

**U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell**  
**Opening Statement at Executive Session**

**March 24, 2021**

Canwtell: Good morning, everyone. The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation will come to order. We have two business issues, we have one executive session before us today and obviously a hearing on surface transportation, which I'm sure many of my colleagues will have many issues that they want to discuss on that front, but first we're going to go into executive session to consider two items.

First we will consider Ms, Polly Trottenberg who was nominated to be Deputy Secretary of the Department of Transportation. I believe Ms. Trottenberg is extremely well qualified for this job with 30 years of transportation expertise under her belt. I specifically want to highlight her role in implementation of Vision Zero, which is a traffic safety program, and its safety reforms implemented in New York City. They have paid huge dividends and saved lives. This strong leadership experience will serve Ms. Trottenberg well as she takes the fight against needless traffic deaths nationwide, and other issues of congestion. In our hearing with Miss Trottenberg, she and I discussed the importance of support for transit agencies, freight infrastructure, at-grade crossings, the impact of COVID on the transportation sector overall, and the needs for us to continue to move forward on infrastructure investments in our nation. I appreciated her views and certainly support her nomination.

President Biden has been talking about these needs on infrastructure investment and that will be the second part of our work here today to listen and to have that discussion, but I know that he and all of us would like to see investments in infrastructure, to help our economy recover and grow in the future. So, these are just some of the issues that we've all had a chance to discuss with Ms. Trottenberg, and those that we will face, she works with Secretary Buttigieg over at the Department of Transportation in getting our transportation sector back on its feet completely and prioritizing safety. So, I don't know if anybody else has any statements to make in support of Miss Trottenberg.

...

**U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell**

**Opening Statement at Hearing entitled "Driving the Road to Recovery: Rebuilding America's  
Transportation Infrastructure"**

**Witnesses: The Honorable John D. Porcari, Former Deputy Secretary of Transportation; Managing  
Partner, 3P Enterprises**

**Mr. Douglas Hooker, Executive Director, Atlanta Regional Commission**

**The Honorable Toby Barker, Mayor, City of Hattiesburg, MS**

**Mr. Mark McAndrews, Director, Port of Pascagoula**

**March 24, 2021**

Cantwell: The hearing that we're having today is, obviously, on rebuilding America's infrastructure. And I believe this is one of the most important topics before us, as it relates to our economy. We live in an ever-increasing global economy, where more than 95% of consumers live outside our borders. That means American workers and businesses need world-class infrastructure to reach customers, and we need to be competitive. Instead, the American Society of Civil Engineers gives the United States infrastructure a rating of C-minus. So, we definitely need to improve that grade. Right now, the United States only invests 0.7 percent of our GDP on transportation infrastructure. Other countries are investing up to eight times that amount, and the United States needs to make more investments if we are to remain competitive.

In 2018, America shipped nearly 19 trillion dollars worth of freight. That number is expected to top 25 trillion by 2030. In my home state of Washington, we moved over 443 billion dollars worth of goods alone, and we see the cost of failing to rise every day in this investment by the amount of delays in our movement of product. The Washington State Department of Transportation estimated that if truck congestion increased by 20 percent, it would cost farmers, manufacturers, and businesses 14 billion dollars in operating costs, resulting in thousands of job losses.

So, what we need to do today is start the conversation about how we're going to invest in America's infrastructure. To me, three things are very clear. One, Congress must provide funds to invest in megaprojects that are important to our nation and to regional economies. For example, in my state, the I-5 bridge replacement between Vancouver and Portland, the West Seattle bridge repair, or the North Spokane Corridor, which is a major transportation hub of moving product from Canada through the United States and on to other destinations. All three of these projects are significant regional projects that mean a lot to our nation's economy. Second, we've already seen that freight and infrastructure programs have helped our economy be more economically efficient, but more needs to be done. If we

can ease the congestion on our roadways, and at rail crossings, and our ports, it only helps our economy grow. Now is the time to partner with local and regional people to solve these problems and get more out of America's competitiveness. With 95 percent of those customers living outside the United States, those products, whether they're from the south, or from the Midwest, or from the East Coast, need to get to their destinations.

And third, I believe we need to do more on helping at-grade crossings, particularly because of rail congestion. If we're seeing an increase of rail traffic and exports out of the United States, it is clear that we are also seeing more congestion at our railroads—that is, at the railroad crossing. This is costing us safety and efficiency. We're releasing a report today, "Railroad Crossing Congestion and Its Impacts to Safety and Efficiency," but we are showing that these delays are really causing concerns. The report shows, for example, in Davis, Oklahoma, a town of 2,800 people, it took police about 20 minutes to respond to a person threatening suicide, even though the person was less than three blocks away. In my hometown, Edmonds, Washington, a train blocked the only access on the waterfront for three hours. This required first responders to literally crawl through the rail cars to aid a pregnant woman who was due to give birth. I'm pretty sure the story that's told locally is that they actually transported her out on a stretcher through the rail cars to get her to the hospital. In Valley, Nebraska, on Christmas morning, firefighters were prevented from responding to a house fire for over an hour, only because a train blocked access to the home. These at-grade crossing issues are real, and we need to make more significant investments to help alleviate this congestion.

We also need to help the serious congestion at our ports with containers. There are currently 26 ships anchored in idle of the Port of LA Long Beach, because they are not able to get to port. When ships are unable to get to port, too often foreign-owned carriers offload goods at American ports and then load up empty containers to go back to Asia, leaving U.S. exports behind. A recent investigation found between July and December of 2020, carriers rejected at least 1.3 billion in U.S. agricultural exports.

These are important issues to keeping our economy going, so I'm glad today we're going to hear from Deputy Secretary of Transportation in the Obama Administration, John Porcari. He's got an extensive record on public and private activities related to infrastructure and before joining the Obama administration was Secretary of Maryland Transportation. We also have three other individuals on the docket to hear from: Executive Director of the Atlanta Regional Commission, Mr. Douglas Hooker, is going to be joining us remotely, and I'm going to let our colleague from Georgia give a longer introduction of him in a moment, and two other individuals, Toby Baker, the Mayor of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and Mark McAndrews, also going to be remote, from Pascagoula. But I'm going to let my colleague, Ranking Member Wicker, make those introductions at the appropriate time. So now I'd like to turn to my colleague Senator Wicker for his opening statement.