



MOBILE BAY NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

May 24, 2024

Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I am writing on behalf of the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP) to express support for the Alabama State Port Authority's (ASPA) grant application for the U.S. Department of Transportation Maritime Administration's Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) Program.

Besides its economic impact, the *TASD New Horizons Project* (or "the Project") will support a safer and more efficient operational environment that will continue the Alabama Port Authority's commitment to sustainability through building more resilient infrastructure that operates with reduced emissions and increased reliability. Proposed improvements include expanding the existing TASD interchange yard, raising it to protect it from storm events, and adding power switches.

MBNEP's purpose is to encourage a community-based approach to watershed management by partnering with stakeholders to address local environmental challenges. In this capacity, a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan 2013-2018 (CCMP) has been developed outlining objectives to improve estuary conditions and educate communities to better manage coastal Alabama's natural resources. The proposed project addresses the 2013-2018 CCMP Technical Assistance and Capacity Building (TAC-3.4) *Advocate for the assessment, improvements, and designation of estuary ports as "Green Ports."* And (TAC-4.2) *Advocate inclusion of better building practices in long-range planning to improve environmental and community resilience.*

As the 2nd fastest growing U.S. seaport and with the Port of Mobile being Alabama's only deepwater port, the Alabama State Port Authority is a key stakeholder in protecting what people value most about living on the Alabama coast: Access to the water, healthy populations of fish and wildlife, environmental health and resiliency, protecting the area's heritage, healthy shorelines, and most important, water quality.

The Mobile Bay National Estuary Program strongly supports this much-needed Project. With the Port's rapid growth and economic position in mind, we support this funding opportunity as an investment in a resilient, sustainable Port.

For these reasons, we thank you for your consideration of the Alabama Port Authority's application for federal CRISI grant funding to accelerate the construction of the *TASD New Horizons Project*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Roberta Swann", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Roberta Swann