

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 18, 2018

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

Florida is home to approximately 20 million residents, and hosts more than 100 million visitors annually. Brightline, a new high-speed passenger rail line, began providing its first week of public service this past Saturday. The train service will offer an alternative transportation option across Florida for the state's millions of residents and tourists. However, in just its first week of operation, public safety issues have arisen that must be addressed. Thus, I respectfully request that the Department of Transportation work with the state of Florida and its local government officials to ensure public safety remains the highest priority for the new high-speed train operation.

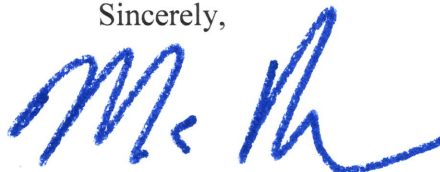
According to the Federal Railroad Administration, sixteen fatalities have been reported along the Florida East Coast Railway corridor this year. Four of these fatal accidents were directly related to Brightline, with two fatalities just in this past week alone. It is critical that the Department of Transportation assess safety measures with Brightline, while coordinating with local officials and members of the community to prevent future tragedies from occurring.

In response to these recent and tragic events, how does the Department intend to ensure that the Florida Department of Transportation, its local partners and Florida East Coast Railway safeguard pedestrians at Brightline rail crossings? What initiatives can be implemented to educate the general public on the dangers of railroad crossings? How can the Department work with private entities and state and local governments to address at-grade crossings across the Florida East Coast Railway in order to meet or exceed safety standards? Can you commit to working with concerned local government officials to ensure their safety concerns are addressed?

As the train service continues its operation and expands its service across the state, I urge the Department of Transportation to work with Brightline, the Florida Department of Transportation, local governments and the surrounding communities to implement appropriate safety measures and confirm proper infrastructure is in place to avoid future fatal accidents.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter and I look forward to working with you to ensure safety remains the number one priority for Florida.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator