

Mississippi River
Cities & Towns Initiative
An Association of United States Mayors
The Mississippi River, Our Connection is Natural 2024



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mississippi River Steps-Up in Response to Baltimore Port Closure

Expecting shifts of both commercial maritime traffic and multimodal surface volume, national organizations and Mississippi River Cities weigh-in on status of nation's supply chain and bridge infrastructure

New Orleans, LA – The Mayors of the Mississippi River hosted several national organizations at a news teleconference on Thursday morning, March 28, 2024. Mississippi River Mayors and their partners offered insights to possible increases in shipping traffic and the related capacity requirements of the Mississippi River, the nation's largest inland waterway, and the ports servicing the river.

“First, our thoughts and support extend to our friends and colleagues in Baltimore. We are here to assist and stand with them in this time. The nation is pulling together across cities and industries to ensure the country remains whole and we weather this together, said **Mayor Mitch Reynolds of La Crosse, WI and MRCTI Co-Chair**. “Since 2015, the Mayors of MRCTI have been steadily working with industry and federal partners to increase the capacity of Mississippi River port and intermodal infrastructure across the corridor contributing to nearly \$100 million in new investment into Mississippi River supply chain capacity.”

“The strength of the supply chain lies in its ability to adapt and respond to challenges. The Mississippi River and its ports are vital national assets, demonstrating our capacity for collaboration and problem-solving in the face of adversity;” said **Association for Supply Chain Management (ASCM) CEO Abe Eshkenazi**.

Following the tragic collapse to the Francis Scott Key Bridge and its impact on both commercial shipping and the temporary closure of the Port of Baltimore, these organizations will provide insight on plans and options to keeping the U.S. supply chain open.

“The question is how can we assist in receiving Baltimore diversions and can we intermodal that freight to the rest of the country efficiently. The Port of New Orleans is the Mississippi River's gateway port to the world generating more than \$100 million in revenue annually. Port NOLA is exceeding the 500,000 TEU threshold year after year six times in a row,” detailed **Mayor Belinda Constant of Gretna, LA and MRCTI Louisiana State Chair**.

“We send our deepest sympathy to our colleagues at the Maryland Port Authority and to those impacted by this unimaginable tragedy,” said **Port NOLA President & CEO Brandy D. Christian**. “The Mississippi River is one of the busiest and most commercially significant waterways in the world, with four of the top five U.S. ports by tonnage between Baton Rouge and the Mouth of the Mississippi River. While the majority of containerized traffic will be absorbed by nearby East Coast ports, our partners stretching from the Lower Mississippi River to the Midwest are looking at ways we can offer realistic assistance and freight solutions for cargo destined for these markets to minimize disruptions to the Nation’s supply chain.”

Mayors also did a stock-take on the status of the nation’s bridges, especially those throughout middle America that ensure domestic freight.

“Vicksburg hosts the only bridge across the Mississippi River in a 156 mile stretch from Greenville to Natchez. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides \$40 billion in dedicated funding for bridges prioritizing for resilience and protection. Along the Mississippi River, the top three states for bridge formula allocation are Illinois, Louisiana, and Iowa in that order. Resilience is a priority in this spending and cities are working with their states to ensure we improve our ability to better sustain impacts,” stated **Mayor George Flaggs of Vicksburg, MS and MRCTI Co-Chair**.

“The tragedy in Baltimore this week has shined light on the interconnected nature of the nation’s transportation and port infrastructure. As funds from the transformative Bipartisan Infrastructure Law continue to make their way to states and communities, this event highlights the need to build with resilience and redundancy in mind. Our nation’s infrastructure received a ‘C-’ in its 2021 Report Card for America’s Infrastructure, and the way we manage, operate, and modify these systems over the decades plays just as crucial a role in improving this grade as the physical structures we build,” said **Norma Jean Mattei, Ph.D., P.E., past-president, American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE)**.

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[The Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative](#) (MRCTI) is a coalition of over 100 mayors along the Mississippi River Corridor, which spans ten states. The Mississippi River provides drinking water to more than 20 million people and 50 cities. More than 60 billion gallons of fresh water is withdrawn from the river daily. The river’s resources support 1.5 million jobs and create nearly \$500 billion in annual revenue. Almost \$1 trillion in product moves on the Mississippi River annually.