

FREIGHT STAKEHOLDERS COALITION

Surface Transportation Reauthorization Platform - 2014

The Freight Stakeholders Coalition represents nearly every segment of the economy - shippers, transportation providers, as well as public and private owners and operators of infrastructure assets that move goods across the United States. The Coalition is united in the belief that a strong federal role in transportation programs is essential to maintaining interstate and foreign commerce and for the development of a more robust and competitive freight network.

The next surface transportation authorization is an opportunity to provide long-term, sustainable funding and to build upon MAP-21, which recognized the linkage between goods movement and economic competitiveness. However, it is time to match this new emphasis on freight by ensuring both long-term Highway Trust Fund solvency, as well as with new and additional non-HTF funding dedicated to prioritizing projects that optimize and integrate the nation's freight transportation system.

The findings and recommendations of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Special Panel on 21st Century Transportation advocated a truly national and interconnected freight transportation system and proposed many recommendations supported by this Coalition, including a call for robust public investment in all modes. The federal government must lead long-term efforts designed to further America's competitive advantage by advancing projects of regional and national significance that reduce congestion, enhance goods movement, improve the environment and create jobs.

We are committed to the modernization of our nation's freight transportation system. It must accommodate projected growth in manufacturing and trade in years ahead or risk the U.S. being surpassed by foreign competitors.

The Freight Stakeholders Coalition has agreed to the following principles for the upcoming surface transportation authorization legislation:

- 1. Congress and the Administration, together, must achieve real, long-term, sustainable funding solutions designed to meet our current and future infrastructure needs.** It is broadly acknowledged and understood that the current federal revenue sources of funding supporting highway, transit, rail and safety programs are insufficient to meet the nation's current needs and without increases to revenues, this gap will grow exponentially in the future. Addressing our infrastructure funding gap is directly connected to maintaining our nation's global competitiveness.
- 2. Provide dedicated funds for freight mobility/goods movement.** It is critical that we resolve the funding challenges and ensure that the future funding is available for the current surface transportation programs, which currently fund many eligible projects that directly support freight mobility. In addition, there is also a need to identify and provide new, dedicated funding outside of the Highway Trust Fund for freight mobility. These

dedicated funds should be provided for planning and capital investment in critical multimodal freight transportation infrastructure that provides public benefits and should be made available to both states and local governments (including seaports) and MPOs. High priority should be given to investment in efficient goods movement on the most significant freight corridors, including investment in intermodal connectors into freight terminals and projects that support national and regional connectivity.

3. Continuation of and funding for the Projects of National and Regional Significance program. The rules for this discretionary grant program, as enacted in SAFETEA-LU, have been fully developed by USDOT with significant input from stakeholders. The program awards funds on a competitive basis and is designed to recognize the national interest of projects that span across multiple states and jurisdictions. Many of these directly facilitate the movement of freight. This program is vital to addressing national freight needs and should be funded.

4. Promote and expedite the development and delivery of projects and activities that improve and facilitate the efficient movement of goods. MAP-21 introduced important reforms to expedite surface transportation project reviews while ensuring environmental protections. The next authorization must continue to build upon MAP-21 environmental streamlining provisions and make improvements to speed project delivery. Efficient federal and state reviews are critical to ensuring that project sponsors and financial investors have the ability to predictably move projects from the drawing board to construction while protecting the environment.

5. Establish a multi-modal freight office within the Office of the Secretary. Freight mobility should be a key priority within USDOT. This office would serve as an advocate for freight and fill several key roles that are missing today. It should administer the Projects of National and Regional Significance program and other freight-related funding and finance initiatives. It would serve as the department's coordinator across all modes for multi-modal freight projects as well as work cooperatively with federal, state and local officials on project delivery. It would review rulemaking across all USDOT agencies and departments to create consistency for regulations affecting freight mobility.

6. Support multi-state freight corridor planning organizations. Multi-state freight corridor planning organizations have assisted states in planning and developing multi-state projects critical to regional and national freight mobility. Congress should allow States and MPOs to use federal funding to support multi-state corridor planning and organizations in order to enhance the ability to address multi-state projects and strategies to improve freight intermodal connectivity.

7. Reauthorize/reinstitute programs that have facilitated freight mobility projects. MAP-21 enhanced the existing core highway program to enable States to prioritize projects by increasing the federal match for freight projects on Interstates/highways and expanding eligibility for STP, including intermodal connectors. In addition, there are numerous previously existing transportation programs that facilitate freight mobility and

are demonstrably valuable that MAP-21 retained outright or made eligible in a new consolidated and limited core program structure. Examples of these include Projects of Regional and National Significance; Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act, National Cooperative Freight Research Program; Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program, Truck Parking Pilot Program, and Rail-Highway Crossings. These programs should be reauthorized.

8. Expand freight planning at the state and local levels. Congress should continue to encourage states, MPOs and localities to develop freight planning expertise to address multi-modal freight mobility as part of their planning processes. Since the enactment of ISTEA, states are required to address multimodal issues as part of the scope of planning process. MAP-21 continued this trend by encouraging states to develop statewide freight plans, as well as linking the increased federal match incentive by requiring eligible projects be included in these plans. Federal law should continue to encourage the incorporation of freight planning into local plans and funds should be made available to MPOs to assist these efforts.

9. Foster operational and environmental efficiencies in goods movement. As in other aspects of transportation, improvements designed to achieve long term sustainability in goods movement are desirable to meet both commercial objectives—economy and efficiency—and public objectives—energy security and reduced environmental impact. Federal policy should employ positive approaches to enhance freight system efficiency and throughput with the goals of improving safety and reducing energy consumption and related greenhouse gas emissions.

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