



June 12, 2008

The Hon. James Oberstar
Chairman, Transportation and
Infrastructure Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Hon. John Mica
Ranking Member, Transportation
and Infrastructure Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Oberstar & Ranking Member Mica:

The Water Resources Coalition applauds your leadership and foresight in convening a hearing on “Financing Infrastructure Investments” to explore the infrastructure investment needs of this country, particularly with regard to water resource projects. We too are very concerned about the state of the nation’s decaying infrastructure and the projected funding gap totaling \$1.6 trillion to maintain, preserve and upgrade it to acceptable condition and performance standards over the next 5 years.

Decades of chronic underinvestment in infrastructure is jeopardizing the strength of our economy and economic competitiveness in the world. The extent of the funding crisis is staggering and will require a broad and comprehensive suite of tools to address the problem. The Coalition would also like to encourage the Committee to request an examination by either the Government Accountability Office or the Congressional Budget Office of innovative financing activities that fall outside of the surface transportation field.

The Water Resources Coalition is a group of organizations representing state and local government, engineering and construction, ports, waterways, transportation services and conservation organizations that have an interest in a comprehensive national water resources policy. Our primary focus is on the need to invest more money and resources in our nation’s water resources.

Our national infrastructure forms the backbone of society, fosters economic development, facilitates trade and commerce and international competitiveness, rebuilds environmentally sensitive areas, stimulates employment, provides water recreation opportunities, enhances agricultural and industrial productivity, and augments our national defense. It includes our roads, bridges, public transportation systems and

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airports; and our drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. Our nation's water resources are no less critical to the American economy and global competitiveness than the more visible roads, bridges and highways. Ports and waterways transport domestic and international cargo. Flood control projects protect lives and prevent property damage. Coastal nourishment projects help to save lives and reduce property damages from storms while providing critical public recreation as well as environmental habitat. In addition, projects for water supply, habitat protection, irrigation and water-based recreation also provide significant benefits.

Through initiatives such as Building America's Infrastructure, momentum is building among policy makers, infrastructure stakeholders and the public to tackle the looming infrastructure funding crisis, and this opportunity should not be lost. Now is the time to seize upon this opportunity and to create an environment where infrastructure funding is treated like the national priority it should be. A renewed federal commitment to infrastructure investment is critical. The federal government has traditionally played a strong role in financing infrastructure projects in partnership with state and local officials. State and local governments spend almost three times as much on infrastructure as the federal government does. Given the enormity of the current funding crisis, consideration of a broad suite of financing mechanisms and tools that include more traditional financing tools as well as new and innovative approaches must be utilized to meet these overwhelming needs.

Financing mechanisms such as bonding, tolling and congestion pricing, public –private partnerships and capital budgeting mechanisms can be used to expand available infrastructure funding and begin to address the state of the nation's decaying infrastructure. In addition, we should seek means to better maintain our existing infrastructure. An example is full utilization of monies collected annually under the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund to be used for its intended purpose – maintenance dredging of our Nation's ports and harbors. We cannot afford to rule out any funding sources, and we cannot shy away from the tough decisions necessary to renew and rebuild the nation's infrastructure.

The Coalition and its members have a wealth of knowledge and experience that we look forward to sharing with you and your colleagues whose commitment to investing in America's future by investing in its infrastructure we both applaud and actively support.

Sincerely,



Brian Pallasch
Co-Chairman
American Society of Civil Engineers



Marco Giamberardino
Co-Chairman
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