

Goldman Remarks at T&I Committee's Member Day

Thank you, Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen, for inviting me to testify before the committee today on transportation and infrastructure issues that are particularly important to my district, NY-10, covering lower Manhattan and a large part of northwest Brooklyn.

As you know, New York City is the most densely populated city in the country. Our public transportation system and our transit infrastructure are the busiest in the nation and are under immense stress. The historic passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) last Congress provided us the opportunity to begin to address some of the most pressing issues in my district, but our work is far from over. As you work to reauthorize transportation and infrastructure programs this Congress, I'd like to call to your attention a few of my district's priorities.

First, we must make sure that our most marginalized communities are not left behind by the renovation of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (BQE). The BQE is one of the most traveled highways in New York State and is a notoriously disruptive corridor in my district. The communities surrounding the highway have been unjustly segregated by its physical infrastructure since the 1950s when it was designed to spare wealthier neighborhoods from disturbance. Perpetuating inequities even further, the overwhelming pollution and heavy traffic the highway produces have disproportionately affected these already vulnerable communities, exposing them to toxic fumes and dangerous pedestrian conditions. Ensuring that federal dollars go to protecting the health and environment of the surrounding communities while the dilapidated central portion of the BQE undergoes construction is a top priority of mine. This is an environmental justice issue and I ask that the committee continue to support and oversee programs, such as the newly created Reconnecting Communities grant program, as well as INFRA and Mega grants to support all communities, including those in my district that historically have been overlooked.

Second, I am asking the committee to prioritize rigorous oversight of the EPA's massively important State Revolving Funds, which received \$50 billion in funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The goal of the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds is to upgrade and strengthen our national water and stormwater systems, so no American is exposed to unsafe drinking water and our communities have the resources they need to protect themselves from increasingly severe flooding. Unfortunately, these investments have not always been equitably distributed, predominantly excluding communities of color where continued dismissal of their needs has compounded, leaving them with aging, outdated, and hazardous water systems. A recent report by the National Resource Defense Council found that municipalities with larger white populations were more likely to receive support from the Clean Water State Revolving Fund than others. My district includes communities that suffer from this inequity. Further still, a number of these marginalized neighborhoods are on low-lying topography and they desperately need federal funds to help mitigate inland flooding and increase capacity for safe and effective stormwater management. In order to ensure that federal investments in State Revolving Funds through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law benefit all Americans, the committee must oversee the fair distribution of the funds by states with rigorous oversight and accountability.

Finally, I strongly urge the committee to advance a bill I cosponsored, the Safe and Quiet Skies Act, as you go through the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization process this year. The legislation would restrict commercial air tours and nonessential helicopter flights, protecting our communities and sparing them the constant and severe disruption these nonessential helicopters cause through both noise and air pollution. The density of my community makes the threat of a localized helicopter or small aircraft crash very dangerous. Since 1983, we've had at least 30 helicopter crashes in our region, with at least 25 fatalities, according to National Transportation Safety Board records. These nonessential flights catering to tourists have continued to grow, and in the last five years, noise complaints have gone up in New York City by over 2,300 percent. In addition to noise and severe vibrations, the excessive use of fossil fuels by helicopters further harms our environment. It is imperative that these operations be much more tightly regulated for the health, safety, and quality life in our communities.

Thank you again for your time and consideration today.