

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 14, 2021

Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves:

Thank you for providing Members the opportunity to share our priorities for 117th Congress. As you continue to develop your proposal to rebuild our nation's infrastructure, we would like to take this Member's Day hearing as an opportunity to urge the inclusion of H.R. 1608, *The Ports-to-Plains Highway Act of 2021*, in any surface transportation reauthorization legislation. This is an issue of great importance and value to the constituents of TX-19, TX-28, TX-11, TX-12, TX-13, TX-23, North Dakota, and rural Americans in the states in-between.

To provide prosperity to every part of the country, any future infrastructure initiative must recognize the essential role America's small towns and rural communities play in feeding, fueling, and clothing America's cities and urban areas. With jurisdiction over highways, airports, water resources, and other critical infrastructure areas, this committee has a unique opportunity to invest in the future of rural America. Access and upgrades to adequate rural infrastructure not only promote the wellbeing and quality of life for people living in rural communities, but also ensures the safe and efficient transportation of food, fuel, and fiber throughout the country.

Investing in rural transportation infrastructure is needed to carry more "Made in America" products to markets at home and abroad, thereby enhancing our country's global competitiveness. In rural districts stretching from the Mexican to the Canadian borders, the Ports-to-Plains Alliance has been doing their part to plant the seeds for a major north-south reliever corridor. The product of years of work and community engagement has resulted in the introduction of H.R. 1608, *The Ports-to-Plains Highway Act of 2021*. If implemented, this corridor would stretch across four states where there are currently no major north-south interstate highways.

The Ports-to-Plains region includes states which lead our nation's energy economy with seven of the top ten states in oil production and eight of the top ten states in wind generation in the country, producing over \$44 billion in agriculture goods, or 22 percent of total U.S. agriculture production. The Ports-to-Plains corridor generates over \$166 billion annually in trade with Canada and Mexico, accounting for almost 20 percent of all U.S.- North American trade. Simply put, Middle America provides the food, fuel, and fiber that strengthens our nation.

The nation's rural transportation network provides the first and last link in the supply chain from farm to market, while also driving tourism, enabling the production of energy, and supporting military movements. The four-state designation language contained in H.R. 1608 would not only improve the resilience of our supply chain, but also spur economic growth for underserved communities, both of which are priorities within President Biden's infrastructure plan. As you continue to develop your proposal to rebuild our nation's infrastructure, we urge you to consider products as well as people in the equitable balance between urban and rural America.

We urge the inclusion of H.R. 1608, *The Ports-to-Plains Highway Act of 2021*, in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization bill. We look forward to working with you this Congress on this critical legislation. Please reach out to our offices if we can be of any help.

Sincerely,



Jodey C. Arrington (TX-19)
Member of Congress



Henry Cuellar (TX-28)
Member of Congress



Kay Granger (TX-12)
Member of Congress



August Pfluger (TX-11)
Member of Congress



Kelly Armstrong (ND-AL)
Member of Congress



Ronny L. Jackson (TX-13)
Member of Congress



Tony Gonzales (TX-23)
Member of Congress