

**Testimony of U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary-Designate Pete Buttigieg
Before
The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation**

Thursday, January 21, 2021

Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Cantwell, Members of the Committee, it's an honor for me to appear before you as the nominee for the United States Secretary of Transportation. I want to first say thank you to my home state senator, Todd Young, for his kind introduction today and for his service to Indiana. I want to thank President Biden for trusting me with this nomination. And I also want to take a moment to introduce my husband, Chasten Buttigieg, who is here with me today.

I'm proud to have him by my side, and I want to thank him for his many sacrifices and his support in making it possible for me to pursue public service.

Today I hope to present to you my goals for the Department of Transportation, to share a little about myself, and of course to hear from you about your priorities and the issues you consider most important to your constituents and to our country.

First and foremost, I want you to know that if confirmed, I will work every day to ensure that the Department meets its mission of ensuring safety - for both travelers and workers - and I will work closely with Congress to do so.

Safety is the foundation of the department's mission, and it takes on new meaning amid this pandemic. We must ensure all of our transportation systems -- from aviation to public transit, to our railways, roads, ports, waterways, and pipelines -- are managed safely during this critical period, as we work to defeat the virus.

We also have a lot of work to do to improve the infrastructure in this country, a mission that will not only keep more people safe, but also grow our economy as we look to the future.

Now is the time, and we have a real chance to deliver for the American people. We need to build our economy back, better than ever, and the Department of Transportation can play a central role in this, by implementing President Biden's infrastructure vision -- creating millions of

good-paying jobs, revitalizing communities that have been left behind, enabling American small businesses, workers, families and farmers to compete and win in the global economy, and tackling the climate crisis.

Infrastructure can be the cornerstone to all of this, and you have my commitment that I will work closely with you to deliver the innovation and growth that America needs in this area.

As a mayor from the industrial midwest, I will bring a bottom-up perspective on transportation programs and funding. If confirmed, I look forward to working with our partners at the state, local, territorial, and tribal levels to find solutions to our infrastructure issues while we also prepare for the future of transportation at a time of great change.

When I took office as the mayor of South Bend--a city that was built by the power of American transportation--we had been hit so hard by economic loss that some in the national press listed us as one of America's "dying cities." As our city fought its way out of the teeth of the Great Recession, infrastructure was at the heart of our vision for a better future.

As Mayor, I worked with public and private partners to launch a "Smart Streets" initiative that brought new life to our urban core and to the historically underserved West Side, revitalizing the downtown, redesigning streets, and spurring hundreds of millions in major economic investment. I worked with regional and state partners--and across the aisle--to support enhancements to our inter-city train system and our now-international airport, and we pioneered public-private partnerships like Commuters Trust, a benefits program to improve the city's transportation experience for workers.

We achieved results by bringing people in, engaging stakeholders and residents, prioritizing limited funds effectively, and unlocking new resources to solve problems. And that's how I will approach the Department of Transportation, if confirmed.

I believe that good transportation policy can play no less a role than making possible the American Dream, getting people and goods to where they need to be, directly and indirectly creating good-paying jobs. But I also recognize that at their worst, misguided policies and missed opportunities in transportation can reinforce racial and economic inequality, by dividing or isolating neighborhoods and undermining government's basic role of empowering Americans to thrive.

So much is at stake today - and so much is possible, as our country works to emerge from the crises of the moment, with bipartisan appetite for a generational opportunity to transform and improve America's infrastructure.

The chance to lead this department at this historic moment is not one that I take lightly, and if confirmed, I promise to bring the same sense of duty and commitment that led me to serve my hometown as mayor and that motivated me to serve our country in the Navy Reserve.

To conclude, Chairman Wicker and Ranking Member Cantwell, I am eager to get to work, and if confirmed I look forward to partnering with this committee and with Congress -- and I look forward to your questions now.

Thank you.