

July 6, 2020

Senator Roger Wicker  
Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, & Transportation  
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wicker:

We, the undersigned, are members of the Freight Stakeholders Coalition. Together, we represent 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.

As Congress drafts legislation to address infrastructure this year, we write with a list of principles supported by our diverse Coalition. We hope that you'll review these principles and use them to guide a comprehensive, robust infrastructure program to assist in our national economic recovery. Thank you for your leadership on these important issues.

Sincerely,

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# FREIGHT STAKEHOLDERS COALITION

Surface Transportation Reauthorization Platform  
2020

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, competitive and smart freight network.

This Coalition supports 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 most recent surface transportation authorization, Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, increased freight planning and coordination at the local, state and federal levels. It also provided modest funding dedicated to freight infrastructure. Despite this, much more is necessary to maintain and develop the infrastructure that carries our economy, including dependable and robust funding. Long term Highway Trust Fund (HTF) solvency is needed as well as additional non-HTF funding dedicated to prioritizing projects that optimize and integrate the nation's freight transportation system.

The Freight Stakeholders Coalition supports 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 programs at a level that is commensurate to needs.** The decades-long surface transportation funding challenge must be resolved to ensure existing surface transportation programs, which fund many eligible projects that directly support freight mobility, receive sufficient and reliable funding. In addition, there is a need to identify and provide new, dedicated funding outside of the HTF 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 states, 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 increased funding for the Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects Program (INFRA) program.** Criteria written into law under the INFRA program focuses on goods movement infrastructure and lists goals such as increasing global economic competitiveness, improving connectivity between freight modes, and improving the safety, efficiency and reliability of the movement of freight and people. INFRA resources must be invested in high-impact goods movement projects that improve the flow of freight and aid the regional and national economy. Funds supporting projects in freight hubs and along freight corridors, invested in both rural and urban communities, will improve the economy's overall health. Presently, INFRA is oversubscribed. In the combined FY17 & FY18 round of awards, USDOT received \$12 in unique requests for every \$1 available; all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have submitted applications to the program, demonstrating freight infrastructure needs across the nation.

**4. Continuation of and increased funding for the National Highway Freight Program.** Funding available through the FAST Act's freight formula program fills an important role by allowing states to invest in goods movement projects of varying sizes, particularly those that may not be candidates for scarce federal competitive grant resources.

**5. Promote and expedite the development and delivery of projects and activities that improve and facilitate the efficient movement of goods.** Both the FAST Act and its predecessor MAP-21 introduced important reforms to expedite surface transportation project reviews while ensuring environmental protections. The next authorization must continue to build upon recent 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.

**6. Establish a multimodal freight office within the Office of the Secretary.** Freight mobility should be a key priority within USDOT. This Office should serve as an advocate for all freight improvements, encourage multijurisdictional partnerships that will result in enhanced system efficiency and fill several key roles that are missing today. It should administer the INFRA program and other freight-related funding and finance initiatives. It should serve as the department's coordinator across all modes for multimodal freight projects as well as work cooperatively with federal, state and local officials on project delivery. It should review rulemaking across all USDOT agencies and departments to create consistency for regulations affecting freight mobility. The administration process for implementing, awarding and administering these assistance programs should be made more efficient to reduce time taken between submission of applications, award of grants and obligation of funds.

**7. Support multi-state freight corridor planning organizations.** Multi-state freight corridor planning organizations have assisted states in planning and developing multistate 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.

**8. Reauthorize/reinstitute programs that have facilitated freight mobility projects.** Recent reauthorizations 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. 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; Short Line Tax Credit (45G); Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Program; Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment Program; Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Program and Rail-Highway Crossings. These programs should be reauthorized/ reinstated.

**9. Continue multimodal freight planning at the state and local levels.** Congress should continue to require states – in consultation with MPOs, localities and other stakeholders – to develop multimodal state freight plans. This planning should be incentivized, as it is now, by National Highway Freight Program funding. 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.

**10. 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, such as economy and efficiency, as well as public objectives, such as 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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