

Statement for the Record
Congressman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Member’s Day Hearing
May 1, 2019
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Thank you, Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves and members of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for providing me this opportunity to discuss some of the priorities I believe should be reflected in any transportation and infrastructure legislation.

I represent the 3rd congressional district of Virginia where the Chesapeake Bay meets the James, Nansemond, and Elizabeth Rivers, which presents both challenges and opportunities. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has worked to keep America’s waterways and ports open to trade, while working with our communities to ensure that they can continue to live with the water that surrounds our community. 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 3rd district is also home to multiple shipyards and neighbors Norfolk Naval Station, the largest naval base in the U.S. These waterways are essential to our community.

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 Norfolk has already spent considerable sums of money to study its recurrent flooding issues 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.

As this committee begins to consider a robust infrastructure package, I urge you to make it a priority to invest in resilient infrastructure. I encourage you to look at the Building Up Infrastructure and Limiting Disasters through Resilience (BUILD Resilience) Act, legislation that I introduced last Congress with Senators Mark Warner and Tim Kaine and that I intend to introduce again soon. The BUILD Resilience Act would establish a competitive grant program for resilient infrastructure investment to bolster the ability of regions, such as Hampton Roads and New Orleans, to implement projects and strategies to reduce regional vulnerability to threats like sea level rise and recurrent flooding. Analyses by the Congressional Budget Office and the Multi-hazard Mitigation Council of the National Institute of Building Sciences estimate that every \$1 invested in resilient infrastructure upfront saves \$3 to \$4 in future losses on the back-

end after a major disaster strikes. Investing upfront can help save taxpayers and impacted communities potentially billions of dollars in avoided costs.

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 will require 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. I would urge the committee to commit crucial federal support for infrastructure in every state.

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.

I would urge the committee to look at the Rebuild America's Schools Act (H.R.865) which would fund \$70 billion in grants and \$30 billion in bonds to help address critical physical and digital infrastructure needs in schools across the country. According to economic projections, the bill would also create more than 1.9 million good-paying jobs. Students and educators deserve to go to school every day in safe and welcoming buildings.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to share my priorities for any comprehensive infrastructure package drafted by this committee. I look forward to working with you to ensure that resilient infrastructure and school infrastructure remains a priority.