Chris Gerdes is the first Chief Innovation Officer at the United States Department of Transportation. In this role, he works with the Secretary to foster the culture of innovation across the department and find ways to support transportation innovation taking place both inside and outside of government. He serves as an internal champion for innovation and idea generation and as a departmental resource for problem solving approaches, advanced research, automation and connected vehicles.

Chris is serving at USDOT while on leave from Stanford University where he is a Professor of Mechanical Engineering. His laboratory studies how cars move, how humans drive cars and how to design future cars that work cooperatively with the driver or drive themselves. Vehicles in the lab include X1, an entirely student-built test vehicle; Shelley, an automated Audi TT-S that can lap a racetrack as quickly as an expert driver; and MARTY, an electrified DeLorean capable of controlled drifts. Chris and his team have been recognized with a number of awards including the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers, the Ralph Teetor award from SAE International and the Rudolf Kalman Award from the American Society of Mechanical Engineers.

Chris is a co-founder of Peloton Technology, a leader in truck platooning, and served as Peloton's Principal Scientist before joining USDOT.