

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

Opening Statement at Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation Executive Session

January 27, 2021

Cantwell: Well, Mr. Chairman, usually the rule is when you have the votes, don't talk. I would say, I greatly appreciate the nominee, Pete Buttigieg, being before the committee being marked up today, and the reception from this committee on a bipartisan effort to work on transportation policy issues.

As someone who had served our country, as a United States Navy reservist, including deployment in Afghanistan, he also, as a Rhodes Scholar, showed impressive understanding of the future of our transportation policies and the major changes that they are going through. In a granular level of transportation infrastructure issues, being a mayor in a Midwestern town where you have to stretch every dollar, including public-private partnerships, including--one of those projects was the South Shore Double Track Project whose full funding grant agreement was signed earlier this month.

So I think he understands what all of us have to deal with, with transportation infrastructure. And I appreciate what he had to say about freight, and the movement of freight. I'm interested in his nomination moving quickly through the Senate. Our COVID pandemic continues to impact all sectors of our economy, and particularly transportation. I think the chairman knows how much each COVID package our committee played a major role on those transportation COVID dollars. So I would hope that we would have our Transportation Secretary very soon so we could work on those transportation issues in the next package.

I plan on asking President Biden, and hopefully Secretary Buttigieg, what they are going to do to help prioritize vaccines to those critical transportation workers who are moving food product. We are now seeing international news, national news, and local news about the challenges we are facing with moving food, and I want to make sure that our transportation infrastructure workers are prioritized to get those vaccines, and we can continue to move product through the United States. So thank you, Mr. Chairman, I enthusiastically endorse this nomination and I asked my colleagues to support it as well.