

Deep Water Port *notes*

The News Portfolio of The Connecticut Deep Water Port Community
New London . New Haven . Bridgeport

Maritime Matters in Washington

By Mr. Paul Bea

WASHINGTON got it done. Really.

The House and Senate produced, and the president will sign, surface transportation authorization legislation that sets the programs and funding for highway, transit and related infrastructure—hereafter referred to as MAP-21 (“Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century”). The bill, H.R. 4348, won bipartisan approval of both chambers by large margins.

The importance of the roughly \$52 billion per year measure can be gauged by the fact that States and transportation agencies utterly depend on the bill for system maintenance and improvement funding. It also sets national policy for everything from truck size and weight to reducing transportation emissions.

MAP-21 is the successor to the 2005 SAFETEA-LU. Arguably, it is a significant successor. It includes some reforms recommended by congressionally established policy commissions. It also contains freight and channel maintenance provisions that are, in their own way, groundbreaking.

Back in 2005 the House and Senate negotiations that produced SAFETEA-LU cut the one major freight infrastructure funding provision from the bill. It took no time for the Freight Stakeholders Coalition to regroup and



The Noreaster transiting LIS to discharge gasoline at Motiva Terminals in New Haven, CT



Marine Pilot Captain Charles Jonas boarding motor tanker Noreaster via rope ladder from pilot boat.

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resume work to get—seven years later—freight policy provisions in the next surface transportation bill.

Today there is reason to celebrate. While a \$2 billion National Freight Program didn't survive the conference some freight provisions were adopted.

- The Secretary is authorized to reduce the non-Federal share of a project's cost if it meets criteria for improving freight mobility.
- A National Freight Policy is established with goals to improve the "condition and performance of the national freight network," to consist of important freight routes to be designated by the Transportation Secretary.
- USDOT is to prepare a National Freight Strategic Plan, in consultation with States and public and private stakeholders, to identify freight gateways and corridors (and bottlenecks), future freight volumes, and needed improvements.
- USDOT is to report on the condition of the freight network and improve data and planning tools to support outcome-oriented infrastructure investments.
- States are encouraged to develop freight plans and organize freight advisory committees.
- The bill also increases to \$1 billion the popular TIFIA credit assistance program and authorizes \$500 million for Projects of National and Regional Significance. Both have been particularly helpful in financing large freight related projects.

The other noteworthy provision in MAP-21 isn't nearly as significant but deserves a mention. It brings attention to the underfunding of port channels and the continuing Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund problem. House and Senate sponsors of the RAMP Act legislation made every effort to get strong language in the transportation bill. However the final product is just "sense of Congress" language that reminds the White House and Congress that the full measure of HMTF resources should be spent each

year to keep U.S. port channels at their most efficient. Still it is a positive development. For the first time the Congress acknowledges the need to make full use of the shipper-paid revenues to maintain the underwater highways. Only time will tell if it will result in greater funding in budgets to come.

MAP-21 isn't all that it should and could be. Above all it doesn't fund the nation's transportation needs at levels required. But let's be grateful for what we got. In today's hyper-partisan Washington the House and Senate produced major infrastructure legislation on a bipartisan basis.

Paul Bea is a government relations and policy advisor in Washington, DC. He chairs the marine highway advocacy group, The Coastwise Coalition, and discusses marine transportation system matters at www.MTSMatters.com.

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An Act Promoting Economic Growth And Job Creation In Connecticut -.HB 6801

Streamline and increase existing tax credits for new hires (\$500/hire) and the unemployed, veterans and the disabled (\$900/hire).

Link: http://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&bill_num=6801&which_year=2011&SUBMIT1.x=0&SUBMIT1.y=0&SUBMIT1=Normal

Federal Resources

VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 Creates New Benefit for Unemployed Veterans.

This legislation offers a tax credit up to \$5,600 for companies that hire veterans who have been unemployed six months or longer. Hiring a veteran with a service-connected disability bumps the credit up to \$9,600.

Link: http://courtney.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6533&Itemid

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