



COAST GUARD SHORE INFRASTRUCTURE

Project Backlogs Reportedly Exceed \$7 Billion

Statement of Heather MacLeod, Director, Homeland Security and Justice

Testimony

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Transportation, House of Representatives

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Chairman Ezell, Ranking Member Carbajal, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss our recent work on the Coast Guard's shore infrastructure. My testimony today summarizes our February 2025 report entitled *Coast Guard Shore Infrastructure: More Than \$7 Billion Reportedly Needed to Address Deteriorating Assets*.¹ This testimony focuses on three areas: (1) the condition of Coast Guard shore infrastructure, (2) reported project backlogs, and (3) budget transparency to address Coast Guard funding targets.

The Coast Guard's mission is to protect and defend over 100,000 miles of U.S. coastline and inland waterways. The scope of shore infrastructure extends beyond piers and lighthouses. It includes housing units in remote locations for Coast Guard members and their families, training centers where new recruits learn and practice essential job skills, and command centers that direct Coast Guard missions such as search and rescue operations. These assets collectively represent a value of \$24.5 billion, as reported by the Coast Guard in FY 2023.

To conduct this work, we analyzed Coast Guard documentation on its overall management of shore infrastructure and data on the condition of shore infrastructure assets as of FY 2023. We analyzed Department of Homeland Security budget data for fiscal years 2019 to 2025, including Coast Guard shore infrastructure funding targets. We also interviewed Coast Guard officials. Our work was performed in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. More detailed information on the scope and methodology of our work can be found in our February 2025 report.


























Nearly Half of Coast Guard Shore Infrastructure is Beyond Its Expected Service Life

In its internal annual 2023 report on its shore infrastructure, the Coast Guard rated the overall condition of its shore infrastructure as "mediocre to fair" and found that nearly half of its related assets were operating beyond their expected service life.² Some types of assets fare worse than others. For example, 81 percent of the Coast Guard's shore infrastructure aviation assets, such as lighting for airfields, are past their service life, as shown in figure 1.

¹GAO, *Coast Guard Shore Infrastructure: More Than \$7 Billion Reportedly Needed to Address Deteriorating Assets*, [GAO-25-107851](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 25, 2025).

²The Coast Guard uses Department of Defense criteria for establishing the expected service life for its shore infrastructure assets, which can range from 6 to 75 years, depending on the type of asset. According to the Coast Guard, its buildings are generally designed for a 50-year service life. The Coast Guard rates the condition of its shore infrastructure using standards developed by the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Figure 1: Information on Coast Guard Shore Infrastructure as of Fiscal Year 2023

Asset line	Examples of assets		Number of assets	Replacement value (in millions)	Percent of assets beyond service life
Housing	Family housing		2,451	\$4,632	37% 
Aviation	Airfield lighting		293	\$2,977	81% 
Shore Operations	Ammunition storage		1,007	\$2,802	51% 
Civil Works	Marine fuel		6,684	\$2,764	60% 
Waterfront	Pier, mooring		1,516	\$2,603	69% 
Sector/District	Operations center		236	\$2,227	50% 
Community Services	Dining facility		1,089	\$1,644	77% 
Aids to Navigation	Lighthouse		20,100	\$1,526	76% 
Base Services	Maintenance facility		4,162	\$1,381	64% 
C5I	Communication tower		1,638	\$795	38% 
Training Facility	Firing range		156	\$676	35% 
Industrial	Coast Guard Yard		49	\$451	58% 
Total			39,381	\$24,479	49% 

Source: GAO analysis of Coast Guard information; GAO icons. | GAO-25-108064

Note: The Coast Guard categorizes its shore infrastructure into asset lines based on their function. This figure does not include leased assets, floating aids to navigation, or marine environmental response assets. The Coast Guard defines replacement value as the estimated cost to replace an entire asset. C5I stands for Command, Control, Communication, Computer, Cyber, and Intelligence.

In 2019, we evaluated Coast Guard shore infrastructure based on leading practices for managing public sector maintenance backlogs.³ Based on our analysis, we made six recommendations, including that the Coast Guard should better manage its portfolio of shore infrastructure assets by establishing goals, measures, and baselines to track the effectiveness of its maintenance and repair efforts. As we reported in our 2025 report, in response to one of our recommendations, the Coast Guard established new measures to aid more consistent data reporting on these efforts but has yet to develop related goals and baselines.⁴ Developing goals and baselines will help the Coast Guard more accurately gauge the impact of its maintenance and repair efforts.

Coast Guard’s Reported Shore Infrastructure Backlogs Exceeded \$7 Billion as of FY 2024

The Coast Guard faces multiple backlogs of shore infrastructure projects that it estimates will cost at least \$7 billion to address as of June 2024. This is more than double the amount we reported in 2019. The backlogs consist of recapitalization projects, such as new construction, and deferred depot-level maintenance, such as repaving an airfield. According to Coast Guard officials, these backlog projects are priorities that would be completed immediately if funding were available.

Table 1: U.S. Coast Guard’s Estimated Shore Infrastructure Backlogs’ Project Costs, as of June 2024

Backlog	Cost to address projects with cost estimates (\$)	Number of projects with cost estimates	Number of projects without cost estimates
Recapitalization and new construction	6,150,700,000	115	194
Deferred depot-level maintenance	877,336,083	1,812	40
Total	7,028,036,083	1,927	234

Source: GAO analysis of Coast Guard data. | GAO-25-108064

Note: The Coast Guard backlogs include recapitalization projects, new construction projects, and deferred depot-level maintenance projects that the Coast Guard would execute if funding were available. This table does not include projects related to aids to navigation. The recapitalization, new construction, and depot-level maintenance backlog project data are current as of June 2024.

Years of deferred maintenance, combined with the need for new facilities to accommodate new assets (such as the Offshore Patrol Cutter), have contributed to the growth in the backlogs’ cost, according to Coast Guard

³GAO, *Coast Guard Shore Infrastructure: Applying Leading Practices Could Help Better Manage Project Backlogs of At Least \$2.6 Billion*, GAO-19-82 (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 21, 2019).

⁴GAO-25-107851.

officials. We have reported on these issues and found that the Coast Guard's short-term budget decisions have contributed to the buildup of its deferred maintenance and recapitalization efforts.⁵

Moreover, we found that the Coast Guard-estimated \$7 billion cost to address its shore infrastructure is understated because there are hundreds of additional projects that lack cost estimates, and the Coast Guard has not updated all of its existing cost estimates for inflation.

Further, as we have previously testified, the Coast Guard's shore infrastructure backlogs are contributing to a buildup of unaffordable acquisitions in both the near-term and long-term. This presents significant challenges to the Coast Guard's major acquisition programs.⁶ In February 2025, we found that the Coast Guard's highest priority programs are still experiencing schedule challenges.⁷ For example, in August 2024, the Coast Guard revised its schedule goals for the Offshore Patrol Cutter program. The program is now planning for delivery of its lead ship by December 2025, more than 4 years later than originally planned.

President's Budget Requests for Each Fiscal Year from FY 2019 to FY 2025 Did Not Address Coast Guard Shore Infrastructure Funding Targets

The Coast Guard cannot adequately address its backlog of shore infrastructure projects, and the President's budget requests for shore infrastructure have not fully addressed the Coast Guard's funding targets. Each year, the Coast Guard sets funding targets for shore infrastructure. However, the President's budget requests for each fiscal year from FY 2019 to FY 2025 and the actual funding levels for shore infrastructure have consistently been below those targets since at least FY 2019, as illustrated in figure 2.⁸ Coast Guard officials have said they will not be able to address the agency's backlogs of shore infrastructure projects if funding remains at the FY 2024 funding level. Current funding is only adequate to address the most pressing needs, which tend to be unplanned corrective actions to address issues that have accumulated over time from years of deferred maintenance, according to Coast Guard officials.

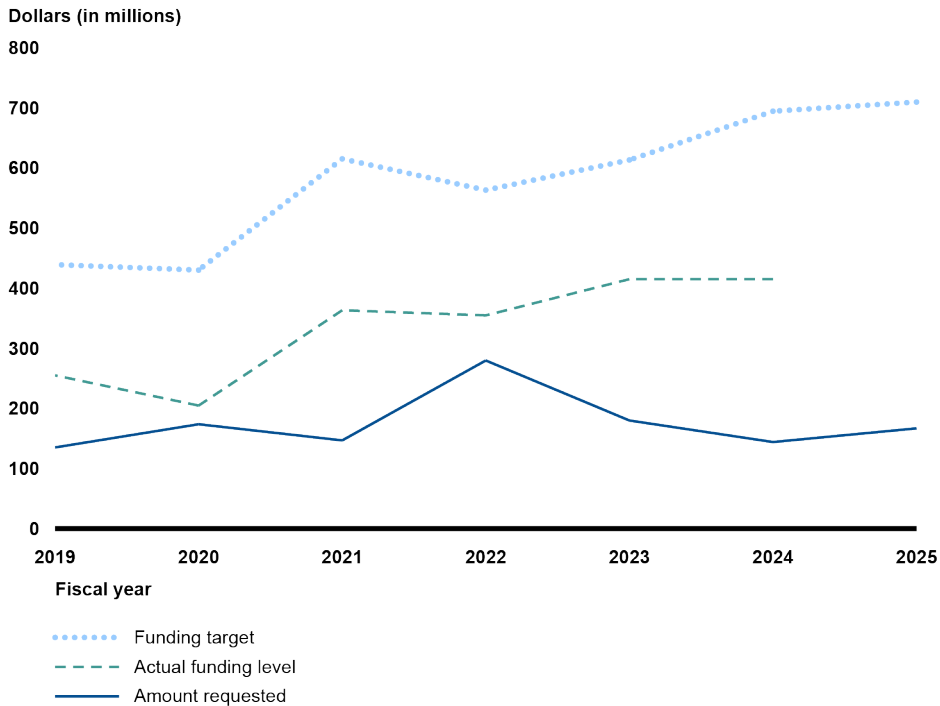
⁵GAO, *Coast Guard Acquisition: Actions Needed to Address Affordability Challenges*, [GAO-24-107584](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 12, 2024); GAO, *Coast Guard Acquisitions: Actions Needed to Address Longstanding Portfolio Management Challenges*, [GAO-18-454](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 24, 2018).

⁶[GAO-24-107584](#)

⁷GAO, *DHS Annual Assessment: Improved Guidance on Revised Acquisition Goals Would Enhance Transparency*, [GAO-25-107317](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 25, 2025).

⁸In 2019, we found that actual funding levels were below the Coast Guard funding targets for FY 2017 and FY2018. See [GAO-19-82](#).

Figure 2: Coast Guard Budget Information for Shore Infrastructure Recapitalization and New Construction Projects, Fiscal Years (FY) 2019 to 2025



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Coast Guard data and DHS Congressional Budget Justifications. | GAO-25-108064

Accessible Data for Figure 2: Coast Guard Budget Information for Shore Infrastructure Recapitalization and New Construction Projects, Fiscal Years (FY) 2019 to 2025

Fiscal Year	Amount requested	Actual funding level	Funding target
2019	135	254.91	439
2020	173.6	204.65	430.057
2021	146.731	363.181	615
2022	279.65	354.65	563.021
2023	179.84	414.84	613.1
2024	144	414.84	694.227
2025	166.75	na	709.5

Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Coast Guard data and DHS Congressional Budget Justifications. | GAO-25-108064

Note: Amount requested and actual funding level refer to amounts in the President’s budget requests for Coast Guard procurement, new construction, and improvement projects, not deferred maintenance. Information is current as of February 2025. Information on the actual funding level for FY 2025 and the FY 2026 President’s budget request were not available at the time of our review.

As we stated in our 2025 report, these gaps have persisted for years. According to the Coast Guard, the budget topline set by the Office of Management and Budget prevents the Coast Guard from requesting a level

of funding that would adequately address all of its shore infrastructure needs. However, as we recently reported, the Coast Guard could do more to inform Congress's budget deliberations.

In 2019, we found that the Coast Guard was not providing Congress with accurate and transparent information related to the budget requests for its shore infrastructure.⁹ As a result, we recommended that the Coast Guard include supporting details about competing priorities and trade-offs in congressional budget requests and related reports—a step that it has not yet taken. Without accurate and transparent information on the Coast Guard's budgetary needs, Congress lacks critical information to help it prioritize funding to resolve shore infrastructure backlogs.

We also found that the Coast Guard could save money by employing models for predicting investment outcomes, analyzing trade-offs, and optimizing decisions among competing shore infrastructure investments. For example, in 2017, the Coast Guard developed a model to achieve cost savings by speeding up aviation pavement investments. However, the model was not adopted. As we recently reported, the Coast Guard selected a model to analyze building investments. However, officials stated that the model will not be fully employed until 2028.

In closing, our work highlights a serious and ongoing issue for the Coast Guard: how to continue fulfilling its missions with an increasingly costly backlog of shore infrastructure. In 2019, we made six recommendations to help the Coast Guard better manage its shore infrastructure. As of February 2025, the Coast Guard has fully addressed two of those recommendations and taken steps toward addressing three of them, but four remain open.

In order to fully address all four of the open recommendations, the Coast Guard will need to (1) develop goals and baselines for tracking the effectiveness of its maintenance and repair efforts; (2) implement new guidance to align its assets with mission needs; (3) fully employ models to help prioritize decision-making; and (4) find new ways to inform Congress about the various projects alternatives and trade-offs that the Coast Guard faces when deciding how best to allocate its shore infrastructure resources. We believe that fully addressing our 2019 recommendations will help the Coast Guard to better manage its resources, identify cost savings, and provide Congress with better information to address shore infrastructure challenges.

We will continue to monitor the Coast Guard's efforts to address our recommendations. Doing so will help the Coast Guard to manage resources more efficiently; support a clear and detailed budget request to meet shore infrastructure funding targets; and better position the Coast Guard and Congress to address long-standing shore infrastructure challenges. We will also continue to monitor the status of the Coast Guard's acquisition programs in our annual assessment of Department of Homeland Security major programs. We also have an ongoing review of the Offshore Patrol Cutter program.

⁹[GAO-19-82](#).

Chairman Ezell, Ranking Member Carbajal, and Members of the Subcommittee, this concludes my prepared statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you have at this point.

GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

If you or your staff have any questions about this testimony, please contact Heather MacLeod, Director, Homeland Security and Justice, at (202) 512-8777, or macleodh@gao.gov. Contacts for the Office of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this statement.

GAO staff who made key contributions to this testimony are Andrew Curry (Assistant Director), Ben Nelson (Analyst in Charge), Nasreen Badat, Ben Crossley, Michele Fejfar, Kevin Gonzalez, Claire Li, Azinwi Numfor, Janet Temko-Blinder, and Christopher Zubowicz. Other staff who made key contributions to the reports cited in the testimony are identified in the source products.

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