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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

WEBSITE: <http://commerce.senate.gov>

JOHN KEAST, STAFF DIRECTOR
DAVID STRICKLAND, DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

March 6, 2020

Hon. Ann D. Begeman
Chairman
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423

Dear Chairman Begeman:

Since COVID-19 was first identified in Wuhan, China last year, the virus has spread to over 50 countries, including the United States, and infected over 100,000 people. This spread has raised understandable concerns by public health officials and the public about measures that can be taken to prevent the further spread of COVID-19. Here in the U.S., the outbreak has infected several of my constituents in Washington state with tragic loss of life. Tireless workers in Washington and across the country are treating patients and working to contain the spread of COVID-19, including through quarantines and by closing certain facilities.

In order to more fully understand the measures the Surface Transportation Board (STB) is taking in response to COVID-19, and additional Federal steps and resources that may be needed, I request that you provide the following information:

- 1) What guidance, messaging, or information has the STB provided to its employees and contractors regarding precautions STB has taken in response to COVID-19? Please detail how that information has, or will be, disseminated to STB employees and contractors, including:
 - a. Any policies guiding the dissemination of such information;
 - b. How and in what manner such information has been disseminated;
 - c. To whom such information has been disseminated; and
 - d. Any planned follow-up.
- 2) Have you implemented guidance from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), or any applicable guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Department of State, or the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), or any other federal agency for employers to plan and respond to COVID-19? If so, please detail how you have implemented this guidance and whether additional guidance or recommendations would be helpful in mitigating the risk of transmission among STB employees.

- a. Would additional guidance or standardized recommendations on COVID-19 specific policies or practices would be helpful from the OMB, CDC, OSHA, or other entities?
- 3) Does the STB have a pandemic response plan or other policies or protocols in place regarding preparation for, or response to, an outbreak at or near STB facilities?
 - a. If so, please provide a copy of that plan, policies, or protocols, and indicate whether the plan has been implemented for some or all of the STB's operations.
 - b. Has the CDC provided adequate guidance on this plan or protocol specific to COVID-19? If not, would additional guidance or standardized recommendations from the CDC or other entity on COVID-19 specific policies or practices be helpful?
 - c. If no such plan, policies, or protocols exist, is the STB in the process of developing a pandemic response plan or policies, either generally or specific to COVID-19? If so, when is such plan expected to be completed and implemented?
- 4) Have you taken any steps to limit international or domestic travel for STB employees?
- 5) Are you currently providing or encouraging COVID-19 screening for STB employees at any of your facilities or for employees who have travelled to areas where the COVID-19 virus has been identified?
- 6) Please outline any telework or flexible leave policies that you have implemented for STB employees in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. If existing policies have been enhanced or amended specifically in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, please detail how that information has been communicated to employees and whether those policies are currently being implemented across STB.
- 7) Has the STB provided any guidance on, or have you identified any rules, regulations, or policies across the transportation industries you oversee, that may require relaxation, exception, or waiver in order to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission? For example, the airline and railroad industries have policies regarding change or cancellation fees that may need to be waived or amended in order to prevent the transmission of a serious communicable disease.
 - a. If you have not provided guidance on such policies, do you plan to do so in the future?
 - b. Would additional guidance or standardized recommendations on COVID-19 specific policies or practices would be helpful from STB?

Thank you in advance for your assistance with this request. I request that you provide the requested information as soon as possible and in no event later than March 13, 2020.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Maria Cantwell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

MARIA CANTWELL
Ranking Member