

Alameda Corridor-East Construction Authority Lauds Call for Increased Railroad Projects

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The following news release is courtesy of the Alameda Corridor-East Construction Authority.

A bipartisan Congressional freight panel report recently released includes the recommendation that Congress provide robust public investment in freight projects, including dedicated funding for a program to provide grants to nationally significant freight projects across the country, such as the ACE rail-roadway grade separation projects.

The recommendations came in a report released by an 11-member panel of the House Transportation Committee after six months of research and visits to the nation's leading trade gateways and corridors.

"We applaud the freight panel's excellent work and truly appreciate the bipartisan recommendation to provide dedicated federal funding for nationally and regionally significant freight mega-projects such as the ACE projects," said Mark Christoffels, Chief Executive Officer of the ACE Construction Authority. Members of the freight panel visited Southern California in late May and received recommendations and freight project updates, including regarding the ACE projects.

The ACE Construction Authority has several projects in the works in the San Gabriel Valley, including work to a few railroad crossings in City of Industry.

Construction on the \$112.8 million Nogales crossing project began in the spring. Other Industry projects in the pipeline include a \$98.1 million

separation on Puente Avenue, a \$122.2 million grade separation at Fairway Drive and Valley Boulevard, and a \$138.2 million one on Fullerton Road.

Specifically, the panel recommends that Congress and the Administration:

- --Establish a comprehensive national freight transportation policy and designate a multimodal national freight network which includes all transport modes;
- --Ensure robust public funding to maintain and improve the condition and performance of the freight network and provide incentives for private investment;
- --Authorize dedicated funding for the Projects of National and Regional Significance (PNRS) grant program, a significant source of funding for the ACE projects and other critical freight mega-projects, and establish clear benchmarks for project selection;
- --Expedite freight project development and delivery; and,
- --Identify freight funding and revenue recommendations.

The ACE projects, along with the CREATE passenger-freight rail projects near Chicago and the Cross Harbor Freight Movement Project near New York, were cited by the panel's ranking Democrat, Congressman Jerrold Nadler of New York, as key mega-projects developed to address major freight bottlenecks and congestion and intended to be funded through the PNRS program as originally authorized by Congress in 2005.

"During the panel's deliberations, we had the opportunity to see several projects of national significance firsthand," said Congressman Nadler, a strong supporter of the PNRS program. "I am pleased that the panel recognizes the specific need to authorize guaranteed funding for these critical freight projects, which often face significant hurdles securing funding under current federal-aid highway programs." Congressman Nadler made his remarks during a press conference held in late October to release the panel's report.

With the current federal transportation bill, MAP-21, set to expire on October 1, 2014, the panel's recommendations are intended to guide lawmakers as they begin to draft legislation to reauthorize federal transportation programs and funding. Congresswoman Janice Hahn and Congressman Gary Miller were among the members of the panel from Southern California. The panel's recommendations are supported by the Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Congressman Bill Shuster of Pennsylvania, and its ranking Democrat, Congressman Nick Rahall of West Virginia.

The 282-mile ACE Trade Corridor as defined in federal legislation encompasses the freight rail mainlines through Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties which carry trade from the Ports of

Los Angeles and Long Beach, the nation's busiest container ports, to the rest of the nation. Regional agencies have identified 131 potential rail-roadway grade separations along the four-county corridor at a cost of \$4.6 billion in 2006 dollars.

Port traffic results in up to 100 freight trains a day using the transcontinental rail network through Southern California, with more than 90 percent of these trains heading east. By 2025, freight train counts are projected to increase to 250 trains per day along the BNSF and Union Pacific mainline rail network, according to a study conducted for the Southern California Association of Governments.

The ACE Construction Authority is charged with constructing rail-roadway grade separation projects at 22 crossings along the freight rail mainlines in the San Gabriel Valley as well as safety improvements at the remaining grade crossings. Although prior federal transportation bills provided a significant funding catalyst for the ACE Construction Authority program, the current overall federal share of the \$1.7 billion program in the San Gabriel Valley has since declined to less than 15 percent with a current program funding shortfall of \$165 million.

In the San Gabriel Valley, studies have shown that without the ACE Program, traffic delays at rail-highway crossings would increase by 300 percent.

--Local Editor Melanie C. Johnson contributed to this report.