

**Chairman Susan Collins Opening Statement**  
**Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban**  
**Development, and Related Agencies**

**Hearing to Review the FY2020 Budget Request for the U.S. Department of Transportation**

**March 27, 2019**

*(As prepared for delivery)*

The subcommittee will come to order. Today I am pleased to welcome the Secretary of Transportation, Elaine Chao, who will testify on the President's fiscal year 2020 budget request. I am also pleased to be joined today by my friend and our Ranking Member, Senator Jack Reed.

Before we hear from the Secretary on the Administration's budget request, I would first like to thank Members of this subcommittee for working together over the last few months to finish the F.Y. 2019 T-HUD appropriations bill. Thanks to the previous two-year budget agreement, we were able to provide \$87 billion for the Department of Transportation, a historic level of funding and a real down payment on our nation's infrastructure. However, we will soon begin work on the F.Y. 2020 bill without such a budget agreement. If we do not reach an agreement on the discretionary caps for F.Y. 2020, the total funding available for non-defense discretionary programs will fall by \$55 billion. The impact of sequestration level funding would be devastating for our nation's infrastructure and housing programs, as well as to other critical programs.

The Administration's 2020 budget request, unfortunately, does not address this cap. As a result, D.O.T.'s discretionary budget is cut by \$5 billion from the F.Y. 2019 levels. The budget request also fails to address the looming insolvency of the Highway Trust Fund and offers no path forward after the FAST Act expires at the end of F.Y. 2020. It is imperative that the Administration work with the authorizing committees to enact a long-term surface transportation bill that provides realistic funding for the Highway Trust Fund.

I am, however, pleased that the Administration has included funding for several critical infrastructure programs, including \$1 billion for the popular BUILD grant program. Madam Secretary, I know you have personally seen the success of this program in communities, both rural and urban, and I want to thank you for your advocacy for this significant funding. The request also proposes \$2 billion for INFRA grants for both large and small freight projects and \$300 million for a competitive bridge program. This program would reward States that use innovative procurement practices to repair or replace rural bridges that are in poor condition.

The request also includes funding levels consistent with the FAST Act for the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. NHTSA's (nit-suh) preliminary data for motor vehicle traffic fatalities in the first half of 2018 look promising, reporting a three percent decrease compared to the same time period in 2017. Safety should remain the Department's top priority, and we encourage the Department to continue its efforts to further reduce this number in the coming year.

For the Maritime Administration, the budget request includes \$205 million for a different, smaller capacity training ship in contrast to the \$300 million provided for maritime academy ships in each of the last two years. I am deeply disappointed in this proposal, which departs from

the years of planning and design work that MARAD completed on the National Security Multi-Mission Vessel. This ship was designed to provide identical training vessels for the state maritime academies, and building the same vessel for all academies is expected to achieve cost savings. The budget proposal would require MARAD to start from scratch, and would be detrimental to the training needs at the Maine Maritime Academy, which is next in line for a replacement ship.

In aviation, the budget invests in safety and efficiency of our nation's airspace. The request includes \$3.3 billion for facilities and equipment, an increase of \$295 million above the F.Y. 19 enacted level, and the highest level ever proposed by any Administration. Investments made in F&E will help accelerate NextGen programs that are already proving successful by reducing flight times and delays. Innovative programs such as A.D.S.B. will allow aircraft to use precise satellite-based positioning instead of radars, a much needed improvement. In 2020, F.A.A. will deploy DataComm services enabling controllers and pilots to communicate digitally, rather than using radio voice communication.

In addition, the request includes funding for Unmanned Aircraft Systems to ensure the safe integration of drones into the national airspace as well as to meet regulatory mandates. The budget proposes to establish a new Office of Innovation to deal effectively with the surge of new aviation technologies while allowing for continued innovation.

While the F.A.A. continues to maintain the safest air traffic control system in the world, we are all too aware of the recent crash of Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 and Lion Air Flight 610. Both crashes involved Boeing's 737 MAX aircraft, and both crashed just minutes after take-off, in eerily similar circumstances. After seeing the satellite data from the Ethiopian Airlines crash, the F.A.A. decided to ground the 737 MAX aircraft, and the agency is now working with the N.T.S.B. on the crash investigation. We must await the results of the N.T.S.B. investigation prior to reaching conclusions about the cause of these crashes; however, these recent incidents have focused attention on F.A.A.'s aircraft certification process for Boeing's 737 MAX aircraft. I expect many of us have questions for the Secretary on F.A.A.'s relationship with Boeing and the government's role in ensuring the safety of the traveling public. I commend the Secretary for requesting the Inspector General to initiate an audit of F.A.A.'s certification of the 737 MAX aircraft. Senator Reed and I have sent a letter to the I.G. asking that the results of this audit be shared with us.

Madam Secretary, I look forward to hearing from you, and I now turn to Senator Reed for his opening statement.

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