

Senate Banking Confirmation Hearing
Testimony for Deputy Administrator Nuria Fernandez
Tuesday, May 11, 2021 – 10:00 AM

Chairman Brown, Ranking Member Toomey, Members of the Committee, it is a privilege for me to appear before you today as you consider my nomination to be Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration.

I am honored and humbled that President Biden and Secretary Buttigieg have entrusted me to serve in this role. Please allow me a moment to recognize someone special, my husband Dan Hall, a native of Cleveland, Ohio and a Glenville High School graduate, Class of '67.

I was born and raised in Panama City, where I took transit buses daily, and came to the United States as a young woman to pursue my engineering degree. I appreciate the doors this country has opened for me. I chose a career in transit because of its ability to open a world of opportunities to everyone. Public transportation is the greatest equalizer: it allows people to get to jobs, schools and services, regardless of where they live, if they own a car or their ability to drive. Yet, to fully achieve that vision for everyone, we still have some miles to travel.

If confirmed, I pledge first and foremost to uphold DOT and FTA's primary mission to improve the safety of public transportation systems. I will work with Secretary Buttigieg to achieve the Biden-Harris Administration's goals of beating the COVID-19 pandemic; supporting our economy; providing a greener way to travel; and embracing diversity and inclusion as we strengthen transit's role in connecting people and places.

I step into this role at a time unlike any other for public transportation. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of transportation. During the pandemic, federal assistance ensured buses, trains, subways, and paratransit services continued helping people get to work, access testing and other medical appointments, and stay connected. As vaccines became available, transit agencies got creative, with the Port Authority of Allegheny County finding new ways to reach and help at-risk seniors, Mountain Line Transit in Missoula printing a route map showing how to access vaccination clinics by bus, and many rural systems offering dial-a-ride services to get folks to vaccination clinics far from home.

Now, as President Biden's leadership has created the opportunity for more than 200 million shots in arms, our country is reopening. People are resuming daily life, and transit will return to its backbone role moving our country. Work and commuting schedules may look different, but the need for public transportation to serve our communities remains acute.

The American Jobs Plan will provide a once-in-a-generation investment in infrastructure to make America more competitive and help create 19 million jobs, in part through revitalizing our transit systems. If confirmed, I plan to take this opportunity to work with Congress and our

transit partners throughout the country to make our industry the best it can be as we emerge from this national emergency.

My long career in the transit industry has prepared me for this moment. Over 35 years, I have worked at FTA, the Chicago Transit Authority, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority here in Washington, D.C., New York State Metropolitan Transportation Authority in New York and, most recently, as General Manager of Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) in San Jose, California. At VTA, I led 2,100 employees and a transit program serving more than two million people who live and work in Silicon Valley.

Under my direction, VTA established an Innovation Center to collaborate with tech companies and universities to find new ways to improve mobility. We also set up a human trafficking awareness program for VTA staff that became a model for a state law requiring all California transit agencies to train frontline workers on how to recognize it and how to respond. I take pride in my fiscal management of VTA's transit program, including overseeing federal grants for capital projects such as extending the Bay Area Rapid Transit's heavy rail, which will connect millions to San Francisco and beyond. For the past two years, I served as Chair of the American Public Transportation Association, which helped reinforce my relationships with transit leaders throughout the industry.

If confirmed, I would apply all of those experiences to make sure FTA continues to adhere to its role ensuring safety, accountability, and stewardship of public funds. I look forward to welcoming new technology and building upon FTA's decades of delivering reliable and equitable transportation. And, of course, working with you to ensure our nation's public transportation system serves everyone, whether they live in rural areas or our suburbs and cities.

I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I welcome your questions.