



PORTS-TO-PLAINS ALLIANCE

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

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FHWA releases Rural Freight Corridor Guideline

The Federal Highway Administration released guidelines this week for state departments of transportation to designate and certify Critical Rural Freight Corridors as part of a larger freight program that was included in the federal transportation authorization bill that was signed into law in December.

The Ports-to-Plains Alliance has pressed hard for the FHWA to issue the guidelines. Without the guidance from FHWA, corridors like those serving primarily rural areas of the Ports-to-Plains region would not be eligible for or have a lower priority for key planning programs and funding programs within the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act.

By providing the guidance, FHWA paved the way for state departments of transportation to designate portions of the Ports-to-Plains, Heartland Expressway and Theodore Roosevelt Expressway as Critical Rural Freight Corridors. The Alliance will be working with the planning efforts of state departments of transportation to urge designation and certification of key corridor sections across the region. States can designate up to the greater of 150 miles or 20% of the Primary Highway Freight System roads as Critical Rural Freight Corridors.

Segments that are designated and certified by the state departments of transportation become eligible for freight funding sources including the National Highway Freight Program which provides formula funds for each state to improve freight movement. It can also improve the chances of competing for FASTLANE discretionary grants under the Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects program.

From a planning viewpoint, designated and certified Critical Rural Freight Corridors are added to the National Highway Freight Network and are eligible for inclusion in the National Multimodal Freight Network. The National Multimodal Freight Network will be finalized by December 4, 2016 which makes immediate action to designate and certify important.

"This was a top priority for the Ports-to-Plains Alliance," said Ports-to-Plains Alliance President Michael Reeves. "Our staff and board members met with FHWA staff as well as our congressional delegation and their staffs to let them know how critical this program is to rural economic competitiveness."

"We realize that the entire Ports-to-Plains Corridor will not be designated on the Critical Rural Freight Corridor Network, but we know that we have several segments that will be competitive. The key for us was to have the FHWA Guidelines so that the state DOT's can make those designations and we can compete," said Reeves.

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/>.