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From: Morning Transportation
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Subject: POLITICO's Morning Transportation: Self-driving car bill zooms through committee — TSA issues warning after Las Vegas shooting — Shuster gets a business aviation ally

By Brianna Gurciullo | 10/05/2017 10:00 AM EDT

With help from Tanya Snyder, Stephanie Beasley and Lauren Gardner

Morning Transportation will not publish on Monday, Oct. 9. Our next Morning Transportation newsletter will publish on Tuesday, Oct. 10.

THE AYES HAVE IT: The Senate Commerce Committee approved Wednesday its self-driving car bill (S. 1885 (115)). And, yes, the bill is just about cars - Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.) withdrew his amendment to include trucks. More than two dozen other amendments were adopted en bloc dealing with everything from data to child safety. Check out the full list here.

What's next? Chairman John Thune (R-S.D.) said the bill "could go standalone" to the floor, but could also hitch a ride on "some fast-moving vehicle at the end of the year that has broad shoulders," if differences with the House bill (H.R. 3388 (115)) can be worked out in advance. "We'll look for any opening and any legislative vehicle that might be out there that would give us an opportunity to advance it," he told reporters after the hearing. "I wouldn't rule any of those things out." Once it hits the floor, expect to see amendments to change everything from the balance of state and federal power to a potential mandate for a manual override in case of a technological malfunction.

Quote(s) du jour: "He said he's gonna shave his beard," Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.) said about bill co-author Gary Peters (D-Mich.) when the committee approved the legislation. "It turned gray during the discussions here," Peters said. Here's a pic of said beard, courtesy of Reuters' David Shepardson.

IT'S THURSDAY: Thanks for tuning in to POLITICO's Morning Transportation, your daily tipsheet on all things trains, planes, automobiles and ports. Send tips, feedback and lyrics to bgurciullo@politico.com or @brigurciullo.

"Sat back with the window down / Eighty an hour and the radio loud / The same songs with the same old rhymes / Tell me to shake it off and swing from the lights."

GET LISTENING: Follow MT's playlist on Spotify. What better way to start your day than with songs (picked by us and readers) that are all about flying, driving, commuting and sailing?

MORE DOGS: The Senate Commerce Committee also on Wednesday approved a TSA reauthorization bill by voice vote, setting a five-year term for the administrator and increasing the use of canine units for passenger screening. In addition, the bill (S. 1872 (115)) encourages more adoption of new technologies and expands the law enforcement reimbursement program, which the Trump administration had proposed eliminating.

And more guns? Some Democrats, including Sen. [Richard Blumenthal](#), objected to a Thune amendment to increase pilot access to firearms training, though the Connecticut senator said he did so "reluctantly" because it was "a lot more reasonable than other proposals that are out there." He said he was worried that the provision would give the administration more discretion to grow the number of pilots who carry guns and lower training requirements. "It could mean more guns on planes," he said.

ICYMI: The committee also approved by voice vote Howard "Skip" Elliott's nomination to be the head of PHMSA. The former CSX Transportation vice president of public safety, health and environment had his [hearing](#) on Sept. 27. Check out his questionnaire [here](#) and his responses to questions for the record from senators following the hearing [here](#).

Cheat sheet: MT just bookmarked this Eno Center for Transportation [page](#) with the statuses of all outstanding DOT noms.

TSA ISSUES WARNING AFTER LAS VEGAS: TSA advised transportation hub operators to begin developing plans with their staff and security personnel at neighboring buildings to protect large crowds from incidents like the Las Vegas shooting, according to a [memo](#) obtained by POLITICO. The agency warned transportation industry officials that subway, rail, bus, cruise and ferry stations might be particularly vulnerable to similar attacks, given their tendency to attract mass gatherings.

SHUSTER GETS A BIZ AV ALLY: Rep. [Bill Shuster](#) (R-Pa.) is touting private airplane company NetJets' backing of his FAA reauthorization as many general aviation groups have urged lawmakers to reject his air traffic control proposal. "Current ATC personnel, while highly professional, face challenges outside their own control, including budget uncertainties and outmoded equipment and systems," NetJets executive Alan Bobo wrote in a [letter](#) to Shuster. "Such systemic challenges ultimately touch all aviation operations within U.S. airspace and impact not only efficiency, but safety as well." Bobo praised Shuster for reworking the board of the nonprofit corporation he has proposed and exempting GA from paying user fees under the bill ([H.R. 2997 \(115\)](#)).

FOR YOUR RADAR: Open Skies will be the focus of an address today by Yousef Al Otaiba, the United Arab Emirates' ambassador to the United States, at a Boeing facility in Charleston, S.C. UAE carriers, including Etihad Airways and Emirates Airline, have put in orders for over 500 planes made by Boeing. Some major U.S. airlines have accused the UAE of flouting its Open Skies agreement with the United States by copiously subsidizing Etihad and Emirates. MT is bracing for press releases from both sides of the dispute today.

WELL, HERE'S WHAT WE THINK: The Trump administration hasn't unveiled an updated list of "principles" for investing in infrastructure, but the New Democrat Coalition is out with their preferences this week, calling for more funding for the Highway Trust Fund and putting money from "deemed repatriation" toward infrastructure. The group of House Dems also back using public-private partnerships "where appropriate" and setting up an infrastructure bank. Their [document](#) says policymakers should zero in on maintenance projects before new

undertakings - and those new ones should "modernize our infrastructure through innovative design and technologies." It also points out that some regulatory streamlining provisions in the FAST Act and MAP-21 haven't gone into effect.

In other ideas: Remember when MT mentioned that the Congressional Progressive Caucus is proposing \$2 trillion in federal funding for infrastructure as a part of its dream budget? Here's how the caucus suggests paying for it, at least in part: by implementing "a \$10.25 per barrel fee on oil paid by oil companies, phased in over five years."

LOWEY CALLS FOR EMERGENCY INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING: The White House is asking Congress for almost \$30 billion for disaster recovery, including \$12.8 billion for FEMA. But New York Rep. Nita Lowey, the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, thinks lawmakers "should add to this request by appropriating funding for flexible Community Development Block Grants; rebuilding coastlines, roads, transit systems, airports, ports, and other infrastructure; small business loans; and repairs to military installations and other federal facilities damaged in the storms." Sarah Ferris has more.

SWIFT MOVES ON MITNICK NOD: The Senate Homeland Security Committee approved John Mitnick's nomination to be DHS general counsel on Wednesday, just one day after holding his hearing. Also approved were measures that would establish new pay standards at TSA and Customs and Border Protection. Specifically, one of the bills (S. 1305 (115)) aims to help CBP maintain a steady workforce by giving the agency the authority to offer retention bonuses. Steph has more details for Pros.

WELCOME TO THE SPACE JAM: The National Space Council, led by Vice President Mike Pence, is having its first meeting today. Jacqueline Klimas reports for Pro Defense that the meeting "will shine the spotlight ... on some of the leading private space companies that are funded by billionaire investors," like SpaceX and Blue Origin. "The agenda suggests that the administration's desire to craft a bold strategy to revitalize the space program will rely significantly on the ideas of the newest and most innovative players in the space sector - and is already wrestling with ways to bridge the divide with traditional government contractors to fuel what [President Donald] Trump has called 'the next great American frontier,'" Jacqueline writes.

BOONIES EXPRESS: The American Public Transportation Association is touting a new report showing that transit ridership rose 8 percent in small towns and rural areas between 2007 and 2015, even as the rural population declined. APTA says seniors, veterans and people with disabilities, who disproportionately reside in rural areas, are a good match for affordable public transportation.

SHIFTING GEARS: Heidi King is now deputy administrator at NHTSA and serving as acting administrator. Her past experience includes stints at GE Capital, the House Energy and Commerce Committee and the Office of Management and Budget. ... Joel Kelsey was promoted from legislative director to chief of staff for Blumenthal. Kelsey was previously a senior policy adviser to Blumenthal, responsible for the Connecticut Democrat's Commerce Committee portfolio. Laurie Rubiner, Blumenthal's last COS, left to be president and CEO of the Alliance for Children's Rights. ... Steve Cernak started Wednesday as chairman of the American

Association of Port Authorities' board. Cernak is the chief executive and port director of Port Everglades in Broward County, Fla.

THE AUTOBAHN:

- "U.K. works backchannels to resolve Bombardier blowup." [POLITICO Europe](#).
- "A weird buyer's market is brewing for hurricane cars." [Bloomberg](#).
- "Poll: Gas tax repeal unpopular" in California. [POLITICO California Playbook](#).
- "Where driverless cars brake for golf carts." [The New York Times](#).
- "Thousands of tales of torment from the nation's worst transit system." [Bloomberg](#).
- "Groups sue FAA to seek air tour plans for national parks." [The Associated Press](#).
- "AFP pressures Trump-state Democrats on tax reform." [POLITICO Pro Campaigns](#).
- "Afghan refugee becomes youngest woman to fly solo around the world." [National Geographic](#).
- "Does Uber lead to less drunk driving? It's complicated." [The Verge](#).

THE COUNTDOWN: DOT appropriations run out in 65 days. The FAA reauthorization expires in 178 days. Highway and transit policy is up for renewal in 1,092 days.

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