

To: Jackson, Ryan[jackson.ryan@epa.gov]
From: Morning Transportation
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Subject: POLITICO's Morning Transportation, presented by Delta Air Lines: Trump to talk roads, rails, regs — Chao hits some turbulence — Transportation nominees sail on

By Lauren Gardner and Tanya Snyder | 06/09/2017 10:00 AM EDT

With help from Brianna Gurciullo

THE DONALD @ DOT: President Donald Trump heads over to Navy Yard Friday for a roundtable DOT Secretary Elaine Chao is hosting with federal and state DOT officials. It will focus on "roads, rails, and regulatory reform," according to White House spokesperson Sarah Huckabee Sanders. "They'll discuss how the current maze of federal regulation leads to an uncertain and prolonged permitting process," she said Thursday. The state DOT leaders will speak to issues they encounter when getting permits for infrastructure projects, a White House spokesman said. Trump will then deliver remarks in the department's atrium before lawmakers, DOT staff and other transportation-world folks.

New numbers, but what do they mean? While you were watching the James Comey hearing Thursday (admit it, you were) the White House quietly posted a new [infographic](#) on their infrastructure plan. A small new tidbit: One slide breaks down the \$200 billion in federal infrastructure funding as: \$15 billion for "transformative projects," \$100 billion for "local prioritization of infrastructure needs" and \$25 billion for rural infrastructure. The infographic also calls for a million "apprentices" in two years, something the administration has never mentioned before as an element of its infrastructure plan.

'Take off like a rocket ship': Trump hosted eight governors, 10 mayors and a smattering of other local and tribal officials Thursday afternoon at what was called "the White House Infrastructure Summit." Trump promised infrastructure revitalization was "going to take off like a rocket ship," and "together, we're going to rebuild America." On the discussion agenda: his administration's efforts to eliminate regulations and speed up project permitting.

Earlier, in the East Wing ... : Vice President Mike Pence got his turn to preside at lunchtime, promising the assembled local, state and tribal leaders that the administration will be "full partners" in the effort to rebuild the nation's infrastructure. He echoed the administration's new promise to shrink project permitting time from "10 years to two years" and said seeing America take 12th place in the world for infrastructure is "not just unacceptable, that's downright un-American. And it's going to change." He promised to listen to state and local partners, saying that when he was Indiana governor he wanted an administration in Washington that would listen to him, not "lecture" him.

IT'S FRIDAY: Thanks for tuning in to POLITICO's Morning Transportation, your daily tipsheet on all things trains, planes, automobiles and ports. Send us tips, feedback and lyrics to tsnyder@politico.com or [@TSnyderDC](https://twitter.com/TSnyderDC) and lgardner@politico.com or [@Gardner_LM](https://twitter.com/Gardner_LM).

["Up and down the road in our worn down shoes / talking about good things and singing the](#)

blues."

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EASY, BREEZY, BEAUTIFUL: Trump's nominee to be No. 3 at DOT, Derek Kan, sailed through his Senate Commerce Committee nominations hearing. As is typical, senators covered pet issues ranging from safety, funding for transportation infrastructure projects and streamlining permitting to Open Skies, Essential Air Service and new vehicle technology during the 80-minute hearing. Robert Sumwalt, selected for another stint on the NTSB, appeared as well and faced questions about investigations in several states, but also gave his responses without any major snags. MT's prediction: The committee will approve both nominees with few, if any, "no" votes.

SOME TURBULENCE: Meanwhile, the House Transportation Committee's hearing on the FAA reauthorization was a bit bumpier as Chao navigated Democrats' charge that airlines would dominate the board of directors the administration has proposed to govern the formation of a non-profit air traffic control corporation, your MT co-pilot [reports](#). "If there's one thing that I can emerge from this hearing: they do not control the air traffic control system" under the proposal, she said, interrupting a sharp line of questioning by Rep. [Mike Capuano](#) (D-Mass.). "They will not."

Engine roar: But when it came to detailed questions about the policy specifics envisioned by the administration's principles for an overhaul, Chao stumbled at times. Democrats questioned whether the FAA would still retain the ability to intervene on local noise issues if a flight path's volume doesn't exceed the threshold triggering an environmental review; Chao said the nonprofit body wouldn't be subject to the National Environmental Policy Act, but then indicated FAA may still retain some oversight.

Delta, call your office: Chao also added to the intrigue around whether Delta Air Lines' position on an air traffic control overhaul has evolved, given the airline's fuzzy-at-best statements as of late. She told one Democrat who brought up a study the airline released last year claiming that passengers would pay higher costs under the new system that she should check in with the company again, "because it seems as though Delta's position on this is changing." A Delta spokeswoman didn't respond when we asked whether the carrier disputes Chao's characterization, beyond pointing to a previous statement that didn't directly answer the question.

And Graves, too: Rep. [Sam Graves](#) (R-Mo.) didn't ask Chao any questions Thursday but did note that he thought there was "a lot of misunderstanding" around the issue. He later clarified to MT that he meant confusion surrounding the differences between what the White House proposed and what the House will eventually consider, plus statements by Chao contradicting the administration principles outlining their ideal representation on the board. On whether he's any closer to a yes, he said: "It just depends. I've got specific things that I have to have to protect GA and we're definitely talking, and if I can get to those things and be able to protect general aviation - and protect the skies is the biggest thing."

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SENATE THERMOSTAT READ: House Democrats also voiced concerns about essentially giving away the nation's air navigation assets for free (there were a lot of metaphors about giving away homes with paid-off mortgages, yet no Oprah references). But the chairman of the Senate Commerce aviation panel told MT he believes there are bigger issues to consider. "A number of other countries, like Canada, run their system like President Trump is proposing. So I don't think that's particularly troublesome," Sen. [Roy Blunt](#) (R-Mo.) said. "I think there's enough other countries that have done this the same way and enough safeguards you can put in that not-for-profit structure that you wouldn't have to worry about that." Still, he added: "That doesn't mean it would be easy to get this done in the Senate."

To that point: The other half of your MT duo [caught up](#) with Senate Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#) on the issue Thursday, and he said he's "worried" and "concerned" about the proposed changes. "There are all kinds of small airports all over the country that I'm not sure the private sector can handle," he said. Count Sen. [Pat Roberts](#) (R-Kan.) skeptical, as well. "I think it's probably going to split down exactly the way it was before," he said when asked whether Trump's backing could change the political dynamics on the issue.

MINDING THE STORE: Democrats during both the House and Senate FAA hearings this week asked Chao about recent reports (like [one](#) from our colleagues) that the White House has ordered agencies to ignore minority party oversight requests. Chao said Thursday that she always aims to cross the aisle - "That's always been my history" - but said it's the administration's call to make. She did say she has "not personally" been instructed not to respond to Democratic inquiries.

Coast Guard weighs in: The Coast Guard was also asked about the Trump administration's order at a House Transportation subcommittee hearing Wednesday. Vice Admiral Charles Ray, the service's deputy commandant for operations, said he wasn't "familiar with the policy" from the administration, but at the Coast Guard, "we pride ourselves on being responsive" to questions from all lawmakers. "I'm not aware of any way that we separate the questions depending on the origin. If they come from the Congress, we make every attempt to answer it," Ray said.

LOBBYING UPDATE: The U.S. Travel Association has [retained](#) Chris McCannell of the Eris Group to lobby on Open Skies. Recently, U.S. Travel's lobbying on the issue has become the subject of [some controversy](#).

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES: John Drake, a DOT official in the Obama administration, is leaving the American Trucking Associations for a new gig at Amazon starting next week. He'll be senior manager of public policy.

THE AUTOBAHN:

- "Automatic train operation won't return to D.C.-area Metro anytime soon." [The Washington Post](#).

- "First black chief pilot at a major airline retires." [The Associated Press](#).
- "This could be the first airbag of the self-driving car era." [Wired](#).
- "Uber in Talks to Acquire Team of Car-Parking Startup Luxe." [The Wall Street Journal](#).
- "Men on public transportation around the world just won't close their legs." [Newsweek](#).

THE COUNTDOWN: DOT appropriations run out in 114 days. The FAA reauthorization expires in 114 days. Highway and transit policy is up for renewal in 1,210 days.

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