

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510
November 30, 2018

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Secretary Chao:

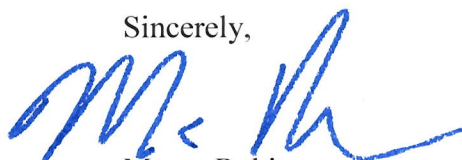
I write in strong support of a joint grant application from the National Park Service and the Florida Department of Transportation for fiscal year 2019 (FY19) Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects (NSFLTP) Program funding to complete the Tamiami Trail Next Steps Phase II project. As I have communicated to you previously, I am grateful for your important role as the U.S. Department of Transportation's representative on the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Taskforce. I believe that the requested funds would significantly address a major barrier to implementing the higher water levels envisioned by the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program.

As you are aware, the U.S. Department of Transportation has been a vital partner in the restoration of America's Everglades, particularly with respect to the Tamiami Trail Modifications Next Steps Project. This ongoing effort has resulted in the construction of approximately 3.3 miles of bridging on the Tamiami Trail (U.S. Highway 41) to deliver significantly greater water volumes in a more natural sheetflow pattern into Everglades National Park through implementation of the Department of Interior's Modified Water Deliveries to Everglades National Park project (ModWaters). With sufficient Tamiami Trail bridging to meet water delivery targets now complete, the initiation of ModWaters operations is only directly constrained by the need to raise approximately 6.5 miles of roadway to account for road safety and integrity concerns.

I strongly support directing federal resources to help complete the Tamiami Trail Next Steps Phase II project, especially in light of a substantial matching funds commitment from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. If funds are awarded, the proposed 2022 completion of this project will significantly advance Everglades restoration and the condition of Everglades National Park's natural resources, dramatically improve the safety of this important route between Miami-Dade and Collier counties, and provide enhanced flexibility for water managers to mitigate significant flooding impacts across South Florida like those experienced after Hurricane Irma.

Thank you for your full and fair consideration of the FY19 NSFLTP Program grant application submitted by the National Park Service and the Florida Department of Transportation.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator