

Testimony of Robin Hutcheson, Administrator, FMCSA
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Highways & Transit
Oversight of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act: Modal Perspectives
December 13, 2023

Thank you, Chairman Crawford, Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, and Ranking Member Holmes Norton for your leadership on this subcommittee. To all committee members, thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for your ongoing partnership.

When I was confirmed as Administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, there was an unprecedented spotlight on not only the trucking and motorcoach industry, but the men and women driving that industry – the truck drivers. Coming off the heels of the pandemic, Americans are now acutely aware of the impact of a truck driver’s work – from the long-haul drivers delivering 75% of our goods annually, to the school bus drivers taking our children to school, and to the city drivers picking up our recycling. There’s no doubt that drivers are essential to our daily lives.

Today, I am happy to report that we have kept that spotlight shining on the industry as we carry out our mission—to reduce crashes, injuries, and fatalities involving large trucks and buses. Roadway safety affects not only those whose lives were lost, but the family members and loved ones who suffer the grief of loss. We have more work to do, and we can and must do better. The work of FMCSA and the industry is supported by the historic passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. I want to thank you all for the opportunity to work with you on this unprecedented investment, which has allowed not only FMCSA, but our partners, to carry out safety priorities to achieve our ambitious goal of zero fatalities on our Nation’s roadways and to support the goals of the Department of Transportation – Safety, Economic Strength, Equity, Climate, and Transformation.

We continue to work with our State and Local Government boots on the ground partners across the country on the critical goal of improving safety, leveraging the increased resources in our formula and discretionary grants by prioritizing inspections for high-risk carriers, dedicating resources to high crash corridors and work zones, and closing loopholes to prevent unsafe drivers and carriers from ever being on the road.

Truck Drivers are essential safety partners. Data demonstrates that the safest drivers are those that have been in the industry the longest. We need to understand, “why are drivers leaving the industry?” I’ve rode along with long-haul drivers in the Midwest and municipal drivers in rural Alaska, hosted listening sessions with stakeholders, and asked these questions. We know that drivers need to feel safe, have access to training, and to be well compensated to both enter and stay within the industry. We have taken that feedback and leveraged the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law resources to assist the truck driving profession and our Nation’s supply chain by creating a better, safer pipeline of drivers and improving recruitment and retention in the profession. And, our assistance underscores the Department’s goals, as it sits at the intersection of safety, economic strength, and equity.

We established the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Women of Trucking Advisory Board to understand and address obstacles, including violence, harassment, and discrimination, for women entering – and remaining in – the industry. We have created action items to reduce those barriers, because, the plain fact is, we can't leave any talent on the table. We have implemented requirements to ensure that drivers entering the industry have had a minimum level of training. We used Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding to train veterans and their families, members of underserved communities, and others in safely operating a commercial motor vehicle, so that they may enter the industry. We awarded Bipartisan Infrastructure Law grant funding to expedite commercial driver licenses issuances. And, since 2021, we have increased the amount of Commercial Driver's Licenses by 1,335,850. We've also launched initiatives to study compensation, predatory leasing arrangements, and detention time, and work with our Departmental colleagues to address truck parking.

FMCSA has increased efforts to combat commercial operations fraud, bolstering the goals of safety and economic strength. We implemented a Strategic Action Plan to address fraudulent household goods activities, including the launch of the Protect Your Move campaign. The Campaign spanned 16 States and resulted in 700 closed complaints and a 36% reduction in customer reports.

Finally, we have dedicated grant funding and resources to prevent human trafficking, underscoring our safety and equity goals, and we completed 50 outreach events this year.

With our continued Partners' work, our driver focus on prevention, and your historic investment in safety, we can meet our shared goal of reducing crashes on our Nation's roadways.

Thank you for the opportunity to share FMCSA's work – and success – in implementing the historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.