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AlleghenyConference.org

March 23, 2016

The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy
Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0108

Lieutenant General Thomas P. Bostick
Commanding General and Chief of Engineers
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20314-0000

RE: Upper Ohio River Navigation Study

Dear Secretary Darcy and General Bostick:

The Allegheny Conference on Community Development and its Affiliates – the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, the Pennsylvania Economy League of Greater Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance – work together to improve the economy and quality of life in the Pittsburgh region. To this end, the Allegheny Conference works with our public, private, and civic leadership to ensure our infrastructure remains a positive asset to our region’s future. I am writing to express our concern with the most recent postponement in the completion of the Upper Ohio River Navigation Study, which has taken nearly thirteen years to complete.

As you know, the study reviewed at least eight options for improving navigation through the aging, unreliable Emsworth, Dashields, and Montgomery (EDM) locks and dams, leading to the recommendation of constructing a new 600 by 100 foot lock at each site. According to the U.S. Corps of Engineers’ own estimates, failure to construct the \$2.3 billion project will cost our region \$430 million per site each year – in total an annual negative economic impact of \$1.29 billion. The Army Corps’ must complete its review of the Upper Ohio River study without further delay because our region’s economic wellbeing is at stake.

The Port of Pittsburgh itself handles over 35 million tons of cargo each year and the locks on the Upper Ohio River move an average of 20 million tons themselves. For example, this includes significant quantities of petroleum products, processed metal, grain, construction equipment, chemicals, and coal – a diverse cross section and significant drivers of the Pittsburgh region’s economy. Specific industrial operations related to coke and coal production would be severely impacted by a disruption in this vital transportation artery. By way of additional amplification, an unscheduled closure at Montgomery was found to cost one Pittsburgh region company approximately \$1 million per day in lost production.

Moreover, even now it is very common to hear of interruptions to shipping traffic through the EDM locks and the Army Corps is well aware of these incidents. It is not an overstatement to assert that the economy of not only southwestern Pennsylvania, but all of Pennsylvania, depends on the timely completion of this project. Countless businesses and their employees, customers, and suppliers will be negatively impacted by any further delays in the Army Corps' review process. A major failure on any upper Ohio River lock or dam effectively shuts down the entire Port of Pittsburgh and a pool loss from a dam failure would not only impact our economy, but would also impact municipal and industrial intakes and recreation along our waterways.

Given the economic impacts to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Pittsburgh region I respectfully submit that any additional delay is not reasonable. On behalf of the Allegheny Conference, I ask that you complete the review of the study without delay so this important project can be completed.

I appreciate your attention to critical issue. As always, I commend your service to our nation.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



Dennis Yablonsky
Chief Executive Officer
Allegheny Conference on Community Development

cc: Susan Baker Shipley, Chair, Port of Pittsburgh Commission
The Honorable Robert P. Casey, Jr., U. S. Senate
The Honorable Patrick Toomey, U. S. Senate
The Honorable Mike Doyle, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Timothy Murphy, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Bill Shuster, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Mike Kelly, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Keith Rothfus, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Glenn Thompson, U.S. House of Representatives