

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION**

Nominations

Wednesday, July 23, 2025, at 10:00 A.M.

DEMOCRATIC QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD

COVER PAGE

Mr. Rutherford

RANKING MEMBER MARIA CANTWELL (D-WA)

Freight investments in the surface transportation reauthorization. Four out of 10 jobs in my state are in freight dependent industries. Freight cannot wait in the Pacific Northwest. Delays cost money for consumers, farmers and manufacturers. That is why I championed historic investments in our nation's freight infrastructure in the bipartisan infrastructure law including:

1. a 78 percent increase for the INFRA freight grant program,
2. a historic \$2.25 billion in port infrastructure investments, and
3. for the first time in a surface transportation reauthorization – freight rail investments through my grade crossing elimination grant program and CRISI.

Question 1: Yes or No: Do you think the next infrastructure law needs to continue funding for the INFRA grant program?

Answer: If confirmed, I would use every resource available to DOT to ensure we can advance the mission of the Freight Office, which will include any funding and programs Congress authorizes in the next Surface Transportation Reauthorization.

Question 2: Yes or No: Do you think the next infrastructure law needs to continue funding for the Port Infrastructure Development Program?

Answer: If confirmed, I would use every resource available to DOT to ensure we can advance the mission of the Freight Office, which will include any funding and programs Congress authorizes in the next Surface Transportation Reauthorization.

Question 3: Yes or No: Do you think the next infrastructure law needs to continue funding for the CRISI Program?

Answer: If confirmed, I would use every resource available to DOT to ensure we can advance the mission of the Freight Office, which will include any funding and programs Congress authorizes in the next Surface Transportation Reauthorization.

Question 4: Yes or No: Do you think the next infrastructure law needs to continue funding for the Railroad Crossing Elimination grant program?

Answer: If confirmed, I would use every resource available to DOT to ensure we can advance the mission of the Freight Office, which will include any funding and programs Congress authorizes in the next Surface Transportation Reauthorization.

Question 5: How can DOT improve multimodal freight planning and coordination between the public and private sectors?

Answer: If confirmed, I will work with state DOTs and engage the freight community-at-large, as appropriate, to ensure the success of the National Freight Strategic Plan.

SENATOR AMY KLOBUCHAR (D-MN)

1. Freight Bottlenecks. Efficient flow of freight across our transit systems is crucial to the competitiveness of our economy. When shippers are delayed by major congestion and outdated infrastructure, products don't arrive on time, businesses suffer, and costs for consumers go up.

If confirmed, how will you work to address freight bottlenecks?

The National Multimodal Freight Network draft process and the National Freight Strategic Plan, informed in part by the review of individual state DOT freight plans, will help to ensure that we drive and align on priorities across the federal, state and local levels.

2. Container Supply Chain. During the pandemic, ocean carriers were unloading containers at American ports but refusing American exports and returning to Asia with empty containers. U.S. exporters saw the price of shipping containers increase four-fold, especially on Asia-Pacific routes. My Ocean Shipping Reform Act with Senator Thune worked to address these supply chain challenges by making it harder for ocean carriers to arbitrarily turn away goods at ports that are ready to be shipped abroad.

If confirmed, how will you work to reduce supply chain disruption and enhance resiliency?

If confirmed, I will use the Freight Logistics Optimization Works (FLOW) program to offer forward-looking supply chain visibility, enabling shippers to make timely decisions about how best to route their freight to destination in response to changes in the operating environment at our nation's ports

SENATOR TAMMY DUCKWORTH (D-IL)

1. GAO released a report this week on air cargo. The report found DOT's Multimodal Freight Office – which is supposed to help reduce freight congestion – hasn't taken action to address challenges facing air cargo.

In fact, it appears the office hasn't even been communicating with air cargo stakeholders or the FAA about infrastructure needs. According to GAO, "Of the 30 stakeholders that responded to our question about coordination with DOT, none said they had communicated with the Multimodal Freight Office about air cargo issues..."

If the office had been paying attention, it would have found, as GAO did, that there are a host of infrastructure problems causing congestion around airports. Poorly configured roadways and a lack of truck staging and parking areas are leading to trucks blocking traffic.

Air cargo is huge for our nation's economy. In 2022, it generated more than \$106 billion in economic output and supported more than 1 million jobs.

Yet, DOT's Multimodal Freight Office appears to be doing nothing to address the critical surface transportation challenges to air cargo operations.

DOT seems more focused on staff cuts than growing our economy and creating jobs.

A. If confirmed, will you oppose staff cuts to the Multimodal Freight Office?

I am not yet at the Department, and therefore, cannot testify to the staffing needs of any part of DOT.

SENATOR BEN RAY LUJÁN (D-NM)

The purpose of the Department of Transportation is to ensure that every form of transportation is safe for Americans.

1. Yes or No: Would you take an action that is in conflict with those goals due to political pressure?

If confirmed, my primary goal would be to make freight transportation as safe and efficient as possible.

2. Yes or No: Would you go against a direct order from the President or his cabinet if you believed it put lives at risk or was illegal?

The President of the United States and his cabinet would never put lives at risk or give illegal orders.

3. Yes or No: Did Joe Biden lawfully win the 2020 presidential election?

Former President Joseph Biden was certified as the winner of the 2020 presidential election and sworn in as the forty-sixth President on January 20, 2021

4.

5. Yes or No: Did Donald Trump lawfully win the 2024 presidential election?

President Trump was certified as the winner of the 2024 presidential election and sworn in as the forty-seventh President on January 20, 2025.

SENATOR JOHN HICKENLOOPER (D-CO)

Small businesses and retailers across the country rely on predictable supply chains for imported goods and services. Imports and key consumer products rely on railways, highways, and runways to deliver consumer products to store shelves or American's front doors. Since January, the President has announced a series of investigations across product sectors (e.g. aircraft parts, pharmaceuticals) while threatening to delay, pause, or issue new tariffs on imported goods from our trading partners.

1. **Mr. Rutherford**, what impact do you believe our tariff policies have had on the multi-modal freight network?

If confirmed, I will work to reduce congestion and increase performance of the multimodal freight network to ensure it continues to support importers, exporters, and domestic shippers. The Office of Multimodal Freight Infrastructure and Policy does not address tariffs.

2. **Mr. Rutherford**, will you commit to working closely with small businesses to navigate any disruptions or bottlenecks in our multi-modal freight network?

If confirmed, I will work with any stakeholders to improve disruptions and bottlenecks in our freight systems.

SENATOR JOHN FETTERMAN (D-PA)

1. Pennsylvania has a vast system of inland waterways. In southwestern Pennsylvania alone, there are 200 miles of commercially navigable waterways, and Pittsburgh is home to one of the busiest inland ports in the nation. Even so, our inland waterways are underutilized. **Mr. Rutherford, what is your plan to incentivize shippers and carriers to increase their use of containers and palletized freight on our nation's inland waterways? Do you see increased reliance of inland waterways as a means to decrease traffic on our roads and highways and address other potential bottlenecks in our supply chains?**

While shifting containerized freight by inland waterways is currently less common, it could provide benefits in specific circumstances. If confirmed, I look forward to exploring opportunities like these to better capitalize on our inland waterways.

2. Pennsylvania's three ports (Erie, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh) move millions of tons in goods each year. These ports are critical to our supply chains and our national security. **If confirmed, how will you prioritize opportunities for growth and infrastructure improvement at ports in Pennsylvania and across the nation?**

If confirmed, I will work to ensure that DOT prioritizes strategic investments in the broader context of changes in multimodal freight market trends to strengthen the economy in Pennsylvania and across the nation.

3. The Port of Erie is a critical shipping hub along the Great Lakes. It's also a driver of jobs and economic opportunity in northwestern Pennsylvania. **In your view, how should shipping and the movement of freight on the Great Lakes factor into our national freight strategy?**

If confirmed, I will work with the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway Administration to promote the use of Great Lakes ports as key contributors to our industrial revitalization.