

Questions for the Record

U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

“Nomination Hearing for Hon. Peter Buttigieg to be Secretary of Department of Transportation”

January 21, 2021

Questions for the Record from Hon. Amy Klobuchar to Hon. Peter Buttigieg

Distracted Driving. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, eight people die and more than one thousand people are injured each day in automobile crashes that involve distracted driving. Meanwhile, distracted driving is responsible for more than 58 percent of all crashes involving teenagers. The most recent reauthorization of the *Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act* included my legislation to help more states qualify for federal grants to fight distracted driving.

Question 1. What are your plans to combat distracted driving and help states do the same?

Answer. If confirmed as Secretary, I will always make safety a top priority. I am committed to protecting American families by reducing the number pedestrian and of roadway deaths and serious injuries. I agree that distracted driving is a fundamental safety challenge, and I will work with you and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) to support state programs that incentivize safe driving, research solutions on distracted driving, and strengthen enforcement.

Question 2. What plans do you have to reduce the number of accidents involving teenage drivers, especially accidents caused by distracted driving?

Answer. Safe driving practices should be a priority from when teenagers first learn to drive and earn their license. For teenage drivers, communication and education are critical. In addition to the measures described above, if confirmed, I would ensure that NHTSA works with states on communications campaigns and educational resources to combat distracted driving and teen driving safety issues.

Light Rail. In September, the Department of Transportation’s Federal Transit Administration (FTA) approved a \$929 million grant for the Southwest Light Rail—a 16 station extension of the METRO Green Line connecting Minneapolis to Eden Prairie. This grant was the largest in Minnesota’s history.

Question 3. What are your plans to improve our nation’s light rail transit, especially for rural communities?

Answer. One of President Biden’s key Build Back Better priorities is to make sure that federal spending reaches communities of all kinds. Whether in urban, suburban or rural areas, too many Americans are experiencing poverty and struggle to keep pace with steadily increasing

costs of living including rising housing and transportation expenses. These communities, particularly in rural and small towns, will absolutely be recognized and prioritized, with light rail options fully explored. President Biden has also proposed to invest in sustainable, quality public transportation systems for every city bigger than 100,000 people. As someone who served as a mayor of a city of roughly a hundred thousand, I agree that accessible and reliable transit in communities of all sizes benefits those that live there and the surrounding areas. One of my guiding principles, if confirmed, one on which I will ask our entire Department to focus, is ensuring that Americans living in urban, suburban and rural communities have affordable transportation options that get them from home to wherever they want to go whether that is work, school, medical facilities, shopping or worship.

Question 4. As we work to rebuild our economy during this pandemic, can you speak to how FTA grants can help promote economic growth in local economies?

Answer. If confirmed as Secretary, I commit to advancing the President's goal of improving access to high-quality public transportation and mobility options, which benefit a recovering economy. Too many communities do not have access to reliable and zero-emissions options for affordable, public transportation and mobility. Federal transit and mobility investments can help promote equitable economic growth in local economies by increasing access to jobs, opportunity, and commerce in an affordable and sustainable way. These improvements will also create stronger community engagement and will support local growth in manufacturing, construction, and business opportunities.

Questions for the Record from Hon. Richard Blumenthal to Hon. Peter Buttigieg

Heavy Vehicle Speed Limiters. According to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), 10,440 people were killed from 2004-2013 in crashes where the speed of the commercial motor vehicle (CMV) likely contributed to the severity of the crash. On average, that is 1,044 lives lost annually to speeding CMVs. Speed limiters already are required in the European Union and other countries. In 2006, safety and industry groups petitioned the NHTSA and FMCSA for a regulation requiring speed governors in heavy trucks to be set to limit top speeds to improve safety and conserve fuel. The agencies finally issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in September 2016 but has failed to advance the rule since then.

Question 1. If confirmed, what will you do to assure that this rulemaking, which has support from both safety and industry groups, is issued promptly?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to advancing the integration of technology that improves the safety of all road users, potentially including technologies such as speed limiters for commercial motor vehicles. Under my direction, NHTSA and FMCSA would work closely with safety advocates and industry stakeholders to achieve the critical safety goal of reducing fatalities due to speeding.

National Transportation Safety Board recommendations. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is the nation's preeminent crash investigatory body. Based on their investigations, the NTSB issues findings and recommendations. The NTSB also regularly publishes the Most Wanted List of Transportation Safety Improvements.

Question 2. If confirmed, will you commit to providing the Committee with a list of outstanding recommendations to the Department of Transportation and its sub-agencies, with target dates for meeting each recommendation?

Answer. I agree that one of the most important functions of the NTSB is to provide timely and critical recommendations to the Department to improve safety. If confirmed, I commit to working with NTSB and all safety components of the Department to address outstanding recommendations. I will provide Congress with any requested information on outstanding NTSB recommendations.

Relief for America's private bus, motorcoach, and passenger ferry industries. The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the private motorcoach, bus, and ferry industries, and unlike other transportation modes, these companies did not receive any assistance in the CARES Act. Fortunately, Congress included \$2 billion in assistance for the motorcoach, school bus, and U.S. flagged passenger vessel industries in the COVID Relief and Response Act signed into law on December 27, 2020, but more relief funding is necessary. Moreover, guidance has not yet been released for this grant program – administered by the Department of Treasury in consultation with the Department of Transportation – and we have been informed it could be several weeks before it is up and running.

Question 3. If confirmed, can you commit to making this new grant program a priority by reaching out to the Treasury Department directly to determine what measures are necessary to ensure this funding gets out the door as soon as possible?

Answer. Yes. Assistance for these operators is critical. I understand that the Departments are already working together on this program and commit to making it a priority.

Underride Guards for Trailers. Technology is currently available that can significantly increase the chances that an individual can survive a crash where a vehicle travels underneath the rear or side of the trailer known as underride.

In 2015, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) to update the standards for rear impact guards that are installed on the rear of trailers. However, the NPRM proposed only to upgrade the federal standard to meet the Canadian standard, which was issued over a decade ago and is substandard given guards currently available in the marketplace. This is evidence of the inadequacy of the federal standard and the ability for manufacturers to produce superior products.

The NTSB has recommended improving comprehensive underride protection. Underride guards can significantly increase the chances that an individual can survive a crash where a vehicle travels underneath the rear or side of a truck trailer. Yet, current federal standards are severely outdated or are lacking entirely.

Question 4. If confirmed, will you commit to updating federal safety standards for rear underride guards to at a minimum meet current industry standards and capability?

Question 5. If confirmed, will you commit to requiring side underride guards on truck trailers?

Answer (to questions 4 and 5). If confirmed, I will work with all safety components of the Department to prioritize our safety rulemakings, including truck rear underride. In 2017, there were 450,000 police-reported crashes involving 18-wheelers, of which 4,237 were fatal. Any technology that can be implemented to improve safety around truck trailers should be carefully considered, and I look forward to working with you on this issue.

Approach to Motor Vehicle Safety. In 2019, over 36,000 people were killed in motor vehicle crashes. There were nearly 7 million police-reported crashes and more than 2.7 million people were injured as well. Every day on average, approximately 100 people are killed and over 7,500 more are injured on America's roads. Automobile crashes remain a leading cause of death for people in the United States. The annual economic cost of motor vehicle crashes is \$242 billion. Preliminary data from the first half of 2020 show that while there was a reduction in traffic, the fatality rate increased dramatically and it was reported that dangerous behaviors such as excessive speed, lack of seat belt use and impaired and distracted driving were on the rise.

Question 6. If confirmed, what specific safety actions will you take in the next four years that will result in significant and sustained reductions in the fatality and injury toll on our streets and highways?

Answer. The numbers you cite are a vivid reminder of how many families lose loved ones, and how many lives are altered because of traffic crashes on our streets and highways. Making sustained progress will require a comprehensive approach that focuses on the safety of the individual, whether inside or outside of a vehicle. If confirmed, I would focus on updates to our road designs that improve safety for all users, as well as deploying new vehicle technologies, such as automated emergency braking, electronic stability control, lane departure warning systems, and other next-generation automated driving systems. As human behavior is at the heart of safety, this comprehensive strategy also must include a focus on communication and education, which will address such issues as impaired and distracted driving.

Voluntary Industry Agreements. Voluntary industry agreements have proven time and time again to be woefully inadequate in advancing public safety on our nation's roads and to shortchange the public. For example, automakers announced such an agreement in 2016 to equip new vehicles with automatic emergency braking (AEB), a safety system that has been proven to prevent crashes and save lives. Yet, to date, five companies that entered into this agreement have less than 50 percent compliance. The result is that AEB is most commonly available on expensive luxury cars that most middle class families cannot afford.

Question 7. What is your position on voluntary industry agreements compared to federal minimum performance standards which require safety technologies in all new cars, such as rearview cameras?

Answer. Safety is my top priority for the Department of Transportation, and part of a comprehensive strategy includes harnessing the most effective technologies to reduce crashes on our streets and highways. The rapid diffusion of these technologies is critical to reducing traffic deaths and if confirmed, I will work across the Department and with industry to expand their deployment, using the most appropriate policy tools. If confirmed, I plan to closely examine the track record and feasibility of voluntary industry agreements.

Crash Avoidance Technologies. Collision avoidance systems include automatic emergency braking (AEB), lane departure warning (LDW), blind spot detection (BSD), rear AEB and rear cross-traffic alert. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) has found that: AEB can decrease front-to-rear crashes with injuries by 56 percent; LDW can reduce single-vehicle, sideswipe and head-on injury crashes by over 20 percent; BSD can diminish injury crashes from lane change by nearly 25 percent; Rear AEB can reduce backing crashes by 78 percent when combined with rearview camera and parking sensors; and, Rear cross-traffic alert can reduce backing crashes by 22 percent.

Question 8. If confirmed, can you commit to requiring collision avoidance technologies such as automatic emergency braking (AEB), lane departure warning (LDW), blind spot detection (BSD) as standard equipment in all new vehicles because of their proven lifesaving benefits?

Answer. As stated above, safety is my top priority for the Department of Transportation, and part of a comprehensive strategy includes harnessing the most effective technologies to reduce crashes on our streets and highways. Without pre-judging the outcome of departmental rulemakings, I do believe that the rapid diffusion of these technologies is critical to reducing traffic deaths and if confirmed, I will work across the Department and with industry to expand their deployment.

Delayed Rulemakings. Over the past few years, NHTSA has missed several key statutory rulemaking deadlines that Congress mandated under the 2012 Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act and the 2015 Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act. Congress authorized NHTSA to finalize these important rulemakings to protect American lives and help make our roads safer. However, NHTSA's failure to implement these congressionally mandated directives have done the opposite – placing countless lives at risk. It is critically important for NHTSA to immediately finalize these long overdue rulemakings – which include improving child restraint systems, mandating rear seat belt reminders, and requiring automakers to notify consumers of recalls via electronic notices – to ensure America is able to continue moving toward our ultimate goal of zero deaths.

Question 9. If confirmed, will you commit to identifying, addressing, and providing a timeline for implementation of missed rulemaking deadlines that Congress mandated under the 2012 Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act and the 2015 Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with NHTSA and other agencies to identify and assess outstanding rulemakings to determine appropriate action including developing a timeline, issuance of further guidance or possible legislative action necessary to ensure America can continue moving toward our shared goal of zero deaths on and around our nation's highways.

Questions for the Record from Hon. Ed Markey to Hon. Peter Buttigieg

Automotive and Traffic Safety. In 2019, over 36,000 people were killed in motor vehicle crashes. There were nearly 7 million police-reported crashes and more than 2.7 million people were injured. Tragically, similar numbers repeat year after year, revealing a public health crisis in automotive and traffic safety. These deaths and injuries are not inevitable, however, and they can be addressed using proven strategies as well as the latest safety technologies.

That's why I introduced a robust legislative package in the last Congress with four bills that will collectively address the threats of seatback failure (S.4122), distracted driving (S.4123), ineffective recalls (S.4121), and insufficient oversight of the auto industry (S.4120). I am now fighting to ensure that these bills become law as part of Congress's next big transportation legislation.

Question 1. As our next Secretary of Transportation, will you support the inclusion of these four bills in a comprehensive infrastructure package? In addition, what specific safety actions do you plan to take in the next four years that will result in significant and sustained reductions in the fatality and injury toll on our streets and highways?

Answer. I share your sense of urgency on this critical issue. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you on legislation to reduce fatalities and injuries from road crashes. Safety is my top priority for the Department. The numbers you cite are a vivid reminder of how many families lose loved ones, and how many lives are altered because of traffic crashes on our streets and highways. Making sustained progress will require a comprehensive and data-driven approach that focuses on the safety of the individual, whether inside or outside of a vehicle. If confirmed, I would focus on improvements to road design that enhance safety for all users and the deployment of new vehicle technologies, such as automated emergency braking, electronic stability control, lane departure warning systems, and next-generation automated driving systems. As human behavior is at the heart of safety, this comprehensive strategy also must include a focus on communication and education, which would address such issues as impaired and distracted driving.

Transportation Alternatives and Safety for All Users of the Road. Pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities increased by nearly 51% between 2009 and 2018. In 2018 alone, 6,227 pedestrians were killed in motor vehicle crashes, the highest mortality rate since 1990. These figures reveal that we are experiencing a national safety crisis on our streets, and that significant investments are needed to ensure safety for all users of the road. At the same time, these investments present an enormous opportunity to lead the world into a new era of green transportation. The transportation sector is the largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the United States, and cars are the leading sources of these emissions. That's why providing alternatives to driving must be an essential part of any effort to combat climate change.

To protect all users of the road and promote transportation alternatives, I have introduced the *Complete Streets Act* (S.2077), legislation that will require states to set aside a portion of their federal highway funding for a new grant program that promotes complete streets projects such as sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalks, and bus stops. I have also introduced the *Connecting*

America's Active Transportation System Act (S.3391), legislation that will dedicate \$500 million annually to connect walking and biking infrastructure into active transportation networks that allow people to reach destinations within a community, as well as travel between communities, without ever needing a car.

Question 2. As the Mayor of South Bend, Indiana, I know that you advanced a “Smart Streets” initiative that promoted complete streets and active transportation across your city. As Secretary, will you support my legislation to similarly advance these programs at the federal level? In addition, what specific regulatory actions will you take to ensure safety and accessibility for all users of the road?

Answer. There are opportunities and initiatives across the country, like our own Smart Streets initiative in South Bend, that focus on safety and accessibility for drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists alike. To ensure safety and accessibility for all roadway users, I will work towards a comprehensive approach that will focus on improved street designs to protect our most vulnerable and support our racial equity goals. At the same time, we will focus on legislation to accomplish these goals that provide for greener transportation choices. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you on both legislative and regulatory opportunities to support this work.

Passenger Rail. Passenger rail is an essential and popular alternative to highways or air travel. Studies consistently show that enhancing passenger rail service will improve mobility, enhance safety, promote economic development, generate new jobs, and protect the environment. Moreover, these benefits are especially pronounced for regions of the country – such as Western Massachusetts – that are historically and persistently unconnected or under-connected. That’s why the Commonwealth of Massachusetts recently released a final report on a proposed East-West Rail line that would connect the cities of Pittsfield and Boston, with stops in other western and central Massachusetts communities along the way.

To promote East-West Rail, as well as other critical projects in Massachusetts like the North-South Rail Link, South Coast Rail, and a Berkshires Housatonic Line, I introduced the *Building Rail Across Intercity Networks to Ride Around Interior of the Nation Act*, or the *BRAIN TRAIN Act* (S.4030). My legislation will provide \$5 billion per year for the development of high-performance intercity passenger rail service across the country, with an explicit focus on developing routes in historically un-connected and under-connected communities, as well as funding preference given to projects that promise the greatest environmental, safety, and economic benefits.

Question 3. As Secretary, will you support the inclusion of my *BRAIN TRAIN Act* in Congress’s next infrastructure package? In addition, will you ensure that essential projects like East-West Rail receive the federal support and funding they need to leave the station?

Answer. If confirmed as Secretary, I commit to working with the President, the rest of the Biden Administration and Congress to make sure that America has the cleanest, safest, and most efficient rail system in the world. I look forward to working with you on future legislation and initiatives that include proposals to improve passenger rail service equity while at the same time

focusing on environmental, safety, and economic benefits, especially in historically disadvantaged areas and corridors.

Questions for the Record from Hon. Gary Peters to the Hon. Peter Buttigieg:

AVs.

Question 1. Under your leadership, how might the Department help lay the foundation for the continued development of automated technologies?

Answer. We know that autonomous vehicles are part of the future of this nation's transportation infrastructure. Autonomous vehicles can make our transportation system safer and more efficient. If confirmed, I am eager to work with you and your colleagues in Congress to ensure that the Federal government is leading the way on ensuring safe autonomous vehicle operations nationwide, and I would work with industry, American workers, safety organizations, environmental groups, and other stakeholders to determine how to create American jobs and advance American technological leadership through this industry.

Question 2. How do you see the manufacture of advanced automotive technologies like AVs fitting within President Biden's plan to build back better?

Answer. President Biden has been clear that we must Build Back Better from the economic crisis we currently face, and position American automotive workers and manufacturers to succeed in the 2020s and beyond. If confirmed as Secretary, I would work to make smart investments in infrastructure, and smart decisions about manufacturing and technology, to give American workers and companies the tools they need to compete, and spark American innovation. These investments will enable America to lead the world in making the advanced products and services needed tomorrow, and create more high-quality, highly-skilled, and safe jobs in partnership with labor unions, educational institutions, and other key stakeholders.

Microtransit. In the last few years, many cities and transit agencies have launched microtransit projects, including Detroit, which is using a fleet of on-demand minivans to complement and extend public transportation. The service, which is wheelchair accessible, focuses on increasing and improving transportation options for essential workers - at a flat rate of \$2.

Question 3. How do you see innovative transit options like shared, on-demand microtransit advancing the future of public transit, improving accessibility and equity, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions?

Answer. If confirmed as Secretary, I am committed to advancing President Biden's goal of increasing access to high-quality, reliable public transportation throughout America, and doing so in a way that improves racial and economic equity, accessibility, sustainability, and good-paying jobs. That includes supporting efforts to help cities, towns, and other areas improve transit, rail, and bus lines, and investing in infrastructure that meets the needs of all residents, including pedestrians, cyclists, riders of e-scooters, and travelers with disabilities. Too often, transportation options are inequitably distributed along racial and economic lines, and addressing this injustice is something I will prioritize throughout the Department's work, if confirmed.

Preventing Drunk Driving. Alcohol-impairment is a public health crisis in our country with impaired driving contributing to more than 10,000 fatalities per year on our nation's roadways. Tragically since the COVID Pandemic began, we've seen an increase in highway fatalities, despite overall traffic on our roads going down.

Question 4. If confirmed, what steps would you take to prevent impaired driving?

Answer. Safety is my top priority for the Department. The numbers you cite are a vivid reminder of how many families lose loved ones, and how many lives are altered because of traffic crashes on our streets and highways. Making sustained progress will require a comprehensive approach that focuses on the safety of the individual, whether inside or outside of a vehicle. As human behavior is at the heart of safety, this comprehensive strategy must include a focus on communication and education, which will address such issues as drunk and distracted driving.

Question 5. Will you commit to providing suggestions back to this Committee (as part of surface transportation legislative conversations, without a time-specific demand) to strengthen or modify the existing DADSS program, including considering regulatory action to require new cars to have in-vehicle technology installed to prevent impaired driving?

Answer. If I am confirmed, safety will be my top priority at the Department. DADSS has the potential to save thousands of lives each year, and I support the use of technology and other safety initiatives to address impaired driving. I consider it important to engage industry and make use of all appropriate tools to ensure that the safest technologies are being employed in our transportation system.

Supporting Testing for V2X. The flagship V2X effort of the U.S. Department of Transportation is the Connected Vehicle Pilot Deployment Program, which I worked to authorize and include as part of the 2016 FAST Act. This program currently funds important deployments in my state of Michigan, as well as places as diverse as New York City, Tampa and Wyoming.

Question 6. If confirmed, do you intend to provide additional funding so the pilot V2X locations and projects can complete their work?

Answer. If confirmed as Secretary, I commit to making sure innovations make our transportation system safer, more equitable, and more sustainable, and lead to good-paying jobs. I look forward to becoming more familiar with the Connected Vehicle Pilot Deployment Program, and working with you to invest in programs and initiatives that allow us to pilot and learn more about the impact of emerging innovations.

Fuel Economy.

Question 7. If confirmed as Secretary, how will you work with the EPA to establish federal fuel economy standards that increase fuel efficiency, improve automotive safety, address carbon emission reduction needs, and support new U.S. highly skilled manufacturing jobs in lightweight plastic and polymer composite automotive materials?

Answer. As you know, this is a priority of the President, and, if confirmed, I would work with EPA and the White House to strengthen fuel economy standards and make up for lost time in the last four years.

Questions for the Record from Hon. Tammy Duckworth to Hon. Peter Buttigieg

Congestion. Many observers predict a spike in roadway congestion in the months to come, exacerbating highway conditions that existed before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Question 1. As Secretary, how will you address roadway congestion that plagues many of our metropolitan areas? What role do you see pricing and innovation playing in congestion relief?

Answer. As a former mayor, I recognize that to truly address congestion in our communities, we must take a holistic and multimodal approach that prioritizes how people can move more safely and reliably around our communities. Strategies and tools like congestion pricing, complete streets, and other innovative community-based transit and mobility options have been successful for communities around the world to reduce gridlock, improve safety, and strengthen economic and regional competitiveness. If confirmed, look forward to working with you on this important issue, and I would direct all relevant components of the Department to develop funding recommendations, guidance and proposals to address congestion.

Passenger Rail. President Biden has long supported increased investment in our nation's passenger rail system.

Question 2. As Secretary, do you support dedicated funding for passenger rail investment, separate and distinct from the Highway Trust Fund? Do you support the creation of a separate Passenger Rail Trust Fund as part of any infrastructure package? How will you ensure that investments in passenger rail will not only improve our transportation system but also help the nation meet its renewed commitments to racial and social equity and to addressing the global climate crisis?

Answer. Moving over 32 million passengers a year (pre-COVID-19) on more than 300 Amtrak trains a day, Amtrak is a vital component to America's passenger transportation network, and should be at the heart of the renaissance of passenger rail transportation in the nation. Before COVID, Amtrak had turned a corner on its operational budget, and I look forward to working with Congress to establish predictable, dedicated funding sources for Amtrak maintenance and expansion, if confirmed. I will also prioritize examining how service cuts have impacted communities and exploring opportunities to help Amtrak return to financial stability and pre-pandemic service levels.

School Bus Safety. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), between 2009 and 2018, 1,207 people were killed in school-transportation-related crashes—an average of 121 fatalities per year. To help prevent or mitigate the severity of these tragedies the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recommends schools buses be equipped with 3-point safety belts, automatic emergency braking, event data recorders, electronic stability controls, fire-resistant materials and fire suppression systems.

Question 3. Do you agree with these recommendations? Would you support legislation that included these recommendations? As Secretary, how will you improve school transportation safety?

Answer. Safety is my top priority for the Department of Transportation, and especially for our children. School bus safety is critical for our nation's children and we should ensure these vehicles meet the highest safety standards. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the NTSB recommendations and proposed legislation and to working with you on this issue.

Underride Protection. Hundreds of individuals across the nation are lost to underride collisions every year. However, after more than 60 years of studying the issue, comprehensive underride protection is long overdue.

Question 4. As Secretary, will you commit to improving the safety of our roadways by finally enacting comprehensive underride standards all trucks and trailers?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with all safety components of the Department to prioritize our safety rulemakings, including truck rear underride. In 2017, there were 450,000 police-reported crashes involving 18-wheelers, of which 4,237 were fatal. Any technology that can be implemented to improve safety around truck trailers should be carefully considered, and I look forward to working with you on this issue.

Contract Towers. The Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Contract Tower Program enhances aviation safety at smaller airports around the country. There are 257 airports that participate in this successful program including six in Illinois, and a seventh in Joliet is in the works.

Question 5. What assurances can you give me that this program will continue to be a top priority for the Department and FAA?

Answer. The most important thing to me, when it comes to air traffic control, will be the safety of our aviators, crews and passengers. If confirmed, I assure you that any evaluation of air traffic operations will take the Contract Tower Program fully into account, including staffing challenges.

Questions for the Record from Hon. Jon Tester to the Hon. Peter Buttigieg:

COVID-19's Impact on Amtrak. As COVID-19 continues to sweep the nation, Amtrak has been forced to reduce staff and routes to reflect lower ridership. If confirmed, you will be installed as a Member of the Amtrak Board of Directors.

Question 1. How will you prioritize the revitalization of robust long-distance service across America as the nation emerges from the pandemic? After the pandemic, how will you work to further expand the national network?

Answer. Moving over 32 million passengers a year (pre-COVID-19) on more than 300 Amtrak trains a day, Amtrak is a vital component to America's passenger transportation network, and should be at the heart of the renaissance of passenger rail transportation in the nation. Americans should expect a high standard for long distance passenger rail. Before COVID, Amtrak had turned a corner on its operational budget, and I look forward to working with Congress to establish predictable, dedicated funding sources for Amtrak maintenance and expansion, if confirmed. I will also prioritize examining how service cuts have impacted communities and exploring opportunities to help Amtrak return to financial stability and pre-pandemic service levels.

Rural Railroad Crossings. In the last year, Montana experienced an increase in the number of vehicle-rail collisions – tragic accidents that deeply impacted rural communities. To minimize these collisions, last Congress I introduced the *Right Track Act*, which aims to improve safety at very rural grade crossings.

Question 2. If confirmed, how will you work to improve grade crossing safety?

Answer. Safety is my top priority for the Department of Transportation and, if confirmed, I would pursue a comprehensive strategy to reduce and eliminate deaths on our transportation system. These tragic incidents that result from conflicts between rail and other modes of travel are unacceptable and preventable. I will utilize all the existing resources at the Department of Transportation to address safety issues and look forward to working with you to identify additional resources that will be needed to promote multimodal safety and improve safety for all who travel.

Contract Towers. The Federal Aviation Administration's Contract Tower Program is extremely successful, and helps support three major Montana airports. However, some of the airports participating in this program face difficulty in fully staffing the towers.

Question 3. How will you work to address staffing challenges at contract tower airports?

Answer. The most important thing to me, when it comes to air traffic control, will be the safety of our aviators, crews and passengers regardless of ownership. If confirmed, I assure you that any evaluation of air traffic operations will take the Contract Tower Program fully into account, including staffing challenges.

Questions for the Record from Hon. Kyrsten Sinema to Hon. Peter Buttigieg

Amtrak Southwest Chief and Sunset Limited. In my home state, the Southwest Chief provides service to Flagstaff, Kingman, and Winslow, Arizona. The Sunset Limited serves Tucson, Benson, Maricopa, and Yuma, Arizona. In these communities, Amtrak service is a significant financial driver. For example, over 50,000 riders disembark in Flagstaff each year and provide more than \$12 million in tourism dollars to the city. The current service cuts to three times per week on long-distance routes, such as the Southwest Chief and the Sunset Limited, impacts both local workers and local economies.

Question 1. Can you commit to supporting long-distance Amtrak service such as the Southwest Chief and the Sunset Limited?

Answer. Moving over 32 million passengers a year (pre-COVID-19) on more than 300 Amtrak trains a day, Amtrak is a vital component to America's passenger transportation network, and should be at the heart of the renaissance of passenger rail transportation in the nation. Americans should expect a high standard for long distance passenger rail. Before COVID, Amtrak had turned a corner on its operational budget, and I look forward to working with Congress to establish predictable, dedicated funding sources for Amtrak maintenance and expansion, if confirmed. I will also prioritize examining how service cuts have impacted communities and exploring opportunities to help Amtrak return to financial stability and pre-pandemic service levels.

Phoenix Amtrak Service. Phoenix is the fifth largest city in the United States and the largest city in the country not served by Amtrak passenger service. Arizona is also one of the fastest growing states in the country. Amtrak service to Phoenix ended in 1996, and the closest current Amtrak service to the Phoenix region is in Maricopa, about thirty-five miles south. At a September presentation to the Rail Passenger Association, Amtrak included Los Angeles – Palm Springs – Phoenix – Tucson as an option for corridor expansion.

Question 2. What factors would you consider when deliberating about future proposals to expand Amtrak service, such as returning service to Phoenix?

Answer. The opportunity to expand intercity passenger rail in fast-growing and underserved regions such as Arizona is one that I look forward to exploring further, if confirmed. I stand ready to work with you, as well as our partners at the state and local level, the private sector, and Amtrak to improve and expand our passenger rail system in order to advance these important goals.

Contract Tower Program. The Contract Tower Program has a strong track record of enhancing aviation safety at more than 250 airports in the country including seven in Arizona. Phoenix Mesa-Gateway – one of the busiest contract towers in the country – is in the process of building a new tower that will help address complex airspace management challenges.

Question 3. Can we count on the Department and the FAA to work with us to ensure contract towers will continue to play a critical role in our national air traffic control system?

Answer. The most important thing to me, when it comes to air traffic control, will be the safety of our aviators, crews and passengers. If confirmed, I assure you that any evaluation of air traffic operations will take the Contract Tower Program fully into account, including staffing challenges.

Research and Development: There has been bipartisan support for reinvigorating Department of Energy Research and Development (R&D) programs to accelerate clean energy technology deployment and reduce emissions. The Department can enable this effort on our roads as well through R&D programs. The Department regularly invests hundreds of millions of dollars into research and technology programs each year, such as the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA's) Research, Technology, and Education Program. To date, the Department has engaged in limited activities relating to sustainability and direct carbon emissions research.

Question 4: Will you commit to exploring how the Department's R&D programs can better support sustainability and emission reductions?

Answer. The transportation sector has a key role to play in addressing climate change. As a first step, let me assure you that if I am confirmed, the DOT will listen to the federal scientists who are working on climate change issues. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Department works with you and other external stakeholders in the clean technology and fuel industries, including unions, industry, and local, state, and tribal governments, to determine how to develop new programs and use existing programs to create innovative solutions to climate change. American innovation will indeed be critical to combating climate change.

Autonomous Vehicles. Automated driving system technology is rapidly evolving.

Question 5. How will the Department ensure that its workforce has the appropriate expertise to develop and enforce rigorous safety standards for the continued development and eventual safe deployment of AV technologies?

Answer. We know that autonomous vehicles are part of the future of this nation's transportation infrastructure. Autonomous vehicles can make our transportation system safer and more efficient. If confirmed, I am eager to work with you and your colleagues in Congress to ensure that the Federal government is leading the way on ensuring safe autonomous vehicle operations nationwide, and I would work with industry, American workers, safety organizations, environmental groups, and other stakeholders to determine how to create American jobs and advance American technological leadership through this industry.

Occupantless Vehicles. During the COVID-19 crisis, autonomous vehicles have been completing contactless deliveries of groceries, medicine, and other essential goods.

Question 6: Should autonomous, occupantless vehicles be considered a viable solution and part of our future pandemic response?

Answer. If confirmed as Secretary, I'm committed to leveraging the Department's resources to responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, including supporting the President's American Rescue Plan and broader response. I'm committed to advancing innovations that show results in terms of making our transportation system more safe, equitable, sustainable, and create good-paying jobs – including those that allow us to more effectively respond to the pandemic.

Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS): In the past year, we have seen UAS (or drones) provide significant benefits to society, particularly during the pandemic. Drones have provided contactless delivery of food, medicine and other essential items. They have helped small businesses reach customers, engineers evaluate bridge safety, insurance agents evaluate storm damage, and inspectors to review infrastructure. Drones have done this all while increasing safety and reducing environmental impacts.

Question 7. If confirmed as Secretary of Transportation, will you prioritize advancing drones and ensure the regulatory framework in the United States keeps pace with evolving drone technology?

Answer. The main focus of the FAA is safety, and if I am confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to help the Department meet these goals with regards to UAS. I look forward to examining further opportunities within the regulatory framework to ensure that the unmanned aircraft industry can both integrate safely into the National Aviation System (NAS) and efficiently develop new technologies.

Questions for the Record from Hon. Jackie Rosen to Hon. Peter Buttigieg

Domestic EV Supply Chain. Nevada is home to important critical mineral resources, including lithium, which is integral for battery technology in electric vehicles.

Question 1. As this Administration works towards achieving its climate goals that include developing a zero-emission transportation sector, how do you plan to work with other federal agencies and stakeholders to encourage a secure and robust domestic supply chain that supports the manufacturing of electric vehicles that depends on lithium supply and batteries?

Answer. As you note in your question, we must ensure that we have a manufacturing supply chain that supports the innovations we will need to achieve the President's goals on climate change. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress and my counterparts at the Department of Energy and external stakeholders, including unions, industry, and local, state, and tribal governments to determine how to develop new programs and use existing programs to create innovative solutions to climate change.

Affordable House. As a former Mayor, you've seen firsthand the pressures on American families to find housing that is affordable. Too often, our infrastructure, transportation, and housing planning happen in silos that do not account for the unique interconnectedness of all three and their potential impact on improving economic opportunity in communities across the country.

Question 2. What policies would you implement to ensure that transportation planning is better integrated with housing planning to remove barriers to housing production, which can ultimately help lower housing costs, support our transportation systems, and promote more inclusive and livable communities?

Answer. There are many compelling opportunities to link transportation and housing policy, and I am eager to work with you to do so, in partnership with my colleagues at the Department of Housing and Urban Development. For too many households, housing and transportation costs alone can exceed over 45 percent of household monthly income. If we want to ensure all Americans can reside in livable communities, we must ensure that federal entities working in collaboration with state and local partners, are better coordinated and aligned to meet this challenge. Through our policies, we can work to affirmatively further fair housing and prevent practices with unjustified discriminatory effect. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about opportunities to leverage the Department's resources to help encourage greater coordination and investment to promote housing and transportation affordability.

Aviation Booking Data. The Department may receive requests to reinstate its Request for Information (RFI) concerning the display and distribution of airfares (Docket No. DOT-OST-2016-0204). Consumers now have more information on airline fares, schedules, and availability than ever before and can easily shop and book their own flights. In fact, Bureau of Transportation Statistics data shows record-low ticket prices in 2019 and early 2020, which further contradicts the argument that there is a market justification for the Department to require

data sharing or business-to-business relationships between airlines and third-party, for-profit intermediaries.

Question 3. Will you commit to carefully studying this issue, including whether evidence exists of a market failure that would prompt interference in the relationship between airlines and airline intermediaries, before considering any requests to republish the RFI?

Answer. Yes. I understand that aviation consumer advocates and industry stakeholders may have differing views on this particular issue. If confirmed, I would carefully evaluate the concerns of all parties to this rulemaking before making a decision on whether to republish the RFI.