

Ranking Member Maria Cantwell Opening Statement

Hearing for Transportation Nominees Ryan McCormack to be Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy, Daniel Edwards to be an Assistant Secretary of Transportation for Aviation and International Affairs, and Trent Morse to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority.

Wednesday, November 5, 2025

[[VIDEO](#)]

I want to start with condolences to those impacted by the UPS Flight 2976. My heart goes out to the entire UPS organization and to the loved ones that they have lost and those who were injured yesterday evening. This is a tragic loss for aviation and certainly the community and citizens of Louisville.

I also want to thank the first responders for everything they did last night. And I thank the NTSB for their swift response -- and the FAA -- and look forward to their investigation and [will track] the developments in this situation.

I want to also thank the essential personnel continuing to work during the shutdown. I continue to focus on getting a resolution to this issue.

For our hearing today, as the Chairman mentioned, we have several nominees impacting our transportation infrastructure. Mr. McCormack, Mr. Edwards, Mr. Morse, thank you for being here. It's good to see our colleague, Senator Scott, a former member of the Committee, with us today as well.

Mr. McCormack, you are nominated to serve as the Under Secretary for Transportation, which is the number three position at the DOT. If confirmed, you would oversee policy development across the department, and I expect you to address the administration's competitive grant reevaluation process. We should embrace the same goals of improving transportation infrastructure in this country without delay.

Of significant importance is the I-5 bridge in my state that crosses the Columbia River. I appreciate Secretary Duffy's firm commitment to seeing this project completed and while it is vital to the state of Washington, it is also vital to the national economy. I will ask further questions about this, and questions about the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration and NEPA process.

Mr. Edwards, I believe we need an Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs who will help with the U.S. being a very strong voice at ICAO and champion efforts to raise global standards on aviation. We also need someone who will fight for fair competition in the airline industry that prioritizes U.S. aviation workers and those jobs, and I expect...that we will agree on many of those issues. I hope you will commit to continuous, uninterrupted air service to small and rural communities that is consistent with the 2024 FAA Reauthorization law.

Our final nominee, Trent Morse, is President Trump's pick to serve on the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan [Washington] Airport Authority. We have already heard one discussion from my colleague, but that's literally my airport of choice flying in and out of Washington. So I will have questions for you about the operations of DCA and Dulles airports. Together, these two airports serve more than 53 million people each year, and passenger traffic grew by 5.8 percent last year. And we need to continue to make sure that this capacity [grows] -- I believe that Dulles has to grow more business on an international basis.

I would note that you left the White House recently and have been lobbying for American Airlines and FedEx, and I understand that you informed the Committee yesterday that you will no longer...be lobbying for those companies if you accept this position. I expect...to hold you accountable to those commitments and to avoid conflicts of interest from lobbying the Board or the Board's decision-making process, if confirmed.

And finally, Mr. Chairman, I think we're still waiting to receive complete financial disclosure and ethics papers, so I would hope that we would get all that information from these nominees prior to the final Committee process.

Ranking Member Maria Cantwell Q&A

[\[VIDEO\]](#)

Sen. Cantwell: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. McCormack, in your testimony, you said we needed improved transparency in the grant process. I've been concerned there isn't enough. Will you provide a complete list of roughly 200 grants that are still under review by U.S. DOT?

Mr. McCormack: Thank you for the question, Senator, and I know that I was working with your staff previous to this hearing with a list of withdrawn and terminated grants that we have provided. I know that we are working on what the rest of that is, understanding that it is a deliberative process. But even in the time since the minority staff interview last week where we had around 200 or so, the Department has obligated another 89 of those grants, which we've done the appropriate Congressional notifications to authorizers and appropriators. So we are working our way through that process.

Sen. Cantwell: So you'll still, you'll engage Senators before any kind of cancellation?

Mr. McCormack: We'll follow all the appropriate Congressional notification, Senator.

Sen. Cantwell: The I-5 bridge -- we had a chance to talk about this. Obviously, bridge capacity is important to our region because we move so much freight, but it's also important to the United States of America for our competitiveness. And national business groups like the American Trucking Association [agree]. Will you commit to keep working on this project and the NEPA process to complete it on time?

Mr. McCormack: Yeah, absolutely, Senator. Thank you for that, and we'll continue to work with you and your staff on that specific issue. I understand from both the staff meeting as

well as our meeting yesterday, how important it is to the region. I know it's a significant priority for Secretary Duffy to continue to engage in that regard, and that at Federal Highways as well as FTA, there have been productive conversations.

Sen. Cantwell: Will you keep the Capital Investment Grant Program pipeline until it can be rated by the Federal Transit Administration?

Mr. McCormack: Yeah, I would have to defer and work with the Federal Transit Administration on that specific subject. As it relates to IVR, I've not been involved in my current role, but would expect to take a more direct role if confirmed.

Sen. Cantwell: Okay. Mr. Morse, the MWAA workforce is a big part of the job. [Passenger traffic increased] 5.8 percent increase over the previous...year. MWAA workers struggle with the high cost of living in the greater D.C. area and deserve wage increases and compensation. If confirmed, would you support fair compensation for airport concession and contract workers?

Mr. Morse: Thank you for your question, Senator. I'm very interested on the concession program of keeping costs down for consumers that transit the airport. As you might have experienced when you go in and buy a water bottle for about \$10, it's a high cost, and I just want to ensure that all the concessions continue to keep costs down for consumers that pass through that airport.

Sen. Cantwell: But what about the workers and their compensation?

Mr. Morse: Thank you, Senator, for the question. I want to make sure that they're paid accordingly, but I, at the end of the day, want to make sure that costs remain low for passengers throughout those facilities.

Sen. Cantwell: Will you commit to work with us? There's a specific issue we didn't get to finally address in the in the FAA Bill, and that is the fact that ramp workers -- and there's a number of workers that work at airports -- that kind of fall in between the airlines and the airports and thus don't have any health insurance. Will you work with us to try to help resolve this issue?

Mr. Morse: I will work with the Committee on these matters if they're within the purview of MWAA.

Sen. Cantwell: Okay, thank you. Mr. Edwards, well, you can be an example airport. If you ask me, they are more important than the 1960's people movers. It's more important to have safe and secure workers at the airport, particularly when you want them to clean the planes and you don't want people to be sick.

Mr. Edwards...you and Senator Cruz had a robust discussion. I'm not going to leap into that, you know, I might ask you for the record about what your views on competition really are. We sell airplanes in the Northwest, so we benefit, whether they're bought -- whoever buys them -- we benefit. But...I agree with Senator Cruz, you have to keep this competition, and

you have to keep a robust environment where we are opening up markets and hopefully encouraging more U.S. carriers to go to international destinations.

But I wanted to ask you about ICAO. I know that Secretary Duffy has been pushing back on ICAO as it relates to decarbonization efforts. How are we going to keep the upper hand at ICAO if we are stepping away from ICAO? I mean, if you ask me, the United States needs to be more full-throated in setting the agenda. And by that I mean on safety standards that we believe should be around the world and not shying away and stepping away and let China dominate or let somebody else dominate on that front. How do we how do we solve that problem?

Mr. Edwards: Senator Cantwell, thank you for that question. Thank you for approaching a topic I'm very passionate about. So the ICAO assembly, as you know, occurs every three years. And during my time on the job, I've made two separate visits to Montreal to get a sense of what was going on the ground there. We are 100 percent committed to taking a leadership role in ICAO. We the United States. There's a critical piece related to safety, as you mentioned. There's international competition and any number of topics where absent our presence and our leadership, others will write the playbook. So it's imperative that we have a strong presence there.

Secretary Duffy has authorized me to add two additional people to the staff in Montreal to strengthen DOT's presence and to make sure that our agendas and our positions are widely held. There are any number of international topics that we don't want led by China and Russia. So while we were at ICAO at the most recent assembly, the biggest accomplishment that Secretary Duffy led was the council vote. So of 160 plus nations that voted on who was going to lead ICAO in the Council for the next three years, we came within six votes of Russia making it on that council. So, if you do that math like we're within, you know, six votes of 50 percent of the world thinking that Russia should be leading at ICAO, and it absolutely did not happen due to Secretary Duffy's effort and the efforts...

Sen. Cantwell: I'm glad that you see the urgency of this issue, and that's why I think stepping away and losing the ability to set standards and play a leadership role is so critical. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.