

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 31, 2018

COMMITTEES:  
APPROPRIATIONS  
FOREIGN RELATIONS  
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE  
SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

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

Dear Secretary Chao:

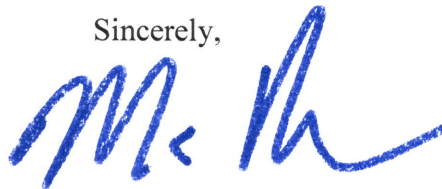
As the Secretary of Transportation, you serve an important role as the U.S. Department of Transportation's representative on the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Taskforce. The Taskforce serves to coordinate all of the federal government's multidisciplinary involvement in the restoration of America's Everglades, the largest subtropical wilderness in North America and the main recharge source for drinking water drawn from South Florida's aquifers.

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has been a vital partner to Everglades restoration particularly with respect to the Tamiami Trail Modifications Next Steps Project. To date, this ongoing effort has focused on bridging portions of the Tamiami Trail (U.S. Highway 41) to allow the Department of the Interior's Modified Water Deliveries to Everglades National Park (ModWaters) project to deliver significantly greater water volumes in a more natural sheetflow pattern into Everglades National Park. ModWaters is designed to raise water levels in the L-29 Canal adjacent to Tamiami Trail by up to 25%. With sufficient Tamiami Trail bridging to meet water delivery goals almost complete, ModWaters could begin operations to provide its full intended benefits for Everglades restoration as soon as the remainder of the roadway is modified to account for road safety and integrity concerns associated with higher L-29 canal water levels.

As such, I respectfully request your assistance in having DOT, including the Federal Highway Administration, work in cooperation with the Florida Department of Transportation, to identify federal resources that can be leveraged to allow the remaining unbridged sections of the Tamiami Trail through the historic Everglades to be raised expeditiously. Such work could also include the installation of additional culverts to allow enhanced distribution of sheetflow under the roadway as desired. These efforts are not only important for the long term survival of Everglades National Park's natural wonders, but are also necessary to help prevent the kind of significant flooding event South Florida experienced after Hurricane Irma raised water levels north of the Tamiami Trail to historic highs.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio  
U.S. Senator