

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

Opening Statement at U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation Nomination Hearing

Witnesses: Hon. Jennifer L. Homendy, of Virginia, to be Chair of the National Transportation Safety Board

**Ms. Karen J. Hedlund, of Colorado, to be a Member of the Surface Transportation Board
Dr. Robert C. Hampshire, of Michigan, to be Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology,
Department of Transportation**

Ms. Carol A. Petsonk, of the District of Columbia, to be Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs, Department of Transportation

June 24, 2021

Cantwell: The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation will come to order. I want to thank our nominees for being here today. We're going to consider the nomination of four very qualified individuals. Last week the committee voted on and passed the Surface Transportation Investment Act which Ranking Member Wicker and I introduced. This important bipartisan legislation makes a \$70 billion down payment on rebuilding and revamping our nation's critical infrastructure, a key to our economic future and creating jobs. Together this committee succeeded in passing legislation that makes infrastructure investment that we need to be competitive in a global marketplace, and some of the nominees that we are going to hear from today are going to help confirm that role. I pointed out that today, the front page at the Seattle Times is 'A Bounty of Containers Stress Our Ports.' So we've been saying that this is one of the reasons why we need an infrastructure bill because this level of increase in freight throughout, really the United States--my colleagues are probably seeing other things but this report says handling of 330,000 shipping containers has grown 38% compared to May 2020. So, these are problems that we hope to address and I look forward to hearing from our nominees about that.

First, the consideration of Jennifer Homendy, the Chair of the National Transportation Safety Board, welcome to you and to your husband and your daughter Lexi who I understand are here today. I know Senator Blumenthal is going to give a longer introduction but I would like to say a few words. You first served as a member of the NTSB since August of 2018 and you'll bring 25 years of experience in transportation safety to this chairmanship. Before joining the NTSB, you served as Staff Director for the House Subcommittee on Rails, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and held various other positions so we appreciate your leadership. Obviously, the concerns of this committee on aerospace and aerospace safety remain paramount. This is an issue, like in all areas of automation and human response, whether we're talking about the rail sector or the automobile sector the aviation sector, we believe we need to give specific focus to this and so I look forward to hearing how you hope to use the NTSB to work with us on the legislation that we most recently passed, which called for safety trend reports to make sure that the most urgent safety needs are constantly being addressed.

Next we'll consider the nomination of Karen Hedlund, member of the Surface Transportation Board, welcome to you and to your son Alex who is here today, and your other son who is watching remotely. You spent a career advising federal, state, and local governments on the development and financing of

infrastructure projects across the United States, including rail, transit, highways, airports, water, and energy facilities, and you've served on the Federal Highway Commission as Chief Council, and then at the Federal Railroad Administration as Chief Counsel and Deputy Administrator. So we appreciate your leadership. As member of the Surface Transportation Board, you'll be able to bring considerable experience to resolve disputes on the various infrastructure issues related to the surface transportation bill.

Next we will consider the nomination of Robert Hampshire to be the Assistant Secretary of Research and Technology at the Department of Transportation, welcome to you and to your wife Alexandra, who I understand is joining you today. Mr. Hampshire currently serves as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology Policy at the Department of Transportation. Before joining the department Dr. Hampshire was an associate professor at the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan. His research applies operation research and data science to analyze novel transportation systems which will focus on environmental impacts and access to opportunities. You'll also be the first chief scientist for the Department of Transportation in 40 years. So we'll look forward to that, a science based approach. Leading the department's research and development on technology programs will be very much needed and very important. The department's research efforts are key to advancing innovation and technology developments across the transportation sector, and helping develop a skilled interdisciplinary transportation workforce for the nation. So I look forward to hearing from you.

And finally the nomination of Carol Annie Petsonk to be Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs at the Department of Transportation. We welcome you, your husband John, and your son Nico. Ms. Petsonk currently serves as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs at the Department of Transportation. She has over three decades of experience in international negotiations on aviation, trade, and environment. Her experience brings a significant public and nonprofit sector experience, having served at the Department of Justice, the Office of U.S. Trade Representatives, for more than 25 years.

So, these are critical issues. As we all know, building and reengaging our global partners on international cooperation for aviation safety standards that protect all of the flying public is also a big priority for our committee. So again, thank you to all of you for your willingness to serve and the things you've already been doing, but your willingness to step forward in these new roles. Now I will turn to the ranking member, Senator Wicker, for his statement.