

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA)

Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation Markup for the Steven Bradbury Nomination

February 27, 2025

Cantwell Opening Remarks

[VIDEO](#) | [AUDIO](#)

Sen. Cantwell: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As you mentioned, we're here today to consider the nomination of Steven Bradbury to be Deputy Secretary of Transportation and the promotion of one Coast Guard officer to be Lieutenant Commander. I support that Coast Guard nomination.

When it comes to Mr. Bradbury, I hope we all understand that we cannot afford a system that fails us in either the roads, or in the skies. It simply does not matter if you're saving dollars, if you're not saving lives. The last thing we need is someone who won't stand up to the industry or [for] aviation safety needs.

What brings us here today, though, is we must ask ourselves what kind of leadership will Mr. Bradbury provide at DOT. In his previous role, he was involved in what I would call common sense requirements that were rolled back in his time period. Fatigue prevention requirements for truck drivers were loosened. A record number of rail safety requirements were waived. And most troubling, a proposed rule on Safety Management Systems for aviation manufacturers such as Boeing was sidelined.

After the 737 Max crashes, the Commerce Committee led an investigation into the causes of the crashes, and we understood that these issues of SMS were very important. Mr. Bradbury impeded this committee's investigation. The committee's final report said [his office] “intentionally withheld relevant information requested by the committee.”

I believe Mr. Chairman, the families of the MAX crashes have expressed their concerns. They specifically voiced concerns about Mr. Bradbury's role in withholding documents related to those crashes, and they voiced concern about the delays in holding Boeing accountable to implementing a robust SMS.

During his testimony, Mr. Bradbury mentioned that maybe one of the issues related to that was that smaller manufacturers didn't want those requirements. But [he] easily could have changed the rule then to say that it just applied to large manufacturers, or could have later, after the Congress passed our law requiring a new SMS. He was still there and could have helped speed up the SMS process before he left.

I do have concerns about this issue related to conflict of interest. Oh, I should just mention Mr. Bradbury was there on the watch, also rolling back an Obama-era rule that said that the

Department of Defense should be required to have ADS-B Out [activated] as a requirement. During the Trump administration, there was an appeal for a waiver, which was granted, to say that they didn't have to turn on ADS-B all the time.

Subsequently, we have found that not only was that just an exemption for some time that the military, then, in a letter to our colleague in the House, said “We 100% never turn it on.” These are the things that get us into trouble when we don't understand the exemptions, when we don't understand the rules, when we don't understand the details of what it takes to do safety and stand up to those who are asking for those exemptions.

I also asked him about the relationship between Elon Musk and the FAA, and just to tell me, as a lawyer, where he would see conflict of interest. I didn't ask him if he saw one today, I asked him where he thought there *could* be a conflict of interest.

I was very disappointed in his answer, because he basically said he didn't see “the potential for a conflict.” I do see potential for conflict, given that SpaceX launch licenses are at issue, and there could be times when Mr. Musk could intervene and demand for launch time. He clearly didn't like it when he was denied that launch time and then demanded that the FAA administrator be fired.

I also believe that in the area of NHTSA, which has initiated a recall investigation of over 2 million Tesla vehicles over concerns about [an] auto pilot feature that failed on the road and ended up in crashes. Tesla said they fixed it with a software update, but NHTSA is still investigating. What if Mr. Musk said, “Let's stop that investigation.”

So I find it perplexing that Mr. Bradbury couldn't come up with a few bright line examples of where somebody could cross the line. So I hope my colleagues will understand that we have lots of work to do on safety. I look forward to the hearing the chairman [has] scheduled on April 2, I believe, with Boeing and the manufacturer from my state, to look at what we can continue to do as a committee to improve safety and work together collectively on this big priority. I urge my colleagues to oppose Mr. Bradbury's nomination, and I thank the Chairman, and I yield back.