

Testimony of the Honorable Marcy Kaptur
US Representative, OH-09

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the US House of
Representatives
2026 Member Day Hearing
Wednesday, January 14, 2026, 10:30 am EST

Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee—thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I represent the largest watershed in the Great Lakes—Ohio’s Ninth District along Lake Erie—from Defiance through Toledo to Sandusky—and the surrounding rural counties across Ohio’s Northwest quadrant. These are port communities, manufacturing and agricultural communities, both urban and rural. For us, transportation infrastructure is not abstract—it determines whether freight moves, whether multi modal transport is available so workers get to their jobs safely, and whether our region can compete and prosper against penny wage foreign industrial regimented competition and, frankly, coastal competition from our Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific coasts.

Critical discretionary grant programs like RAISE are designed to ensure mid-sized cities and rural communities can compete for infrastructure investments that would otherwise be out of reach. Funded by Congress, these great opportunities are awarded through competitive, merit-based processes. But since May, 2025, serious concerns have emerged about how the RAISE program is being executed *after* awards were already announced.

Across our country—including in Northwest Ohio—communities that were publicly awarded RAISE grants now face prolonged delays, additional administrative reviews, and uncertainty at the obligation stage. Projects that went through the full competitive process are sitting in limbo, without clear timelines or explanations.

These delays have real consequences.

In Toledo, delayed RAISE funding has adversely affected development with rising costs impacting projects, freight movement, rail and port access, safety, and multimodal for connectivity. For example, the **Reconnect Junction and Downtown Communities** project was awarded a \$20 Million RAISE grant to safely reconnect neighborhoods divided by interstate infrastructure—yet it has been placed on indefinite hold.

Local governments cannot absorb the costs of such uncertainty. Construction costs rise especially due to tariffs, contracts are disrupted, and financial exposure increased as federal commitments stall.

Rural communities are especially vulnerable. Smaller jurisdictions often lack the fiscal capacity to carry out projects while waiting indefinitely. Delay can mean outright cancellation.

That is not what Congress intended, or, quite frankly, what the law prescribes.

Once a project is competitively selected and publicly announced, communities should be able to rely on that commitment. Businesses shouldn't have the rug pulled out from under them. Predictability and follow-through are essential to the credibility of federal discretionary grant programs.

Previously awarded RAISE grants should be obligated in a timely, predictable manner. Local sponsors deserve clear communication and confidence that federal commitments will be honored.

Therefore, I urge the Committee to continue its oversight of RAISE implementation, including the status of unobligated awards and the reasons for administrative delays.

Our communities are ready to build and drive our economic success. They have done their part. Now the Federal government must do theirs. This Committee is critical to making that happen.

I also must urge your Committee to attend to addressing the plight of midsize city airport service, which has lost significant business to gigantic hubs. Our region also faces issues with a major transport volume shift with the opening of the new Gordie Howe Bridge that connects Detroit to Canada. In that vein, investment in the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation may be a portal your Committee can enable faster to meet multimodal challenges along the I-75-I-90 corridors.

Please let me support a strong WRDA bill. As is this Committee's tradition, bipartisan cooperation is essential to producing legislation that empowers the Army Corps of Engineers to do what they do best: apply their engineering expertise and federal resources in partnership with local communities to meet our Nation's need for harbor maintenance, port development, flood control, and environmental restoration—including across the land locked American Heartland.

For those of us in Northwest Ohio, these challenges are not abstract. Communities in my district within the Western Lake Erie Basin see firsthand how aging water and wastewater systems, eroding shorelines, and recurring flood risks affect our families, businesses, and our region's economic vitality. I am preparing several study and project requests for WRDA to strengthen critical infrastructure; reinforce seawalls, shoreline stabilization, other flood control elements; while improving water quality, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities in the Western Lake Erie Basin.

I respectfully urge the Committee's careful consideration of these forthcoming requests and your support for including them as you develop the WRDA 2026 bill.

Finally, I implore your Committee to work on upgrading both passenger rail service, and freight rail safety across northern Ohio.

Many across our nation have seen troubling headlines in recent years about rail accidents, and derailments in Sandusky, Fremont, and East Palestine, Ohio. While these accidents drew headlines, it is policy solutions that will help to lessen the frequency of these incidents, and protect the communities I represent and others like them from coast to coast.

Rail, Federal highways, and Federally dredged ports, are the spine of our multimodal northern Ohio economy. I look forward to working with the Committee to continue investing in modern rail infrastructure that helps move our people, our goods, and ensures safety in the years ahead.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.