Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative
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Regional Contact: Jim Gwinner, 314-791-2274, jgwinner@LS2group.com

Ahead of White House Meeting and in Midst of Flooding, Mississippi River Mayors Urge National Infrastructure Bill

Mayors Present Jobs, Investment, and Resilience Plan for the Mississippi River Corridor worth $7.85 Billion

March 7, 2019, Washington, DC – Twenty mayors representing cities along the Mississippi River are gathered this week for the seventh Capitol meeting of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative (MRCTI). On Wednesday and Thursday, in meetings with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and lawmakers charged with shepherding an infrastructure bill, the mayors unveiled their plan to reinforce the essential natural and built infrastructure of the Mississippi River Corridor.

The Mayors' strategy of twelve appropriation priorities and four infrastructure vehicle recommendations addresses the flooding many communities are experiencing now as well as worse impacts expected in the Spring.

"The National Weather Service hydrologic outlook for our entire corridor predicts considerable risk for significant flooding into the spring. Southern Illinois just registered their third-highest flood level and Vidalia, LA is just about to tie for its second-highest water level. We must act. We are in DC urging serious proposals to address the vulnerabilities we see on the ground," said **Lionel Johnson, Mayor of St. Gabriel, LA and Co-Chair of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative**.

In Midst of Flooding, Mississippi River Mayors Push Innovative Financing

The mayors recommend a $7.8 billion infrastructure plan that supports eight major U.S. industry sectors, creates over 147,000 jobs, continues 1.5 million jobs, sustains our ecological assets to power our economy, mitigates for hundreds of millions of dollars in disaster impacts, and generates $23.8 billion in economic activity.

"We're not going to solve our problems with grants. One of the largest infrastructure grant programs in the Federal budget is the BUILD Grant program. The entire award history of the 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. So, we're going to have to get innovative about how we approach funding our infrastructure," explained Frank Klipsch, **Mayor of Davenport, IA and Co-Chair of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative**.

The Mayors' plan calls for the establishment of a Resilience Revolving Loan Fund to help communities address serval hazards including droughts, intense heat, wild fires and significant storms. Mayors also endorse supporting WIFIA and TIFIA and new approaches like Environmental Impact Bonds.

"CDP (formerly Carbon Disclosure Project) brought several investors to meet with us regarding our significant infrastructure projects. It's partnerships like these that can create new funding streams to bring a vision to fruition," detailed Mayor Jacob Frey, Mayor of Minneapolis, MN.

Mayors Recommend Recycling Capacity be Included in Infrastructure Vehicle

"China was taking 40 percent of the paper and plastic waste generated by the United States. Now, communities will be responsible for recycling and processing the vast majority of their own waste. The recycling infrastructure simply does not exist in the US to manage the tremendous plastic waste we are now having to assimilate," states **Rita Albrecht, Mayor of Bemidji, MN**.

Mayors urge Congress to include recycling infrastructure in comprehensive infrastructure 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.

"We're looking at the possibility of catastrophic flooding in the Mississippi River Valley that could approach 1993 flood levels that hit us in the St. Louis area. So, we need to take action now. Our Cities are working with each other, working with the Corps of Engineers, and FEMA to prepare. But, we want to stop these billion-dollar disasters. Over the last ten years ten or more disaster declarations have been designated in thirty states while six states have received twenty or more," cautioned **Rick Eberlin, Mayor of Grafton, IL**.

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The Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative *is comprised of 88 mayors and the association represents cities on the main stem Mississippi from Minnesota to Louisiana. More information can be found on our website at www.MRCTI.org*

About the Mississippi River

The Mississippi River is critical natural asset. As the ecological linchpin to the 31-state Mississippi River Basin, the River supports the most agriculturally productive region on the planet; creates nearly $500 billion in annual revenue; provides drinking water for more than 20 million people; transports 40 percent of the nation's agricultural output; and directly supports more than one 1.5 million jobs.