

**REMARKS FOR
THE HONORABLE NORMAN Y. MINETA
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION**

HURRICANE KATRINA TRANSPORTATION RECOVERY PRESS BRIEFING

**WASHINGTON, D.C.
SEPTEMBER 7, 2005
5 PM**

Good afternoon.

I wanted to take a few minutes this afternoon to highlight today's major developments. Reopened pipelines and runways, a new bridge contract, and ships heading to the region are all signs of rebuilding the hurricane-ravaged Gulf Coast.

Two days ago, I traveled with President Bush and saw first-hand the devastation that Hurricane Katrina left in her wake. The destruction and the human tragedy are heart-wrenching.

For the last week and a half, our team at the Department of Transportation has been working around the clock. Virtually every mode of transportation is helping to bring urgently needed supplies in and to evacuate citizens out.

And even while important life-saving rescue efforts are underway, the rebuilding has begun. We still don't know the full extent of the damage to the region's transportation systems, but we're already working aggressively to get the Gulf Coast moving again.

Let's begin with the pipelines.

As of today, all pipeline operations in the Southeast, Midwest, and Atlantic states are running normally. That includes the two largest pipelines serving the East Coast, Colonial and Plantation, which - with our help - were back in full operation Monday.

Also today, the Department of Transportation opened the second runway at the Gulfport-Biloxi airport to aircraft supporting hurricane relief efforts.

With the airport's tower and radar approach control facility restored, and Gulfport-Biloxi is now fully operational.

In fact, the Department of Transportation now has all airports within the hurricane-stricken region back to full operation, with one exception, New Orleans' Lakefront Airport, which remains under water.

And this afternoon, a 5.1 million dollar contract was signed with a local company in Columbia, Mississippi, to get the I-10 Bridge in Pascagoula repaired and open to normal, two-lane traffic. Work begins Saturday and will be completed within the 31 days.

And we're offering a 100,000-dollar-a-day bonus to get the bridge back in operation even faster.

Bids are coming now in for the work on the I-10 Slidell Twin Span Bridge, and we expect an emergency contract to be awarded later this week.

Finally, as you know, I took the unprecedented step last week of mobilizing the U.S. Ready Reserve Force to support recovery and rebuilding efforts. At 6:31 this morning, the *Diamond State* left Houston for the Port of New Orleans. The crane-ship will serve as a home for the personnel who will soon be reporting to get the Port of New Orleans back up and running, as well as bringing power to the port's shore-side facilities and equipment and doing the work that port cranes currently cannot.

The *S.S. Wright* left Baltimore for the Gulf Coast at 10:10 a.m., and others are set to follow shortly.

On air, on land, and by sea, we're bringing in every resource we can muster to aid in the recovery and help the people of this storm-battered region get back on their feet as quickly as possible.

And as our efforts move forward, I will continue to keep you updated.

I have a team of experts with me here in my office, and, at this point, we're happy to take your questions.

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