

Remarks by Senator Hickenlooper

“Hearing on the Nomination of Shailen P. Bhatt to be Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration of the Department of Transportation” U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works

Chair Carper, Ranking Member Capito, members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to this hearing to introduce Shailen Bhatt and celebrate his nomination to serve as the Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

During my time as the Governor of Colorado, Mr. Bhatt served as Executive Director for the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT). We actually persuaded Mr. Bhatt to join our team while he was serving as the Secretary of Transportation in Chairman Carper’s home state of Delaware. Today, it seems only right that I appear before this Committee to help Mr. Bhatt onto his next chapter where his work will now benefit all of our states.

When Mr. Bhatt started at CDOT, he hit the ground running. His Colorado success stories include opening the I-70 Mountain Corridor and nearby express lanes, and launching CDOT’s popular intercity bus service named “Bustang”. His most important project fixed what was known as “the Gap”—a 12 mile stretch of I-25 between Denver and Colorado Springs that had been just 2-lanes since the interstate was built. When traveling through “the Gap” between our two largest cities, you were guaranteed to sit in traffic. This improvement project was long needed and Mr. Bhatt got it done: it opened late last year, **ten years** ahead of schedule.

Mr. Bhatt was equally eager to go to Boulder to plan new roadways that incorporated bike paths as he was to travel to our rural San Luis Valley to hear creative proposals to help get agricultural crops to market more quickly. We strived to deliver results for ALL Coloradans and Mr. Bhatt really took that to heart.

Mr. Bhatt wanted to shape a forward-looking transportation future. He led a feasibility study to build the “Hyperloop”, a new, high-speed passenger rail service (*and also a common mispronunciation of my own name*). He helped complete the world's first commercial delivery by a self-driving truck in our state and deployed a new autonomous protection vehicle to better protect construction crews from distracted drivers. This is the kind of bold vision we need in order to spur innovation and help meet the evolving transportation needs of the American people.

As we move forward with implementing the transformative investments made in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Mr. Bhatt’s leadership of the Federal Highway Administration will ensure these funds are used effectively to improve the safety and reliability of our nation’s highways.

When Mr. Bhatt left Colorado, the Denver Post described him as, “*a fierce advocate for transportation innovation.*” Given his extensive experience, I wholeheartedly support his nomination and I look forward to his confirmation.

Thank you for inviting me to make this introduction. I yield back.