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Rep. Rashida Tlaib Written Testimony
Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Member Day

Honorable Sam Graves, Chairman
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Rick Larsen, Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen,

Thank you for the opportunity to share written testimony regarding my priorities within the Committee's jurisdiction for the 119th Congress.

PHMSA Hazardous Materials Enforcement

In the aftermath of the East Palestine, Ohio rail disaster, there is rightfully more focus than ever on the transportation of hazardous materials through our communities.

In Detroit, the 94-year-old Ambassador Bridge spans the Detroit River and connects the U.S. to Windsor, Ontario, Canada. Over 20% of trade crosses over the crossing, which is located upstream of municipal drinking water intakes. The bridge is privately owned by the Detroit International Bridge Company, which has a long history of illegal activity and disregard for safety rules and regulations. The long-time owner was even jailed and held in contempt for not following court orders.

Last year, after years of lobbying Michigan state government and ghost-writing letters of support from lawmakers who accepted campaign donations, the State of Michigan made the regrettable decision to loosen restrictions on hazmat transportation across the Bridge over community objections in both Detroit and Windsor, Ontario. The bridge is too old, too narrow, and lacks proper firefighting and other hazard mitigations.

The federal agencies in charge of enforcing hazardous materials regulations – which include Customs and Border Patrol and PHMSA – lack the resources for aggressive enforcement that safeguards public health. I encourage the Committee to support the highest possible funding for PHMSA's Hazardous Materials Field Operations so that it can provide proper and timely compliance inspections on the Ambassador Bridge and others like it.

Line 5 and PHMSA Pipeline Field Operations

Michigan is home to numerous oil and natural gas pipelines and has already suffered one of the worst inland oil spills in our nation's history when Enbridge's Line 6B dumped a million gallons of heavy crude oil into the Kalamazoo River. As Enbridge continues to violate state law by operating its Line 5 pipeline through the Straits of Mackinac in the Great Lakes, the importance of pipeline inspections and enforcement cannot be overstated. I urge the Committee to support the highest possible level of funding for PHMSA's Pipeline Field Operations to help safeguard the Great Lakes for generations to come. Moreover, I urge the Committee to reject any support for the Line 5 pipeline or the Line 5 tunnel project.

FAA Noise Mitigation

Michigan's 12th District is home to many communities within close proximity to the Detroit Metropolitan Airport (DTW), and many of our residents are burdened by the air and noise pollution that comes with living under flight paths. I encourage the Committee to support the highest possible level of funding for the Federal Aviation Administration's Airport Noise Compatibility Planning, referred to as Part 150. Robust funding for Part 150 will allow DTW and airports like it across the country to update their noise mitigation plans more frequently to adjust to changing weather patterns, airline trends, and in DTW's case, the Cleveland/Detroit Metroplex Project. This in turn will better protect our residents from pollution and disruptions to their everyday lives and will help local governments respond to resident concerns.

Pedestrian Safety

I also encourage the Committee to continue support for the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Grant Program, which funds regional, local, and Tribal initiatives through grants to prevent roadway fatalities and serious injuries. Our district has suffered far too many roadway and pedestrian casualties, and our local governments need more support designing better roadways and pedestrian infrastructure to keep us all safe.

Federal Highway Buffers

Many of my residents live within a few hundred feet of major federal highways and experience elevated rates of significant health problems due to increased air pollution exposure. Sound walls, cut sections, and roadside vegetation can all help reduce exposure to air pollutants that harm our communities. I urge the Committee to support funding for green buffers and other means of reducing residents' exposure to transportation-related air pollutants, especially in environmental justice communities.

Thank you for your consideration of these important priorities for the 12th district and all of Michigan.

Sincerely,



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress