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U.S. COMMITTEE ON THE MARINE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM SEEKS INFORMATION FROM PORTS, PORT USERS AND STAKEHOLDERS ON BARRIERS TO ACTION THEY FACE WHEN PLANNING FOR LONG-TERM ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

WASHINGTON – Today, the U.S. Committee on the Marine Transportation System (CMTS), an interagency maritime policy coordinating body, released a request for information (RFI) on the state of U.S. ports and their usage of federal resiliency planning resources to respond to long-term environmental changes. As coasts continue to come under threat from rising sea levels, responses will help to assess climate readiness among the nation’s public and private ports.

In addressing the action, CMTS Coordinating Board Chair Nicole LeBoeuf points to a broad attempt to counteract a changing climate.

“Ports are too big to fail,” she said. “As part of our efforts to support U.S. ports in addressing coastal change, this RFI plays an essential role in understanding how to best move forward. Comments on usage of resilience data and planning guidance will be used in order to identify barriers to action that ports face.”

Ports face a variety of challenges when it comes to climate change. Many are already subjected to inundation from storm surge and other coastal flood factors, problems that will only be exacerbated in the near future. Absent accelerated revision in the use of expert resilience guidance and quality environmental data, U.S. competitiveness and operational efficiency in the marine transportation system will be negatively affected.

Economically, the toll is already high. Coastal and ocean-related trade contributes significantly to the United States’ GDP, sourcing \$1.5 trillion annually while supporting over 13 million jobs.

Port resilience is also a social and environmental imperative, as communities surrounding ports have a significant stake in their long-term sustainability. Their concerns extend from job security to environmental justice and the potential destruction of local ecosystems, both of which will be threatened should no action be taken on coastal change. Any information pertinent to these issues should be included in responses.

While these challenges posed by coastal change are daunting, there is significant optimism behind the RFI and other initiatives to help turn the tide.

“Combating this multifaceted threat of climate change to U.S. ports requires a united front. I’m excited for the RFI to serve as a much-needed bridge connecting port communities with the many agencies that are members of the CMTS to share best practices and broaden access to existing resources on port

resilience,” Brian Tetreault, Acting CMTS Executive Director, said. “We believe this is a bold step in the right direction.”

In addition to the RFI, CMTS highlights that this request complements key port resilience tools already available, such as the CISA Marine Transportation System Resilience Assessment Guide, NOAA’s Climate Mapping for Resilience and Adaptation, and the FEMA National Resilience Guidance. For more, see the RFI or visit <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/07/15/2024-15356/request-for-information-to-identify-barriers-to-planning-for-climate-resilience-in-us-ports>.

CMTS encourages all U.S. port authorities to participate in the RFI by submitting their responses within the next 45 days. Your valuable insights will be instrumental in building a more resilient and sustainable future for our nation's ports.

Please contact mtsinfo@cmts.gov for more information, or visit CMTS’s website.

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