



Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

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February 25, 2021

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Congratulations again on your new position. We look forward to working with you on the many transportation issues facing our nation.

We are writing today to bring to your attention to an urgent matter that has gone unattended to by the Department of Transportation (DOT) for several years and requires prompt action. It is related to the deployment of a much needed and long overdue backup timing capability for GPS. Specifically, we request the immediate implementation of the 2018 National Timing Reliance and Security Act (NTRSA) by DOT.

GPS is a critical system which provides position, navigation, and timing (PNT) services to nearly every infrastructure sector and citizen of our country, yet it has no resilient, independent backup. This vulnerability was first detailed by DOT in a 2001 report recommending backup capabilities be deployed to address the issue. In 2014 the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) defined it as “a single point of failure” for critical infrastructure. Since 2001, there have been over 18 studies and recommendations by the Federal Government calling for a land-based, wireless nationwide backup system.

In 2015, after more than 15 years of studies and recommendations by the Federal Government, the Obama Administration’s PNT Executive Committee, chaired by the Deputy Secretaries of Transportation and Defense, sent the attached letter to Congress. In it they acknowledged this significant vulnerability and committed to a two-fold strategy. First, the deployment of a land-based eLoran timing system to address this issue immediately, and second, a broader approach to cover for all PNT vulnerabilities. This well-reasoned approach gave Congress encouragement that this national security problem would finally be addressed.

However, in 2018, after no additional action was taken, Congress took responsibility to codify the commitments outlined in the 2015 letter, and on a nearly unanimous bipartisan basis in both Houses, passed the NTRSA in order to implement the land-based timing back up system.

The legislation and subsequent law stated that the backup would be up and running by December 2020. Unfortunately, DOT has yet to issue the Request for Proposal (RFP) and is now over two years behind in deploying this capability. To give it a boost, in the recently passed *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021* (P.L. 116-260) Congress provided funding and report language instructing DOT to hire six new staff positions for this initiative in an effort to finally get it moving.

As the national security of the country depends on deploying this capability, we are very concerned with DOT's failure to execute. As you now take over leadership of the DOT, we request that you make the implementation of the NTRSA an immediate priority of your administration.

We look forward to working with you and your team on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Peter A. DeFazio
Chair



Salud Carbajal
Chair
Subcommittee on Coast Guard
and Maritime Transportation



John Garamendi
Member of Congress