

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20515

May 10, 2021

The Honorable Peter DeFazio  
Chairman, Committee on  
Transportation and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20003

The Honorable Sam Graves  
Ranking Member, Committee on  
Transportation and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves,

We look forward to working with you to pass bold, transformative infrastructure legislation. As Congress works with President Biden to develop the American Jobs Plan, building on the important work of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, we are reminded of the President's statements that this is the moment to rebuild, and to invest in the future of our country by investing in resilient infrastructure.

We write today to urge you to consider how our plan for transformative infrastructure can include the proposed Texas Coastal Spine project and regional coastal resiliency projects. This project to extend Galveston Island's existing seawall and construct floodgates in Galveston is precisely the kind of visionary project that is called for in this moment. It aligns with the goals of this Committee and the American Jobs Plan by taking seriously the need to protect against increasingly frequent and intense weather events. The unique conditions present on the Texas Gulf Coast also make this transformative plan a national priority.

While hurricanes are a fact of life along the Gulf Coast, in a little more than a decade, our region has sustained increasingly dangerous and destructive hurricanes—causing loss of life, destruction of property, and hundreds of billions of dollars in damages. In 2008, Hurricane Ike became the third-costliest storm in U.S. history, causing \$30 billion in losses to the Houston region and killing 84 people. In 2015, the Memorial Day Flood dropped 162 billion gallons of water on the Houston area. The following year, 2016, the Tax Day flood dropped another 240 billion gallons of water in the Houston area. Hurricane Harvey, the most significant tropical cyclone rainfall event ever recorded, became the third 500-year flood in as many years. Harvey dropped 9 trillion gallons of water along the Texas coast, killed 68 people, and caused more than \$125 billion in damages.

Catastrophic weather events like these are happening more frequently and with more intensity. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), in 2020 alone, the U.S. experienced 22 billion-dollar disasters. Scientists have testified to the Congress that these storms will increase in size and frequency as a result of climate change.

With our past and our future in mind, Texans have been working to address the potential risks by designing and building consensus around a plan to protect the Texas coast for more than a decade. In partnership with Army Corps of Engineers, which we anticipate will have a report on this study this year, this process has resulted in a transformative proposal for the Texas Coastal Spine project, also frequently referred to as the “Ike Dike.” The Ike Dike and other projects in the study are smart, timely, and strategic investments to prevent a potential human and environmental catastrophe unlike any this country has seen.

Investment in this proposal is smart. Studies have shown that for every dollar spent on pre-disaster mitigation, the federal government saves seven dollars or more that would be spent on repairing and recovering from future damages. In light of the costs incurred in the last decade alone, the return on investment is plain, and it will lessen the burden on government resources after disasters.

Investment in this proposal is timely. Texans have spent years building a coalition to support and sustain this effort. We have seen broad community support to take transformative action from across the community. Texas state legislators have already asked the White House to include it in the infrastructure package and are working on legislation to fund the project and ensure its success into the future.

Investment in this proposal is in our national interest. Constructing the Texas Coastal Spine serves to protect our economic and national security interests by hardening the infrastructure around the critical facilities that power the country and the world. The Houston region, home to more than seven million people, is home to the Port of Houston, the busiest port in the country by total tonnage, and home to one of the largest concentrations of refining and petrochemical complexes in the world. This region is responsible for 32 percent of the refining capacity for the entire country and it is estimated that 40 percent of the nation’s jet fuel is refined here. If a storm surge from the Gulf were to hit and damage this complex, the loss of capacity would be felt throughout the country and across the world, with dire economic and national security impacts.

This project comes at a significant upfront investment, currently estimated at \$26 billion, which is why we raise this project with you now, in the context of the American Jobs Plan and the interest in transformative infrastructure projects. We agree with you that there are also costs to doing nothing. The costs of the potential human and environmental disaster of a storm surge along the Texas Gulf Coast and up the Houston Ship Channel are too great to bear.

Now is the time to be innovative and strategic and to spend our resources preparing, in partnership with our local stakeholders and capable federal partners.

While we are pleased to see that President Biden included \$50 billion to increase resilience in vulnerable communities, the flooding that coastal communities have faced in recent years shows that this amount will not meet the needs for all communities in years to come. It is for these reasons that we ask that you include an increased funding source specifically for regional coastal resiliency projects like the Texas Coastal Spine in the infrastructure package.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to continuing to work with you and the committee on this effort and the effort to build our nation's infrastructure for the future.

Sincerely,



Lizzie Fletcher  
Member of Congress



Randy Weber  
Member of Congress



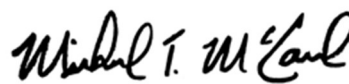
Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Member of Congress



Brian Babin  
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Michael T. McCaul  
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Sheila Jackson Lee  
Member of Congress



Troy E. Nehls  
Member of Congress



Filemon Vela  
Member of Congress



Dan Crenshaw  
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives,  
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader  
The Honorable Steny Hoyer, Majority Leader