Written Statement from Finch Fulton
Nominee for Assistant Secretary for Policy, US Dept. of Transportation
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Nominations Hearing on Wednesday, March 11, 2020

Thank you Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Cantwell, and Members of the Committee. I am proud to be here today as the nominee for Assistant Secretary of Policy for the U.S. Department of Transportation. I believe my background makes me uniquely qualified for this role.

I have been involved in transportation issues my entire life. Growing up, my family owned a small trucking, logistics, and warehousing business, which served as a connection between the Port of Mobile, rail lines, and commercial motor vehicles using the I-10 and I-65 interstate connections. Every summer, I worked in these warehouses. I learned first-hand the important role strong logistical centers play for the health of our economy and our country's competitiveness.

After graduating from the University of Alabama, I moved to Washington, D.C., where I served as a staffer in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. While working in the Senate, I took night and weekend classes to earn an MBA from Johns Hopkins University. In these roles, I learned to be an advocate for constituents baffled by the complexity of Washington, D.C., helping individuals work through complicated bureaucracies to achieve results.

After receiving my MBA and leaving the Senate, I moved to Dallas, Texas, where I worked for a public affairs company called VOX Global. Here, I worked on advocacy campaigns focused on the State and local integration of technology. While my primary focus was around telecommunications issues, I used this position as an opportunity to get more involved in a number of innovative transportation technologies, namely drones, ride-share services and automated vehicles. My experience thinking through the challenges of locally elected officials helped me consider their responsibilities, and the appropriate role of the Federal government.

In my over three years at the U.S. Department of Transportation, these experiences have served me well. I have learned much from Secretary Chao's vision and leadership of the Department. First and foremost, I have learned the importance of keeping safety as the top priority for the Department, and the "North Star" for all of its actions.

In 2018, the most recent year reported by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the number of fatalities on American roads reached 36,560. Each life lost is a tragedy. The Department must continue to prioritize safety outcomes in all of its actions, including grant making, regulatory updates, enforcement, and engagement actions and as a focus for engaging with new technologies. By keeping safety as the focus for all of the Department's actions, I believe we can make significant steps towards the goal of zero fatalities.

Technology holds great potential to improve the safety, efficiency, and economic impact of our transportation system, but it is not a "silver bullet." The developments in automated vehicles, drones, hyperloop systems, commercial space launch and reentry, and even data initiatives can dramatically change the way people and goods are moved about the country. Many of these technologies challenge the Department in new or more sophisticated ways on methods both to prove and to improve levels of safety, or in determining what mechanisms are best suited in the Department for providing oversight. I believe that we can utilize the public processes and mechanisms that are in place to consider these questions, and include input from all relevant sources, to ensure the long-term health of and to realize the great potential for, these new technologies.

I have had the distinct privilege of being able to lead the policy development of the Department's approach to automated vehicles. In the last few years, the Department has published *Automated Driving Systems 2.0: A Vision for Safety*, *Automated Vehicles 3.0: Preparing for the Future of Transportation*, and through our work with the White House *Ensuring American Leadership in Automated Vehicle Technologies: Automated Vehicles 4.0*. These guidance documents have helped clarify the approach and the role of the Federal government in the safe and full integration of automated vehicle technologies into our Nation's transportation system.

I have also been actively engaged in the development and execution of the drone Integration Pilot Program, and the Automated Driving System Demonstration grants—both of which take the approach that we should 1) prioritize safety, 2) use these opportunities to generate data to allow us to update our regulations and standards, and 3) work collaboratively with the communities in which these technologies are being developed to ensure people understand the capabilities—and limitations—of these technologies. I am also currently leading the efforts of the Department's Non-traditional and Emerging Transportation Technology (NETT) council, which is working in an intermodal fashion to determine which

authorities to bring to projects that do not fall neatly within the authorities of one mode or another, such as hyperloop.

As we move towards a new surface transportation authorization, we must use reauthorization as an opportunity to codify steps to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the American transportation system. This effort will undoubtedly include Administration priorities like One Federal Decision. Separate and apart from legislative efforts, we must also use current authorities and funding opportunities to test and validate better ways to invest in, manage, and oversee our transportation assets while investing in improving our Nation's infrastructure. I look forward working with Congress as we utilize grant programs, such as the BUILD and INFRA transportation grant programs, to do so.

Thank you for your time, and for the opportunity to testify before you today.