

To: Jackson, Ryan[jackson.ryan@epa.gov]
From: Morning Transportation
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Subject: POLITICO's Morning Transportation, presented by Delta Air Lines: A tale of two chambers — Opening the Gate(way) — Laptops welcome

By Tanya Snyder and Lauren Gardner | 07/07/2017 10:00 AM EDT

A TALE OF TWO CHAMBERS: It's no secret that House Transportation Committee Chairman [Bill Shuster](#)'s plan to separate the air traffic control system from the FAA has created deep divisions on Capitol Hill. And Rep. [Sam Graves](#)' (R-Mo.) decision to support the House bill ([H.R. 2997](#)) - after striking a deal with Shuster to eliminate user fees for general aviation and protect small pilots' access to the airspace - has left some daylight between him and the general aviation community of which he's long been member. That could get awkward later this month, when Graves will pilot World War II planes in the massive annual Oshkosh airshow, and this weekend when he presides over an aviation town hall at a fly-in at his home airport in Tarkio, Mo. As Tanya writes, he's likely to hear from groups that feel wounded by his change of heart on the air traffic control overhaul.

Get in formation: GA groups have kicked their organizing up a notch this week, taking advantage of lawmakers' public events in their home districts to mobilize members against the bill. Mark Baker, president and CEO of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, said general aviation users "are not interested in negotiating this at all" and that Graves "was not representing the general aviation community" when he agreed to Shuster's plan. They worry that any plan to include special protections for their community was not drawn with them in mind. "The idea of giving control of this public asset to a board that is largely airline-centric is dangerous," Baker said.

'Fear of the unknown': For his part, Graves has been dismissive of GA's continued concerns, saying opponents are just "afraid of the unknown" and that "we've put in every protection possible" for general aviation.

DON'T YOU FORGET ABOUT ME: Even as the House bill draws the battle lines, the Senate's FAA legislation (S. 1405) is facing its own obstacles after the Commerce Committee adopted an amendment to give the agency leeway to expand the types of training that can be credited toward the federal 1,500-hour requirement for first officers. That mandate was spurred by the 2009 crash of a regional airliner near Buffalo, N.Y., that raised questions about pilots' training. Since then, those smaller airlines and some rural-state officials have argued that the rule has exacerbated a pilot shortage they blame for reducing air service to rural areas.

Room for movement? Senate Commerce Chairman [John Thune](#) (R-S.D.) forced the issue by pushing the amendment's adoption despite Democratic opposition - a major shift from the 2016 FAA debate, when Sen. [Mike Rounds](#) (R-S.D.) was the only lawmaker to openly advocate for an amendment related to pilot training during floor debate. At that time, Congress decided to call for a study of the issue instead, and the results were ultimately favorable to the regionals. But while Thune has indicated he's willing to compromise as long as lawmakers can assuage concerns about the pilot pipeline, it's unclear whether lawmakers aligned with the families of

those killed in the 2009 Colgan Air crash can agree to anything that changes the status quo, Lauren writes for Pros.

Real talk: The New York delegation in both chambers has strongly opposed easing the 1,500-hour mandate, and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) has promised to block the bill if there's no deal to his liking. "I'll continue to do everything I can to ensure that any effort to water down these rules never becomes law," he said through a spokesman after the Commerce markup. That unresolved issue, coupled with the dwindling number of legislative days, means getting long-term FAA authorization bills through both chambers before the August recess - and navigating a conference committee before the agency's authority expires Sept. 30 - will be no small feat.

IT'S FRIDAY: Thanks for tuning in to POLITICO's Morning Transportation, your daily tipsheet on all things trains, planes, automobiles and ports. Starting next week, Lauren will be driving the MT-mobile with transportation security reporter-extraordinaire Stephanie Beasley, so send your tips, feedback and lyrics to lgardner@politico.com or [@Gardner_LM](https://twitter.com/Gardner_LM) and sbeasley@politico.com or [@Steph_Beasley](https://twitter.com/Steph_Beasley).

"Bye, bye Miss American Pie / Drove my Chevy to the levee but the levee was dry / And them good ole boys were drinking whiskey and rye / Singin' this'll be the day that I die / This'll be the day that I die"

Want to keep up with MT's song picks? Our Spotify playlist has over 100 followers - you can get listening, too!

THIS IS THE BEST HOLIDAY WEEK EVER: Your MT team apologizes for failing Thursday to properly commemorate National Air Traffic Control Day, which we did not know existed until President Donald Trump sent out a statement thanking "the hard working men and women of the Federal Aviation Administration," which his administration hopes will soon be the hard working men and women of a private nonprofit entity. In his missive, Trump touted "his" (or really, Shuster's) plan to "modernize" and "transform" the system. The U.S. Bureau of Air Commerce established the air traffic control system 81 years ago Thursday, and Ronald Reagan made it a holiday in 1986 (five years after he fired all the air traffic controllers).

OPENING THE GATE(WAY): The federal government's latest estimate for a new Hudson River rail tunnel (plus repairs to the existing infrastructure) is nearly \$13 billion, according to a draft environmental impact statement released Thursday. The higher cost (previous estimates put the effort in the \$8 billion to \$10 billion range) comes as Trump's DOT has tried to distance itself from the Obama administration's commitment to split the cost of the multibillion-dollar project with New York and New Jersey, most recently leaving the Gateway project's board of directors.

Definitely, maybe: "It will be the responsibility of the project sponsors to identify their funding sources and plan," DOT said in a news release. "The department notes that all projects that apply for federal funding must meet the appropriate criteria and that all projects will be individually evaluated on their merits, without prejudice against or partiality in favor of particular projects."

Mark your calendars: Page 3 of this handy [fact sheet](#) provides a project timeline that estimates the new tunnel could be completed by spring 2026. That would then allow for work to begin on rehabbing the existing tunnel, which would take another four years.

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LAPTOPS WELCOME: It's official: Qatar Airways [confirmed](#) rumors Thursday that DHS will allow passengers on its U.S.-bound flights from Hamad International Airport in Doha to carry personal electronic items on board after it implemented security enhancements.

Oh and also: In other Qatar Airways news, the airline [said](#) Thursday it would move ahead with plans to build a stake of up to 4.75 percent in American Airlines, despite the "categorical" opposition of American's management. Qatar Airways had previously indicated interest in buying up to 10 percent of the carrier's shares, but said it would not exceed 4.75 percent without the approval of American's board.

PRIVATE PILOT FOR AMTRAK FINALIZED: FRA will publish a [final rule](#) today outlining how private companies can apply for an opportunity to provide passenger rail service for existing Amtrak long-distance routes, so long as they can do it for less money than the feds currently have to pay for those services. The program, created by the FAST Act, allows the experiment for up to three routes for four-year periods (that the secretary can re-up for another four years), but which ones the third-party operators might try to tackle are still TBD.

GET IT TOGETHER, STATES: FHWA's inspector general's office is looking into the agency's oversight of state DOT cost estimates for projects that receive federal funding. "[U]nderestimating a project's costs could lead to delays in delivering a project because additional funding will have to be arranged," the IG said in the [announcement](#) of the audit Thursday. "Conversely, overestimating a project's cost causes inefficient use of funds that could be used for other projects."

SLICE OF PI: From our friends at [POLITICO Influence](#) : "Nearly every member of the Illinois congressional delegation sent a letter last week to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao and Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross urging them to crack down on three Gulf airlines for violating Open Skies agreements. ... If the letter sounds like it could have been written by a United lobbyist, that's because it was. A draft copy of the letter obtained by POLITICO shows Adam Hepburn, a United lobbyist, as the author. The draft copy is almost identical to the final letter. Isaac Sancken, a spokesman for Rep. [Dan Lipinski](#) (D-Ill.), who took the lead in assembling support for the letter, confirmed that United wrote the letter and that American and Delta were involved as well."

SHIFTING GEARS: Curtis Tate on July 24 is joining the North Jersey Media Group to report on New Jersey Transit and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey for The Record newspaper. He previously covered Kentucky and transportation at McClatchy Newspapers in

D.C.

THE AUTOBAHN:

- "New Jersey Transit Train Derails at Penn Station in New York." [The New York Times](#).
- "Lac-Megantic residents marking 4th anniversary of rail tragedy." [CTV](#).
- "Three injured on Delta flight after passenger tries to enter cockpit." [CNN](#).
- "Investigation finds chaotic evacuation from fiery American flight." [USA Today](#).
- "Millions Meant for Rail Tunnel Subsidize Ferry Rides for a Few." [The New York Times](#).
- "New Amtrak CEO has Texas ties, but can he save state's Eagle route?" [Fort Worth Star-Telegram](#).
- DOT awards \$230 million in grants to 104 airports. [FAA](#).

THE COUNTDOWN: DOT appropriations run out in 86 days. The FAA reauthorization expires in 86 days. Highway and transit policy is up for renewal in 1,182 days.

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