

Testimony of Carlos A. Monje, Jr.
Nominee to be Undersecretary of Transportation for Policy
Before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
May 20, 2021

Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Wicker, Members of the Committee, I am humbled to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy at the U.S. Department of Transportation.

I'd like to thank my wife Anne, who is here today and is a brilliant public servant and wonderful mother to our boys Sebastian and Leonel. I'd like to thank my big sisters who are watching from home, President Biden and Secretary Buttigieg for their faith in me, and the more than 50,000 professionals who work at the Department of Transportation for welcoming me back 120 days ago.

These are men and women who take pride in their mission and utilize their expertise every day to improve the lives of people across the country. It would be the honor of my career to help lead that mission.

At the end of the Obama Administration, I served as Assistant Secretary for Policy and Acting Under Secretary. I worked on improving our freight networks, helping communities thrive, standing up the Build America Bureau and advocating for the passage of the FAST Act. I previously was Special Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff of the White House Domestic Policy Council.

I've worked here in the Senate, on political campaigns large and small, and in the private sector. I've worked for three presidential transitions, including the last one, where I built a team of more than 400 volunteers to do a top-to-bottom review of all the domestic agencies of the federal government. We accomplished our goals and prepared the new Administration to take on the overlapping crises facing us.

As we come out of the darkness of COVID, our transportation network--like the nation itself--is stepping into a bright, but unfamiliar future. Millions of Americans are back on the job, yet many are forgoing their daily commute and working from home. People are beginning to confidently travel again on buses, trains and airplanes, but transit agencies and airlines still have a long way to recover. A supply chain that was stretched to its breaking point as Americans stayed home and bought things online, is still digging out, with containers piled up at our ports. And even as drivers were on the road less last year, crashes and road fatalities spiked for the first time in decades.

The U.S. Department of Transportation is in a unique position to lead, and we need to. That means deploying the intellectual firepower of our research and technology assets to help state, local and Tribal partners anticipate and plan for the new normal. It means making our port, rail and intermodal facilities more robust and resilient so that American farmers and manufacturers can ship their goods across the country and around the globe. Leading means helping communities make the most of their limited dollars through impactful grant and innovative

finance programs. And it means rededicating ourselves to safety, so that every trip on every mode of transportation ends with a safe arrival.

Earlier this year, the President released the American Jobs Plan. At a time when we face a trillion-dollar backlog of needed repairs and improvements, the American Jobs Plan would modernize our transportation system, improving more than 20,000 miles of roads and 10,000 bridges. It would expand world-class passenger rail services, invest in ports, waterways and aviation, and double federal spending for public transit.

The American Jobs Plan would reconnect urban and rural communities left behind by past decisions, and give millions more commuters safer, shorter, cleaner and more affordable options, whether they move by car, public transit, foot, bike, or wheelchair. It would combat the climate crisis and create good union jobs by sparking an electric vehicle revolution, and by building a national network of 500,000 electric vehicle chargers.

If I have the honor of being confirmed by you, I vow to work with this committee to strengthen the Department and achieve better results for the American people. I know you and your staff have deep expertise on our shared infrastructure challenges, that your knowledge of the needs of your constituents is unrivaled, and that your role as a partner in governing is vital to our shared success.

In closing, thank you again for your consideration and the opportunity to appear before you. I look forward to your questions.