

The U.S. Department of Transportation released \$5 million in emergency funds to rebuild and repair roads and bridges destroyed or damaged in Vermont by Tropical Storm Irene, Vermont's congressional delegation announced today.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood on Tuesday evening notified U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), a member of the Senate Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee.

Sanders had been in discussion with LaHood to explain the magnitude of the destruction in Vermont and to convey the state's need for emergency help.

Sanders said, "I want to thank Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood for his quick response to providing emergency help to Vermont in our time of need. Secretary LaHood has a strong understanding of the magnitude of the disaster that has struck Vermont and the need for immediate federal help and I appreciate that very much. While no one can yet estimate the full extent of the damage and destruction that Vermont has suffered, it is likely that the long-term cost of rebuilding our roads, bridges, rail lines, businesses, homes and public buildings will be in the hundreds of millions of dollars. For Vermont's rebuilding effort to be successful, there is no question but that there will have to be strong cooperation between the federal government and the state. Sen. Leahy, Rep. Welch and I will be working as hard as we can to make that happen."

Leahy said, "Never in my life have I witnessed this much destruction in our state, and it breaks my heart to see it. I am grateful to Secretary LaHood and the Department of Transportation for

their prompt response to this disaster. The people of Vermont are resilient, but even the strongest among us can use a helping hand. This emergency aid will help to start rebuilding the many roads and bridges all over Vermont that were destroyed in the flooding. As Vermonters move forward, looking to each other for support, I will continue to do everything in my power, along with Senator Sanders and Congressman Welch, to secure aid for the state and to see that all levels of government come together to effectively bolster the efforts of neighbors and friends as we all work to come to terms with this tragedy."

Welch said, "This is welcome news to Vermont. The damage to public infrastructure is immense and this will help us begin to rebuild. We have more work to do. Traveling around the state, I am meeting small business owners who have lost their livelihoods, employees who have lost their jobs, farmers who have had their crops washed away, and individuals whose homes are ruined. We have a long recovery ahead of us, and more assistance will be vital. Vermont has always responded to times of great hardship by working together. We will do so again. I thank Secretary LaHood for the quick action and look forward to working with Sens. Leahy and Sanders as well as Gov. Shumlin to make sure the necessary assistance gets to Vermont quickly."

The emergency funds help pay for the repair and reconstruction of federal highways and bridges that have suffered serious damage as a result of the storm. The funds are for immediate responses to repair storm damage and will not reduce the amount Vermont may ultimately receive if, as expected, President Barack Obama declares a federal disaster in the state.