

Women In Trucking Driver Advisory Committee shares concerns with NTSB Chairman Hersman

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When NTSB Chairman Deborah Hersman says, "I'm from the government and I'm here to help," she means what she says. She proved it this past week as she spent nearly four days immersed in activities to help her better understand the trucking industry.

Hersman traveled from her office in Washington, DC to the Mid-America Trucking Show in Louisville, Kentucky, riding with five different professional drivers who shared their thoughts with their captive audience of one. "It was an HONOR to meet Chairman Hersman," said Jill Garcia, fifteen-year driver with Schneider National, "she was VERY attentive to my input and concerns."

Prior to addressing the audience at the Women In Trucking (WIT) Salute to Women Behind the Wheel on Saturday, April 2, Hersman sat down with the WIT's driver advisory committee to listen to their thoughts about safety issues on the road. Members of the American Trucking Associations' America's Road Team joined them.



Back row, left to right: Clarence Jenkins (UPS Freight), Dennis Martin (UPS Freight), Sherri Fronko (Wilcox Trucking), Veronica Godoy (Con-way Truckload), Tim McElwaney (ABF Freight System), Alphonso Lewis (YRC Worldwide), Danny Fuller (Con-way Freight), Wayne Crowder (FedEx Freight)
Front row, left to right: Angel Grider (Con-way Freight), Jill Garcia (Schneider National), Ingrid Brown (Forward Air), Susan Wirth-White (Walmart), Chairman Hersman, Linda Caffee (FedEx Custom Critical), Cynthia Kidder (J.B. Hunt Transport), Susan Durstine (Southern Cal Transport)

"The opportunity to meet with Chairman Hersman went beyond my expectations," said Sherri Fronko, Wilcox Trucking and twenty-year veteran driver. "She is a real person who listened and cared about what the driver advisory committee had to say! Our meeting was truly an honor."

Ingrid Brown, who began her career as a professional driver in 1979 agreed with Fronko, "The personal attention given to each and everyone in the meeting was one that could not be mistaken nor missed being filled with human compassion, knowledge, and interest by Chairman Hersman."

Angel Grider, who drives for Con-way Freight said, "I appreciated the candor in which she spoke. Due to her ride along, I admired her newfound respect for the American trucker. I felt like she truly was looking for feedback, not just platitudes, and as a result I believe we may have been able to get her to see both sides."

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Chairman Hersman has earned the respect from many in the trucking industry who were impressed with her effort to understand the driver's perspective. She admitted, "I know it's all in a day's journey for you. I also recognize that two days on the road doesn't a trucker make. My trip was just a small glimpse into your world and I don't understand everything about your lives. But I definitely have a lot more respect for the hard working professional truck driver."

Walmart driver, Susan Wirth-White said, "It was truly an honor to meet with Chairman Hersman, but more importantly, to have an open discussion of safety concerns regarding the highways of America with the Chairman since this is her area of expertise. I was also impressed with all of the professional drivers present and the experience and comments they made. These forums are beneficial to all and along with the safety issues being addressed, we can feel confident that our highways will become safer as long as we continue to keep the focus and the dialogue."

NTSB Chairman Deborah A. P. Hersman is from the government, but she truly does have a desire to help. "Chairman Hersman was a bright light on a lot of safety issues. I have learned a lot from meeting her," said Cynthia Kidder, J.B. Hunt Transport and one million mile safe driver. "We appreciate her support for Women In Trucking as well as the entire industry."

Ellen Voie
President/CEO
Women In Trucking Association, Inc.