

Transportation & Infrastructure Committee “Member Day” Draft Remarks

Thank you, Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, and to my colleagues on the Committee for giving me this opportunity. I would like to bring some attention to a few critical issues not only in my district but across the nation.

As you all know, our nation’s infrastructure has been neglected for far too long. Our bridges, roads, and transit are aging and are in desperate need of repair.

Transit

- Transit is critical in Coastal Virginia. Hampton Roads has one of the largest bus networks in the Commonwealth. Route 20, for example, is one of the most populated bus routes in the Commonwealth, running from Virginia Beach to Downtown Norfolk.
- Bus transit should be a priority in an upcoming surface transportation bill because it is an affordable way to expand public transit. An overwhelming number of my constituents use buses to commute to and from work, in addition to school, workforce development, medical appointments, and essential shopping and retail.
- Bus service is an integral part of Coastal Virginia’s economy, providing jobs in the community and helping many working families throughout our community get from place to place, especially in rural areas.

Rail

- Expanding rail access through the Port of Virginia is vital to my district as well as the nation’s economy and safety.
- Last year, the Port was awarded a \$20 million federal grant to expand its rail operation. This grant will allow the Port to double the existing capacity of the Norfolk International Terminal’s Central Rail Yard.
- Currently, 34 percent of the Port’s total volume moves to market by double-stack rail service, and that demand is forecast to exceed 40 percent with a need for capacity to process an additional 200,000 containers for export.
- Without expansion, the terminal’s current operation could not keep up with growth, resulting in more movement of freight by truck on local roads and highways.
- Expansion in Hampton Roads maintains the expected level of service to cargo owners in the Midwest, Ohio Valley, and other inland markets.

Coastal Resiliency

- Like many communities that are close to the ocean, Coastal Virginia experiences the challenges of recurrent flooding and rising sea levels. Our region needs resilient infrastructure that stands strong against the challenges of our changing climate.
- Virginia’s Second District is home to Naval Station Norfolk, which is the world’s largest naval station and installations from every branch of service.
 - In 2019, a Department of Defense report found that greater Hampton Roads is one of the areas “most vulnerable to flooding” in the entire United States.
 - When it floods in Coastal Virginia, it becomes more than just a local nuisance – it becomes a national security issue.

- We must make investments in innovative and durable infrastructure to protect both, our local economy and our national security and military readiness.
- As a Navy veteran representing Hampton Roads, I know America's military communities desperately need funding for infrastructure projects to promote readiness. We must fund and improve on initiatives like the Defense Community Infrastructure Program to put our communities in the best position moving forward.

Closing

- Again, I would like to thank Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, and my colleagues on the Committee for giving me the chance to speak about transportation and infrastructure priorities throughout Coastal Virginia.
- By making much-needed investments in our infrastructure, we can set our communities up for sustainable economic success.