



2020 CAPITOL MEETING

Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative

2020 Federal Policy Platform
of the Mayors along the
Mississippi River

A 2020 Vision for an
Enhanced River Corridor
*Federal action partnered with
Innovative financing solutions*



Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative 2020 Policy Platform

*Federal Action Partnered with
Innovative Financing*



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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 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

MRCTI



Executive Summary

A 2020 Vision for an Enhanced Mississippi River Corridor

It is our privilege to present the MRCTI Federal Policy Platform for 2020 to our national leaders and regional stakeholders. *Our plan is direct: Answer the historic disasters of 2019 with transformative and innovative new tools that more directly partner federal programs with local action complimented by global-level investment.*

Our Association is comprised of both high-capacity urban areas and opportunity-rich rural towns whose economies depend on each other. Our strength is rooted in the diversity of our 95 member cities whose populations span from hundreds to millions. Our Corridor is a national treasure vital to our nation’s economic security and essential to the world’s commodity supply chain.

This platform of twelve appropriation and four infrastructure priorities works to address the acute shocks and chronic stresses our region has sustained over the last several years totaling more than \$205 billion in actual losses since 2005, over \$10 billion since 2016, and more than \$6 billion in 2019 alone. This platform includes both existing and new programs, 35 percent of which is recommended to remain at current funding levels.

The Mayors’ work helps protect and restore the Mississippi River’s natural infrastructure which supports human culture and economies. The Mississippi River Basin produces 92 percent of United States agricultural exports and 78 percent of the world's exports in feed grains and soybeans. The waterway’s ecology provides 80 billion gallons of fresh water withdraws to industries and drinking water to 20 million people in 50 cities.

According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce the waterways and ports of the ten-state Mississippi River Corridor alone provide over 500,000 jobs generating \$83.6 billion in annual revenue. Yet, the historic proportions of the 2019 floods tested our entire basin

The 2019 Disasters are difficult to overstate. The impacts of 2019 were basin-level: 14 million people displaced, 19.3 million acres unplanted, over \$20 billion in damages across the Ohio and Missouri River Valleys.

Answering the unprecedented events of 2019, Mayors of the Mississippi River offer this \$6.85 billion proposal that builds resilience, mitigates mounting climate risk, creates over 128,000 jobs, and generates more than \$20.5 billion in economic activity.

The Mississippi River is America’s most essential inland waterway because it is the world’s most agriculturally productive basin and largest navigable system with the greatest trade footprint of any river in the western hemisphere. One in every 12 people on Earth ingest food made from commodities produced in the Mississippi River Basin. *What follows here is the Mayors’ recommendation of federal program requests to support and strengthen that will achieve return to the American tax payer if directed toward built and natural infrastructure restoration and deployment.*



Appropriation Priorities

Agriculture, Rural Development, and Related Agencies

- ◇ Emergency Watershed Protection Program, \$157 million
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service

Energy & Water

- ◇ Corps of Engineers Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations \$200 million
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- ◇ Corps of Engineers Mississippi River & Tributaries Program \$400 million
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- ◇ Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program/UMRR, \$1.033 billion
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Homeland Security

- ◇ FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program, Full 6% Share

Interior, Environment, & Related Agencies

- ◇ Section 319 Water Pollution Control Grants, \$200 million
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- ◇ North American Wetlands Conservation Fund, \$50 million
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- ◇ USGS Water Resources Program, +11 million
U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Geological Survey
to baseline spending
- ◇ 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

Transportation, HUD, & Related Agencies

- ◇ America's Marine Highway Grant Program, \$10 million
U.S. Department of Transportation, Maritime Administration
- ◇ U.S. DOT BUILD Grant Program, \$1.5 billion



Infrastructure Priorities

- ◇ Include in the 2020 reauthorization of the Water Resources Development Act greater disaster prediction and assessment capabilities, natural infrastructure capacity analysis, and a recovery bond pilot program;
- ◇ Strengthen local resilience, climate mitigation, and economic development programs within America's Transportation Infrastructure Act, S 2302;
- ◇ Enact the Community Resilience Revolving Loan Fund Act (RRF), HR 3779
- ◇ 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

“Clean Water is the lifeblood of our communities”
-Belinda Constant, Mayor of Gretna, LA



Agriculture, Rural Development & Related Agencies

Emergency Watershed Protection Program.....	\$157 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.

Energy & Water

Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations.....\$200 million
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Mississippi River & Tributaries Program.....\$400 million
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Background:

The Army Corps of Engineers' Civil Works program budget funds the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations Program, which manages critical activities needed to reduce the risk of flood impacts in River communities, facilitate economically vital waterborne transportation, restore significant aquatic ecosystems, generate low-cost flood prevention solutions, and support the River region's jobs.

The Issue:

However, despite the critically-important nature of such projects, the Army Corps of Engineers' Civil Works programs are consistently cut. A funding level of \$200 million specifically for watershed and flood prevention operations coupled with \$400 million for the Mississippi River & Tributaries Program will allow the Corps to bring essential infrastructure out of a state of compromise and provide dimensions for the channel that allow freight to use said infrastructure unhindered while continuing to elevate the priority of natural infrastructure restoration as a viable flood control approach.

The floods of 2019 were especially catastrophic to both farms and city infrastructure with a recovery period estimated to be nearly ten years for some areas that sustained the worst damage. Flooding on a basin scale must be met with basin scale solutions supported by an appropriate budget for such investments.

Therefore, the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative mayors urge Congress to oppose cuts to and support the maintenance of the Army Corps of Engineers' Civil Works program budget specifically achieving \$200 million for watershed and flood prevention operations as well as \$400 million for the Mississippi River & Tributaries Program.

Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Prog/UMRR.....\$1.033 billion U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Background:

The Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) is a long-term plan of navigation improvements and ecological restoration that benefits the entire inland waterway system.

NESP aims to reduce commercial traffic delays while restoring, protecting, and enhancing the environment. NESP implements an integrated, dual-purpose plan that progresses toward economic and environmental sustainability of the River. NESP can advantageously build from the existing Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program (UMRR, \$33 million); and then, UMRR can help ensure continuous benefits after NESP's 15-year duration has completed.

As authorized by Congress, NESP includes \$1.948 billion in navigation improvements and \$256 million for targeted, cost-effective efficiency measures while at the same time providing for \$1.717 billion toward a 15-year ecosystem restoration program that includes an additional \$10.42 million annually for critical monitoring.

The Issue:

The domestic movement of materials and commodities is pivotal to our nation's economy and the Mississippi River's built and natural infrastructure contribute to that obligation beyond any inland waterway. Yet, lock outages have increased 700 percent nationally over the past decade and ecosystem degradation has played a significant role in exacerbating disaster impacts. There is a cost-effective program ready to address these issues if implemented as authorized.

- *Equipping the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with the data needed:* The feasibility study for NESP, which was approved by the chief of engineers and authorized by Congress, outlines specific incremental steps for navigation efficiency; the first one being to complete construction and implementation of non-structural and targeted measures. Following non-structural and efficiency measure implementation, economic and efficacy studies will guide future action on lock construction ensuring more public benefit and less government waste.
- *Providing for both built and natural infrastructure:* The NESP authority requires the Corps to spend near-equally towards ecosystem restoration and navigation improvements.
- *Facilitating long-term benefits:* The NESP feasibility study promises ongoing restoration funding beyond the life of navigation projects. For as long as navigation continues on the Mississippi River, restoration and monitoring programs will be necessary to protect the environmental services our economy depends on.

Therefore, Mayors urge Congress to fully fund NESP ensuring a 1) persistent support of our natural infrastructure: NESP promises nearly \$2 billion for ecosystem restoration over the life of the program. This component is essential to our manufacturing, water supply, and tourism economies. Thus, it is imperative this work continue unhindered through the life of the program and beyond. 2) Efficient and tailored federal role: It is important Congress empower the Corps of Engineers to clarify new institutional arrangements with USGS and other partners to ensure there is no disruption in long-term monitoring and restoration as NESP is implemented.

Homeland Security

Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program.....Full 6% Share Federal Emergency Management Agency

Background:

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) 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. PDM provides funds for pre-disaster planning and mitigation saving money by investing in disaster preparation, when every dollar spent on disaster mitigation yielded four 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.

Three cycles in a row now have provided \$246 million for PDM. This marks tremendous progress from the original \$22 million placeholder the program languished in for several years. Further, not only has PDM enjoyed considerable increase in resources but it has been recently expanded on a policy level to provide for a multi-state option that allows states to partner on larger cross-border projects. Now, the enacted Disaster Recovery Reform Act has altered the very nature of the PDM program itself and removed PDM's annual appropriation all together.

The Issue:

The newly enacted 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 PDM. However, Mayors of MRCTI are concerned about what the new PDM structure will yield and have developed several priorities Mayors urge FEMA to consider.

Therefore, the Mayors of MRCTI implore FEMA to pursue the following provisions for reforming the PDM program.

- The new PDM should include safeguards that prevent actors within any administration from unilaterally allocating PDM funding outside a public process based on need and importance to the economic and security interests of the nation;
- The new PDM should prioritize for projects that include natural infrastructure assets, involve multiple states, address multiple hazards, and incorporate and reward climate risk reduction capacities;

- The new PDM 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;
- The new PDM 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 mission;
- 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, perhaps much less. MRCTI urges FEMA to recommend in the guidance that a significantly smaller percent set aside could be devastating to mitigation efforts especially in recent out-years from a major disaster event.

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 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.

The funding level for FY 2020 of \$172 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.

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 2020. 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.

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 hunter economy.

Therefore, the MRCTI Mayors call upon Congress to support the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund at \$50 million for FY 2021. 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.

USGS Water Resources Program.....+11 million to Baseline
U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Geological Survey

Background:

Nutrient loading and sediment transport and deposition are two critical water-quality issues in the Mississippi River Basin (MRB). These issues can affect drinking water supplies, aquatic ecosystem health, manufacturing, utilities, and navigation on the main-stem Mississippi River. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) operates the National Water Quality Network (NWQN) for Rivers and Streams to assess the status of – and changes in – water-quality conditions. New sensor technologies can continuously measure concentrations of nitrate and phosphate, and estimate suspended-sediment concentrations.

The proposed monitoring network will deliver near real-time estimates of nutrient and sediment concentrations and loads at key locations across the Mississippi River Basin (MRB). The data would be delivered using a state-of-the-art mapping and visualization website that would enable water managers, key stakeholders, and the public to track how nutrients and sediment move throughout the MRB, evaluate how effective agricultural management practices are at reducing nutrient and sediment contributions to large inland watersheds and the main-stem Mississippi River, and provide a significant ability to track the impacts of floods or contaminant spills on a near real-time basis.

The one-time cost to purchase and install the necessary sensors and infrastructure at the 54 monitoring sites is approximately \$5M. Funds to operate and maintain the continuous sensors, add discrete water-quality sampling at selected sites to verify sensor data, and to analyze, quality-assure, and deliver information on a website would be about \$6M per year.

The Issue:

Nutrient loading is one of the greatest threats to our business lines on the river because it compromises water quality, impedes manufacturing, and depresses the tourism and recreation industries that account for the second largest economy on the waterway. States are working to reduce nutrient loading into the watershed, but require robust monitoring to help them determine if their reduction practices are working at a regional scale. Hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent across the landscape on this issue blindly if there is not systemic monitoring in place to measure the effectiveness of nutrient reduction projects.

The FY 2020 funding level for the USGS Water Resources Program was \$234 million. Adding \$11 million to that figure will allow for deployment of a nutrient monitoring net as well as one year of sensor operation funding. Adding \$6 million to the USGS baseline budget will allow for ongoing operation of the sensors in outlying years coupled with \$5 million for hardware. This support will allow for the measurement of nutrient reduction activity across at least ten states. *Real-time water quality is essential to disaster response, and targeted investment.*

Therefore, Mayors urge Congress to allocate \$11 million to the USGS Water Resources Program baseline spending for FY 2021. Robust monitoring at this level will allow accurate measurement of infrastructure project effectiveness.

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 80 days in many places and more than 200 days in others. 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.

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.

Transportation, HUD, & Related Agencies

America's Marine Highway Grant Program.....\$10 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 \$10 million, just \$200,000 above the FY 2020 enacted level.

BUILD Grant Program.....\$1.5 billion U.S. Department of Transportation

Background:

The Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development, or “BUILD” Transportation Discretionary Grant program, provides a unique opportunity for the DOT to invest in road, rail, transit and port projects that promise to achieve national objectives. Previously known as Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery, or TIGER Discretionary Grants, Congress has dedicated nearly \$7.1 billion for ten rounds of National Infrastructure Investments to fund projects that have a significant local or regional impact.

From 2009 to 2018, about 30 TIGER/BUILD grants have been awarded for project on the Mississippi River making the corridor one of the most infrastructure intensive with the least number of funded projects. This discrepancy is especially acute if one takes into account that the Mississippi River Corridor is responsible for the nation’s only trade surplus.

The Issue:

The largest economy on the Mississippi River is manufacturing providing nearly a half million jobs and over \$375 billion in annual revenue. Much of this manufacturing is in the food, beverage, and chemical industries which requires a significant amount of surface transportation capacity to remain whole and grow. Because the Mississippi River is a border for over two-thirds of its length, the Corridor is uniquely positioned to compete for BUILD Grants at a multi-state level which is a priority of the grant.

The entire award history of the TIGER/BUILD program would not even meet one fourth of the investment needed to bring the nation’s inland waterway system up to a state of good repair let alone all surface transportation needs of roads, rail, transit, and ports.

Further, as a stand-alone program, BUILD Grants do not make a considerable impact on infrastructure needs, but coupled and leveraged with other programs such as TIFIA, INFRA Grants, the Surface Transportation Program (STP), Fast Act Grants, and the Marine Highway Program these options collectively can multiply the work they accomplish by at least a factor of three with an economic performance ROI of \$4.00 for every \$1.00 invested.

Therefore, the Mayors of MRCTI urge FY 2019 level funding for the U.S. DOT BUILD Grant Program for FY 2021 (\$1.5 billion) in order to maximize the reach and leveraging capabilities of this infrastructure investment. Nearly \$11 billion worth of projects were submitted to DOT in 2018 competing for one and a half billion dollars in grant funding. Over half of the projects submitted were in rural areas.

The appetite and need for infrastructure are clearly prevalent throughout the nation, yet a comprehensive infrastructure vehicle remains elusive, but a \$2 trillion tax cut package passed rather efficiently. Tax cuts are fine, but the physical platform of our economy is weakening and is increasingly in a state of compromise or failure. BUILD Grants are a temporary boost that are working to keep our infrastructure stable for the moment.

Infrastructure Authorization Priorities

◇ Water Resources Development Act

◇ America's Transportation Infrastructure Act

◇ Resilience Revolving Loan Fund

◇ Plastic Recycling & Waste Infrastructure

"The physical platform of our economy is our built and natural infrastructure"

-Jim Strickland, Mayor of Memphis, TN



Water Resources Development Act Reauthorization

House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee
Senate Environment & Public Works Committee



Pictured from R to L: Mayor Rick Eberlin of Grafton, IL; Mayor Kevin Smith of Helena-West Helena, AR; Mayor Tim Kabat of La Crosse, WI; Mayor Sharon Weston Broome of Baton Rouge, LA; Mayor Frank Klipsch of Davenport, IA; Mayor Lionel Johnson of St. Gabriel, LA; Mayor Bob Gallagher of Bettendorf, IA; Mayor Errick Simmons of Greenville, MS

Background:

The Mississippi River makes possible the United States' only trade surplus, generates nearly \$500 billion in annual revenue, directly supports 1.5 million jobs, and is the largest commodity producer and mover in the world generating over \$164 billion in commodity export economy alone. Yet, all of this economy is at significant risk due to vulnerabilities and damage created by escalating disasters costing cities 3 to 8 percent of their economies. 2019 was especially significant with no less than \$2 billion in actual losses along the main stem corridor and likely above \$4 billion for the larger basin.

These unprecedented disasters throughout the Mississippi River Corridor necessitate further overt action including disaster prediction system improvements and hardware upgrades, economic analysis on the capacity of natural infrastructure to absorb and mitigate disaster impacts, and finally, assistance for city borrowing capacity to deploy financing for recovery activities so that infrastructure can be improved during rebuilding for greater resilience against the next event.

Cities along the Nation's most important asset propose three critical additions to the 2020 reauthorization of the Water Resources Development Act that will work to realize solutions on the ground that are cost effective to the American taxpayer providing a nearly 6 to 1 return on investment.

Therefore, the Mayors of MRCTI propose the following provisions be included in the next reauthorization of the Water Resources Development Act.



Disaster Prediction Improvements—Similar to what was authorized in WRDA 2014 but with specific hard ware and software additions specifically aimed at capturing more real-time data on water levels and inundation mapping capabilities.



Natural Infrastructure Mitigation Capacity Study—Wetlands, marshes, forests, connected floodplain and backwater areas play a multi-billion dollar role in helping cities manage and regulate water, but it is not well understood how these assets can work collectively to protect critical national infrastructure through the corridor so Mayors know where to deploy, restore, and/or augment natural infrastructure to achieve the best mitigation results; this study will equip them with that knowledge.



Recovery Bond Pilot—Not dissimilar to profit repatriation legislation or *Build America Bonds*, these recovery bonds would allow for private capital to flow into recovery and resilience projects by providing a subsidy to the issuer of the bonds at the rate of 35% of the interest paid by the issuer. Only taxable bonds would be eligible for the subsidy. This subsidy will lower the cost of capital of issuers participating in the program, allowing them to more quickly win approval of the projects and begin work. These projects would work in tandem throughout the Mississippi River Corridor toward mitigating the \$2+ billion in actual losses incurred along 75 percent of the River Valley in 2019 with an aim toward rebuilding more resilient and sustainably. This pilot can allow for a significant expansion of projects and programs in the region, create jobs in devastated areas, give investors confidence the United States is taking steps to address compelling needs, and stimulate local economies that have been depressed by recent flooding and reduced international commodity sales. Moreover, this pilot can address critical infrastructure needs that threaten the security of our waterways and logistical systems. MRCTI recommends an initial subsidy of \$250 million over the life of the bill for this pilot.

2019 Disaster Impacts to Select Mississippi River States

14 million people displaced, 19.3 million acres unplanted, Basin-wide event from PA to OK



IOWA saw perhaps some of the worst and most expensive impacts out of all 275 days of flooding in 2019 with the largest recorded flood level recorded and over \$1.7 billion in losses from both sides of the state. Major disaster declaration issued March 23.



MISSISSIPPI sustained flooding for six months in 2019. Storms, straight-line winds, and tornadoes also ravaged areas. Over 200,000 acres of farmland flooded and Greenville broke the all-time flood duration record set in 1927. Major disaster declaration issued April 23.



ILLINOIS communities on the Mississippi River lost as much as 80% of their seasonal economy due to the 2019 floods. The confluence area of the Illinois, Missouri, and Mississippi Rivers witnessed an inland sea nearly 10 miles across. Dangerous constriction points and little natural storage capacity amplified risk. Major disaster declaration issued September 19.



LOUISIANA sustained the longest period of flooding in the entire corridor—275 days, breaking all previous records. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers opened the Bonnet Carre Spillway twice in one year, for the first time ever. Subsurface infrastructure damage to northern and mid-Louisiana is expected to be nearly 30 percent.



ARKANSA sustained flooding across the state with the Arkansas River being above flood stage for most of its length from Oklahoma to Mississippi. By early June, only half of the Arkansas soybean crop had been planted. Major disaster declaration issued June 8.

America's Transportation Infrastructure Act 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.

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 Decisionmaking 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.

We further 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.

Mayors of MRCTI recommend 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.

Create a Community Resilience Revolving Loan Fund (RRF) Act for floods and additional hazards.....\$200 million (over two years)

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 \$6.00 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.

In 2017, Senator Reed introduced SB 1507, the State Flood Mitigation Revolving Fund Act of 2017 which creates a revolving loan fund to mitigate for floods only using the National Flood Insurance Program as a source for authorization and funding. Further, efforts taking place in South Carolina, Virginia, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, and Texas have all begun to examine resilience loan fund models. One of particular note is South Carolina Senate Bill 259, SC Resilience Revolving Fund Act introduced January 8, 2019.

In July of 2019, Congresswoman Angie Craig (MN) and Congressman Rodney Davis (IL) stood with Mayors of MRCTI to introduce the Resilience Revolving Loan Fund Act (HR 3779).

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 proposed 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 resilience loan fund can directly compliment the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant 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 the enactment of a Community Resilient Revolving Loan Fund to compliment the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant program and create greater return on investment around making our infrastructure more adaptive to more frequent disasters. It is recommended that at least \$200 million be made available to the RRF over a 24-month period.

Pass Plastic Recycling and Waste Management Infrastructure Improvements (Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act of 2020, HR 5845, S 3263)

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 20% by 2020.

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:

With China no longer allowing for plastic diversion, U.S. communities will be responsible for recycling and processing the vast majority of their own 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 to does the marketplace need to reduce its use and dependence on plastics. Such reductions should also be coupled with commitments around shifting plastic products to those types more readily recycled 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.

All in all, Mayors urge Congress to reward companies and public entities that reduce their use of plastic. The *Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act of 2020* as introduced is an example of a sound approach to this systemic issue.

MRCTI Leadership

Co-Chair

The Honorable Bob Gallagher
Mayor of Bettendorf, IA

Co-Chair

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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

The Honorable George Flaggs
Mayor of Vicksburg, MS

Colin Wellenkamp
Executive Director

Brandt Thorington
Government Relations Dir.

Tiara Lumas
Operations Manager

The Honorable Belinda Constant
Mayor of Gretna, LA

Jennifer Wendt
Plastic Waste
Campaign Manager

Jim Gwinner
Press Manager

Dave Ewing, CPA
Fiscal Agent