

## Meet the 2015 House Transportation Committee Staff

Adapted from: National Journal's Meet the Transportation  
Committee's [Majority](#) and [Minority](#) Staff

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# Meet the House Transportation Committee Staff

## Transportation Committee Staffers

*Committee Leadership: Chairman: Bill Schuster (R-PA); Ranking Member: Peter Defazio (D-OR)*

Name	Committee Position
Chris Bertram	Majority Staff Director
Matt Sturges	Majority Deputy Staff Director
Jennifer Hall	Majority General Counsel and Deputy Staff Director
Beth Spivey	Majority Director of Outreach and Coalitions
Jim Billimoria	Majority Communications Director
Kathy Dedrick	Minority Staff Director
Ward McCarragher	Minority Chief Counsel
Helena Zyblikewycz	Minority Staff Director for the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit
Jennifer Homendy	Minority Staff Director for the Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials
Jen Gilbreath	Minority Communications Director

*Sources: National Journal Research, 2015 Fawn Johnson, "Meet the Transportation Committee's Majority and Minority Staffs," National Journal, April 22, 2015*

# Transportation Committee Majority Staff

## Chris Bertram, Staff Director



### Personal Information

- Bertram sometimes brings his family's 14-year old dachshund, Penny, to the committee office

### Biography

**Education:** Trinity University, B.A.; Harvard University, MPP

**Career:** Public Policy Professional

### Previous Experience

- Federal Aviation Administration:* Assistant Administrator for Financial Services and Chief Financial Officer
- Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation:* senior professional staff
- United States Department of Transportation:* Chief Financial Officer, Assistant Secretary for Budget and Programs

### Comments on Committee

- Bertram arrived at his current post in the Transportation Committee after working in the Transportation Department, where he had a prominent role in writing the Obama administration's transportation budget
- Bertram views his job as helping the Transportation Committee strive to authorize and streamline governmental programs within the political and budget realities of the day

Sources: National Journal Research, 2015 Fawn Johnson, "Meet the Transportation Committee's Majority and Minority Staffs," National Journal, April 22, 2015

# Transportation Committee Majority Staff

## Matt Sturges, Majority Deputy Staff Director



### Biography

**Education:** Western State Colorado University, B.A.

**Career:** Consulting, Public Policy, Legislative Affairs, Campaign Support

### Previous Experience

- *Office of Rep. Deborah Pryce (R-OH):* Coalitions director, Political Campaigns
- *Office of Rep. Pat Meehan (R-PA):* Legislative Director
- *Advancement Partners:* consultant

### Comments on Committee

- Sturges’s experience as staff director for the Aviation Subcommittee helps explain his heavy investment in passing the Federal Aviation Administration bill.
- Sturges finds the FAA bill particularly rewarding to work on because it is “a bill that has given Congress so many problems in the past to tackle”

### Personal Information

- Sturges is an Ohio native who went to school in Gunnison, Colorado
- He enjoys spending his free time outside snowboarding, skiing, biking, and climbing

Sources: National Journal Research, 2015 Fawn Johnson, “Meet the Transportation Committee’s Majority and Minority Staffs,” National Journal, April 22, 2015

# Transportation Committee Majority Staff

## Jennifer Hall, Majority General Counsel and Deputy Staff Director



### Biography

**Education:** University of Arizona, B.A.; University of Notre Dame Law School, J.D.

**Career:** Attorney, Legal Counsel, Congressional Staffer

### Previous Experience

- *House Oversight and Government Reform Committee:* Staffer
- *Highways and Transit Subcommittee:* Counsel
- *Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management:* Counsel
- *Federal Emergency Management Agency:* Congressional-Affairs specialist and Attorney for

### Comments on Committee

- Hall has served on the Transportation committee since 2006, although this was her first time working on FAA authorization because her previous focus was highways, bridges, and disasters
- Regarding the FAA, Hall says, “At this point in my career with the committee, the FAA authorization is one major piece of committee legislation I haven’t worked on”

### Personal Information

- In college, she studied Kazakh, the official language of Kazakhstan
- She began her Washington career as a staffer on Capitol Hill, and came back to work on the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act

Sources: National Journal Research, 2015 Fawn Johnson, “Meet the Transportation Committee’s Majority and Minority Staffs,” National Journal, April 22, 2015

# Transportation Committee Majority Staff

## Beth Spivey, Director of Outreach and Coalitions



### Biography

**Education:** Bucknell University, B.A.  
**Career:** Legislative Aide, Congressional Staffer

### Previous Experience

- *Office of Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-MS):* staffer
- *Rapiscan Systems* – Vice President of Legislative Affairs
- *Office of Rep. Bill Shuster (R-PA):* staffer

### Comments on Committee

- Spivey’s is responsible for making sure that all transportation stakeholder groups are able to tell the committee what they need in various bills
- Although she cannot promise to appease all of the stakeholder’s interests, Spivey says her role, “is a great combination of policy, politics, and sales and marketing”
- Her experience in the private sector has given her an appreciation for the difficulties facing businesses who lobby legislators. On this topic Spivey says, “We as Hill staffers do not live, eat, and breathe these businesses day in an day out. It is impossible for us to be real-world experts on all of the issues we handle”

### Personal Information

- Dreams of someday opening a juice bar on an airstream at the beach

Sources: National Journal Research, 2015 Fawn Johnson, “Meet the Transportation Committee’s Majority and Minority Staffs,” National Journal, April 22, 2015

# Transportation Committee Majority Staff

## Jim Billimoria, Communications Director



### Personal Information

- In his free time, Billimoria is an amateur photographer, a work-out fiend and a wine enthusiast

### Biography

**Education:** University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, B.A.; Johns Hopkins University, M.A. in Communications

**Career:** Congressional Aide, Campaign Support

### Previous Experience

- *Office of Rep. Dan Burton (R-IN):* Staff Assistant
- *House Republican Conference:* Assistant Press Secretary
- *House Ways and Means Committee:* Communications Director

### Comments on Committee

- Billimoria is the architect of several social-media and digital campaigns for committee legislation, which is part of his plan to integrate “a comprehensive digital and social-media push when the time comes”
- On aviation and surface transportation legislation, which are on the committee’s agenda, Billimoria says “these are two very complex pieces of legislation, and we not only want to explain it to the masses but do so in an attention-grabbing manner”

Sources: National Journal Research, 2015 Fawn Johnson, “Meet the Transportation Committee’s Majority and Minority Staffs,” National Journal, April 22, 2015

# Transportation Committee Minority Staff

## Kathy Dedrick, Minority Staff Director



### Personal Information

- Dedrick’s Capitol Hill career began as a congressional page to Rep. DeFazio when she was a teenager
- Dedrick has spent the last 18 years in Washington, serving the House, Senate and administration

### Biography

**Education:** Wilamette University, B.A.

**Career:** Legislative Aide, Capitol Hill Staffer

### Previous Experience

- *Office of the Vice President:* Legislative assistant for Vice President Al Gore
- *US Economic Development Administration:* Senior Adviser
- *Office of Rep. Peter Defazio (D-OR):* Chief of Staff, Legislative Assistant
- *Senate Committee for Environment and Public Works:* Senior Policy Director

### Comments on Committee

- Dedrick was excited to work with House Republicans on MAP-21 reauthorization and on a bill to reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration
- Dedrick believes that these legislative endeavors represent a rare opportunity for a minority staffer in the House

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# Transportation Committee Minority Staff

## Ward McCarragher, Minority Chief Counsel



### Biography

**Education:** University of Wisconsin, B.A., J.D.  
**Career:** Congressional Staffer, Legal Counsel

### Previous Experience

- Subcommittee on Economic Development: Intern, assistant counsel and counsel
- Transportation Committee: Lead Democratic counsel, 1998 and 2005

### Comments on Committee

- McCarragher is the longest-serving staff member of the Transportation Committee, having been the Democratic chief counsel for 17 years, in addition to other committee positions
- This year McCarragher’s focus has shifted from surface-transportation issues “highways, transit and rail” to aviation
- McCarragher is excited to work on reauthorizing the Federal Aviation Administration because it represents an opportunity to work on some “new, complex issues, such as air-traffic-control reform”

### Personal Information

- McCarragher started his work on the Transportation Committee as an intern in 1993, back when it was called the Public Works and Transportation Committee
- McCarragher has three kids, two teenage sons and a seven-year old daughter

Sources: National Journal Research, 2015 Fawn Johnson, “Meet the Transportation Committee’s Majority and Minority Staffs,” National Journal, April 22, 2015

# Transportation Committee Minority Staff

## Helena Zyblikewycz Staff Director for Subc. on Highways and Transit



### Personal Information

- An avid baker and teaches kids' yoga on weekends

### Biography

**Education:** Georgetown University, BSFS; University of California, Berkeley, MPP

**Career:** Capitol Hill Staffer, Policy Analyst, Legislative Representative

### Previous Experience

- *Committee for Economic Development:* Analyst
- *AFL-CIO:* Legislative Representative for the Transportation Trades Department

### Comments on Committee

- Has worked on the Transportation Committee since 2007, when she joined the committee as a staffer for then-Chairman James Oberstar (D-MN)
- As the lead Democratic staffer negotiating the surface-transportation legislation
- Zyblikewycz is excited to be a part of, "a long-term bill [that] has the potential to lay the groundwork for the transportation system of the future and to make significant progress toward enhancing mobility and economic competitiveness"

Sources: National Journal Research, 2015 Fawn Johnson, "Meet the Transportation Committee's Majority and Minority Staffs," National Journal, April 22, 2015

# Transportation Committee Minority Staff

## Jennifer Homendy, Staff Director for Subc. on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials



### Personal Information

- Homendy is a marathoner and triathlete and runs one-mile races with her seven-year-old daughter

### Biography

**Education:** Pennsylvania State University, B.A.

**Career:** Government Relations, Advocacy, Business and Labor

### Previous Experience

- *Office of Sen. Arlen Specter (D-PA):* Intern
- *National Federation of Independent Business*
- *International Brotherhood of Teamsters*
- *American Iron and Steel Institute*
- *AFL-CIO: Transportation and Trades Department*

### Comments on Committee

- As the committee’s lead Democratic negotiator on rail and pipeline issues, Homendy already has one big success for this Congress: an Amtrak authorization bill
- Homendy intends to turn her attention to the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration’s hazmat-safety program, which is up for reauthorization and will be included in the broader surface-transportation bill

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# Transportation Committee Minority Staff

## Jen Gilbreath, Minority Communications Director



### Biography

**Education:** Oregon State University, B.A.

**Career:** Campaign Support, Communications

### Previous Experience

- *Office of Rep. DeFazio (D-OR):* Campaign manager, Press Secretary

### Comments on Committee

- Focuses her work on trying to find new ways to spread awareness about infrastructure through more than traditional press releases
- Gilbreath’s efforts have included reviving the committee’s dormant Twitter account and creating a committee Facebook account

### Personal Information

- Gilbreath is an outdoor enthusiast who has hiked Huayna Picchu, the mountain that rises over the ancient Peruvian city of Machu Picchu
- She studied Arabic and International relations in college
- An Oregon-native, she is a huge craft-beer fan

Sources: National Journal Research, 2015 Fawn Johnson, “Meet the Transportation Committee’s Majority and Minority Staffs,” National Journal, April 22, 2015