



PORTS-TO-PLAINS ALLIANCE

Securing the Benefits of Commerce to
North America's Energy & Agricultural Heartland

Congressional Meetings

Ports-to-Plains Alliance Washington DC Fly-in April 19-21, 2016

1. Introductions / Status of Corridor in State/District

2. A Comparison between FAST Act and Ports-to-Plains Alliance Federal Recommendations – Handout

The Ports-to-Plains Alliance is pleased with the FAST Act and especially its increased focus on freight. Last year the Alliance provided its recommendations for transportation reauthorization and as outlined in the handout, many of our recommendations were included in the final bill. Significantly:

- The five year FAST Act provides much-needed long-term certainty and flexibility for state and local governments and creates opportunities for improving rural highway corridors vital to safe travel, economic development, and energy development for North America
- The new freight program provided important opportunities in both planning and funding for multi-state rural highway corridors that are essential to the development of America's energy and agricultural resources.
 - The *National Multimodal Freight Network* sets the stage for future transportation reauthorization legislation with its purpose is to guide future federal investments and assistance to states in directing resources.
 - The *National Highway Freight Program* provides formula-based freight funding to each state with eligibility for Critical Rural Freight Corridors.
 - The *Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects Program*, a discretionary grant program focused on freight includes fund, goals and criteria which recognize rural, multi-state corridors; consider the safety, efficiency, and reliability of the movement of freight and people; and seeks to improve roadways vital to national energy security.

3. Fixing The Highway Trust Fund

The FAST Act did not provide the permanent revenue solution necessary to maintain current levels of federal highway investments, much less increased investment. When the FAST Act transfer of \$70 billion from the General Fund to the HTF is exhausted on September 30, 2020, the program will face a projected \$19 billion-and-growing annual revenue shortfall. A top priority of the Alliance is for Congress to permanently address this shortfall as soon as possible as part of tax reform or other revenue-related measure.



4. Timely Designation of Critical Rural Freight Corridors

The opportunities presented by the FAST Act can be limited if USDOT/FHWA does not, in a timely manner, provide guidance to states on the process of designating Critical Rural Freight Corridors (CRFC). CRFCs were included in MAP-21, but during the two and a half years of MAP-21, the states received no guidance on the process of designation. Timing of the designation under the FAST Act can have significant impact upon rural multistate corridors' ability to benefit from the freight provisions described above.

- Without designation, CRFCs cannot be included in the *National Multimodal Freight Network* which is required to be completed by December 4, 2016.
- Without designation, they may receive less consideration by states for use of the formula *National Highway Freight Program* funding.
- Without designation, they may receive less consideration by states and the administration for applications and funding through the discretionary *Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects Program*.

Timely promulgation of the CRFC guidance by DOT/FHWA is another top priority of the Alliance.

5. Reduced Hours of Operation at the Port of Raymond, MT

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) announced reduced hours at the Raymond Port of Entry. The action reduces the hours of operation from 24 to 18 hours per day, beginning on April 18 and running for 60 days. This action by CBP limits the alternatives for movement of goods through crossings in Montana and North Dakota and forces businesses to either wait to use the reduced hours or add additional travel time and miles to use the ports of entry at Sweetgrass (MT – 335 miles from Raymond) or Portal (ND – 92 miles from Raymond). Sweetgrass and Portal, 427 miles apart, would be the only choices on a 24 hour basis. The reduced hours also further affect hours or service hours for truckers. The Alliance would point out that the additional miles in the U.S. to use one of these remaining 24-hour ports also translates into additional miles on the Canadian side of the border.

6. Outreach in Your District/State

If there is interest in having public meetings focusing on transportation or economic development, the Alliance can host those meetings. These town hall type meetings can address the congressional role in the passage of the FAST Act, corridor improvements, and where appropriate, recognition of participation in the Ports-to-Plains Caucus.

7. Ports-to-Plains Alliance Caucus

The Alliance would like to thank the members of Congress that have served on the Ports-to-Plains Caucus. For those members not on the Caucus, we urge you to join. Membership in the caucus demonstrates your support of rural transportation and economic development as well as the development of the entire Ports-to-Plains corridor.



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