



North Carolina General Assembly  
House Of Representatives

REPRESENTATIVE DEB BUTLER  
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COMMITTEES:

BANKING  
COMMERCE  
FINANCE  
REDISTRICTING  
TRANSPORTATION

May 15, 2020

The Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
2165 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 2051

Attn Please:

Honorable Peter DeFazio, Chairman  
Honorable Sam Graves, Ranking Member

Dear Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves:

I represent North Carolina's House District 18 which is located in New Hanover and Brunswick Counties, precisely where the Cape Fear River empties into the Atlantic Ocean. The Port of Wilmington is part of the fabric of my district. Goods have been shipped in and out of our Port for generations and so it's success and vitality are integral to the economic engine of our Region. I am very proud of the success of our Port. The leadership there has done a terrific job of making a smaller port competitive. We are nimble and more affordable and thusly attractive to industries who might otherwise choose another port.

The Wilmington Harbor Navigation Improvement Project is a very large project. Deepening the channel by 5 feet and enlarging the turning basin are herculean tasks that will have incredible effects on our region some of which may be enhancements and yet some which may be very damaging. It's difficult to know without the proper studies being done. And while I know that our Port Authority was permitted to prepare its own feasibility study, I am extremely concerned that there has been **no provision for public engagement or comment**. Had this project taken a more thoughtful path, the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) would




have engaged the public. This project, by no means has universal public support and those whose lives will be directly impacted deserve to be heard.

Further, I feel that the **feasibility study is now obsolete and outdated** insofar as we have a new economic reality to consider. It is my opinion that a more exhaustive review is necessary in order to balance the economic and environmental impacts of this project, particularly as we navigate the effects of the global pandemic we are all enduring.

Lastly, I am not fundamentally opposed to the project on its face, but I do want the people of this region to weigh in on it and I do want a more exhaustive feasibility study that is **more accurate and timely**. I do not feel that the "203 report" is sufficient given a project of this magnitude.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Butler", written in a cursive style.

Representative Deborah A. Butler  
NC House of Representatives – District 18  
Serving Brunswick and New Hanover Counties