

Questions for the Record (Majority)

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

“Nomination Hearing of Jennifer Homendy to be Chair of the National Transportation Safety Board, Karen Hedlund to be a Member of the Surface Transportation Board, Dr. Robert Hampshire to be Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology for the Department of Transportation, and Carol (“Annie”) Petsonk to be Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs for the Department of Transportation”

June 24, 2021

Question for the Record from Chair Cantwell to Ms. Karen Hedlund to be a Member of the Surface Transportation Board

Freight Railroad Investment. The railroads play a critical role in moving freight throughout our nation. Prior the COVID-19 pandemic, it was estimated that the value of freight shipped by railroad would increase by 45 percent in the next decade to \$1.1 trillion annually. Moving this freight safely and efficiently will require an increased long-term investment in people and infrastructure.

Question. If confirmed, what will you do to ensure that the STB’s policies promote the efficient movement of goods and encourage railroads to invest in their infrastructure?

Answer.

Over the last year, our ocean and inland ports have experienced unprecedented congestion which, related in part to the significant market disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the spike in demand across all sectors, as the economy rebounds. Transfers from ships to trucks and rail have been hampered by shortages of containers, trucks, and truck drivers and also disruptions in rail schedules and planning. I believe that resolving current problems and ensuring a robust and viable transportation network involves a “whole of government approach,” requiring different agencies within government, including STB, FRA, FMCSA and FHWA to work cooperatively. At the same time, legislative initiatives advancing in the House and Senate, and as proposed by the Administration, are calling for significant increases in investment in various types of infrastructure, including freight rail.

To the extent undertaking such investments, whether publicly or privately funded, requires action or authorization by the STB, I believe the Board should act diligently and expeditiously in moving its review processes forward under its statutory and regulatory framework. Additionally, I believe that the Board must continue to adhere to the core objectives and priorities of the Staggers Act and the ICC Termination Act, which were enacted to ensure that the Nation’s

freight and passenger rail network is healthy, competitive, self-sustaining, and responsive to the needs of shipper and the public.