



United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

September 11, 2017

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

Dear Secretary Chao:

As you are aware, Hurricane Irma made landfall in the state of the Florida as a category four hurricane early Sunday morning. Local officials have reported substantial damage to the bridges, roadways, and airports across the entire state. We thank the Department of Transportation for its swift release of emergency relief funding to begin addressing the immediate recovery needs.

While the infrastructure has yet to be fully surveyed, the need for assistance is expected to be significant. Florida Highway Patrol has already reported that portions of Interstate four in Central Florida have been washed out, and early indications are that northeast Florida roads are inundated with water. We are also hearing that bridges in the lower keys have sustained damage and are covered with debris. These roads, highways, and bridges may serve as critical routes, necessary for emergency response efforts, or vital to the delivery of much-needed fuel, food, water and other necessities post-storm. In addition, airports serve as a key hub for recovery as well, and are in the process of assessing damage. Without full functionality of these transportation pathways, Floridians are unable to resume their normal day-to-day lives.

The Department of Transportation plays a critical role in ensuring the safety and operability of our transportation network. While the level of damage to our state in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma is unclear, it is essential that all federal resources are provided to aid in restoring our state's infrastructure to its optimal function and usability for our constituents. As state and local officials continue to assess the infrastructure damage incurred by this natural disaster, we ask the Department of Transportation to continue to coordinate with relevant federal agencies to provide all possible aid, staff and resources to address any deficiencies.

Thank you for your prompt consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Nelson".

Bill Nelson
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marco Rubio".

Marco Rubio
United States Senator