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HUD Secretary Reviews Federal Support for WAPA Amid Utility's Leadership and Operational Struggles

Adrianna Todman visits the Virgin Islands to evaluate CDBG-funded projects as WAPA navigates grid instability and management changes.

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HUD Secretary meets with WAPA leadership to assess the progress of federally funded projects. By. WAPA

On Thursday, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Adrianna Todman visited the offices of the Water and Power Authority to receive a detailed review of projects funded by HUD's Community Development Block Grants.

The visit comes as WAPA highlights progress on critical infrastructure initiatives, such as the battery storage system at the Richmond Power Plant and a pending tank stabilization project.

However, the visit also coincides with lingering operational challenges, including grid instability and recent leadership changes.

CBDG-funded projects underway at WAPA include the battery storage system at the Richmond Power plant. The negotiated Vitol settlement was paid out of CBDG funds as well. A tank stabilization project is currently awaiting HUD approval prior to the disbursement of funds to commence work.

“We are proud to showcase the progress we've made, and remain dedicated to leveraging these collaborations to deliver reliable, sustainable services to the Virgin Islands community,” said WAPA Chief Executive Officer Karl Knight.

Mr. Knight lauded the progress being made with the backing of federal and local government. He highlighted the Vitol deal as a major victory for WAPA, and said that the utility was “deeply grateful for the means to achieve this accomplishment for the territory.”

Despite the external support, WAPA has in recent years lurched from crisis to crisis. While Ms. Todman was meeting WAPA officials on St. Croix, consumers on St. Thomas grappled with the latest fault in the electrical system which triggered power rotations and took at least six hours to repair. Days earlier, the Consortium broke the news that longtime Chief Operating Officer for electricity Ashley Bryan had [submitted her notice to resign, following months of grid instability](#) across the territory caused by a myriad of issues.

With infusions of cash from the local and national government staving off insolvency, and a legally-mandated turnaround management company [now in place](#) to help the struggling utility get its financial and management affairs in order, “today’s visit by Secretary Todman highlights the critical role that federal and local partnerships play in driving the success” of WAPA's infrastructure projects, Mr. Knight declared. “It’s sobering to reflect on how much progress the Authority has made with the federal and local backing,” he mused.

For her part, Secretary Todman is reported to have commended WAPA leadership and staff, according to a press release issued by the organization.