



To: Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao  
From: Representative Crisanta Duran, Colorado  
CC: Senator Michael Bennet, Senator Cory Gardner  
Subject: Transportation Safety

Dear Secretary of Transportation Chao,

The Department of Transportation's most important responsibility is to ensure the safety and security of America's roads, bridges, railways and other modes of transportation. In this respect, your Department has work to do to fulfill its most fundamental obligations the American people. As [Secretary of Transportation](#) for [America's Cabinet](#) – a 'shadow cabinet' of young elected officials from across the country who came together to offer an alternative vision for the nation – I call on you to fulfill the Trump Administration's promise to put Americans to work rebuilding our infrastructure to ensure the safety of America's transportation systems.

In the past three months, we have seen [four fatal crashes](#) involving Amtrak alone. In Washington state, three died when a train failed to brake in time and derailed, hanging over a busy interstate road. In North Carolina, a couple died when a train collided with their SUV. In Virginia, a train carrying Republican lawmakers to a congressional retreat struck a garbage truck, killing at least one. And just this week, an incident in South Carolina left two dead when an Amtrak train collided with a stationary train car. We mourn these senseless losses.

These incidents, and the deadly frequency with which they are occurring, are an unacceptable failure on the part of the Department of Transportation to protect the safety and security of riders nationwide. Americans deserve better.

America's Cabinet has a different vision for America's transportation systems, one in which we protect riders, create jobs and build and maintain state-of-the-art transportation systems that safely and effectively move Americans where they need to go. Monday, Feb. 5<sup>th</sup> was [Transit Equity Day](#), a collaborative effort to advance sustainable and equitable transportation infrastructure. As Secretary of Transportation on America's Cabinet, I urge you to do just that.

According to the [American Society of Civil Engineers](#), American infrastructure will need more than \$3.6 trillion in investment by 2020 in order to serve a growing population and keep systems up to date, less than half of what the Trump Administration is pledging. This includes [positive train control](#) (PTC) technology, which can automatically slow down a speeding train and which may have saved lives in the four recent Amtrak collisions.

I propose to invest in rebuilding our decaying infrastructure. We can get America back on track by hiring the best-trained, skilled trades workers alongside a new generation of service recruits. By relying on the best apprenticeship programs coming out of America's unions and linking those career building programs to a next generation of national service recruits, we could



rebuild our infrastructure, rebuild our fraying national civic culture and build pathways to employment for so many.

The Department of Transportation isn't simply responsible for building roads and making sure trains run on time. More fundamentally, it's the Department's responsibility to ensure that Americans get to where they're going safely and securely, a responsibility that Secretary Chao has failed to uphold in recent months. As Secretary of Transportation for America's Cabinet, I propose a new direction for America's transportation policy, one that includes expanded investment, job creation, education and training programs. Secretary Chao, it's time to get back on track.

Sincerely,

Crisanta Duran  
Colorado Speaker of the House of Representatives  
Secretary of Transportation, America's Cabinet