

Hearing Statement  
Subcommittee on Appropriations  
Transportation, Housing and Urban Development  
FY 2020 Budget Request  
Department of Transportation  
Chairman Susan M. Collins  
March 27, 2019  
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The Subcommittee will come to order. Today I am pleased to welcome Transportation Secretary, Elaine Chao, who will testify on the President's fiscal year 2020 budget request for the Department of Transportation and Related Agencies. 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. We actually got our work done on time but unfortunately due to other issues, it was held up. Thanks however 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 any such 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, such as the vital transportation programs that we will be discussing today, 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 for many 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 enacted 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 included funding for several critical infrastructure programs, including \$1 billion for the popular BUILD grants. Madam Secretary, I know that you have personally seen the success of the BUILD program in communities, both urban and rural, 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 preliminary data for motor vehicle traffic fatalities in the first half of 2018 look very promising, with a three percent decrease compared to the same period the year before. Safety

should, and I know will, remain the Department's top priority, and we encourage the Department to continue its efforts to reduce this number further 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 our state maritime academies, and building the same vessel for all academies is expected to achieve cost savings. This budget proposal would require MARAD to start from scratch in designing a brand new ship, and would be detrimental to the training needs at the Maine Maritime Academy, which is next in line for a replacement ship. We followed MARAD's guidelines exactly, and funded New York first, Massachusetts last year, and Maine is scheduled for this year, but with a far smaller, and inferior ship provided in this budget.

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 above the F.Y. 19 enacted level, and the highest ever provided by any Administration. These investments will help accelerate NextGen programs that are already proving successful by reducing flight times and delays. Innovative programs such as the A.D.S.B. will allow aircraft to use precision satellite-based positioning instead of radars, a much needed improvement. In addition, the request includes funding 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 and safety.

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 crashes 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. and the Department decided to ground the 737 MAX aircraft, and the agency is now working closely with the N.T.S.B. on the crash investigation. We must await the results of the investigation prior to reaching conclusions about the causes of these crashes; however, these recent incidents have focused attention on F.A.A.'s aircraft certification process for Boeing's 737 MAX aircraft and on the training of pilots. I expect many of us to 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, again I welcome you here today, I look forward to hearing your testimony, and I now turn to Ranking Member Senator Reed for his opening statement.

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