

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 3, 2013

Director Rudy Malfabon
Nevada Department of Transportation
1263 South Stewart Street
Carson City, Nevada 89712

Dear Director Malfabon:

I write to you today regarding the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Beneficiary Travel Program as it relates to roads managed by the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT). I appreciate the opportunity to contact you.

In 2012, the VA implemented a new program for calculating beneficiary travel reimbursement for veterans traveling from their home to a VA Medical Center or Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) for essential care. Under this new system, the VA utilizes Bing Maps to calculate the miles between the veteran's home and the closest VA medical facility based on the route with the shortest distance.

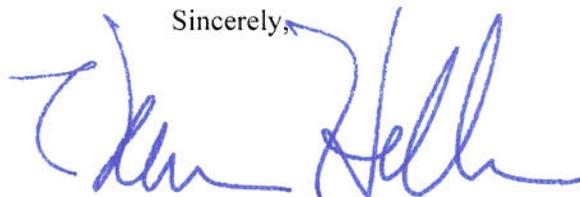
In Nevada, many of our veterans live in rural areas and travel long distances to reach the closest VA facility. Unfortunately, Bing Maps cannot account for roads that are private, not viable, or impassible due to harsh weather conditions. Veterans are often left with no choice but to take a different, longer route than the one determined by Bing Maps, resulting in a lower reimbursement rate. At a time when many Nevada veterans remain unemployed and are struggling to make ends meet, such a discrepancy puts a financial burden on our nation's heroes who are traveling many miles to receive critical care.

Without written approval from an official authority, such as your Department or a local county sheriff's office, the VA Beneficiary Travel Office cannot choose an alternate route to ensure the veteran is properly reimbursed. It is my understanding that veterans are tasked with reaching out to NDOT or other relevant authorities to receive a letter of confirmation when a road is blocked off, marked as private, or not viable for other reasons.

For these reasons, I encourage NDOT work with the VA to issue an official letter listing the roads throughout Nevada under your jurisdiction that are not accessible so that the VA can issue proper reimbursement to Nevada's veterans. Recognizing that road viability changes throughout the year based on construction, detours, or weather conditions, I also encourage NDOT to provide the VA with this information as requested.

Thank you for the opportunity to contact you. I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to receiving a response and working with you on other transportation matters important to Nevadans.

Sincerely,



DEAN HELLER
U.S. Senator