

United States Senate

September 26, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, Southeast
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

I first want to commend you for the excellent work you have done with the United States Department of Transportation (DOT). From planning and coordinating federal transportation projects to emergency response, the DOT's mandate is broad. Under your and President Trump's leadership, the DOT has excelled in every respect by streamlining the agency and fixing problems through strategic resource deployment.

Since you took over DOT, not only has your agency responded to catastrophic natural disasters in North Carolina, Texas, California, and New Mexico, but it has done so in a way that cuts through red tape and streamlines relief to better support recovery efforts. You have swiftly deployed agency employees to areas impacted by wildfires, rapidly responding to complex logistical challenges affecting all modes of transportation.

While relief is often quickly dispatched to states and affected areas as needed, state and local governments often vary in how they manage and request these resources. After visiting the Palisades recently with media personality Mr. Spencer Pratt, a wildfire victim himself who lost his family's home and has since been displaced, I witnessed the destruction that the January 2025 wildfires left in their path. I was heartbroken by the wreckage, and I became concerned as people within the Palisades community shared their perspective on how much Los Angeles and California have mismanaged funds that were supposed to be directed to preventing and responding to these wildfires. It has been reported that California, in general, and Los Angeles, in particular, have received seemingly endless flows of federal funds from the DOT and other federal agencies for wildfire management, repression, and response. Yet these funds do not appear to have been used wisely. This has led many to conclude that California's trouble with wildfire mitigation is not due to a lack of funding, but rather years of the state's foot-dragging and red tape.

Natural disasters happen, regardless of state or political party. And we should all rally around those who experience calamity through no fault of their own. But those in government also have a duty to responsibly manage funds that have been allocated to prevent and respond to these disasters. That does not appear to have been the case in California.

Accordingly, I have been conducting oversight of the contributing causes of the Palisades fire and the adequacy of the response efforts. To advance that oversight, although I acknowledge your incredibly effective response to the Palisades fire, I am writing to request an update on the funding that has been allocated to California in the past ten years, starting on September 1, 2015. In particular, how much money has the DOT given to California for wildfire response, prevention, and recovery? How many DOT personnel have been employed or deployed to respond to wildland fires on California state property? Are there any federal or California laws, rules, or regulations that hinder the DOT's ability to adequately respond to wildfires or recover from wildfires? Additionally, how much money did California receive from the DOT in response to the Palisades wildfires and other California wildfires that occurred in 2025?

I have heard concerns about the potential grounding of resources due to former President Biden's visit to the Palisades in January of this year. I would like to request any information that pertains to the grounding of resources that would have been used to put out the Palisades Fire or any other effects based on his visit.

I know you share my concern that all taxpayer dollars are spent wisely, transparently, and in the public interest. To assist you in your ongoing efforts, I hope that we can shed light on California's waste, mismanagement, and inefficiency in order to foster a more responsive and transparent use of funds by the states. The people of California deserve it, and the American people demand it.

I would be grateful if you could provide an answer to me by October 17, 2025. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick Scott", with a stylized, cursive script.

Rick Scott
United States Senator