



PORTS-TO-PLAINS ALLIANCE

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

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Interstate 27 Was the Focus at the Ports-to-Plains Alliance Annual Conference in Lubbock

Community leaders from across North America's energy and agriculture heartland gathered in Lubbock, Texas last week to celebrate 20 years of progress on the Ports-to-Plains corridor and look forward to the next milestones, including extending Interstate 27.

Among the speakers and conference attendees were elected officials, members of the Texas Department of Transportation and other transportation groups from across the country. Four West Texas mayors spoke on a panel discussion to make their plea. The discussion was booked as "Efforts to Create a Major Milestone."

Lubbock Mayor Dan Pope led the panel with Amarillo Mayor Ginger Nelson, San Angelo Mayor Brenda Gunter and Big Spring Mayor Larry McLellan. Pope talked about how extending I-27 will improve communities and what needs to happen to get it done. The mayors talked about the benefits of trade and commerce flowing through their West Texas communities, plus the business development it would expect to create.

Another highlight of the conference was a panel discussion featuring some of the founders of the Ports-to-Plains Coalition. Former Congressman Randy Neugebauer, Texas Tech Chancellor, Robert Duncan, and El Paso City Manager Tommy Gonzalez, who all played key roles at the inception of Ports-to-Plains, reflected on the challenges they overcame and noted the accomplishments of the organization over the last 20 years.

Economist Dr. Ray Perryman noted that the extension of Interstate 27 would have a tremendous impact on boosting the region's economy and economic competitiveness. In highlighting the importance of interstate highways, Perryman noted the U.S. economy today would be twenty-five percent smaller without the interstate system. Perryman also said there is a thirty-two percent annual return on investment in interstate highways.

Michael Reeves, president of the Ports-to-Plains Alliance, said "the commitment we've seen over twenty years through our membership, staying committed to the project and then also the growth, as well, speaks to the commitment and importance it is to the whole region and why it's important for everyone to continue pushing forward."

"We have a lot of accomplishments, but we still have a way to go," Reeves said.

The full conference agenda and speaker presentations are available online at portstoplains.com.

Ports-to-Plains is a grassroots alliance of over 275 communities and businesses, including alliance partners Heartland Expressway, Theodore Roosevelt Expressway and Eastern Alberta Trade Corridor Coalition, whose mission is to advocate for a robust international transportation infrastructure to promote

economic security and prosperity throughout North America's energy and agricultural heartland including Mexico to Canada. Additional information on the Ports-to-Plains Alliance is available at <http://www.portstoplains.com/>.