

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 28, 2012

The Honorable Janet Napolitano
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Napolitano and Secretary LaHood:

We write in strong support of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey's request for consideration of the Bayonne Bridge "Raise the Roadway" project for expedited review under President Obama's March 22nd Executive Order on Improving Performance of Federal Permitting and Review of Infrastructure Projects. This project is of critical importance to the economy of our region and merits your consideration for inclusion on the Federal Infrastructure Dashboard.

The Port of New York and New Jersey is a powerful economic engine for the region. It is the largest port on the East Coast, serving more than 35 percent of the country. It also supports more than 250,000 jobs in the region and nearly \$37 billion in annual business income.

However, the height of the Bayonne Bridge impedes access to the port. While more than 12 percent of U.S. container traffic travels under the Bayonne Bridge, the height of the bridge makes it difficult for larger ships to access the port. This access will become even more difficult with the opening of the Panama Canal in 2014, which will allow larger ships to reach East Coast ports.

To accommodate these larger ships, the Port Authority has been working to raise the Bayonne Bridge. The Port Authority is ready to move forward with the project, and has committed \$1 billion in funding, but cannot progress until the environmental review process is complete. The Senate Commerce Committee recognized the importance of advancing this process in November 2011, when it approved Coast Guard authorization legislation for FY 2012 and 2013 that included language requiring the completion of a U.S. Coast Guard interagency administrative review of the project.

We believe that every effort should be made to ensure the environmental soundness of this project while expediting administrative review. Accordingly, we ask that you include the nationally and regionally significant Bayonne Bridge project in the Federal Infrastructure Dashboard pursuant to the Executive Order.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Laukenberg

Chris Sch

Rabit Menendez

Kirsten E. Gillibrand