



# PORTS-TO-PLAINS ALLIANCE

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

News Release - For Immediate Release

May 15, 2014

Contact: Michael Reeves  
(806) 775-2338  
[michael.reeves@portstoplains.com](mailto:michael.reeves@portstoplains.com)

## **Ports-to-Plains pleased to see Senate move forward with highway bill**

The Ports-to-Plains Alliance is pleased to see the U.S. Senate moving ahead with their bill to reauthorize the federal transportation funding bill, MAP 21, that is set to expire September 30, and with some of the key provisions included in the bill. The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee released their bipartisan bill Monday and held its first markup hearing Thursday. The bill authorizes \$261.4 billion over six years for highway funding.

“It is critical that Congress pass a reauthorization of MAP 21 and not allow funding to stop to critical transportation projects. And due to the long term planning involved in such projects, a long term solution is needed instead of just passing short term extensions,” said Ports-to-Plains President Michael Reeves.

Among the key provisions in the Senate bill (S 2322) that Ports-to-Plains supports is a National Freight Program, which would provide \$400 million including funding for critical freight corridors in FY 2106, and ramps up to \$2 billion in FY 2020.

“Our country’s economy depends on moving freight to markets and we must have adequate corridors to keep our economy moving. Whether you are in agriculture, energy or manufacturing you have to have good highways to efficiently get your goods to your customers,” said Reeves.

The plan calls for funding of Critical Rural Freight Corridors, allowing states to identify such routes within their states. Among the criteria for designation as a Critical Rural Freight Corridor are that the highway provides access to energy exploration, development, installation, or production areas; provides access to a grain elevator or other regionally significant agricultural facility; or connects to an international port of entry.

“It is good to see that the Senate recognizes the importance of rural corridors like Ports-to-Plains,” said Reeves. “Rural America, particularly the Ports-to-Plains region, produces the food, fiber and fuel that feeds, clothes and powers our country.”

The Freight Program also requires states to establish a freight advisory committee in order to be eligible for funding. In the Ports-to-Plains region Texas and Colorado already have such committees, but other states do not.

### **Ports-to-Plains Highway Bill Support – Add One**

The biggest unanswered question is how Congress will pay for this new bill. The Environment and Public Works Committee produces the policy and recommended spending levels in the bill, but it is up to the Finance Committee to decide how much money there will actually be for the program. The spending levels in this bill would require the Finance Committee to find about \$16 billion per year, or roughly \$100 billion over the six-year life of the bill. That money would need to come from cuts in other programs or new revenue.

“I think most people would agree that transportation infrastructure should be one of the top priorities we expect our government to provide,” said Reeves. “We realize the money must come from somewhere and we will encourage our leaders to make this critical investment in America’s infrastructure. While nobody likes paying higher taxes, we would support an increase in the gas tax if it means we will adequately address our decaying infrastructure,” said Reeves.