

**Testimony of Congressman William R. Keating, MA-09
before the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
United States House of Representatives**

May 1, 2019

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Members' Day Hearing

Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, and the distinguished Members of this Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify about infrastructure issues of the utmost importance to my district.

In Southeastern Massachusetts, the Bourne and Sagamore bridges support the only two roads for crossing the Cape Cod Canal by car. As with so many bridges around the country, these critical pieces of infrastructure have long reached the end of their working lives. In fact, the Army Corps of Engineers has spent millions of dollars to keep the bridges at their minimum level of operation and keep the regular flow of traffic moving. Of course, traffic is an issue in all our communities, but it becomes a matter of heightened concern during large-scale emergencies.

Thankfully, the residents of Cape Cod have not faced a catastrophic event in recent years, but we have had several near-misses—for example, Hurricane Sandy, which devastated New York in 2012, and Hurricane Jose, which brought Tropical Storm conditions to Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket in 2017. We have also been hit by several Nor'easters the last few winters, storms that have caused widespread wind and ice damage—and even death. Increasingly, it appears my region is due for a major direct hit.

For these reasons, it is important that we recognize that the Canal Bridges, and other critical evacuation infrastructure across the nation, play fundamental roles in providing for the safety of countless Americans. In Massachusetts, I am relieved to report that much of the state and local work required to shore up the long-term safety of the Canal Bridges is already underway. I have also been working closely with Army Corps leadership, both in New England and in Washington, to ensure the safest, most resilient evacuation routes remain a priority. We know we are capable of success in this effort, and I appear before this Committee to encourage similar efforts to secure evacuation routes around the country.

Last year, I partnered with Senators Markey and Warren from my home state, as well as Mr. Garamendi from California, who sits on this Committee, to introduce the *Enhancing the Strength and Capacity of America's Primary Evacuation Routes Act*, or the ESCAPE Act, which would authorize dedicated public infrastructure funding to construct, maintain, and protect designated emergency evacuation routes. Passage of the ESCAPE act would be an important step in securing the safety of all communities in times of natural disaster. I look forward to partnering with Mr. Garamendi to reintroduce this legislation again soon.

As I know the Members of this Committee agree, we cannot risk the public safety by neglecting our vital roadways. We must provide the necessary federal resources to support safe passage in times of emergency, and we must eliminate any doubt that our infrastructure might not meet the challenge.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to emphasize the importance of safe evacuation routes and the need for increased federal support. I am confident this Committee is well equipped to meet our nation's infrastructure needs, both in my district and across the United States. I hope to continue this dialogue as Congress considers upcoming infrastructure legislation, and I yield back.