

House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Testimony

Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, and distinguished members of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on behalf of the great state of Louisiana.

I would also like to take a moment to thank you for the prayers and support many have given to the city of New Orleans. Our Country continues to mourn the unnecessary tragic loss of life and the families whose lives have been changed forever.

I offer the people of California who have suffered tremendous loss of property and life from the tragic fires our thoughts and prayers as well.

Over the past 8 years, in three different election cycles 62, 74 and 77 million American voters respectfully have expressed their desire to see this Country return to exceptionalism by voting for President Donald J. Trump. That is over 210 million votes that one person has received over the course of 8 years. That is 210 million commitments to change.

The mandate is clear, and it is time to reinstate President Trump's infrastructure policies—You **MUST** eliminate regulatory barriers, streamline permitting, and implement the “One Federal Decision” rule.

For those listening who are not aware—the “One Federal Decision” rule requires federal agencies to establish a “one agency, one decision” structure for

environmental reviews. It also shortens the lengthy environmental review process to two years, allowing us finally to address aging infrastructure immediately.

One of my first actions as a freshman member of the 112th Congress, some fourteen years ago, was a dear colleague letter, that I submit back into the congressional record today.

This letter highlighted the need for fiscal responsibility when spending the people's money, by investing in our decaying infrastructure and setting us up for long term success.

Unfortunately, over a decade has passed, and the amount of money spent has increased exponentially with little return to the American people in true infrastructure improvements.

In order to make America Great, our people and our commerce must be able to move around efficiently and effectively on a stable and improved infrastructure system.

As Governor, I wish to highlight the critical role our infrastructure plays in driving prosperity for the United States as a whole.

Let's look at Louisiana.

In 2022, Louisiana moved over half a trillion dollars worth of freight through our State. Ranking us 16th nationally.

Louisiana is expected to have the 3rd largest freight growth in the nation by 2050 and the ninth-highest share of semi-trucks in the U.S. This highlights how critical Louisiana's infrastructure is to the nation.

Our waterways are equally critical. Louisiana has five of the top 15 ports in the nation, moving over a half a billion tons of cargo annually. These ports, along with Louisiana's energy infrastructure, provides the power and goods you need to fuel the U.S. economy, helping EACH of your state's succeed in economic growth.

Without investments in roads, bridges, and ports—supply chains falter, manufacturing slows, and consumers face delays and higher costs; the American people lose.

And we are losing today!

In 1982 Rep. Billy Tauzin established the I-49 Corridor to connect I-40 to New Orleans providing a much-needed north-south surface transportation route to improve the movement of goods and service in this Country.

The completion of this project will greatly enhance services to Middle America and serve as an important hurricane evacuation route for my citizens. Sadly, because of bureaucracy and lack of federal support, 30 years later, very little has been done.

I beg you to cut the red tape, implement the President's plan and fund this project!

To often we have seen vital infrastructure fail us; such as the Francis Key Scott bridge collapse. All because of neglect.

In 1950 on I-10, a bridge was built over the Calcasieu River in Lake Charles, Louisiana. Today according to the National Bridge Inspection Ranking, this bridge scores 3 out of 9. To put that in perspective the Baltimore Bridge ranked 5 before its collapse.

The Calcasieu bridge carries over 90,000 vehicles daily from Texas to the East coast. Let me repeat that, over 90,000 DAILY!

Last year, with little help from the Federal Government, we took action ourselves to fix the bridge, the only way forward without Congress's help was to toll it. This is going to cost commercial transporters and consumers the most.

This body could bring relief to the toll prices by granting us more funding to lower the commercial tolls.

Based on cargo volume the Port of South Louisiana and Houston rank 1 and 2 respectfully. I-10 links these two ports together as goods travel towards the East coast. This creates a huge strain on that section of I-10. As goods move East to West they must cross the Mississippi River in Baton Rouge. The lack of improvement over that bridge has caused BR to have the fourth-worst traffic congestion in the U.S. A new bridge over the Mississippi River is essential to addressing this problem!

I ask you to work with me to prioritize funding sources for a new Mississippi River bridge to improve freight mobility and reduce congestion. This is vital to economic progress in many of your districts as well.

Finally, I want to address the efficiency of the 404 B permitting process. Louisiana, as you know, has many rivers, streams, bayous, canals, and a long coastline.

Our waterways are what keep our economy alive, and the efficiency of this permitting process (under Section 404) is important to our businesses and economy.

The 404 B Permit process has irritated every member of Congress I have spoken with, regardless of their party affiliation. As a result, the EPA adopted a 2024 Rule, which aims to simplify and clarify the process for states to take on Section 404 permitting, and it will take effect in just two days (Jan. 17, 2025). We plan to use it! And Congressional action can simplify it and speed that process for us.

Louisiana is interested in working with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under President Trump's administration to explore the possibility of managing Section 404 permits ourselves. We believe that taking this responsibility will improve the permitting process and reduce unnecessary overlap between the federal and state governments—Speeding up projects.

In Louisiana, we are known for letting the good times roll, but without help from Congress on infrastructure, nothing will be rolling!

The projects and request I spoke about today, are but a few of the many investments we need to safeguard communities, strengthen our nation, and ensure long-term resilience.

I strongly encourage Congress to act decisively on these specific priorities.

Together, we can secure the infrastructure necessary for the prosperity of our Country: making America Great Again!