

**Testimony of Christopher Coes**  
**Nominee to be Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy**  
**Before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation**  
**October 20, 2021**

Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Wicker and Members of the Committee, I am humbled and honored to appear before you today as the nominee for Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy for the U.S. Department of Transportation.

I want to thank the President and Secretary Buttigieg for their trust in nominating me for this role. It's a privilege of a lifetime.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my amazing wife, Candice, who is here today and my mother, family and friends who are watching online. I would also like to acknowledge the prayers, aspirations and sacrifices of those that came before me who paved the way for me to sit in front you today.

I have been a transportation safety and economic development advocate since my youth. Growing up in in Thomasville, a small rural community in southwest Georgia, I saw firsthand and experienced the benefits of smart infrastructure investments and the impacts of decades of disinvestment on the economic, health and social mobility of individuals and communities.

For example, while waiting at a red light, my mother was hit by a speeding drunk driver. She was disabled and no longer able to pursue her own ambitions. Without any alternatives, I spent much of my youth as caretaker for my mother and great-grandmother, who relied on me walking or biking to do every day errands, at times on unpaved roads or while dodging car traffic. My experience is not unique. Many communities, rural and urban, lack basic infrastructure or affordable and safe access to every day destinations.

Fortunately, my community and its surrounding rural areas, banded together to bring broadband to thousands of residents and businesses. I leveraged these investments to enhance my own education and took advantage of new opportunities, including working here in Congress as an intern with Congressman Sanford Bishop as part of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Internship Program.

This is a great example of how smart infrastructure investments can not only ensure rural communities, like mine, no longer have digital dirt roads, but can change lives.

I have dedicated my career to advancing policies and public private partnerships to ensure that all Americans, particularly those in rural and small-town communities like Thomasville, have had the ability to live, work and play in healthy, vibrant and equitable communities.

Since January 20, 2021, I have served as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy. In the last few months, I have worked with some of the most dedicated and professional public servants at the Department to manage the Office of Assistant Secretary for Transportation policy.

Together, we are advising the Secretary on surface transportation reauthorization and leading many of the Department's multimodal initiatives to improve safety, advance transportation equity, address climate change and foster innovation.

Prior to joining the Biden-Harris Administration, I served as a Senior Campaign Advisor and Deputy Director for Transportation for America, founding Executive Director for LOCUS, and Vice President at Smart Growth America.

While at Smart Growth America, I worked to develop market data research on the impact of transportation and land use investments on local and regional economic, climate and social equity performance.

I worked closely with federal agencies, including US DOT, to support local communities' efforts to advance smart and equitable transportation investments and public-private partnerships, such as the National Opportunity Zones Academy, USDOT's Transit-Oriented Development Technical Assistance and LadderSTEP Pilot Cities programs.

I also had the privilege to work with this Committee and Congress in a bipartisan manner to ensure local communities had access to funding and financing tools to rebuild their rail infrastructure, promote road safety and encourage greater private investment to build transit-oriented development (TOD). This type of development is critical to ensuring housing and transportation options are affordable to the average American.

President Biden and Secretary Buttigieg have made combating COVID-19, creating high-quality American jobs, fixing our crumbling roads, bridges and rail infrastructure, reconnecting long divided communities and combating climate change as this Administration's top priorities. If confirmed, it would be an honor to continue to work with Congress on these efforts.

Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Wicker, and Members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to be here. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.