

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 13, 2020

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

Administrator Nicole R. Nason  
Federal Highway Administration  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Chao and Administrator Nason:

On the morning of November 11, 2020, a truck hauling potassium hydroxide and diesel fuel crashed into a jackknifed truck on the lower deck of the Brent Spence Bridge. The fire from this explosive crash burned for two hours. Thankfully, both drivers were recovered from the crash uninjured. This critical connection between Ohio and Kentucky is now in a dangerous condition will remain closed until further notice while the damage is assessed and critical repairs begin.

I understand both Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear have issued states of emergency related to this accident. The Transportation agencies in both states have begun repairs and seek Emergency Relief funding through the Federal Highway Administration for the repairs and restoration of essential travel on the Brent Spence Bridge. I understand the process to obtaining this assistance is already underway, with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet already receiving \$12 million in quick release funds. I support and appreciate these efforts.

Looking forward to the needs of the Greater Cincinnati region, the Brent Spence Bridge has been functionally obsolete for over 35 years. This structure built in 1963 is designed to handle 80,000 cars. This year, the Ohio Department of Transportation estimates an average of 160,000 cars crossing the bridge daily. This connection is critical for the region's economy. An estimated three percent of the nation's GDP crosses the Brent Spence Bridge each year.

I ask that you stay engaged with me on identifying a sustainable path forward. While the immediate need is restoration of the operations after this horrific accident, we are in need of a long-term solution for the interconnectivity of this region. If there are any additional funding avenues available within Department of Transportation at large, I ask that you help identify those options.

I appreciate your attention to this matter on behalf of the Greater Cincinnati region.

Sincerely,



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Rob Portman  
United States Senator