

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-1806**

January 24, 2022

The Honorable John Bel Edwards  
Governor of Louisiana  
P.O. Box 94004  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards:

We appreciate you announcing a potential funding package to get the I-10 bridges constructed. Without aggressive action to alleviate the bridge's congestion, traffic projections indicate that I-10 is expected to become the source of even more additional traffic accidents and loss of life. This should have been done decades ago, but the cost of inaction is even more significant now than ever.

Years ago, you indicated your support for a new bridge crossing the Mississippi River. Unfortunately, since then, little progress has been made on this critical infrastructure project and additional unnecessary hurdles have been put in place which has lengthened the process. After a much-scrutinized decision to award a contract to analyze the bridge's alignment, a decision which was finalized after an appeal in early 2020, it was announced in the fall of last year that the number of potential crossings had been narrowed to 17 individual options. This is not progress. Many keen observers of this process have theorized that this effort is built on a strategy not to complete the bridge, but to delay the process enough so that it becomes the problem of a future governor's administration. To meaningfully move forward on this project your administration must show leadership by definitively deciding where this bridge will be and making key investments to improve areas adjacent to that location so the new bridge is integrated into the capital region's existing infrastructure.

As you know, the key problem in moving forward toward construction has been a lack of the resources to make this \$1 billion project a reality. Your recommendations for funding include numerous funding sources outside of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). You recently said regarding IIJA, ... "we're slated to receive right at \$6 billion from that act over five years for traditional infrastructure related to surface transportation that's going to be very helpful. But we also have to manage expectations. Of that \$6 billion, \$5 (billion) we were going to get anyway – so the additional funding is about 200 million dollars a year. Again, very helpful. But there are a lot of people who think that \$6 billion [is] on top of our

normal program. It's not. And in exchange for the \$200 million more we're going to get each year; our match obligation is going to be about \$50 million. So, look forward to working with the legislature to make sure we can identify that funding source to meet that match obligation so we can receive the \$200 million per year..."

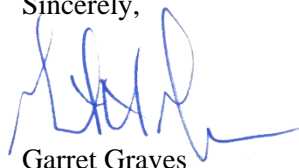
While the "increase" in funding for Louisiana in the infrastructure bill appears to be \$200 million per year over five years, the state's cost-share increases by \$50 million and surging inflation, workforce shortages in the construction sector, and supply chain issues will effectively negate any increase in funding for Louisiana. Meaning, the \$6 billion will not result an increase as promised when all factors are considered. Further, this is far short of the estimated \$8 billion we have secured in recent years for infrastructure in south Louisiana.

The IJA bill has been purported to be the saving grace for all of Louisiana's infrastructure woes, in reality, our state has lost out to larger and more populous states as funding has become available under IJA.

The reality is that Louisiana has not fared well under the infrastructure grant prioritization criteria established by this presidential administration. IJA politicizes project funding in a way that discriminates against Louisiana. For example, a recent announcement of IJA funds for Army Corps of Engineers resiliency projects awarded only 6.6 percent of the total funding to Louisiana, even though Louisiana projects represent 31 percent of the Corps' authorized project backlog and hurricane-impacted states like Louisiana were supposed to receive disproportionately more funding. In regard to transportation funding, we've seen similar trends. In 2021, we received zero in federal funding from the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant program and in the second allocation of the \$1 billion available through the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant program, we only received funding for a new fare collection system for the New Orleans Streetcar. In other words, out of two nearly \$1 billion transportation grant programs, Louisiana only received \$18.5 million, and it was not even for construction of a transportation project. Even though our state hosts several key national ports, we have only received one Marine Highway grant and one small Port Infrastructure Development Grant. While there may be new funding opportunities, our state clearly is not a priority of this presidential administration.

Encouraging federal and state officials to make meaningful progress on a new bridge has been a key issue for me during my time in Congress. People have been talking about these projects for decades. To deliver the results the public deserves, we must work together on a cohesive strategy that will deliver the I-10 bridges and I-49 from Lafayette to New Orleans. To effectively do this, we must recognize past failures and new challenges and boldly move forward taking meaningful steps to make this dream a reality. I look forward to collaborating with you in the future on this shared goal.

Sincerely,



Garret Graves  
Member of Congress