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United States Senate

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November 17, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable Bryan Bedford
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Secretary Duffy and Administrator Bedford,

I am writing regarding the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) and Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) recent decision to issue a nationwide ground stop on November 13th, 2026. The traveling public's safety should always be our number one priority. But the FAA and the USDOT owe travelers answers about what caused a disruption of such a massive scale, how federal agencies are addressing the immediate impacts of the ground stop, and what the Trump Administration is doing to ensure this does not happen again.

As you know, Nevada's economy is highly dependent on travel and tourism, and any transportation disruptions can have major impacts on an economic sector that has been significantly weakened by the Trump Administration. According to Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority data, visitor volume to Las Vegas declined by roughly 7.5% in 2025. Recent data indicate that visitation has continued to trend downwards in 2026.[1] The tourism sector generates approximately $98 billion in total economic impact for Nevada (or 37% of the state's GDP), supports 436,600 jobs, and accounts for 34% of state and local governments' tax revenue annually.[2]

I know how critical the tourism sector is to my state, which is why I have consistently engaged with the administration on the topic and about the impact the President's actions have on the travel industry. It is critical that we get answers from USDOT and the FAA about this ground stop, while assuring the traveling public of the safety of the system and competence of its management. Thus, I am requesting answers to the following questions:

1. What is the expected timeline for specific information and answers on the root cause and proposed solution to the situation that caused the ground stop order?
2. Why was such critical maintenance work carried out during busy work hours? Is that normal operating procedure for these kinds of updates?

[1] LVCVA Executive Summary of Southern Nevada Tourism Indicators: https://www.lvcva.com/research/reports/post/lvcva-executive-summary-of-southern-nevada-tourism-indicators/
[2] Nevada Resorts Association press release "Nevada's Tourism Industry Generates Nearly $100 Billion in Statewide Economic Activity in 2024": https://nevadaresorts.org/press/articles/032525-NewsRelease-2025FactBook.pdf

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3. What advance risk assessment did the USDOT and FAA do before initiating the air-traffic control overhaul? If a risk assessment has been done, was Friday's ground stop a scenario that was considered under that assessment?
4. Was there a plan in place to address the complication that led to the ground stop order? If so, provide an outline of those details and whether they worked as intended.
5. What specific communications and support did the USDOT provide to airlines to help address the impact on their businesses, their workers, and the traveling public?
6. What specific communications and support did USDOT and FAA provide to aviation workers, including through their labor unions? Are you seeing reports of already strained air traffic controllers having to work longer hours to get flights back on track?
7. What specific communications have USDOT and FAA had with the hotel and hospitality sectors to help them support stranded travelers?
8. How are you working with both the airlines and the hospitality sector to ensure that the traveling public is not burdened with the costs associated with the ground stop and subsequent flight disruptions?
9. What is your estimate of the economic impact of this ground stop order?
10. Can you provide specific details and associated dollar amounts for how you plan to use the $50 billion in additional funding you are requesting from Congress?
11. Can you provide the Trump Administration budget request that lays out the USDOT's complete and detailed financial proposal for comprehensive air traffic overhaul?
12. What steps have been taken by the FAA since the September 2026 Government Accountability Office report[3] which states: "FAA's lack of a reliable lifecycle cost estimate and an integrated master schedule introduce heightened risk to Brand New Air Traffic Control System (BNATCS)"?

These details are vital not only for informing the public, but also to provide Congress with more details on USDOT's dramatically increased request for $50 billion in non-specific funding for air traffic updates. I am requesting answers to these questions before our current December 11th federal funding deadline. Given the timeliness of your funding request, and the needs of our air traffic controllers and travelers, I am requesting answers to these questions by **Monday, November 30, 2026**. I appreciate your focus and attention to this critical topic.

Sincerely,



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

[3] GAO-26-107992: Air Traffic Control Systems: Ambitious New Modernization Effort Needs to Improve Cost and Schedule Planning – https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-26-107992; which further states on page 31: "FAA is introducing additional risk. Notably, FAA's lack of a reliable lifecycle cost estimate for BNATCS that is comprehensive and well-documented increases the likelihood of cost overruns and unmet performance targets. FAA has also added risk by concurrently implementing thousands of projects without an integrated master schedule for phase 1. Without a schedule that accounts for dependencies between these projects and the associated site installations, FAA risks having an inefficient schedule that causes excessive disruptions to air traffic control operations and jeopardizes the agency's ability to meet its aggressive deployment schedule."