

**Statement of Congressman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott  
Member’s Day Hearing - Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
April 14, 2021**

Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves and members of the Committee, thank you for providing me this opportunity to discuss the priorities of Virginia’s third district in the upcoming infrastructure legislation.

I represent the 3<sup>rd</sup> congressional district of Virginia where the Chesapeake Bay meets the James, Nansemond, and Elizabeth Rivers, which presents both challenges and opportunities. My district is home to the Port of Virginia, one of the largest and busiest ports on the eastern seaboard. With 95 percent of our nation’s trade moving by water, it is essential that the port is able to maintain operations. The 3<sup>rd</sup> district is also home to multiple shipyards and neighbors Norfolk Naval Station, the largest naval base in the U.S.

Unfortunately, due to sea level rise, both attributable to climate change as well as historic subsidence, these same waterways also pose a serious risk. Some studies estimate this rise to be as much as 7 feet by the year 2100, the Hampton Roads region is the second largest population center at risk from sea level rise in the nation, behind only New Orleans. The City of Norfolk is specifically at risk from flooding due to high tides, nor'easters, and hurricanes. As the home of Naval Station Norfolk and numerous other federal and military facilities, this recurrent flooding also poses a severe national security risk.

State and local elected officials in Virginia already appreciate the significant threat sea level rise poses to Hampton Roads. Unfortunately, the cost to proactively and aggressively address this problem head-on is far too great for any city to bear by itself. While Hampton Roads has already spent considerable sums of money to address the rising water and implement resilient infrastructure where feasible, the scope of the

entire project to actually address the problem is expected to total in the billions of dollars.

Hampton Roads is also home to significant traffic backups at the waterway crossings and throughout the region. The widening of the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel is primarily being financed with local revenue from sales and gasoline taxes in the Hampton Roads Transportation Fund but it requires state and federal support. There is a limit to how much and how many of these major transportation projects can move forward without federal assistance. For example, the Downtown and Midtown Tunnels connecting Norfolk and Portsmouth Virginia were in such a state of disrepair and need of expansion that the Commonwealth had few options other than to enter into a lopsided private-public partnership leading to egregious tolls for decades to come. The Hampton Roads region is also in vital need of public transit investments. Norfolk has had succesOur airports, roads, and bridges are

in need of repair and I would urge the committee to commit crucial federal support for infrastructure in every state.

As the Chair of the Committee on Education and Labor, I look forward to working with your Committee to address the existing shortage of skilled workers and lack of diversity within the sector. In my district, for example, the Hampton Roads Bridges and Tunnel expansion creates 1,000 jobs, but I just heard this week from union members about an existing skilled trade shortage in the area.

Any infrastructure bill should also include investments in workers so that they have the skills needed to build and expand to cleaner and greener infrastructure are needed. For too long the funding for workforce programs has been too small and too disjointed, spread across multiple agencies rather than through an intentional approach driven through the existing public workforce system. I look forward to working with you to support the recruitment of a diverse workforce and to ensure that

recruitment for these projects happens in and around the communities impacted by them.

School infrastructure must also be a part of any infrastructure package we consider. Despite the evidence linking well-resourced facilities, well-supported teachers, and healthy buildings to better academic and life outcomes, the federal government dedicates no money to public school infrastructure improvements. My legislation, the Reopen and Rebuild America's Schools Act (H.R.604) would invest \$100 billion in grants and \$30 billion in bond authority targeted at high-poverty schools. Students and educators deserve to go to school every day in safe and welcoming buildings. We should also be investing in community college facilities and technology to grow local economies, improve energy efficiency and resilience.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to share my priorities for a comprehensive and resilient infrastructure package drafted by this committee.