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COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-3007

March 7, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

I write to you with concerns about a recent sinkhole that has formed in New Jersey's Seventh Congressional District along Interstate-80 (I-80) in Wharton, NJ that has caused significant traffic delays and impact on the local community in Wharton.

In late December 2024, a sinkhole formed on the shoulder of the eastbound lanes of I-80, nearby Wharton, N.J. This incident closed eastbound lanes for four days while repairs were completed. In early February, I-80 was closed once again when a "depression" was found in the middle of the roadway, nearby the site of the first sinkhole.<sup>1</sup> Just a few weeks later, while the roadway was still closed for evaluation and repairs of this latest incident, a new "void" was identified underneath the eastbound lanes of I-80 further complicating repair efforts. Since then, at least another 134 "voids" have been identified in the area, which could be precursors to additional sinkholes.<sup>2</sup>

Since the first discovery in December 2024, repair estimates have moved from four days to three weeks to a now-undetermined timeframe while the NJDOT attempts to map the scope of these "voids". Meanwhile, New Jersey commuters, many of whom are my constituents heading to or from New York City, are snarled in traffic. Lengthy detours are reported to turn 3 to 4 minute drives to 45 minutes or more, while local businesses report up to a 25% drop in patrons as commuters attempt to steer clear of the area.<sup>3</sup> These delays, paired with the uncertainty of the situation and timeline for repair, disrupt a major thoroughfare between New York City and Pennsylvania.

As this investigation has continued, NJDOT officials have indicated this was caused by the collapse of an abandoned mineshaft.<sup>4</sup> Many residents, including my constituents, have noted the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/i-80-sinkhole-wharton-nj/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/new-sinkhole-i80-wharton-morris-county/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/traffic-frustration-build-up-around-latest-i-80-sinkhole/>

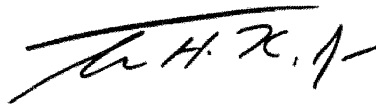
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/i-80-sinkhole-abandoned-mine-new-jersey/>

abundance of abandoned mineshafts in the area. Furthermore, state officials have identified hundreds of mines in the area, many dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup>

With these delays in mind, paired with the alarming uncertainty of the repair timeline, I write to convey my constituents' concerns and respectfully request answers to the following questions.

1. What federal resources are available to assist in emergency infrastructure repairs like those currently being conducted in Wharton?
2. What federal resources are available to assist in identifying areas where transportation infrastructure is vulnerable to rapid failure because of the hazards posed by abandoned mines?
3. What flexibilities from DOT are available to help New Jersey expedite repairs or provide alternative and efficient detours?
4. Are there any DOT resources that had previously been allocated to administering New York's congestion pricing plan that can be immediately transferred to expedite the repairs of this sinkhole on I-80 near Wharton, NJ?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. H. Kean, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Thomas H. Kean, Jr.  
Member of Congress

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<sup>5</sup> <https://gisdata-njdep.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/njdep::abandoned-mines-in-new-jersey/explore>