

From: Larvo, Jill (OST)
Sent: Wed, 12 Feb 2025 17:18:07 +0000
To: List-OST-B10; List-OST-B60
Subject: FW: DOGE's aviation spin still unclear

- Rep. Rick Larsen (D-Wash.), ranking member of T&I, and 27 of his Democratic colleagues in a Tuesday letter to Duffy called on him to rethink and “rescind” the FHWA’s move last week to suspend the NEVI (Electric Vehicles)
- Sen. Deb Fischer (R-Neb.) plans to reintroduce a bill today that would require electric cars to pay into the Highway Trust Fund (Electric Vehicles)

AASHTO link -[USDOT Secretary Duffy Outlines Highway Bill Priorities](#)

From: POLITICO Pro's Morning Transportation <newsletter@email.politicopro.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 12, 2025 5:46 AM
To: Larvo, Jill (OST) <jill.larvo@dot.gov>
Subject: DOGE's aviation spin still unclear

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Feb 12, 2025

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POLITICOPRO Morning Transportation

BY SAM OGOZALEK CHRIS MARQUETTE AND ORIANA PAWLYK

With help from Josh Siegel and James Bikales

QUICK FIX

— **What will Elon Musk’s cost-cutting crew do with air traffic control?**
Lawmakers remain uncertain — but one senator said DOT’s chief pledged restraint.

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— **A batch of House Democrats urged DOT** to resume an electric vehicle charging program that federal highway officials have mothballed.

— **Sen. Ted Cruz said Congress may scrutinize helicopter routes** near U.S. airports following the recent plane-Black Hawk crash, and he's asked the FAA to assess the issue nationally.

IT'S WEDNESDAY: You're reading Morning Transportation, your Washington policy guide to everything that moves. We're glad you're here. Send tips, feedback and song lyrics to Sam at sogozalek@politico.com, Chris at cmarquette@politico.com and Oriana at opawlyk@politico.com and follow us at [@SamOgozalek](https://twitter.com/SamOgozalek), [@ChrisMarquette](https://twitter.com/ChrisMarquette) and [@Oriana0214](https://twitter.com/Oriana0214).

"I am not your rolling wheels/ I am the highway/ I am not your carpet ride/ I am the sky."

DRIVING THE DAY

IN THE DARK: What the so-called Department of Government Efficiency will do with the nation's air traffic control system remains shrouded in mystery. Sen. [Tammy Duckworth](#) (D-Ill.) on Tuesday said she told DOT Secretary Sean Duffy last week that "you don't want people who don't understand aviation in there." Duffy, she [told Oriana](#), observed that "they're not gonna be touching the ATC system." DOT didn't respond to a request for comment on Duckworth's remarks.

BUT SOMETHING IS AFOOT: Your MT team fanned out across Capitol Hill to question lawmakers about DOGE's goal of making "rapid safety changes" to the system.

— **Asked if he knows what the cost-cutting squad** is going to do, Rep. [Sam Graves](#) (R-Mo.), chair of the House Transportation Committee, told your MT host: "Nope."

— **Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas), chair of the Senate Commerce Committee**, said he's spoken with both Duffy and Elon Musk, DOGE's chief, about the issue. Cruz

told your MT host that, when it comes to the government-slashing group, he assumes they will review the entity of the system — not just one component, like Notice to Airmen alerts.

“UNVETTED, UNTRAINED”: Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C., lawmakers sent a letter Tuesday to Chris Rocheleau, the FAA’s acting administrator, expressing alarm about DOGE. “Musk’s cadre of unvetted, untrained, and unaccountable individuals” may have “the ability to make changes to complicated and sensitive FAA policies at a time when serious and knowledgeable people should be in charge,” the letter reads.

TIPS? Reach out to us via Signal if you know what DOGE is up to at the FAA (or elsewhere at DOT): (607) 386-3174.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

TAKE IT BACK: Rep. Rick Larsen (D-Wash.), ranking member of T&I, and 27 of his Democratic colleagues in a Tuesday letter to Duffy called on him to rethink and “rescind” the FHWA’s move last week to suspend the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure program, commonly known as NEVI. The directive, Larsen and the others wrote, “retroactively” purges a federal highway formula program for which all 50 states have already been given apportionments — and wipes out “years of work” to meet a congressional mandate. The decision “directly contradicts the statute and the federal highway funding process, designed to provide certainty and stability in transportation construction,” the letter reads. (As MT readers will know, NEVI was part of the 2021 infrastructure law.)

— **DOT didn’t respond to a request for comment** on the letter. All nine Democrats on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee also wrote to Duffy on Tuesday, blasting the NEVI move. But EPW Chair Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.) defended it, telling Josh Siegel that the initiative has been “rife with problems” and merits closer examination. “It’s been four years and my understanding is there are 58 stations that have been built,” said Capito, who

voted for the law that created the program. “It’s good to suspend and take a look at it. I don’t think it’s permanent.”

FIRST IN MT: Sen. Deb Fischer (R-Neb.) plans to reintroduce a bill today that would require electric cars to pay into the Highway Trust Fund — a Republican priority. The text can be found here. It would apply to sales after Dec. 31, with a tax of \$1,000 on light-duty EVs (hybrid models are exempt) and a tax of \$550 for battery modules that are over 1,000 pounds.

— **In a statement to POLITICO**, Fischer said that EVs can “weigh up to three times as much as gas-powered cars, creating more wear and tear on our roads and bridges” — and it’s “only fair” that they pay into the HTF. A spokesperson for Fischer said Rep. Dusty Johnson (R-S.D.) is introducing companion legislation in the House.

TAKING AIM AT TAX CREDITS: Sen. Bernie Moreno (R-Ohio) wants to gradually phase out EV tax credits for consumers and next week plans to introduce a bill that would do so. Chris and James Bikales have the details.

— **“We have \$7 billion worth of EVs in dealer inventory right now**, so you can’t pull the band aid off like that,” Moreno said Tuesday.

BUT, BUT, BUT: Rep. Buddy Carter (R-Ga.), a vice chair of the Conservative Climate Caucus who has seen large EV investments in his district, said Tuesday he’d be “surprised” if House Republicans compromised on a phase out of such tax credits. Carter suggested that the party has already coalesced around fully repealing them.

— **“I think they’re gone,” Carter told Josh**. “Republicans are pro-choice in the sense we don’t think the government should be telling us what vehicles we drive.”

AVIATION

MORE THAN JUST REAGAN NATIONAL: Cruz told your MT host Tuesday that following the deadly PSA Airlines-Black Hawk helicopter collision over the

Potomac River, Congress may take a close look at routes that bring helicopters near busy commercial airports across the U.S. “I have asked the FAA to systematically assess all of those routes and make a recommendation as to how we can enhance safety,” Cruz said.

— **Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.)**, Commerce’s ranking member, meanwhile, told Chris that lawmakers are seeking more information about how military helicopter routes are organized by the FAA around Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. “Who oversees that? Who reviews it? How is it done throughout the United States?” Cantwell said.

UPPING AIR TRAFFIC: The FAA announced Tuesday that two runways that had been closed at Reagan National in the wake of the disaster have been reopened, and the agency has increased the airport’s hourly arrival rate to 28 from 26. (The typical maximum rate is 32.) Temporary restrictions on helicopters in the area, with some exceptions, remain in effect, the FAA said.

— **In their Tuesday letter to Rocheleau, the lawmakers** from Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C., requested more information about the crash, which killed 67 people. They also inquired about an email sent to FAA employees last week ordering them not to participate in some advisory committee meetings — a directive the agency later walked back, calling it an “unauthorized communication.” Separately, Duckworth said Tuesday that Duffy told her that the email mixup was a mistake and “nobody’s barred from those meetings.”

TRASH IT: Airlines for America wants the Trump administration to “immediately terminate” a pre-rule, rolled out in the waning days of the Biden administration, that aims to give compensation to airline passengers whose flights are canceled or significantly delayed for something that’s the carrier’s fault.

— **“In an industry that the Biden Administration’s expert report** characterized as ‘highly competitive,’ airlines do not need further incentive to provide quality service,” A4A said in comments posted Tuesday, calling the idea “fundamentally

flawed” and claiming the previous administration did not consider its own cancellation and delay data before inking the proposal.

— **By contrast, groups such as the National Consumers League** said the regulation would generally benefit the flying public, and argued that any compensation should also account for the length of a delay or even the distance of a canceled flight.

URGING VIGILANCE: On the 16th anniversary of Continental Flight 3407 crashing near Buffalo, New York, the families of victims in a statement called on lawmakers, regulators and industry leaders to “uphold their commitment to safety.” “We will honor the legacy of our loved ones by continuing to demand accountability and compliance with the standards we fought so hard to achieve,” the group said in a statement, adding that the recent crash above the Potomac is a “stark reminder that the work is not done.”

MARITIME

MORE TO DO: There are gaps in how the Coast Guard addresses cybersecurity risks in the U.S. maritime transportation sector, the Government Accountability Office found in a report published Tuesday. One key takeaway: the service conducts inspections of vessels and facilities, during which it documents cyber deficiencies — but it can’t “readily access complete information” on those results from its database. The watchdog issued five recommendations, which DHS agreed with.

THE AUTOBAHN

- “Global Air Travel Surges While Switch to Clean Jet Fuel Lags.” Bloomberg.
- “Ford CEO decries cost and chaos of Trump tariffs.” Reuters.
- “China’s car sales post biggest drop in almost a year in January.” Reuters.

- “Elon Musk’s Business Empire Scores Benefits Under Trump Shake-Up.” New York Times.
- “Ford Chief Executive Says Trump Policies May Lead to Layoffs.” New York Times.
- “New York’s business boosters push Trump to keep Manhattan tolls.” POLITICO Pro.
- “Appeals court rejects Trump administration’s emergency bid to resume spending freeze.” POLITICO.
- “Trump’s clash with the courts escalates.” POLITICO.
- “Dark City Roads Deadliest for Pedestrians at Night.” AAA.

ON THE CALENDAR

— 10 a.m. T&I’s highways and transit panel holds a hearing titled “America Builds: A Review of Programs to Address Roadway Safety.” Rayburn 2167.

Know of an event we should have on our calendar? Let MT know at transpocalendar@politicopro.com.

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