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21ST DISTRICT, FLORIDA

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE

Congress of the United States
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May 10, 2024

Colonel James Booth
Jacksonville District Commander
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
701 San Marco Boulevard
Jacksonville, FL 32207-8175

To Colonel Booth:

I am writing to you because I am concerned about the Army Corps' decision to divert \$831,070 from Florida water infrastructure projects to the state of Maryland for costs associated with the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge. Officials from the Army Corps made the Florida congressional delegation aware of the decision this week.

This decision seems to have been made with little input from Florida lawmakers. In fact, the entire Florida congressional delegation was only informed of this action via email. Initially, we were led to believe that we needed to actively object, or that it would be assumed members concurred with the decision for the funds to be reprogrammed. The overwhelming response, from both Republican and Democratic members, was that the Corps should not take any funding out of the state of Florida. Now, we understand that the Army Corps has the authority to take this action and its last-minute outreach to Congress was more of a notification than a request for sign-off.

I'm concerned about the impact this action will have on our state's water infrastructure, including canals, ports, and our ever-important fight for clean water. As such, I ask that you answer the following questions:

1. Who made the decision to divert funding from Florida to Maryland?
2. How will this impact any ongoing work the Corps is doing or could undertake in the State of Florida on a project-by-project basis?
3. Is this decision exclusive to the Jacksonville District or will other districts have their funding diverted as well?
4. What, if any, risk assessments were conducted to ensure diverting this money will not adversely impact the economy and environment of Florida?
5. Why did the Army Corps take this course of action instead of submitting supplemental appropriations request to cover costs associated with the collapsed bridge in Maryland?

6. How much liability does the federal government have for the collapse of the bridge, compared to the state of Maryland and the company responsible?
7. Is there no insurance policy by either the federal government, state of Maryland, or company responsible that can cover cleanup and rebuilding costs?

I ask that you respond no later than 5:00 p.m. on May 14, 2024. The House Transportation and Infrastructure has a hearing scheduled to discuss the Federal Response to the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse, and this will help me be fully prepared. Thank you for your immediate attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

Brian Mast
Member of Congress