

Testimony of Congressman Mike Johnson (LA-04)

Submitted to the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies

March 9, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member and members of the committee.

I appreciate the opportunity to come before you today as you consider funding priorities for the fiscal year of 2018. I ask for your continued support of our nation's infrastructure and transportation priorities.

Given the importance of Northwest Louisiana's unique national security footprint and mixed infrastructure needs, I am very thankful for the opportunity to bring important and noteworthy projects to your attention. Today I share my support of providing adequate formula funding for the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, specifically grant opportunities and the FASTLANE program, to aid the national needs we have heard here today.

I recently learned that Louisiana's Fourth Congressional District contains five of the nine Louisiana Department of Transportation's (LA DOTD) state sectors, making it the largest. Within that area, my district contains 3,403 bridges and a total of over 20,000 miles of local and interstate roadway. It is also home to four shallow draft port authorities, with 485 miles of navigable waterways, seven freight railroads and 875 miles of railroad track. Every one of these areas are in need of attention, as I am sure they are in many of your districts.

Long-term statewide transportation plans have identified incredibly significant amounts in transportation needs, and demonstrated that without adequate funding, of \$1.86 billion, to address critical infrastructure projects efforts aimed to improve safety needs will go unaddressed.

Louisiana, despite maximizing and capturing available federal dollars every year, sees a

transportation budget that is only about \$600-700 million annually, putting it drastically short of its needs.

Just as many of the other members here have stated, my state is in desperate need of immediate action. To provide just a few examples of the critical issues in my district, since January alone, nine bridges in my district were forced to shut down. According to official reports in recent years, Northwest Louisiana's economic health and quality of life may be at risk if these transportation and infrastructure funding challenges continue to go unanswered. Without the necessary funding, it will not be possible to reverse the damage done by previous years' failures to address economic challenges.

In the 4th congressional district of Louisiana alone, our statewide plan identifies at least 13 category A through D megaprojects. Given the realities of needing to maintain a fiscally balanced budget, I am aware that every infrastructure project cannot be met. Despite this fact, we have been presented with an opportunity to once again prioritize the most important and noteworthy projects. In addition to advocating for adequate formula funding for the FAST Act, I would also ask that the Committee support competitive grant opportunities and the FASTLANE program. I'd like to provide some specific examples of infrastructure and highway projects in my district that are critical for improving national security and growing the local economy.

- First, funding of the final portion of I-49. The 3.6 miles of proposed new highway will intersect Shreveport in order to connect I-49 at the I-20 interchange with I-49 North near the I-220 interchange. This will add a seamless and helpful connection for a highway that extends from Canada to New Orleans. This project will reduce travel time and travel distance for those remaining on I-49 and provide a more

direct access to downtown Shreveport as well as align needs for supporting current Air Force plans for Barksdale Air Force Base.

- A second example is with the interstate project of I-69. As named by the U.S. DOT as one of the six “Corridors of the Future”, construction of I-69 is critically important to provide exponential resources to the Port of Shreveport-Bossier, Barksdale Air Force Base and a much-needed loop around the urban area of Shreveport and Bossier City. In Northwest Louisiana, the Sections of Independent Utility (SIU) 14, 15 and 16 need to be completed in order for the project to continue.
- A third example of a project that would greatly benefit from these programs is interstate widening efforts for I-49 and I-20 in the 4th Congressional District. The I-20 corridor is congested with vehicle traffic at several points with conditions expected to worsen in the coming years. Grant opportunities have the potential to allow for further development of these interstates that are crucial to the economies of the local regions and states.
- Bossier Parish is one of the fastest growing areas of our state. This rapid growth has caused severe traffic congestion, especially on Highway 3 (Benton Road) and Highway 3105 (Airline Drive). The increased congestion threatens future development in the area, and we must act now to ensure that new growth does not hinder further progress. Improvements and expansion of existing infrastructure on these roads will support further growth.
- Lastly, I’d like to mention the Barksdale Air Force Base (BAFB) Gate Project. Barksdale AFB is a key national security asset located in Bossier Parish that does

not have sufficient, direct access to the interstate system an issue which is a hindrance to a national Air Force priority. The state of Louisiana is advancing a project to fix this, supporting the Department of Defense's investment in our national security and in Louisiana. This project will improve base security and connect a new public road extending from the I-20 at the I-220 interchange to a new gate at Barksdale Air Force Base, moving the commercial vehicle inspection station away from aircraft approach. According to the Air Force this transportation project will remove a current national security risk, and add in necessary Force Protection components for a future Weapons Storage and Maintenance Facility, as well as alleviate traffic congestion and delay. The project is currently in the environmental phase and has a preliminary cost estimate of \$80-100 million. However, there is an immediate \$11.8 million FY19 MILCON request by the Air Force which has been briefed to Secretary of Transportation and Louisiana Governor.

Like each of you, I could go on about the importance of dozens of projects. In addition to these new capacity projects, costs to maintain the transportation system we already have continue to grow. Providing the needed resources to competitive grant opportunities and the FASTLANE program to address long-standing challenges will serve as an economic generator and help build protections for Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas and the surrounding states.

It is my understanding that many of these top priority infrastructure projects have been raised to the president as well as to our governor.

Thank you again for the ability to provide testimony on Louisiana's transportation and infrastructure priorities, many of which have a direct impact on our national security

infrastructure and overall economy. The infrastructure needs I have raised today are of great importance to the future stability of my district and the economic strength of not only Louisiana, but our nation as a whole.