

For Immediate Release

September 13, 2017

Contact: Jim Gwinner, jgwinner@LS2group.com 314-791-2774

CDP Contact: Camilla Lyngsby, camilla.lyngsby@cdp.net, 646-668-4184

Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative Annual Meeting Mayors Make Major Announcements: *Lessons Learned Following Disasters, Call for National Infrastructure Proposal and Investment Plan for Disaster Mitigation, Sign Partnership with CDP on a \$2 Trillion Global Investment Portfolio*

September 13, 2017 – St. Louis, MO – More than two-dozen Mayors from the length of the Mississippi River gathered this week for the sixth annual meeting of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative (MRCTI). Mayors called for a national infrastructure proposal in light of recent damage caused by hurricanes and announced a partnership with CDP that will grow Mississippi River resilience and sustainable development projects.

Mayor of St. Louis, MO and host of this year's annual MRCTI meeting, Lyda Krewson, emphasized the significance of the Mississippi River to St. Louis, "We pull over 100 million gallons out of the River every day for our drinking water supply, the waterway makes possible the Port of St. Louis which is the nation's third largest inland-waterway port by tonnage, and it is a major source of tourism for our region attracting millions of visitors every year helping to make tourism and outdoor recreation the second-largest economy in the ten-state corridor."

"The Mississippi River represents the best potential to attract opportunity. The River is our past heritage and our future strength," claimed Co-Host Mayor Jackson-Hicks of East St. Louis, IL across the River from St. Louis, MO.

MRCTI mayors reflected on the first time they gathered in 2012 as a response to a barrage of natural disasters including Hurricane Isaac, a 50-year drought, and flooding in over half of the Corridor. "This past March, Mayor Constant and I led our association's release of a plan to restore our nation's infrastructure and reduce disaster impacts by addressing both our built and natural infrastructure," announced MRCTI Co-Chair Mayor Coleman of St. Paul, MN.

Mayors emphasized ways in which natural infrastructure plays a critical role in cleaning and managing water. "The natural infrastructure of the Mississippi River Delta alone provides \$12 to \$47 billion in benefits to the economy annually," noted Mayor Coleman.

With the nation's attention focused on long-term assistance strategy for Harvey and Irma-impacted areas, the Mayors discussed lessons they learned.

“Our hearts go out to the communities of Texas and the Southeast impacted by these storms. Having lived in the center of Katrina’s impacts where 80 percent of our area was under water, the devastation surrounding Houston and Florida hits home for us,” said Mayor Belinda Constant of Gretna, LA and Co-Chair of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative.

In 2016, MRCTI mayors proposed the creation of a multi-state Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant program allowing multiple states to partner on the same disaster mitigation project, which was not previously possible. “FEMA adopted our proposal completely allowing states to partner this way and meet disasters at the scale they happen-regionally; we hope the states take advantage of this option,” Mayor Belinda Constant, MRCTI Co-Chair was pleased to announce.

The national cost of past hurricanes is steep, reaching over \$110 billion for Hurricane Katrina alone. Mayor Johnson of St. Gabriel, LA, next to Baton Rouge, shared a few hard-learned lessons for longer-term recovery vehicles.

1. Make the recovery inclusive of all in need;
2. Ensure an operable proportion of recovery funds actually goes to FEMA;
3. Ensure that the recovery funds go to recovery and resilience, not other projects;
4. Establish disaster recovery block grants to help localities recover long term;
5. Establish a disaster recovery spending strategy with input from mayors, county executives, and governors.

“Everything we have been talking about this morning points to one tremendous need – infrastructure,” declared Mayor Johnson. MRCTI announced a call for a national infrastructure plan with innovative solutions such as a “Resilience Revolving Loan Fund”. Additionally, former Mayor of Atlanta, Andrew Young, discussed ways to enhance the infrastructure of the Mississippi River Corridor.

Mayors announced a new partnership with CDP (formerly Carbon Disclosure Project). The international not-for-profit organization and founder houses the world’s largest collection of self-disclosed corporate environmental data. CDP North America has a network of investors that use CDP’s data to make evidence-based decisions. Their network of investors and purchasers represents over \$100 trillion and their 89 supply chain members represent a combined purchasing power of over \$2 trillion.

“CDP invented environmental disclosures linked to investor awareness in 2003 and has since then extended it to 571 cities worldwide so as to better showcase their infrastructure needs and operations,” said Paula DiPerna, Global Advisor for environment and finance for CDP North America.

“Since the Mississippi River economy generates nearly \$500 billion annually, Mississippi River cities can be an attractive performer,” said Mayor Coleman whose comments reflected the earlier sentiments expressed by Mayor Jackson-Hicks who stated that the

River is the “best potential to attract opportunity”.

“Instead of depending on federal money that may or may not materialize, or a federal infrastructure package that may or may not pass in the near-term with new funding attached, we are pursuing our own options and increasing our own chances of attracting investment into the Mississippi River Corridor,” stated MRCTI Co-Chair, Mayor Coleman, of St. Paul, Minnesota.

The Mayors and CDP signed the agreement for a partnership that will match Mississippi River resilience and sustainable economic development projects to a \$2 trillion global investment portfolio.

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The Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative is comprised of 80 mayors and the association represents cities on the main stem Mississippi from Minnesota to Louisiana. More information can be found on our website at www.MRCTI.org

CDP is an international non-profit that drives companies and governments to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, safeguard water resources and protect forests. Voted number one climate research provider by investors and working with institutional investors with assets of US\$100 trillion, we leverage investor and buyer power to motivate companies to disclose and manage their environmental impacts. 6,000 companies with some 60% of global market capitalization disclosed environmental data through CDP in 2016. This is in addition to the over 500 cities and 100 states and regions who disclosed, making CDP's platform one of the richest sources of information globally on how companies and governments are driving environmental change. CDP, formerly Carbon Disclosure Project, is a founding member of the We Mean Business Coalition. Please visit www.cdp.net or follow us @CDP to find out more.