

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION:
QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD**

**NOMINATIONS HEARING
JUNE 16, 2020**

**Written Questions Submitted to Joel Szabat, Nominee to be Under Secretary of
Transportation for Policy, Department of Transportation**

Submitted by the Hon. Roy Blunt

Question. Mr. Szabat, I want to bring to your attention a project that I have long championed and a project that is incredibly important to rural communities in Missouri. North Central Missouri is facing a critical water shortage which would have a devastating impact on the lives of families, farmers, and business owners in the region.

The East Locust Creek Watershed project, which has been in the making over the last 20 years, is a joint partnership with federal partners, the North Central Missouri Regional Water Commission (NCRMWC), and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources to establish a multi-purpose reservoir with the primary purpose of providing an abundant source of low-cost and safe water for residents in 10 rural counties in North Central Missouri.

This project is multifaceted and encompasses several agencies at the federal level including the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Rural Development, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Department of Transportation. Last year, the Department of Transportation awarded a \$13.5 million Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant for the East Locust Creek Reservoir Project to relocate roads surrounding the reservoir and install road safety improvements. I understand there are ongoing interagency discussions with DOT regarding the finalization of this BUILD grant. Can I receive a commit from you that, if confirmed, you will work to help expedite the interagency clearance of this critical infrastructure grant and utilize all flexibilities to ensure that this grant gets the necessary work implemented on the ground?

Response: *Yes*

Submitted by the Hon. Shelley Moore Capito

Question. Emerging technologies - such as tunneling, hyperloop, and autonomous vehicles - represent a giant leap forward for the future of transportation in the United States. In January, I commended Secretary Chao and the Department of Transportation (DOT) for establishing the Non-Traditional and Emerging Transportation Technology (NETT) Council. The NETT Council plays a critical role in providing guidance and leadership when resolving regulatory gaps that may impede the deployment of new technology. I believe that it is important to foster a regulatory environment that encourages and promotes new and innovative transportation

technologies. Mr. Szabat, if confirmed, in your role as Under Secretary of Transportation Policy do you commit to the continuing the Non-Traditional and Emerging Transportation Technology (NETT) Council and their work on identifying the resolving regulatory gaps that may impede the deployment of new technology? If confirmed, what steps do you see that are needed at DOT in order to foster an environment that promotes innovative technologies rather than stifling or impeding them?

Response: *Yes, I am committed to the important, continuing work of the NETT Council. One of the most important things we can do as a Department is to continue to listen to stakeholders on how the Department can best serve innovators. To that effect, the Department will establish a framework for innovators to engage with the NETT Council and continue to explore what sorts of resources innovators may find most helpful as they navigate the Department's authorities and regulations.*

Submitted by the Hon. Ron Johnson

Question. Section 514 of the FY 2018 Coast Guard Authorization Act directed the Department of Transportation to establish requirements for a land-based, resilient, and reliable alternative timing system and to provide Congress an implementation plan for such a system. Both efforts were expected to be completed by June of 2019. This date recognized the economic and national security significance of fielding a viable timing signal in the event of a GPS disruption. We are now a year late. Can you commit to providing these deliverables, based on the Department's recent testing and finding, to the committee by July 31, 2020?

Response: *I whole-heartedly agree on the importance of identifying and deploying resilient and reliable back-up position, navigation and timing systems to protect our economic security, as well as transportation safety, from the damage that would occur if GPS were effectively disrupted. It will be my highest priority to move forward with our deliverables. I hesitate to commit to a fixed date only because it is preferable to move forward with a whole-of-government plan, given the many equities that must be protected, rather than a report from a single Department.*