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Advancing Safety in Our New Mobility Future

Thursday, June 6, 2019

U.S. DOT's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology Diana Furchtgott-Roth recently inaugurated the U.S. DOT Volpe Center's 2019 thought leadership series on Our New Mobility Future.

She spoke on the benefits of enhanced mobility, improved infrastructure, and vigilant attention to safety. "We are all interested in mobility. More trips are better. We want more travel for work, we want more travel for vacation, more travel for pleasure…We want this done in a faster, cheaper, way. More trips mean that more people are better off," said Furchtgott-Roth.

Increased Transportation Availability

Furchtgott-Roth touted the benefits of having the technology available to enable people to buy the transportation that more effectively meets their needs. These gains range from existing technologies such as automated toll collection that do not require cars to slow down, to long term prospects such as autonomous vehicles enabling individuals to work during their commute.

"These are not Lexus lanes, but Toyota lanes: lanes that enable a middle- or low-income parent to avoid a $50 fine for being late to pick up a child at daycare," Furchtgott-Roth said. "Being able to charge for transportation services —which we were not able to do before—enables funds to be channeled into transportation improvements to the benefit of travelers."

These technologies fulfill their potential to revolutionize travel, and promise to increase greatly everyday mobility for important populations, such as traditionally underserved communities, people with disabilities and older adults, she said.

Continued Transportation Safety and the 5.9 GHz Spectrum

U.S. DOT is working to usher in a new era of transportation innovation and safety. “As we prepare for the future of new, emerging technologies, such as truck platooning where trucks can follow one another without drivers, one of the top Department priorities is to make sure we address public concerns about safety, security, and privacy, without hampering innovation,” Furchtgott-Roth said. “Growing freight and e-commerce means more trucks and deliveries. Imagine a future where truck deliveries and goods delivery are increasingly autonomous and the people we work to keep safe will increasingly be people outside the vehicle.” Featured transportation safety examples included pedestrian automatic emergency braking systems, and lateral protective devices on trucks. “As the population of vulnerable road users continues to evolve, research-backed, cost-effective safety transportation technologies are more important than ever.”

In 1999, the FCC allocated a band in the 5.9 GHz spectrum to traffic safety and intelligent transportation systems. This valuable asset has been sought by unlicensed users. “We emphasize the importance of keeping the 5.9GHz band for traffic safety,” said Furchtgott-Roth. ”Increasing connectivity in our transportation systems using the 5.9 GHz band of spectrum will increase safety and reduce the 37,000 fatalities and 2.7 million injuries on our roads every year.

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Related Links

- Speaker Series: Our New Mobility Future

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