



MRCTI

Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative

2021 Federal Policy Platform of the
Mayors along the Mississippi River

A LEGACY PROPOSAL TO PROTECT
OUR CORRIDOR

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Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative 2021 Policy Platform

A Legacy Proposal to Protect our Corridor



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The Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative (MRCTI) is an association of United States Mayors in ten states along the main stem Mississippi River from headwaters to the Gulf of Mexico. All members of MRCTI are currently serving U.S. mayors. All content of MRCTI publications is congruent to MRCTI policy as adopted pursuant to association bylaws by the Co-Chairs and Executive Committee of the association.

Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative
1520 Market Street, Suite 2000
St. Louis, MO 63103
+01 314 324 8782
www.mrcti.org



Sharon Weston Broome
Mayor of Baton Rouge, LA
MRCTI Co-Chair



Bob Gallagher
Mayor of Bettendorf, IA
MRCTI Co-Chair



Introduction

A Legacy Proposal to Protect our Corridor

We, the Mayors of MRCTI present this Federal Policy Platform for 2021 to our national leaders and regional stakeholders. *Marking a new decade, new administration, and new congress the Mayors present a bold and intrepid proposal designed to exceed any previous legislative development we have supported.*

100 Cities comprise our association. MRCTI encompasses advancing urban areas, opportunity-rich rural towns, and everything in-between. The economies of our region are interdependent. Our strength stems from the diversity of our member communities whose populations span from hundreds to millions. Our Corridor is a national treasure vital to our nation’s economic security and critical to commodity production, manufacturing, and transportation.

This platform surpasses all previous. A historic flood in 2019, a new record of named storms in 2020, and the pandemic demand daring and resolute propositions. Epic change calls for epic leadership. This is no time for austerity. We believe we stand at a pivotal moment of choice – continue to cope and stumble toward eventual collapse or leverage this moment and climb toward renewal and prosperity.

The economy of the Mississippi River Valley is dependent on a healthy, working ecology that provides environmental services fundamental to our quality of life. The Mississippi River Basin produces 92 percent of United States agricultural exports and generates nearly half a trillion dollars in annual revenue directly supporting 1.5 million jobs mainly attributable to manufacturing.

Municipal budgets cratered in 2020. Coming off the historic and basin-wide impacts of 2019 with 14 million people displaced, 19.3 million acres left unplanted, and \$20 billion in actual losses; 2020 compounded physical damage with the most active hurricane season ever overlaid by a pandemic that created municipal budget shortfalls surpassing the 2009 financial crisis.

The Mayors of the Mississippi River support a national spending plan of \$371.56 billion that will help pull the nation’s most vital manufacturing corridor out of compromise and into capable creating and/or saving over 4 million jobs, and generating more than \$1.1 trillion in economic activity.

All but one of the spending levels recommended in this platform are at national scale with only the SMRT Act being for the Mississippi River Corridor specifically. *This platform is the Mayors’ recommendation of federal programs to support, strengthen, and create that will achieve a return to the American tax payer up to \$12.00 for every \$1.00 invested.*

Appropriation Priorities in brief

COVID-19 Relief & Recovery Supplemental

National Local Government Revenue Replacement \$350 billion

National Local Government Vaccine Distribution Assistance \$20 billion

Agriculture, Rural Development, and Related Agencies

Emergency Watershed Protection Program, \$200 million
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service

Rural Development Prog: ReConnect, Rural Facility, Water Assistance \$805 million
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Commerce, Justice Science

EDA Public Works Program \$150 million
U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration

Homeland Security

Resilience Revolving Loan Fund \$100 million
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Program (BRIC) Full 6% Share
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Interior, Environment, & Related Agencies

Section 319 Water Pollution Control Grants, \$200 million
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Drinking Water Infrastructure Resilience & Sustainability Program \$4.0 million
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Community Water System Risk and Resilience Program \$25 million
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

North American Wetlands Conservation Fund \$50 million
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service

Transportation, HUD, & Related Agencies

America's Marine Highway Grant Program, \$12 million
U.S. Department of Transportation, Maritime Administration

Scenic Byways Program \$20 million
U.S. Department of Transportation

Authorization Priorities in brief

Safeguarding the Mississippi River Together (SMRT) Act

Include in the 2022 reauthorization of the Water Resources Development Act a Mississippi River Program as proposed by the *Safeguarding the Mississippi River Together Act*;

America's Transportation Infrastructure Act

Pass the *America's Transportation Infrastructure Act* with the climate performance and resilience components intact.

Disaster Equitability, Prevention, Emergency Needs & Decisions (DEPEND) Package

More resources for repetitive loss areas, establishment of a NFIP revolving loan fund to make the program solvent again, and more flexible terms for localities to remove properties from vulnerable inundation zones. Improve disaster resilience, mitigation, and adaptation over a number of public operations by enacting the following:

Flood Level Observation, Operations, and Decision Support Act

Preventing Health Emergencies & Temperature-Related Illness and Deaths Act

Catastrophic Loss Mitigation Incentive and Tax Parity Act

National Flood Insurance Reauthorization

Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act

Address our plastic recycling and waste management infrastructure deficiencies through comprehensive legislation that works to reduce plastic waste, assert manufacturer responsibility, and increase US plastic recycling capacity by passing the *Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act*.

COVID-19 Relief & Recovery Supplemental

“We obtained most of our PPE supply from MRCTI.”

-Mayor Kevin Smith of Helena-West Helena, AR, MRCTI State Chair



COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Supplemental

National Local Government Revenue Replacement.....	\$350 billion
National Local Government Vaccine Distribution Assistance.....	\$20 billion

Background:

Small towns and large cities across the political spectrum stretching from across the industrial Midwest down to the mouth of the Mississippi River at the Gulf of Mexico have sustained a positivity rate up to 40 percent (40%). Our cities are on the front lines confronting the pandemic and suffering from the damage it has caused to our local economies and the revenue shortfalls that threaten our ability to maintain vital services.

The Issue:

Mississippi River states are among the hardest hit. Our cities reflect the national impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, where on average cities have seen revenues decline by more than 20 percent while expenditures have increased by 17 percent. At the same time, nearly two-thirds of cities surveyed did not receive CARES Act funding. More than 70 percent of cities expect their condition to worsen without a relief package.

Our cities have been experiencing unprecedented financial instability and prolonged pandemic effects that are straining our ability to maintain basic public services, safeguard public health, and support the distribution of COVID vaccines. As a result, an immediate and unified federal response is needed to support state and local efforts to contain the virus and mitigate the economic consequences of this unprecedented crisis.

Without federal financial assistance, our nation’s economic recovery will stall and cities and towns—both urban and rural—will be further challenged in rebuilding healthy local economies. Federal aid will also enable our cities to sustain joint response efforts from the public and private sector, and support partnerships between local governments, businesses and their communities to mitigate the economic, health and public safety impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, localities are playing an important role in vaccine deployment by providing facilities, volunteers, PPE supplies, security, and capacity. However, vaccine distribution in a fiscally compromised setting further strains other public services making reimbursements critical.

Therefore, Mayors of MRCTI implore Congress to pass a new COVID-19 package that includes urgently needed financial relief for cities and towns that have borne the brunt of the impact from the pandemic. With infections, hospitalizations, and deaths at unprecedented levels, and economic recovery stalling, our citizens are looking for immediate action from Washington. Regardless of how it is structured, it is imperative that Congress approve revenue replacement for local governments to ensure the swiftest possible pandemic recovery.

“Our ability to be good stewards of the River is critical to our future.”

-Mayor Melvin Carter of St. Paul, MN, MRCTI State Chair



Agriculture, Rural Development & Related Agencies

Emergency Watershed Protection Program.....	\$200 million
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service	

Background:

Through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) helps communities address watershed impairments that pose imminent threats to lives and property. If land has suffered damage due to flood, fire, drought, windstorm, or other natural occurrence, EWP is designed to assist in the natural recovery of that land.

EWP program addresses watershed impairments, which include, but are not limited to:

- Debris-clogged stream channels;
- Undermined and unstable streambanks;
- Jeopardized water control structures and public infrastructures;
- Wind-borne debris removal; and
- Damaged upland sites stripped of protective vegetation by fire or drought.

Floodplain easements for restoring, protecting, maintaining, and enhancing the functions and values of floodplains, including associated wetlands and riparian areas, are available through EWP. These easements also help conserve fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, flood water retention, and ground water recharge, as well as safeguard lives and property from floods, drought, and erosion.

The Issue:

Mayors are focused on mitigating the next disaster to control costs and deterioration of natural infrastructure harming the economy. Mayors need programs that don’t simply bring back the landscape to the state it was before the disaster, but improving resilience and immediately addressing vulnerabilities that worsen impacts.

The Emergency Watershed Protection Program meets all our characteristics for restoring our natural infrastructure making it more resilient for persistent and unprecedented impacts. Counties which meet most or all census track thresholds for EWP are situated along the Mississippi River main stem from the border of Iowa and Missouri to Baton Rouge, LA comprising over half of the River’s entire length.

Therefore, Mayors of MRCTI urge Congress to allocate \$157 million in new funding to EWP so that crucial funds will be available to address and reduce the cost of more frequent disasters. Mayors do find the Watershed Flood Prevention Operations Program valuable, but projects are not prioritized around disaster impacted areas nor do they typically address larger watersheds.

USDA Rural Development Program.....	\$805 million
U.S. Department of Agriculture	
<i>ReConnect Pilot Program</i>	\$700 million
<i>Rural Community Facilities Program</i>	\$100 million
<i>Emergency Community Water Assistance Grants</i>	\$5 million

Background:

USDA Rural Development offers loans, grants, and loan guarantees that build and sustain many of our rural communities. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit it was even clearer how much many of these communities needed assistance, particularly with high-speed internet which has been critical for many struggling to adjust to the new reality of virtual work and school.

The ReConnect Pilot Program provides loans and grants for the costs of construction, improvement, or acquisition of facilities and equipment needed to provide broadband service in eligible rural areas. To qualify for both the grant and loan the service must provide internet speeds of 25/3 Mbs, with loans providing interest rates of 2%. This program received \$635 million in funding for FY 2021.

The Rural Community Facilities Programs offers direct loans, loan guarantees, and grants to develop or improve essential public services and facilities, such as fire and rescue stations, village and town halls, health care clinics, hospitals, adult and child care centers, assisted living facilities, rehabilitation centers, public buildings, schools, libraries, and other community-focused facilities. This program helps ensure that rural communities meet the needs of their citizens and ensure that the community can further develop. This program received \$74 million in funding for FY 2021.

The Emergency Community Water Assistance Grants are vital to rural community disaster recovery. The program grants up to \$150,000 to construct waterline extensions, repair breaks or leaks in existing water distribution lines, and address related maintenance necessary to replenish the water supply and \$1,000,000 to construct a water source, intake, or treatment facility after a disaster. This program received zero dollars for FY 2021.

The Issue:

All these programs ensure that our rural communities can meet the basic needs in the wake of the longest sustained flooding in 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic. After the severe sustained flooding of 2019, river water infiltrated many of our communities' sewer systems. This damaged the many sewer lines and limited our water treatment facilities' processing ability.

Therefore, the Mayors urge Congress to allocate \$700 million for the ReConnect Pilot Program, \$100 million for the Rural Community Facilities Program, and \$5 million for the Emergency Community Water Assistance Grants in FY 2022. These programs are vitally needed by our rural communities to meet their needs after the flooding in 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Commerce, Justice Science

Public Works Grant Program.....\$150 million U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Admin.
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Background:

EDA's Public Works Grant Programs provide economically distressed communities and regions with comprehensive and flexible resources to address a wide variety of economic needs. These programs are focused on Opportunity Zones, which make up a majority of the land along the main stem of the Mississippi River. These flexible grants support new ideas and creative approaches to create economic prosperity in communities. This flexibility is key as nearly 10 million jobs remain lost because of COVID-19, and the US stands to lose between \$3 to \$4 trillion in GDP over the next two years.

In FY 2021, the Public Works Grant Program was funded at \$120 million. The CARES Act also allocated \$1.467 billion to Public Works Program as a supplemental in FY 2020. Investments under the Public Works Grant Program can fund projects like distance learning networks, smart buildings, business and industrial parks with fiber optic cable, telecommunications and development facilities, water and sewer system improvements, business incubators, port expansion, and brownfields redevelopment. Projects are judged on their potential to increase the capacity of the community or region to promote job creation and private investment in the regional economy, as well as the likelihood that the project will achieve its projected outcomes.

Issue:

With the increase in funding our Mayors would be able to support a wide variety of programs that are specifically designed for their communities' needs and best suited to ensure their communities are supporting their citizens as soon as possible. Our Mayors understand that our communities will need to look and work differently in a post-pandemic world, with a program like EDA's Public Works Grant program our Mayors will be able to adjust to the new economic realities of a post-COVID-19 world.

Therefore, the Mayors urge Congress to increase funding for the Public Works Grant Program to \$150 million in FY 2022 to help communities deal with the long-term effects that the COVID-19 pandemic will have in communities. Supporting these targeted local approaches will ensure that cities and towns can support economic solutions following the fallout from the pandemic.

Homeland Security

Resilience Revolving Loan Fund (RRF).....\$100 million U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency

Background:

In 2012, disasters cut into the total revenue of the Mississippi River economy by 8.75 percent in actual losses, to say nothing about ongoing drains on the economy that metastasize and multiply over time. On average over the last five years, disasters are costing the Mississippi River economy close to 3 percent annually. But the impacts are actually much larger than this since disasters tend to spike losses in the economy and have on-going impacts that can take years to neutralize.

The multiplier effect of disasters is exactly why investment in preparedness and mitigation can payback as much as \$12.00 for every dollar spent. More importantly, if the investment is in the form of a loan over a grant, ROI to the taxpayer can be improved even more.

The record floods of 2019 cost the Mississippi River Corridor \$6.2 billion in actual losses and over \$20 billion for the entire basin. The RRF was enacted through the STORM Act on January 1, 2021. The Act authorizes \$100 million for fiscal years 2022 and 2023 totaling \$200 million.

The Issue:

Resilience has considerable national security implications. Since the Mississippi River System (as described above) is so integral to the U.S. economy both domestically and globally and sustains so many jobs – the repercussions to our national security require explicit attention.

A Community Resilience Revolving Loan Fund (RRF) is a tool to provide another investment leveraging option for infrastructure. State Revolving Loan Funds for clean water and drinking water provide a minimum return of almost \$2.00 for every dollar spent. A similar instrument can be established for a broader application toward preparedness activities.

Moreover, a fully funded resilience loan fund can directly compliment the BRIC Program. The key, however is applying the RRFs in such a way that revenue is generated to repay loans. Regardless of the revenue attachments, hazards such as drought, prolonged episodes of intense heat, severe storms, wildfires, and earthquakes must be addressed or any major infrastructure projects will be vulnerable.

Therefore, Mayors urge full funding of the Resilience Revolving Loan Fund to create greater return on investment around making our infrastructure more adaptive to more frequent disasters.

Further, Mayors urge the Administration to create the position of *White House Chief Resilience Officer*. With BRIC, the RRF, and the full complement of the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program FEMA will be placing nearly \$800 million a year into resilience. This work requires coordination, organization, and collaboration among agencies across the federal portfolio.

Building Resilient Infrastructure & Communities Prog.....6% Share U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency

Background:

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program effectively reduces threats to Mississippi River Valley populations and structures at risk by funding preparation in advance of natural disasters, while also reducing the River region's reliance upon Federal post-disaster recovery funds. BRIC provides funds for pre-disaster planning and mitigation saving money by investing in disaster preparation, when every dollar spent on disaster mitigation yielded six to twelve dollars in benefits. We applaud the Congress' renewed support for shifting federal spending away from the very expensive recovery side of the balance sheet to the much more impactful mitigation side thereby protecting our communities and making our economies more resilient.

The Issue:

The Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018 gives the President authority to set-aside an equivalent of up to 6 percent from the funds spent on disasters the previous year for certain types of future disaster assistance for pre-disaster mitigation projects, creating a permanent funding source for such activities. This new provision was envisioned by Congress to create a new level of capacity within pre-disaster spending. However, Mayors of MRCTI are concerned about less than six percent of the set aside being made available and that natural infrastructure is not emphasized enough in program guidance.

Therefore, the Mayors of MRCTI implore FEMA to pursue the following priorities for the BRIC program.

- BRIC should prioritize for projects that include natural infrastructure assets, involve multiple states, address multiple hazards, and incorporate and reward climate risk reduction capacities;
- BRIC should also have specific limits on what administrative restrictions states can place on localities competing for a share of the funds. Too often do states issue controls on local governments preventing them from applying for competitive federal funds such as prohibitively short deadlines;
- BRIC should be as flexible and multi-hazard as possible in spending requirements. Climate impacts now are so severe, persistent, and variable that tight spending margins will only serve to frustrate progress and cost the taxpayer more;
- There should be provisions in the new PDM and across the FEMA portfolio that reward local governments for saving critical national infrastructure from being destroyed; FEMA assistance does not currently incentivize this activity;
- The language of the Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018 allows for up to a maximum of 6 percent of the funds spent addressing disasters the previous year giving the Administration the flexibility to set aside less than 6 percent. MRCTI urges FEMA to pursue the full six percent set-aside for FY2022.

Interior, Environment, & Related Agencies

Section 319 Water Pollution Control Grants.....\$200 million U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
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Background:

EPA’s Clean Water Act Section 319 Categorical State Grant Program provides grants (known as “Water Pollution Control Grants”) to states for prevention and control measures that improve water quality. \$164.92 million was enacted for FY 2016 for Clean Water Act Nonpoint Source (Section 319) Grant Program (\$5.66 million over the FY 2015 enacted level). This spending is directed at state and tribal efforts designed to implement water pollution controls and strengthen nutrient control efforts consistent with EPA state nutrient reduction framework.

The funding level for FY 2020 of \$172 and FY 2021 of \$177 million increased the spending for 319 grants as compared to the FY 2019 enacted level in order to begin meeting the needs of states for controlling the massive nutrient-intensive landscapes they are faced with managing. This resource assists states in securing the agricultural industry and aiding our manufacturing base because nutrients lost from the field to our rivers comprise a cost to farmers in nutrient replacement, and a cost to manufacturers and cities to clean the water before it can be used to power industry. The combined agriculture and manufacturing economies just in the 246 counties that comprise the Mississippi River corridor generate \$422.6 billion.

The Issue:

Section 319 Water Pollution Control Grants are the only grant within the EPA portfolio specifically intended to reduce non-point pollutants and toxins from entering waters of the U.S. The Mayors see nutrient loading as one of the most significant threats facing the water quality of the Mississippi River and all its aquatic systems that support cities’ economies.

MRCTI has held discussions with stakeholders throughout the corridor to determine how mayors can play a valuable role in reducing nutrient loading into the Mississippi River. Out of the ten Mississippi River states, only Minnesota and Illinois have set both nutrient reduction goals and timelines. Two states have set reduction goals, but no timelines, and six states have neither. States have explained to us that budget constraints are one of the main causes for not pursuing nutrient reduction more directly. Funding is needed to deploy robust monitoring as well as conduct the research needed to set credible goals. Thus, mayors are working to see how they can help states secure more funding resources through the only non-point source grant program – 319.

Therefore, the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative Mayors ask Congress to fund the Section 319 Categorical State Grant Program’s Water Pollution Control Grants at \$200 million for FY 2021. Further, Mayors recommend the U.S. EPA partner with the Natural Resource Conservation Service within USDA to ensure state 319 Grants plans include nutrient reduction capacities at an influential level. This type of cross-agency collaboration on evaluating grant applications has precedent in the HUD administered Sustainable Communities Grant Program where multiple agencies advised on application viability on a number of performance metrics.

Drinking Water Infrastructure Resilience & Sustainability.....\$4 million
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Community Water System Risk and Resilience Program...\$25 million
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Background:

Water infrastructure resilience, sustainability, innovation and risk reduction were parceled-out into a variety of short-term programs made available through the 2018 passage of America’s Water Infrastructure Act. These programs are authorized at modest amounts totaling only \$264 million for the entire nation. These programs are designed to offer key infusions of capitol into large or small water systems that require single fund infusions to reach project success.

The Issue:

According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, there is a \$300 billion investment shortfall in drinking water and wastewater infrastructure investment. The drinking water wastewater investment shortfall for the ten states along the Mississippi River is \$92.1 billion. Though the new WRDA programs will not create a considerable impact on the water infrastructure backlog, they do demonstrate a recognition of various problems facing city water systems.

Two accounts in particular assist cities with better leveraging the multi-billion state revolving loan program (SRFs) and the innovative Water Infrastructure Financing Innovation Act credit program (WIFIA): The Drinking Water System Infrastructure Resilience & Sustainability Program and the Community Water System Risk and Resilience Program. Though only authorized for a combined maximum funding level of under thirty million dollars, both grants add to city resilience and mitigation capacities for the extensive water system infrastructure that must be maintained. The drinking water system grant offers aid to help small or disadvantaged communities prepare their drinking water infrastructure for threats like floods, hurricanes, and hydrologic changes.

Beneficially, the community water system program expands on the drinking water system grant by focusing on and augmenting the community water system emergency plan requirements under EPA. Local governments can use the community water system risk and resilience program for planning by expanding their emergency plan capacity and application. During the 2019 floods, cities along the Mississippi River sustained flooding for over 270 days in some places. High water for this long a duration created new water system impacts not typically seen during flood events such as massive subsoil shifting, record number of sinkholes, and systemic damage to water treatment plants.

The pandemic through 2020 and into 2021 has delayed defunded infrastructure restoration efforts throughout the corridor and the winter storms of 2021 have caused further damage.

Therefore, MRCTI mayors call on Congress to fund at the full authorized level the drinking water and community water system resilience grants to provide cities a group of funding options for the diverse infrastructure problems facing aging municipal water systems.

North American Wetlands Conservation Fund.....\$50 million U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
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Background:

Wetlands are a complex ecosystem that provide a myriad of services and benefits to near-water communities including water quality improvement, pollution control, flood protection, fisheries, recreation, and commercial harvests of rice, reeds, and hay.

The Northern American Wetlands Conservation Fund (WCF) assists local government agencies in building programs to protect, manage and restore wetlands. States and local governments are eligible to apply for financial resources out of the WCF providing a 50 percent match. The Fund provides applicants with some opportunity to develop and refine comprehensive state, local government wetland programs, however the majority of the award should go toward specific wetland restoration projects. The WCF prioritizes for spending meant to build the capacity of state, local governments to increase the quantity and quality of wetlands in the U.S. by acquiring real property to turn over to wetlands, conserving and restoring wetland acreage, and improving wetland conditions.

It is difficult to overstate the benefits of wetlands due to their efficient water regulating capacity. For instance, a single wetland can remove the same amount of pollutants as a \$5 million treatment plant without the adjoining energy, maintenance, and capital costs as the built equivalent.

The Issue:

The Upper Mississippi River Basin has lost over 80 percent or 64 million acres of wetlands since the close of the 18th century leaving our region exposed to disasters that would normally be absorbed by wetland capabilities. A single wetland acre can store as much as one million gallons of water. Collectively, wetlands provide several hundred million dollars in water flow and regulatory services annually.

Further, outdoor recreation and tourism comprise the second largest economy on the Mississippi River supporting a sport fishing industry that generates several billion dollars in annual revenue. Up to 90 percent of recreational fish catch depends on wetlands for an essential portion of the life cycle. On the terrestrial side, half of all North American bird species nest or feed in wetlands and the Mississippi River Valley is home to the largest most populated migratory flyway in the continent supporting a multi-billion bird and large game economy.

Therefore, the MRCTI Mayors call upon Congress to support the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund at \$50 million for FY 2022, only \$3.5 million over the FY 2021 enacted level. In tandem with the WCF allocation, MRCTI mayors also recommend adding designated project areas to the Five Star Urban Waters Program that includes the Mississippi River and major confluence areas such as the St. Croix, Cedar, Missouri, Ohio, and Arkansas Rivers. Finally, MRCTI mayors strongly recommend allocating the full share due to the Land & Water Conservation Fund so that the maximum benefits of that program may be realized and fully compliment the work of the urban waters and wetland grants.

Transportation, HUD, & Related Agencies

America's Marine Highway Grant Program.....\$12 million U.S. Department of Transportation
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Background:

Consisting of over 29,000 nautical miles of navigable waterways, America's Marine Highway System serves as an extension of the surface transportation system and promotes short sea transportation. Two Marine Highway System routes (the M-55 and M-35 Corridors) incorporate the Mississippi River. Those two corridors are vital components of the nation's inland waterway system and central to maintaining our ability to efficiently transport a significant portion of the region's agricultural and other commodity exports to the Gulf.

America's Marine Highway Program is a Department of Transportation-led program to expand the use of our Nation's navigable waterways and to relieve landside congestion by increasing the efficiency of the surface transportation system. The Program is administered by the Maritime Administration (MARAD), which collaborates with stakeholders from all transportation sectors to improve and strengthen the U.S. marine transportation system, including building a U.S. maritime system for the 21st Century.

In 2014, \$1.7 trillion worth of U.S. goods moved through the nation's ports. The largest U.S. port ranked by tonnage is the Port of South Louisiana along the Mississippi River. Indeed, the nation's only trade surplus in agricultural goods is made possible by port infrastructure of the Mississippi. Waterways and ports of the ten-state Mississippi River Corridor alone provide over 500,000 jobs generating \$83.6 billion in annual revenue.

The Issue:

Regardless of the infrastructure and economy described above, containerized freight, the most ubiquitous medium of freight movement, is almost non-existent on the nation's inland waterway system. Of the 29 million containers that came into the United States in 2018, almost none of them moved on the Mississippi River. Thanks to a broad public/private partnership brokered by the Mayors of the Mississippi River, Inland River Port & Terminal Association, and the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association container movement is returning to the River.

Our inland ports and waterways cannot be ignored and are essential to our economic future:

- Our population will grow from 329 million in 2019, to 438 million by 2050;
- The movement of freight is expected to increase by 40 percent over the next 30 years;
- As much as 10 percent of the cost of goods can be attributed to transportation costs.

Bottom line, there is not enough surface transportation infrastructure to accommodate projected growth in U.S. freight demand. *Inland port and waterway infrastructure are vital to U.S. economic competitiveness.*

Therefore, MRCTI Mayors call upon Congress to support the Marine Highway Program by funding the grant account at \$12 million, just \$1.2 above the FY 2021 enacted level.

Scenic Byways Program.....\$20 million US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration
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Background:

The Scenic Byways program under the Federal Highway Administration is a collaborative effort that was established to recognize, preserve and enhance selected roads throughout the United States. The U.S. Secretary of Transportation recognizes certain roads as All-American Roads or National Scenic Byways based on one or more archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities.

The Great River Road running directly next to the Mississippi River is arguably the longest and most important scenic byway in America. The road travels through many of our communities and encourages tourists to explore the Mighty Mississippi and our communities. The road is an important way to connect our communities for the 3,000-mile journey from Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico. Along the Great River Road National Scenic Byway, there is a wide variety of tourism amenities as well as Interpretive Centers that help travelers experience the many facets of the Mississippi River Region.

The Scenic Byways program provides grants to benefit the byway traveler's experience, whether it will help manage the intrinsic qualities that support the byway's designation, shape the byway's story, interpret the story for visitors, or improve visitor facilities along the byway. Improving the Great River Road is vital to increasing the sense of history and beauty that the Mississippi River represents to our nation and our communities. The Scenic Byways program was funded at \$16 million for FY 2021.

Issue:

During COVID-19, driving has again increased in popularity as a safe activity that can be enjoyed uninterrupted in everyday life. Increasing funding to the Scenic Byways program will help to meet the needs of this increased usage and beautify these locations. Byways like the Great River Road can be a way to increase tourism and help restart the tourism industry after the economic hits taken because of the pandemic.

Therefore, the Mayors urge Congress to increase funding for the Scenic Byway program to \$20 million for FY 2021. This increased funding will help to improve the Great River Road and ensure that generations to come will be able to enjoy this national treasure.

Authorization Priorities

“Because of MRCTI, we can deploy more infrastructure.”

-Mayor LaToya Cantrell of New Orleans, LA



Safeguarding the Mississippi River Together Act;

America’s Transportation Infrastructure Act

Disaster Equitability, Prevention,
Emergency Needs & Decisions
(DEPEND) Package

- *Flood Level Observation, Ops, & Decision Support Act*
- *Preventing Health Emergencies & Temperature-Related Illness and Deaths Act*
- *Catastrophic Loss Mitigation Incentive and Tax Parity Act*
- *National Flood Insurance Reauthorization*

Break Free from Plastic
Pollution Act

Safeguarding the Mississippi River Together Act

Water Resources Development Act Reauthorization

House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee

Senate Environment & Public Works Committee

Mayors of the MRCTI Propose the *Safeguarding the Mississippi River Together Act* (SMRT Act) for the purpose of sustaining one of the nation's most important natural resources relying on and expanding authority enacted via the 2014 Water Resources Development Act. All actions are presented at Corridor scale.

The SMRT Act creates the Following Organs

- 1) *Federal Leadership Committee* comprised of critical federal agencies, one governor, and one Mayor to coordinate and advise on federal mobilization to carry out the Act.
- 2) *National Mississippi River Program Office* to develop and implement a Comprehensive Mississippi River Restoration Plan as well as studies and investigations called for under the Act.
- 3) *Comprehensive Mississippi River Restoration Plan* assembled and managed by the Mississippi River Program Office, this plan will set-out a ten-state strategy to restore at scale the critical national assets of the entire Mississippi River Corridor.

The SMRT Act Establishes the Following Grants and Studies

- 1) Infrastructure Repair, Resilience, and Adaptation Grant to repair, replace, or restore critical natural and built infrastructure assets that have sustained considerable damage due to repetitive loss events through spending lines for planning, resilience, and build-back-better activities.
- 2) Sustainable Economic Development Grant to allow communities to shift their economies from costly industrial base to clean manufacturing, commodity movement, and/or tourism.
- 3) State Sedimentation and Errand Nutrient Assistance Grant for states to pursue nutrient reduction strategies more aggressively in the form of planning, innovative achievement of nutrient reduction goals such as nutrient trading, capitalization for best technology, support of on-field sustainable agriculture practices and the development of new markets for cover crops.
- 4) Mississippi River Corridor Economic Profile updated every five years to profile the regional economic activity dependent upon the Mississippi Corridor.
- 5) Watershed Monitoring Network calls for the development of a Water quality and flow monitoring network for the Mississippi River Valley.
- 6) Disaster Resilience and Environmental Services Valuation provides data, research, and investigation that offers economic impact of all MVD ecosystem restoration work in terms of disaster resilience and enhanced environmental services to be made part of the MVD's cost-benefit analysis for all ecosystem restoration projects.
- 7) Trust Fund Feasibility Study to determine the feasibility of establishing a multi-user-fee-supported trust fund for the Mississippi River's ecological sustainability and built infrastructure integrity and repair.



Appropriations and ROI

The SMRT Act authorizes up to \$500 million per year for five years to fund activities prescribed. Since funding resilience can generate a return of up to \$12.00 for every \$1.00 invested and the environmental services of the corridor produce nearly \$500 billion in annual revenue for the nation as well as billions of dollars more in water regulation and production services the actual cost projected for this Act is close to 0.1 percent of the return if benefits remain unchanged.

Permeable Margins of Jurisdiction and Authority

The Mississippi River Corridor is vast with many interests and players, thus a multi-lateral approach is necessary to have an impact on climate, resilience, and economic security. This legislation works to address issues outside traditional silos and cross links original authorities among agencies so intergovernmental, inter-economic, and interdisciplinary sciences are essential.

Timelines Arranged

- 1) 120 days after enactment, the Secretary of the Interior shall establish a narrowly tailored temporary version of the National Program Office in order to immediately assist and coordinate the early activities of the Secretary and the Federal Leadership Committee until a more permanent version may be developed in the Mississippi River region.
- 2) 6 months after enactment, the Secretary of Interior shall invite proposals from the ten states along the Mississippi River to host the National Mississippi River Program Office.
- 3) 6 months after the Secretary of Interior invites proposals from the ten states along the Mississippi River to host the National Mississippi River Program Office, states' responses are due to be submitted to the Secretary.
- 4) 9 months after enactment, the Federal Leadership Committee shall prepare and publish a broad strategy for coordinated implementation of existing programs and projects to guide efforts to protect and restore the Mississippi River Corridor.
- 5) 2.5 years after enactment, the National Program Office shall develop a comprehensive Mississippi River Restoration Plan.
- 6) 3 years after enactment, the Trust Fund Feasibility Study shall be reported to Congress.
- 7) Every 5 years after enactment, the Program Office shall update to the Economic Profile.
- 8) Every year after the publishing of the Comprehensive Mississippi River Restoration Plan, at least one project must be carried out as prescribed by the Act.

From Corridor to Basin Effect

This legislation is designed to set the stage for management of the Mississippi River region from corridor (10 states) to basin (31 states) scale over time as the intent, inquiry, and approach are perfected starting with the activities described in the SMRT Act.

America's Transportation Infrastructure Act
Highway Bill Reauthorization
House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee
Senate Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee

Background:

The Mississippi River ten-state corridor has some of the most important infrastructure to the nation's economy making possible the country's only trade surplus and over \$164 billion in agricultural exports and domestic shipments annually. However, more than 10 percent of the bridges in the River's ten-state corridor are structurally deficient, 16 percent of the corridor's roads are in poor condition, and the parks in the corridor are facing a collective \$4.97 billion in unmet needs. Three of the states along the Mississippi River rank in the top ten of port tonnage, six of the states in the top twenty of port tonnage. Yet, closures along the Mississippi are now more common and cost the nation \$300 million per day in lost economic activity. Flooding on the Mississippi in 2019 cost over \$20 billion in actual losses.

The Issue:

The national deficit as a whole for all types of infrastructure in the U.S. is in the trillions of dollars which creates apathy due to the seemingly insurmountable amount of investment required to repair the inventory we already have. Incremental progress can yield results if coupled with making our infrastructure resilient and mitigating for increasing climate impacts.

The Mayors of MRCTI present their recommendations for the pending highway bill in two categories: 1) funding levels for critical programs and grants; 2) policy endorsements and/or recommendations.

Therefore, the Mayors of MRCTI recommend the following programs be prioritized within the America's Transportation Infrastructure Act (highway bill reauthorization) and subsequently funded at the full authorization level.

Resiliency Program (Protect Grants)	\$5.5 billion (5 years)
Disaster Relief Mobilization Pilot Program	\$5.0 million
Rural Barge Landing Dock, and Waterfront Infrastructure Projects	\$6.2 billion (5 years)
National Scenic Byways Program	\$20 million
Construction of Ferry Boats and Ferry Terminal Facilities Program	\$440 million (5 years)
Bridge Investment Program	\$3.26 billion (5 years)

Further, the Mayors of MRCTI make the following policy recommendations in regards to the America's Infrastructure Act.

- *Section 1106. Emergency Relief* – Mayors strongly agree with expanding the Emergency Relief program's parameters for spending to improve resiliency including removing surface transportation infrastructure out of floodplains and the use of natural infrastructure to mitigate the risk of flooding.

- *Section 1109. Expansion of Surface Transportation Block Grant Program* – Mayors endorse expanding the STBG to include construction of wildlife crossing structures, rural barge landing, dock, and waterfront infrastructure projects, and the construction of certain privately or majority privately owned ferry boats and terminals.
- *Section 1114. National Highway Freight Program* – Mayors agree with proposed Increases to the maximum number of highway miles a State may designate as critical rural freight corridors from 150 to 300 miles, and as critical urban freight corridors from 75 to 150 miles; and additional flexibility for lower population-density States to designate a maximum of 600 miles. The section allows up to 30 percent of program funds to be used on eligible multimodal projects.
- *Section 1115. Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)* – MRCTI Mayors strongly agree with adding flexibility to CMAQ by allowing States to spend up to 10 percent of CMAQ funds on certain lock and dam modernization or rehabilitation projects and certain marine highway corridor, connector, or crossings projects.
- *Section 1522. Permeable Pavements Study* – MRCTI Mayors endorse a study on the effects of permeable pavements on flood control.
- *Section 1301. Efficient Environmental Reviews for Project Decision-making and One Federal Decision* - MRCTI Mayors recommend including a mechanism by which environmental enhancement and restoration projects assisting built infrastructure be given priority review and that full environmental reviews be maintained to shield public lands, water, and air from consequences.

Most importantly, we recommend that projects incorporating resilience and mitigation capacities by use of natural infrastructure already in place or to be restored, should receive priority consideration from the agency as this will reduce the risk of investment and decrease maintenance costs. These same considerations can be applied to the state rural infrastructure investment plans especially for disaster-prone areas such as near-water communities.

The Mayors of MRCTI urge that any alterations to natural resource reviews provided by law not sacrifice human health and safety or the integrity of critical environmental services for the sake of project efficiencies. Compromising ecosystem benefits may ultimately render an infrastructure project more expensive due to its unintended deleterious effect on water security and/or natural protections to disasters.

Disaster Equitability, Prevention, Emergency Needs and Decisions (DEPEND) Package [A Suite of 4 bills Selected by MRCTI]

Catastrophe Loss Mitigation Incentive and Tax Parity Act [DEPEND Package]

“Our two cities have worked together to return repetitive loss areas back to the River and pursue infrastructure designed to flood.”

- Mayor Phil Stang of Kimmswick, MO, MRCTI State Chair
- Mayor Ron Counts of Arnold, MO



Background:

Disaster mitigation is crucial to prevent the costs associated with disaster recovery. Every dollar spent by the federal government on disaster mitigation has proven itself to save \$6.00 to \$12.00 for every dollar spent on post-disaster recovery. The devastating flooding on the Mississippi River cost over \$20 billion in 2019 alone. Improving options for financing will allow the opportunity to prioritize mitigation efforts and save the federal government in the long run.

Rep. Thompson (CA) and Rep. Calvert (CA) introduced the Catastrophe Loss Mitigation Incentive and Tax Parity Act that excludes Federal taxation of state-based grants that support mitigation. The bill was introduced in the House at the end of 2019 but failed to move out the Ways and Means Committee. The bill needs to be reintroduced in the 117th Congress. Unfortunately, the legislation does not yet include flooding as one of the qualified mitigation purposes.

The Issue:

This common-sense approach will stop people from being penalized for receiving federal aid that will protect people, property, and communities. By removing this tax, it will encourage homeowners to make the necessary changes to their homes. In the Mississippi River valley, this could tremendously help our communities by providing extra incentives for our residents to pursue flood prevention measures in vulnerable areas, once the bill adds language on floods.

Similar efforts have been taken at the state level in California and have been successful in mitigating earthquake damage. If this effort were taken federally and included language for flooding it should make significant efforts to encouraging homeowners to take action to prevent flooding and support the long-term solvency of the National Flood Insurance program.

Therefore, the Mayors urge Congress to reintroduce and pass the Catastrophe Loss Mitigation Incentive and Tax Parity Act with language that also allows tax deductions to mitigate flooding, storm surge, and named storms. There is no direct cost with the bill, although the tax benefits will reduce revenue, the loss will likely be less than the savings due to the mitigative efforts.

Flood Level Observation, Operations, and Decision Support Act (FLOODS Act) - \$35,000,000 (\$3,500,000 for fiscal years 2022-2031) [DEPEND Package]

Background:

Flooding has been shown to result in over \$25 billion in annual economic losses nationally. In 2019, flooding within the Mississippi River Basin caused over \$20 billion in damage to public and private property, plus losses to crops and livestock, for the entire Mississippi River and its tributaries according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. These losses can be mitigated with better forecasting information, that will allow communities like those along the Mississippi River to better plan and deploy assets to mitigate the damage before it happens. As mitigation has been shown to pay back as much as \$6.00 for every dollar spent.

In the previous Congress, Sen. Wicker introduced the Flood Level Observation, Operations, and Decision Support Act (FLOODS Act, then S.4462) to increase the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) ability to forecast floods, hurricanes, and tornados to allow a better response to mitigate potential damage. The bill passed the Senate at the end of 2020 by unanimous consent and with bi-partisan support. A companion bill was also introduced in the House, however, the bill failed to gain traction before the end of the 116th Congress.

The Issue:

The FLOODS Act has the potential to provide information that will save lives and prevent property damage. With early warnings, our communities will be able to better evacuate vulnerable areas to save lives as well as deploy temporary barriers and other resources to prevent property damage. The FLOODS Act establishes a “National Integrated Flood Information System” to coordinate and integrate flood research at NOAA. Further, the bill allows for increased partnerships within the various federal department to ensure better coordination in water management.

For local communities the benefits will be invaluable as a service coordination hydrologist will be positioned at each National Weather Service River Forecast Center to increase impact-based decision support services at State and local level, and flood watches and warnings will be improved to support coordinated flood management. NOAA will also work to improve monitoring of windstorms, deploy aerial surveys of floodwaters, as well as model freshwater outflow into the ocean. As Mayors along the nation's largest inland waterway, this information could dramatically improve our response.

Therefore, the Mayors urge the reintroduction and passage of the FLOODS Act in the 117th Congress to provide better forecasting and early warnings for potentially deadly storms as early detection could save lives and prevent property damage. We recommend that \$3,500,000 be made available for each fiscal year 2022 through 2031 pursuant to this Act.

Preventing Health Emergencies and Temperature-Related (HEAT) Illness and Deaths Act- \$194 Million (for fiscal years 2022-2026) [DEPEND Package]

Background:

Heat-related deaths are a tragedy not just for the loss of life, but the ability to prevent those deaths. In the past 30 years, extreme heat events have been the leading cause of weather-related deaths in the US. The COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters have exposed just how vital these cooling centers can be to preventing loss of life. In the wake of Hurricane Laura, which left 22 dead in Louisiana in 2020 six of those deaths were classified as heat-related deaths. When natural disasters and power outages are combined with high heat indexes, it leaves many in the community particularly vulnerable. With the added impact of the COVID-19 pandemic closing many of these cooling centers has made the issue even worse, and disproportionately affected the elderly and those with pre-existing conditions.

Last Congress Senator Markey introduced the Preventing Health Emergencies and Temperature-related (HEAT) Illness and Deaths Act (then S. 4280) to formalize and improve the National Integrated Heat Health Information System Interagency Committee (NIHHIS) and establish a grant program that will provide \$100 million in grants to reduce the health impacts of extreme heat. Cities and low-income urban neighborhoods are particularly vulnerable, as cities can be 20 degrees warmer than the surrounding area, and low-income areas have been found to have less tree cover which can further compound the issue.

The Issue:

The Preventing HEAT Illness and Deaths Act is a tremendous step toward communities with better identification of increased heat and the resources needed to combat it in our communities. The National Integrated Heat Health Information System Interagency Committee was created by President Obama, this legislation will authorize and expand the focus of that committee. Also, the committee will conduct a study on extreme heat that will identify ways to improve heat warnings, address and identify gaps in data including public facilities that lack air conditioning, develop alternatives to public cooling centers, and better protect workers exposed to extreme heat conditions.

In addition, the bill provides \$100 million to community projects that reduce the health impact of extreme heat events, and give priority to projects in disadvantaged communities, communities with significant heat disparities, and communities with large gaps in heat preparedness.

Therefore, the Mayors urge Congress to reintroduce and pass the Preventing HEAT Illness and Deaths Act, as this legislation is critically needed to help provide our communities with the resources needed to support cooling centers in our communities and outreach to vulnerable populations. We request \$194 million to be allocated over 5 years, with \$94 million to National Integrated Heat Health Information System Interagency Committee (NIHHIS) to improve information and response related to extreme heat and \$100 million for grants to address extreme heat.

Background:

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) provides federally backed flood insurance to property owners, renters, and businesses in the case of a flood. NFIP is a crucial program to many of the communities along the Mississippi River that have suffered damage from flooding with over \$20 billion in damages in 2019 alone. Unfortunately, many of our communities along the river have homes that have suffered repeated flooding. The National Flood Insurance Program provides many of our citizens the peace of mind to purchase and protect their homes in the chance of an unforeseen natural disaster. As Mayors, we work to move or protect vulnerable homes and neighborhoods. Increased help from the federal government can lessen the burden faced by our communities.

The Issue:

NFIP is set to expire on September 30, 2021, a long-term comprehensive reauthorization is currently needed. The House began the examination of NFIP in 2019, and the National Flood Insurance Program Reauthorization Act was passed out of Committee. That bill would have allowed FEMA to prioritize its resources toward communities like many of ours that are working to address issues around homes that have flooded more than once. It would have also established a revolving loan fund that would have helped to provide loan interest loans to a variety of stakeholders to reduce flooding risks. Congress should pass a comprehensive reauthorization of the NFIP before the end of the fiscal year.

Therefore, the Mayors urge Congress to pass a reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program before the end of the fiscal year that includes:

- Prioritization under FEMA for communities that are working to address homes that have been affected multiple times so cities have assistance in relocating residents in repetitive loss areas;
- Establish a flexible revolving loan fund that will provide low-interest loans to communities, schools, businesses, and families that reduce the effects of floods including buying out properties that have been flooded repeatedly and environmental restoration;
- Require communities with 50 or more repeatedly flooded properties to develop flood plain management, mitigate the effects of flooding, and reduce the growth of properties in these areas, or remove those properties completely away from vulnerable areas;
- Increase flood risk disclosure to ensure all purchasers and renters of a property to be able to see if the property has had previous flood damage, and relevant information associated with that damage;
- NFIP policies and rates need to accurately reflect the risks associated with such a policy, we do understand the need for affordability to many of these homes particularly in low-income communities, however, these policies should not be so low that they create a moral hazard to the residents and incentivize remaining in dangerous areas.

The reauthorization also needs to limit the promise of future subsidies for new construction in vulnerable flood plains, we need to ensure the long-term viability of the program, and limiting future subsidies to flood-prone new construction will ensure more safe sustainable construction.

Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act

Background:

In September 2018, Mississippi River Mayors announced a commitment with state legislators and companies on an effort to reduce plastic waste in the Mississippi River Valley by calling on levels of government and organizations to reduce their plastic waste.

This year in conjunction with the United Nations, National Geographic, and the University of Georgia we have launched a Mississippi River Plastic Reduction Initiative aimed at first documenting and tracking plastic waste on the Mississippi River. As an initial pilot, we are working with community groups in St. Paul, St. Louis, and Baton Rouge to document the large plastic problem that exists on the Mississippi River.

The Mississippi River provides billions of gallons of fresh water to industry each day and drinking water to 20 million people in 50 cities. But when up to 80% of the plastic in our oceans comes from land-based sources and the Mississippi River drains an expansive 31-state landscape, it becomes clear that possibly 40 percent of plastic pollution in the Gulf originates from the Mississippi River.

Compounding the plastic issues facing water quality of the Mississippi River is the fact that China announced last year that it would no longer take any plastic waste for recycling from the United States closing the door to a 25-year running outlet for plastic waste. About 45 percent of the world's plastic waste set for recycling was being processed by China until 2018. Nations like the U.S. will need to recycle waste at home with little recycling infrastructure to do so.

The Issue:

U.S. communities are now responsible for recycling and processing a majority of their waste. The recycling infrastructure simply does not exist in the United States to manage the tremendous plastic waste we are now having to assimilate.

More importantly, however, is the need for plastic waste to be reduced. There needs to be an equal if not larger private sector response to this problem as plastics are pervasive throughout the economy. For instance, the amount of plastic produced from 2000 - 2010 exceeds the amount produced during the entire last century.

As much as municipal plastic recycling systems need resources and support, so too does the marketplace need to reduce its use and dependence on plastics. Such reductions should include commitments to shift plastic products to those types recyclable by municipal systems.

Therefore, MRCTI mayors call on Congress to address recycling infrastructure and waste management deficiencies through passage of a comprehensive vehicle that:

- Improves our national recycling infrastructure;
- Improves the quality and capacity of domestic recycling;
- Incentivizes new waste reduction technologies and practices;
- Provides grants to local governments to modernize and expand recycling;
- Increases the amount and types of recyclable material that is collected and recycled;
- Incentivizes resource reuse, take-back programs, and consumption reduction strategies;
- Reward companies and public entities that reduce their use of plastic.

MRCTI Leadership

Co-Chair

The Honorable Bob Gallagher
Mayor of Bettendorf, IA

Co-Chair

The Honorable Sharon Weston Broome
Mayor of Baton Rouge, LA

Executive Committee

The Honorable Melvin Carter
Mayor of St. Paul, MN

The Honorable Tim Kabat
Mayor of La Crosse, WI
Corp. Advisory Board Presiding Mayor

The Honorable Mike Bawden
Mayor of Riverdale, IA
MRCTI Treasurer

The Honorable Phil Stang
Mayor of Kimmswick, MO

The Honorable Rick Eberlin
Mayor of Grafton, IL

The Honorable Kevin Smith
Mayor of Helena-West Helena, AR
MRCTI Secretary

The Honorable Jim Strickland
Mayor of Memphis, TN

The Honorable George Flaggs
Mayor of Vicksburg, MS

The Honorable Belinda Constant
Mayor of Gretna, LA



Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative

1520 Market Street, Suite 2000

St. Louis, MO 63103

+01 314 657 3862

www.mrcti.org

MRCTI Staff

Colin Wellenkamp
Executive Director

Brandt Thorington
Government Relations Dir.

Tiara Lumas
Operations Manager

Jennifer Wendt
Plastic Waste
Campaign Manager

Jim Gwinner
Press Manager

Dave Ewing, CPA
Fiscal Agent