

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

*Full Committee  
Nomination Hearing  
February 20, 2025*

**REPUBLICAN QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD**

*Mr. Steven Bradbury*

**COVER PAGE**

## SENATOR TODD YOUNG (R-IN)

### Autonomous Vehicles

Mr. Bradbury, I've been a proponent of autonomous vehicles and expanding opportunities for testing and deployment. The United States has been the global leader on AVs, but I am concerned that China is catching up and our country will soon be surpassed if we don't put in place pro-AV policies.

1. What are your thoughts on AVs and what opportunities do you see at the Department of Transportation for AV policy?

**Answer: Automated driving technologies, including autonomous vehicle systems, hold great promise to reduce highway deaths and injuries dramatically. I believe the Department of Transportation (DOT) should work to advance regulatory frameworks for the Nation that will help facilitate and accommodate the development, testing, and safe deployment of such innovative technologies and systems. If confirmed, I would plan to assist the Secretary in working toward this goal. If legislation is needed or deemed appropriate, I would expect to support the Secretary in working with Congress to advance federal policy in this important area.**

### Truck Driver Shortage and DRIVE-Safe Act

Mr. Bradbury, the last surface reauthorization bill included a pilot version of my bipartisan *DRIVE-Safe Act*, to establish an apprenticeship program to allow for the legal operation of commercial motor vehicles in interstate commerce by commercial driver's license holders under the age of 21. However, the previous administration added burdensome requirements outside of Congress' intent – further inhibiting our ability to alleviate the truck driver shortage.

2. Will you commit to reviewing the Biden Administration's missteps in implementation and exploring ways to correct them?

**Answer: Yes.**

3. If an administrative fix isn't feasible, will you support my efforts to pass legislation that properly reforms the program?

**Answer: If confirmed, I would expect to assist the Secretary in working with Congress on any such legislation that is deemed necessary, subject to the approval of the President.**

### The Intersection of Technology and Transportation

Mr. Bradbury, leveraging tech and transportation holds promise of many economic and societal benefits as a result of improved safety and overall efficiency. Whether it be connected vehicles,

autonomous vehicles, or next generation aviation – there are endless opportunities that should be prioritized.

4. How are you thinking about the intersection of technology and transportation?

**Answer: Technological innovation holds great promise for enhancing safety across all modes of transportation. I believe that DOT, wherever possible consistent with the law, should employ its authorities, including its regulatory powers, in a manner that promotes safety by preserving incentives for private investment in innovative new transportation technologies.**

5. Do you have any priorities when it comes to tech and transportation?

**Answer: Yes, I do. If confirmed, my priorities would include assisting the Secretary in (1) working with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) (and Congress, if necessary) to upgrade the systems and technology needed to manage air traffic safely and efficiently and to ensure the safety of the National Airspace System (NAS); (2) advancing the regulatory frameworks for automated driving technologies, as discussed in response to Q.1 above; (3) working with the FAA to advance the regulatory framework for commercial drone usage and the approvals needed for the development of safe new advanced air mobility systems; (4) working with the FAA to make further improvements to streamline the process for licensing commercial space launches and reentries, consistent with safety; (5) working with the FAA to develop workable means for safely and efficiently integrating unmanned aircraft systems and advanced air mobility systems into the NAS; (6) working with the FAA to accommodate the advancement of new supersonic aircraft technologies; and (7) generally exercising DOT's regulatory and funding authorities in ways that accommodate the advancement of safety-enhancing technologies across all transportation sectors.**

### **Highway Reauthorization Priorities**

Mr. Bradbury, as you know, Congress will need to reauthorize the federal highway bill by the end of FY2026. I have long heard from stakeholders in Indiana about their preference and support for increasing the percentage of formula grant funding to allow for more equitable distribution of funds across the country.

6. I know that EPW has jurisdiction over this in a surface bill, but would you be open to this sort of change?

**Answer: Yes.**

### **Grade Crossings**

Mr. Bradbury, over 95 percent of rail-related deaths in the United States involve drivers going through a grade crossing or a person walking on or along the tracks. Beyond the safety concerns, grade crossings can cause delays and impact many Americans' daily commutes.

7. If confirmed, would you commit to advocating for robust funding and needed programmatic flexibilities for grade crossing projects in order to meet the demand for these vital safety and highway mobility improvement projects?

**Answer: Yes, if confirmed, I would expect to assist the Secretary in supporting efforts to improve the safety of grade crossings. I agree that we must make it a national priority to reduce grade-crossing accidents significantly, including through appropriate funding and flexibility for innovative local solutions.**

## SENATOR TED BUDD (R-NC)

1. The FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 includes several provisions to address the problem that not all aircraft in the airspace can detect other aircraft in the vicinity. This detection capability is also known as electronic conspicuity. While three provisions (sections 319, 808, and 810) direct the FAA to act, section 906 requires the Comptroller General study to feasibility and cost of various means of electronic conspicuity and report to this Committee within one year – that is in five months from today. Safety experts believe the best way to ensure the safety of the airspace in which various types of aircraft operate is to require all aircraft to be electronically conspicuous to all other aircraft.

Will you prioritize the studies mandated by Congress, inquire as to the status of the GAO's work, and report to this Committee following your confirmation?

**Answer: Yes, if confirmed, I will support the Secretary in responding to this request.**

2. President-elect Trump has commented that “just as America led the automobile revolution in the last century, I want to ensure that America, not China, leads the revolution in air mobility.” What steps will you take as Deputy Secretary of Transportation to follow through on this goal?

**Answer: I agree with the President that it is critical for the U.S. to lead the world in the development and manufacture of advanced air mobility systems and that the U.S. must not be dependent on systems or components from China in this or other areas of transportation technology. To follow through on this imperative, I believe the FAA should have in place a clear, consistent, and streamlined framework for the efficient review and approval of safe new air mobility solutions and should apply its regulatory authorities in a manner that appropriately preserves incentives for American investment in these exciting systems and technologies, consistent with safety. If confirmed as Deputy Secretary, I would expect to work closely with the Secretary and the FAA to realize this goal.**

What do you see as the Department of Transportation's (DOT's) role in ensuring U.S. leadership in the Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) industry?

**Answer: Please see my response to the preceding question.**

How will you work to re-establish the U.S. as the gold-standard in aviation and work with other civil aviation authorities to harmonize and create a global marketplace for U.S. AAM manufacturers?

**Answer: The FAA must reestablish itself as the recognized world leader and standard setter in the safety certification of new aircraft systems. Among other things, FAA leadership enables America to maintain and grow its vital domestic manufacturing base in aviation, an important component of our national economy. If confirmed, I will assist the Secretary in working to ensure that the FAA continues to engage with major foreign certification authorities and other cooperative aviation partners around the world toward the goal of achieving consistent state-of-the-art standards and practices for the development and manufacture of advanced air mobility systems.**

3. Autonomous Vehicles (AVs) and Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) can play a critical role to keep the roads safe. In 2022, there were around 40,000 traffic deaths on the roads. While I strongly support accelerated and scaled deployment of AVs, I am deeply concerned that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) does not have the most efficient and modernized test infrastructure to ensure the safety of these systems, such as through modeling and simulation.

How will you work with the NHTSA Administrator to modernize its test infrastructure to ensure these systems are being scaled in a safe way?

**Answer: Automated driving technologies, including autonomous vehicle systems, hold great promise to reduce highway deaths and injuries dramatically. I believe all components of DOT, including NHTSA, should work to advance regulatory frameworks for the Nation that will help facilitate and accommodate the development, testing, and safe deployment of such innovative technologies and systems. If confirmed, I would plan to assist the Secretary in working toward this goal. If legislation is needed or deemed appropriate, I would expect to support the Secretary in working with Congress to advance federal policy in this important area.**

4. It is well known that there has been a shortage in the air traffic controllers needed to meet the needs of our nation's airspace. Congress responded by providing increased resources to the FAA and last year, passed the FAA reauthorization which increased authorized funding levels and directed maximum controller hiring.

Will you commit to maximum air traffic controller hiring?

**Answer: Yes, if confirmed, I will support the Secretary in working with the FAA to ensure we hire the best and brightest air traffic controller candidates and that we expand the pipeline and training capacity for new air traffic controllers, consistent with the resources provided by Congress.**

Will you commit to keeping this committee apprised of any resource needs to support our traffic system?

**Answer: Yes, if confirmed, I will support the Secretary in keeping this Committee apprised when additional resources may be needed to support and improve the safe operation of our vital air traffic control systems.**

5. With drone delivery operations, the FAA has taken a piecemeal approach to NEPA reviews, conducting environmental reviews on a market by market basis, with only one instance of a state-wide review. The process can take anywhere from 6 to 12, even up to 18 months. From talking to industry experts, it's clear to me that the environmental review process for drone operations moves too slowly and is hindering industry's ability to scale.

Congress addressed this issue in Section 909 of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, which directs the FAA to develop guidance and implementation procedures focused on adoption of a higher-level, programmatic approach to environmental reviews for UAS operations, including consideration of a nationwide approach. Section 909 also directs the FAA to leverage prior environmental reviews to develop a categorical exclusion for certain specified commercial drone operations.

Do you agree that a streamlined, more nationwide or programmatic approach makes sense for these drone operations?

**Answer: Yes.**

As a follow up, given the delays caused by these environmental reviews in holding American companies back from providing benefits to communities across the country, can you commit today that, if confirmed, you will prioritize implementing Section 909 of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 and streamline the environmental review process for this promising technology?

**Answer: Yes.**

6. Two federal agencies (NHTSA and the Environmental Protection Agency) currently regulate vehicle emissions, which means vehicle manufacturers have compliance obligations to two different federal agencies for essentially the same thing. How would you ensure that there is alignment between these regulations and that automakers meeting one emissions regulation would also be complying with the other?

**Answer: Congress granted the Secretary of Transportation the exclusive authority to set fuel economy standards for new motor vehicles sold in the United States—an authority exercised through a delegation to NHTSA. In recent years, The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has established and enforced carbon dioxide emissions limits for new motor vehicles which inevitably carry the potential to supersede or interfere with the fuel economy standards set by NHTSA. Unfortunately, with the**

**approval of EPA, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) has also issued regulations that impose separate fuel economy requirements. I believe it is important to return NHTSA to the lead role in setting national fuel economy standards for new motor vehicles. If confirmed, I would intend to assist the Secretary in ensuring that NHTSA fulfills this role in coordination with EPA to avoid any potential for unnecessary overlap or interference with EPA or CARB restrictions.**

7. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act directed NHTSA and FMCSA to issue a number of rules requiring technologies on new vehicles.

Many of these rules are still yet to be issued. If confirmed, will you work with industry on new technological safety regulations so that they are practical, feasible, and promote innovation?

**Answer: Yes, if confirmed, I would support the Secretary in fulfilling this commitment.**

8. China is currently engaged in a concerted effort to infiltrate the U.S. transportation system from surveillance balloons to drones to intelligent sensors. One such risk comes from Chinese Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) sensors that can create a 3-D model of everything around the sensor and are deployed – often with DOT taxpayer funds – on street corners for “Smart City” applications, at the perimeter fences of secure transportation facilities for breach detection, and inside airports for human traffic flow monitoring.

Chinese LiDAR manufacturers are targeting sales to U.S. Federal, State and local governments for the installation of LiDAR sensors near critical infrastructure. In fact, the largest Chinese LiDAR manufacturer, Hesai, was recently named by the Department of Defense as a Chinese military company operating directly in the United States.

If confirmed, will you immediately ensure that taxpayer funds at the Department of Transportation are not being spent on Chinese LiDAR sensors that create a homeland and national security risk and work with Congress to help pass legislation to ensure that such protections are added to U.S. law?

**Answer: The threat to our national security from Chinese Communist Party-controlled technology is acute, especially when the technology is incorporated into assets used by governmental entities or near critical infrastructure. If confirmed, I will support the Secretary in reviewing all DOT funding programs to ensure that taxpayer funds are not being used to undermine national security. If it is determined that legislation is needed, I would expect to assist the Secretary in working with Congress to achieve this goal.**