National Transportation Safety Board

Office of the Chairwoman

Washington, DC 20594

October 19, 2026

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ted Cruz
Chairman
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tim Scott
Chairman
Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
Ranking Member
Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

I write to express our deepest gratitude for your leadership and steadfast support of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and its critical safety mission. Though we are operating under a Continuing Resolution through December 11, 2026, and I do not want to presume what our full funding will be for Fiscal Year 2027, it is important to take a moment and reflect on our myriad accomplishments, all of which were achievable because of your historic investment in the NTSB.

That investment is not a one-way street. I view every dollar entrusted to this agency as a commitment that carries an obligation in return: to conduct thorough, fact-based, objective investigations of transportation accidents and incidents, deliver timely investigation reports, and issue safety recommendations that will reduce risk. At the same time, we have delivered on President Trump's directive to restore performance and accountability of the federal workforce, a workforce that is entrusted to shape and implement actions that have a significant impact on all Americans, eliminating inefficiency, maximizing productivity and cost-savings, and advancing the needs, policies, and goals of the United States.

The return on that investment is measured not only in investigations completed, but in lives saved, injuries prevented, and families spared the devastation of a transportation tragedy. I am exceptionally proud of the NTSB's workforce and all we have accomplished as a team. A few highlights:

<u>Investigative Excellence</u>

- Led Timely Investigation into the Deadliest U.S. Commercial Aviation Tragedy in a Generation. We closed our timely and thorough investigation within one year of the January 29, 2025, midair collision at Ronald Reagan National Airport (DCA), which claimed the lives of all 67 people on board both aircraft. We are now hard at work to ensure the safety recommendations we issued in that investigation are fully implemented.

- Conducted High-Profile Investigations into Landmark Transportation Disasters. These included the train derailment and subsequent hazardous materials release in East Palestine, Ohio; the collapse of Fern Hollow Bridge in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; contact of the containership Dali with Baltimore's Francis Scott Key Bridge and subsequent bridge collapse, resulting in nationwide safety recommendations to better protect bridges from catastrophic vessel collisions; the in-flight separation of the left mid exit door plug on Alaska Airlines Flight 1282, which identified critical manufacturing and quality-control failures and advanced reforms to prevent similar accidents; and numerous near misses including the January 13, 2023, near collision at John F. Kennedy International Airport involving American Airlines flight 106 and Delta Air Lines flight 1943; and the February 4,

2023, runway incursion at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport involving Southwest Airlines flight 708 and Federal Express flight 1432. The airplanes were separated at their closest point by just 150 to 170 feet. We are currently leading the investigations into 1,210 transportation accidents and incidents, including the crash during takeoff of UPS flight 2976 and leading the U.S. participation under Annex 13 of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in a myriad of foreign investigations, including Air India flight 171 and flydubai flight FZ1073.

- Eliminated the Backlog of Investigative Reports: The agency cleared the backlog of investigative reports over two years old, from a high of over 400 when I took over as Chairwoman to zero for the surface modes and 36 for aviation at the end of Fiscal Year 2026 (previously zero). The majority of those 36 cases are attributable to vacancies in our Medical Officer roles, for which recruitment at the federal pay scale has been extremely challenging. Once we can consistently sustain completing investigations in less than 24 months, we will move forward with our next goal of an 18-month maximum.

- Improved Investigation Timeliness: Through rigorous process improvements and a new tracking system, we have reduced the number of open investigations by 32%, from 1,792 at the end of Fiscal Year 2021 to 1,217 at the end of Fiscal Year 2026. Further, we reduced the average age of open investigations by 30%, down from 405 days in 2022 to 282 days today.

<u>Effectiveness and Efficiency</u>

- Eliminated the Backlog in the Office of Administrative Law Judges: After fully staffing the NTSB's Office of Administrative Law Judges, we cleared a two-year backlog of approximately 300 filings and over 100 matters. The office has also instituted a 30-day processing deadline for <u>all</u> cases.

- Cleared a 10-Year Evidence Backlog: We eliminated a decade-long backlog of evidence and implemented a cloud-based platform to centralize the tracking and management of physical and digital evidence—from collection through disposal or return to its owner. By replacing manual recordkeeping with electronic workflows, we improved efficiency and accuracy.

- Established and Modernized the NTSB Drone Program: Under my tenure the agency established and modernized its formal uncrewed aerial systems (UAS) or secure drone program from an initial footprint of 5 aircraft and 4 crew members to 8 aircraft supported by 17 staff. To support our investigative work, drones are now deployed across aviation, marine, rail, and highway accident sites for aerial photography, videography, site mapping, and photogrammetry.

- Established a New Process for and Developed the Agency's Fiscal Year 2026-Fiscal Year 2030 Strategic Plan: The plan was developed with significant stakeholder involvement, from NTSB career leadership, rank-and-file, Board Members, and the public. It maps out the agency's new 5-year strategy for mission and operational advancement, (1) Impact; (2) Efficiency; and (3) Resilience.

- Consolidated Agency System Security Plans: In alignment with Executive Order 14222, "Implementing the President's 'Department of Government Efficiency' Cost Efficiency Initiative," the agency consolidated seven System Security Plans, which are required under the Federal Information Security Modernization Act (FISMA), to two. This effort reduced documentation overhead, eliminated duplicative controls, and accelerates audit preparation without compromising security. As a result, we earned an "Optimized" cybersecurity maturity rating for Fiscal Year 2025, the highest possible, demonstrating our resilience against emerging threats.

- Automated Processes: We automated the form used by pilots to report civil and public aircraft accidents and incidents to the NTSB: Form 6120, Pilot Operator Aircraft Accident/Incident Report. The effort saves the agency $20,000 annually by reducing by 50% the number of man hours required to manually input data.

Select Monetary Wins

- Saved $1,295,800 on our Fiscal Year 2025 IT Services Contract by reducing the scope of services and renegotiating labor rates.

- Saved $395,871 annually by terminating eight contracts for services ranging from virtual fax services to the Excellence in Government Fellows program.

- Saved approximately $92,000 annually (about $460,000 over five years) by decommissioning a commercial data center without disrupting operations. The effort also improves system reliability and performance while strengthening redundancy and continuity of operations.

- Saved $400,000 over two years by migrating our file sharing and collaboration tools while enhancing mobile access, streamlining workflows, and strengthening data governance.

Technology

- Improved Timely Access to Transportation Safety Information: The agency launched dashboards for pending publications on our website, automating notifications to investigation parties and international representatives, and expanding tracking and analysis of safety recommendation implementation.

- Implemented a Digital Risk-Assessment Tool: The tool helps investigators identify hazards, share mitigation strategies, and address equipment needs real-time for all potentially hazardous investigative activities.

- Leveraged Super Intelligence to Help Identify Unreported Accidents. This is particularly critical for highway accidents that are not reported to the NTSB.

- Informed Decision-making with Hard Data: We developed and implemented our first-ever agency-wide data program, which is led by our first-ever Chief Data Officer and first-ever Chief Data Scientist. These leaders provide key insights that inform our data-driven decision-making and allows agency-wide efforts to measure and improve how we carry out mission-critical functions.

- Modernized our IT Systems: NTSB received $16.2 million through the Technology Modernization Fund to improve how we collect, manage, and share investigation information, including reports, data, and dockets. The funding supports an end-to-end system designed to streamline the investigation and report process and make NTSB information easier for employees and the public to access.

- Implemented Data Dashboards: When I became Chairwoman, agency staff had no way to determine the number of employees on board on a given day; the best data they had was the number of paychecks sent out in the previous pay period. I made it clear on day one that was unacceptable. Today, we have dashboards that display real time statistics about not just our headcount but mission workload, team structure, budget management, report timeliness, mission launches, recommendations status, charge card usage and timely payment, and hiring actions. The dashboards have allowed the agency to monitor and track performance and make more informed, data-driven decisions.

- Developed and Implemented Two Executive Order-Mandated "Centralized Technological Systems." The agency used existing IT platforms, the Contract Payment Justification System and the Non-Essential Travel Approval System, and established policies, reporting mandates, and communications to transparently roll out the new systems to the workforce, on-time, while ensuring my approval for all expenditures.

- Were Early Adopters of Super Intelligence (SI) Tools to Maximize Efficiency and Reduce Cost: The agency signed a Memorandum of Understanding to access USAi, the federal government's secure SI platform. In our investigation of the May 2025 collision of a Mexican Navy tall ship with the Brooklyn Bridge, NTSB investigators used the platform to translate mostly handwritten Spanish-language vessel logs and maintenance records for an initial review. This enabled investigators to assess the records without first commissioning a full translation,

which the State Department estimated would cost $184,000 and take 250 working days.

- Acquired a Super Intelligence (SI)-Powered Accident-Detection and Situation Awareness Platform. It analyzes large volumes of publicly available information and other data sources to identify significant events, emergencies, transportation accidents, and other developing situations to improve agency awareness in real time. The system provides rapid alerts that supports launch decision-making and accelerates agency operational investigative responses to accident sites.

- Investing in Leading-Edge Laboratory Equipment. Integral to our agency's reputation as an internationally respected leader in transportation accident forensics are our specialized laboratories, where we have made major recent capital investments. In Fiscal Years 2025 and 2026, we invested $1.25M in lab equipment and $2M in software upgrades used in both the NTSB Materials Laboratory – where investigators determine whether the performance of materials and structures is related to the cause or severity of an accident – and the Vehicle Recorder Laboratory, where investigators extract, format, and analyze data from aircraft flight data recorders (FDR) and cockpit voice recorders (CVR), and from recorders installed in locomotives, large ships, and some highway vehicles.

<u>Collaboration</u>

- Finalized a Memorandum of Agreement with the Federal Aviation Administration on Commercial Space Investigations. Negotiations had stalled since 2004.

- Implemented 25-Hour Cockpit Voice Recorders (CVRs): We appreciate Congress's safety leadership in mandating the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to implement many of our most critical recommendations in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, such as our longstanding recommendation to extend cockpit voice recorder duration to 25 hours on new and existing aircraft. In February 2026, the FAA issued a final rule requiring newly manufactured aircraft with a CVR to retain the last 25 hours of audio. This change is significant for future aircraft but does not apply to the thousands of aircraft already in service, which will continue under the two-hour standard unless retrofitted.

- Advocated for Federal and State Legislation, including Aviation Safety Legislation: Beyond completing a timely and thorough investigation into the DCA tragedy in one year, our world-renowned experts have provided extensive technical assistance to both chambers of Congress as lawmakers draft legislation in response to the NTSB investigation: the Airspace Location and Enhanced Risk Transparency (ALERT) Act of 2026 and the Rotor Operations Transparency and Oversight Reform (ROTOR) Act. Staff's invaluable insights will ensure the lessons

learned from this tragedy translate into lasting statutory safeguards that protect the traveling public for generations to come – but nothing changes until it becomes law. Never before has Congress advanced all of NTSB's safety recommendations following a tragedy. We must not miss this singular opportunity. Every day that passes without implementation of all 50 NTSB recommendations represents a continued and unacceptable risk to public safety.

- Entered into First-Ever Agreement with the U.S. Department of State to evacuate NTSB personnel working overseas due to injuries or political turmoil.

- Partnered with Congress to Achieve the Agency's First Major Funding Increase in Decades to Hire Investigators and Mission-Critical Roles. Under my direction, the agency drafted and sent the NTSB's first-ever reauthorization proposal to Congress, which included, among other things, strategic workforce planning and training. With your leadership, we have received historic funding to accomplish our mission and address longstanding needs.

<u>Performance and Accountability</u>

- Revitalized the Agency's Federally Mandated Drug Testing Program: Transformed a 30-year-old approved but unimplemented framework into the policies, processes, and governance needed to achieve a fully operational, compliant program once approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

- Was the First Federal Agency to End Max Telework: Mandated a return to work following COVID-19, bringing 100% of the workforce back well before other Federal agencies, beginning in January 2022, three months after I took over as Chairwoman and years before the current, Executive Order-mandated timelines. I directed staff to review the duty location and the work status of approximately 435 employees, redirecting seven employees back to an NTSB office, and established clear criteria for those public safety positions appropriate for remote work, fully implementing the Executive Order directives.

- Changed Direction on Investigations During Government Shutdowns: Changed our policies during a government shutdown to require our workforce to be called back from furlough to investigate accidents and incidents. During COVID, before I was Chairwoman, we did not launch, which is a detriment to safety. I also increased the number of essential employees from 7% in the 2018 shutdown to 74% of our workforce in the 2025 shutdown. Our mission is essential.

- Overhauled the Performance Reporting Process for Employees: Made significant changes to the annual performance reporting process, requiring substantially more accountability of senior leadership and employee performance.

in accordance with the recently issued Office of Personnel Management's Performance Appraisal for General Schedule, Prevailing Rate, and Certain Other Employees final rule.

- Conducted Stakeholder Outreach Across All Modes of Transportation: Led efforts to meet with all stakeholders on a routine basis to better understand where the NTSB could make improvements and then implemented many of them (contained herein). NTSB also conducted a number of stakeholder feedback surveys on our processes and products.

- Mandated the First-Ever Capital Planning and Investment Control Program: Before I was Chairwoman, the NTSB did no planning for capital investments, including cybersecurity investments. Now, we don't just plan but use hard data to inform agency decision making and investments needed to support mission priorities or compliance with government-wide mandates.

- Maintain Mission to Serve the Public at Minimal Cost: The NTSB's budget is 0.002% of the total U.S. budget, 0.13% of the total U.S. Department of Transportation operating budget and is equivalent to 41 cents per American taxpayer annually and provides unbiased safety expertise for all.

- Responsible Stewards of Taxpayer Dollars: The agency saved $2.7 million in taxpayer funding by closing the NTSB Training Center in favor of developing strategic alliances within the private and public sectors to train our investigators. At the same time, we entered into a lease with the Government Services Administration to open a high-bay space to process, document, and evaluate evidence.

- Ensuring Agency Readiness in Worst-Case Scenarios: Restored the agency to full compliance with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) standards to strengthen NTSB Continuity of Operations Program readiness, achieved by conducting gap assessments (such as major aircraft accident drills) to identify and resolve deficiencies in security and emergency management practices. We also developed our own safety risk assessment process to ensure safety of employees.

- Developed First-Ever Voluntary Confidential Safety Reporting Program. This is based on the aviation model. Our program makes it clear that all employees have the right to report safety concerns without fear of reprisal and that everyone — employees, supervisors, and leaders — is responsible for receiving safety concerns respectfully, taking them seriously, and acting on them appropriately. Our Safety Division responds to all concerns in a transparent manner within 5 business days of being reported so that employees can see the status of their concern.

- Designed and Delivered the "NTSB Fundamentals for Employees" (NTSB 101) Course: More than 70 new employees completed the comprehensive training course with participation of the entire executive leadership team to reinforce the agency's commitment to employee training and growth as the most vital asset to conducting the NTSB's essential safety mission.

- Recognized 54 High Performing NTSB Employees: Over the past five years, we recognized these employees for their superior performance and contributions furthering the mission of the NTSB at the Annual NTSB Employee Awards Ceremony. I also nominated the NTSB team who investigated the midair collision near Ronald Reagan National Airport for the much-deserved Aero Club's Wright Brothers Memorial Trophy, which they received in December 2025.

Hiring

- Requested and Successfully Received Multiple Executive Order Exemptions: On my request, thanks to President Trump and Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle, was granted exemptions from participating in the Office of Personnel Management's Deferred Resignation Program given the critical nature of our safety work; the federal hiring freeze; and efforts to cancel our lease. We were granted exemptions to fill 19 positions (1) related to public safety; (2) essential to protecting life and property; and (3) under programs where limiting the hiring of personnel would conflict with applicable law. I also requested and was granted full exemptions from 16 occupational job series fundamental to facilitating the public safety mission and protection of life and property role of the NTSB.

- Ensured Mission Readiness by Expert Hiring: We had 397 employees and nearly 60 vacancies when I took over as Chairwoman in August 2021. Since then, we have grown our workforce 6.5%, hiring 226 employees – half the agency – over the past five years. This includes targeted hiring of new investigator positions to ensure completion of mission-critical work and streamlining our processes to reduce the time to hire to no more than 90 days. All hiring managers are held to this performance metric.

- Recruited Top Talent for 20 of the Agency's Key Leadership Positions to Improve and Expand on the NTSB's Mission and Operational Outcomes. We also achieved direct-hire authority from the Office of Personnel Management for the first-time ever for 15 difficult-to-hire, mission-critical positions.

- Filled All Regional Aviation and Air Traffic Control Investigator Positions, Tripled the Number of Law Enforcement Liaisons, and Doubled the Number of Structural Engineers in Aviation. The law enforcement specialists facilitate and

foster law enforcement relationships across the country to pave the way for modal investigators to conduct their work more efficiently, including serving as evidence recovery specialists.

These are just a few of our successes. Our mission remains urgent. Every investigation, safety recommendation, hearing, report, and engagement with stakeholders serves a single enduring purpose: preventing future transportation accidents and saving lives. The NTSB will continue to carry out that responsibility with independence, rigor, transparency, and respect for the public resources you have entrusted to us.

Thank you for your continued support of the National Transportation Safety Board and its dedicated employees. Your investment in our people, our capabilities, and our mission strengthens safety for every traveler across our highways, railways, waterways, pipelines, and airspace. I look forward to continuing to work with the Administration and Congress to advance transportation safety for the American people.

Sincerely,

[Original Signed]

Jennifer L. Homendy
Chairwoman