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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

WEBSITE: <http://commerce.senate.gov>

March 6, 2020

JOHN KEAST, STAFF DIRECTOR
DAVID STRICKLAND, DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

Elaine L. Chao, Secretary
Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

Since COVID-19 was first identified in Wuhan, China last year, the virus has spread to over 50 countries, including the United States, and infected over 100,000 people. This spread has raised understandable concerns by public health officials and the traveling public about measures that can be taken to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 not just through air travel, but through all modes of transportation. Here in the U.S., the outbreak has infected several of my constituents in Washington state with tragic loss of life. Tireless workers in Washington and across the country are treating patients and working to contain the spread of COVID-19, including through quarantines and by closing certain facilities.

To date, however, there has been limited public guidance issued by the DOT, or other Federal health and security agencies, regarding steps transportation carriers or the traveling public should take to address COVID-19. With the constant movement of goods, livestock, and people across our country, the DOT is uniquely positioned to ensure that all modes of transportation are proactively addressing and planning for strategies that will mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

In order to more fully understand the measures DOT is taking in response to COVID-19, and additional Federal steps and resources that may be needed, I request that you provide the following information:

- 1) What guidance, messaging, or information has DOT provided to its employees and contractors regarding precautions DOT has taken in response to COVID-19? Please detail how that information has, or will be, disseminated to DOT employees and contractors, including:
 - a. Any policies guiding the dissemination of such information;
 - b. How and in what manner such information has been disseminated;
 - c. To whom such information has been disseminated; and
 - d. Any planned follow-up.
- 2) Have you implemented guidance from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) or any applicable guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Department of State, or the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety

and Health Administration (OSHA), or any other federal agency for employers to plan and respond to COVID-19? If so, please detail how you have implemented this guidance and whether additional guidance or recommendations would be helpful in mitigating the risk of transmission among DOT employees.

- 3) Does DOT have a pandemic response plan or other policies or protocols in place regarding preparation for, or response to, an outbreak at or near DOT facilities?
 - a. If so, please provide a copy of that plan, policies, or protocols, and indicate whether the plan has been implemented for some or all of DOT's operations.
 - b. Has the CDC provided adequate guidance on this plan or protocol specific to COVID-19? If not, would additional guidance or standardized recommendations from the CDC or other entity on COVID-19 specific policies or practices be helpful?
 - c. If no such plan, policies, or protocols exist, is DOT in the process of developing a pandemic response plan or policies, either generally or specific to COVID-19? If so, when is such plan expected to be completed and implemented?
- 4) Have you taken any steps to limit international or domestic travel for DOT employees?
- 5) Are you currently providing or encouraging COVID-19 screening for DOT employees at any of your facilities or for employees who have travelled to areas where the COVID-19 virus has been identified?
- 6) Please outline any telework or flexible leave policies that you have implemented for DOT employees in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. If existing policies have been enhanced or amended specifically in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, please detail how that information has been communicated to employees and whether those policies are currently being implemented across DOT.
- 7) Has DOT provided any guidance on, or have you identified any rules, regulations, or policies across the transportation industries you oversee, that may require relaxation, exception, or waiver in order to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission? For example, the airline and railroad industries have policies regarding change or cancellation fees that may need to be waived or amended in order to prevent the transmission of a serious communicable disease.
 - a. If you have not provided guidance on such policies, do you plan to do so in the future?
- 8) In his testimony before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation's Subcommittee on Aviation and Space on March 4, 2020, Assistant Secretary Szabat noted that DOT will be coordinating with transit stakeholders as the U.S. Government plans for community transmission of COVID-19 within the United States.
 - a. What information or guidance have you provided to the traveling public, regulated entities, and transit or transportation stakeholders regarding the

transmission of COVID-19 and steps they can take to mitigate the risk of community spread?

- b. Which transit and transportation stakeholders will DOT be communicating with moving forward in planning for community transmission of COVID-19 within the United States?
- c. Will DOT be providing any information or guidance regarding COVID-19 on its website or in any other format to the travelling public or transportation stakeholders?
- d. Would additional guidance or standardized recommendations on COVID-19 specific policies or practices would be helpful from the CDC, OSHA, or other entities?

Thank you in advance for your assistance with this request. I request that you provide the requested information as soon as possible and in no event later than March 13, 2020.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Maria Cantwell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

MARIA CANTWELL
Ranking Member