Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

Peter A. DeFazio
Chairman

Katherine W. Dedrick
Staff Director

Sam Graves
Ranking Member

Paul J. Sass
Republican Staff Director

February 11, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

In furtherance of our need to reinvest in our Nation's infrastructure and to revitalize our Nation's economy, we urge you, in your Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Budget Request, to fully utilize already collected funds in the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) to operate and maintain our Nation's ports and harbors.

Through enactment of the *Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2020*, Congress provided a new budget tool to increase Federal investment in U.S. ports and harbors, by being able to fully allocate HMTF funds for maintenance dredging activities outside discretionary budget limitations.[1] This would directly benefit the countless businesses, industries, farmers, and workers whose livelihoods depend on coastal and inland harbors for the movement of goods and services. By taking advantage of these increased spending limits in your FY 2022 Budget Request and releasing these funds, you can maximize the capability of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to meet existing Federal harbor maintenance obligations and have an immediate positive benefit on our Nation's economy and critical infrastructure.

The United States maritime transportation industry supports more than $4 trillion in commerce and creates employment for more than 23 million people.[2] Oceangoing vessels carry more trade merchandise by tonnage than all other modes combined, accounting for 80 percent of the total volume for the world, and serve as a critical link for accessing foreign markets and competing in a global economy.[3] Similarly, commercial ports can be the leading economic drivers of regional and local economies, supporting commercial fishing operations, U.S. Coast Guard facilities,

---

[1] Sections 101, 102, and 104 of Division AA of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Pub. L. 116-260).
[2] See U.S. Coast Guard, Maratime Commerce Strategic Outlook, October 2018 (https://www.dco.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/Assistant-Commandant-for-Prevention-Policy-CG-5P/Marine-Transportation-Systems-CG-5PW/Maritime-Commerce/).
[3] See United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (https://unctad.org/webflyer/review-maritime-transport-2018).

and other critical maritime services that would not be possible without fully maintained ports and harbors. At every level, the efficiency and availability of our ports is critical to our economy, for the safety and well-being of our communities, and for job creation across the country.

Today, a balance of approximately $10 billion in already collected tax revenues sits idle in the HMTF in the U.S. Treasury, with an additional $1.6 billion in annual collections being deposited in the Trust Fund annually.[4] Yet, while the Harbor Maintenance Tax is levied year after year directly on maritime shippers using coastal and inland ports, revenues collected for the statutorily intended purpose of maintaining those ports and harbors remain underutilized—failing the Federal commitment to ensure the viability of U.S. ports for tax-paying domestic shippers and importers.

Without raising any taxes, the Corps could spend significantly more funds to meet the growing maintenance dredging needs and ensure the continued competitiveness of our ports if we unlock the idle funds and begin the path towards full utilization of the HMTF, as provided for in *WRDA 2020*.

In recognition of our common desire to increase investment in our Nation's economy and infrastructure, and to create and sustain U.S. jobs, we urge you to recognize the advantage of this new budget tool and to include in your FY 2022 Budget Request the full capability of the Corps to meet the backlog of critical maintenance dredging needs of all our U.S. ports and harbors. At a minimum, we request your FY 2022 Budget Request provide the estimated $2 billion in HMTF allocations called for in *WRDA 2020* for the coming fiscal year.

Making these funds immediately available is an easy step to make commodities and goods produced in the U.S. more competitive in world markets, maintain the safety and reliability of our ports, and will restore the faith of those who pay into the HMTF.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

PETER A. DeFAZIO
Chair
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

SAM GRAVES
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

[4] See Budget of the U.S. Government, Fiscal Year 2021 (https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/BUDGET-2021-APP/pdf/BUDGET-2021-APP-1-21.pdf).