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Measures across U.S. target port pollution

Joe Johnson isn't a scientist, but he knows that the giant, smoke-spewing ships that dock at the Port of Baltimore can't be good for his health — or that of his 9-year-old son. "Those things just look evil," says Johnson, a handyman who lives in a row house just east of the port. "When the wind blows the wrong way, there's no telling what kind of (pollutants) we're breathing." Indeed, approximately 87 million Americans who live near major seaports are breathing some of the nation's dirtiest — and most dangerous — air, the Environmental Protection Agency says. But help is on the way, thanks to initiatives across the USA to cut pollution coming from ships, vehicles and other sources within the ports themselves.

"We're trying to be creative, and we're getting a lot of help from the government," says Richard Sheckells Jr., chief of environmental initiatives for the Maryland Port Administration. Baltimore port officials are using federal stimulus money to help companies retrofit tugboats and other vehicles with cleaner engines. Ports in California, New Jersey and elsewhere are spending more than \$100 million in public and private funds to help replace aging trucks with newer, less polluting vehicles.

In potentially the most dramatic move, this week the Britain-based International Maritime Organization (IMO) will consider an Obama administration request that would restrict pollution coming from foreign-flagged vessels that sail within 230 miles of the U.S. coast, or dock at U.S. ports. If approved, the decision by the United Nations agency would, for the first time, establish an "emissions control area" for such ships, which fall outside the U.S. government's jurisdiction and often use heavy, sludge-like



fuels with extremely high levels of sulfur and other pollutants.

The IMO decision "is a really big deal," says Geraldine Knatz, executive director for the Port of Los Angeles. She says that ports have struggled for years with how to reduce emissions from foreign ships, which account for more than 90% of the traffic at U.S. ports. If a port such as Los Angeles tried to establish pollution limits — which it had no clear legal authority to do — then ships could just dock at a rival port such as Oakland instead, Knatz says.

In contrast, the IMO ruling would establish "a level playing field nationwide, and that's really what ports and private industry are asking for," Knatz says. The proposed restrictions would force some ships to cut their sulfur emissions by 95% by 2015. A massive mountain of coal sitting next to Baltimore's harbor is a reminder that ports have not traditionally been "green" places. Communities near ports tend to suffer from above-average rates of cancer and asthma, according to EPA head Lisa Jackson. Jackson has estimated that 40 of the largest 100 U.S. ports are located in metropolitan areas that fail to meet federal air-quality standards.

—CONT'D (See page 5)



China to bid on US high-speed rail projects

Beijing- China plans to bid for contracts to build U.S. high-speed train lines and is stepping up exports of rail technology to Europe and Latin America, Deputy Railways Minister Wang Zhiguo said Saturday, March 13, 2010. China has built 6,500 kilometers (4,000 miles) of high-speed rail for its own train system and President Barack Obama issued a pledge in November with his Chinese counterpart, Hu Jintao, to cooperate in developing the technology.

"We are organizing relevant companies to participate in bidding for U.S. high-speed railways," Wang Zhiguo, a deputy railways minister, told a news conference. Wang gave no details of where China's railway builders might seek contracts, but systems are planned in California, Florida and Illinois. He said state-owned Chinese companies already are building high-speed lines in Turkey and Venezuela.

Beijing plans to construct a 16,000-mile (25,000-kilometer) high-speed rail network by 2020 in a 2 trillion yuan (\$300 billion) project it hopes will spur economic and technology development. A new line linking the central city of Wuhan with Guangzhou near Hong Kong on China's southern coast is billed as the world's fastest at 237 miles (380 kilometers) per hour.

China produces high-speed trains using French, German and Japanese technology. Its manufacturers have developed a homegrown version but have yet to produce a commercial model.

Chinese rail authorities have signed cooperation memos with California and Russia and state companies plan to bid on a line in Brazil linking Rio de Janeiro with Sao Paulo, Wang said. He said Saudi Arabia and Poland also have expressed interest.

The White House announced \$8 billion in grants in January for rail projects including the high-speed systems in California, Florida and Illinois.

"China is willing to share its mature and advanced technology with other countries to promote development of the world's high-speed railways," Wang said.

So far, China's government has completed 2,295 miles (3,676 kilometers) of rail lines with top speeds of up to 220 mph (350 kph) and 1,795 miles (2,876 kilometers) with speeds up to 155 mph (250 kph), according to Wang. Another 6,000 miles (10,000 kilometers) of lines are under construction, he said. Once the network is



completed, it will cut travel time from Beijing to Hong Kong from 24 hours to 10.

Some critics say high-speed train fares are too high for average Chinese and question whether the lines can recover their construction costs. Wang said high-speed trains already have higher occupancy rates than regular trains, though he gave no details.

Source: <http://tinyurl.com/yjbwsl3>
Huffington Post news article (April 9, 2010)

Senate gives final approval to 9-month extension of SAFETEA-LU

March 17th- The Senate gave final approval on this date to a bill known as the "HIRE Act" containing seven transportation provisions including an extension of authorization for federal highway and transit programs through Dec. 31 as well as providing \$19.5 billion to the Highway Trust Fund. The vote on this date to concur with House amendments sent this legislation to President Barack Obama. On March 18th, one day after the Senate action, the President signed the "Hire Act" bill into law.

"Hundreds of thousands of construction workers and state department of transportation employees from across the country are breathing a collective sigh of relief today now that the Senate has approved the Hiring Incentives to Restore Employment Act," said AASHTO Executive Director John Horsley. "We are delighted that Congress has passed this significant piece of legislation. It's a win for the economy and for the communities that will benefit from the transportation projects funded by this measure." (A video statement from Horsley is available at www.transportation.org.)

The measure approved by the Senate [68-29](#) and sent to the president would:

- Extend surface transportation authorization until the end of this calendar year. The current extension of the 2005 surface transportation authorization law known as "SAFETEA-LU" is scheduled to expire March 28.
- Deposit \$19.5 billion into the Highway Trust Fund to reimburse the trust fund for interest payments not received since 1998. This will ensure the trust fund's solvency into next year.
- Restore in this fiscal year \$8.7 billion in highway contract authority to the states that had been rescinded at the end of Fiscal Year 2009.
- Fund the federal highway program's contract authority for FY 2010 at \$42 billion, up from \$30 billion, returning the program to its FY 2009 funding level.
- Provide \$4.6 billion in additional federal subsidies for Build America Bonds, a program created by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The bonds allow states and municipalities to finance infrastructure projects with an interest subsidy from

the federal government. State and local governments have issued \$78 billion worth of Build America Bonds during the program's first year.

- Allow the Highway Trust Fund in the future to collect interest on its deposits, as all other federal trust funds are authorized to do.
- Restructure fuel-tax exemptions for government vehicles currently paid out of the Highway Trust Fund so future payments come out of the General Fund rather than the trust fund, increasing money available for highway and transit projects in future years.

Senators voted [61-30](#) on Monday March 15th to close debate on the bill, [HR 2847](#), with the final vote occurring the morning of March 17th. The House first passed the bill Dec. 16 with much greater funding including \$37.3 billion in stimulus money for transportation projects.

The Senate stripped most of the funding out of the bill and approved the scaled-down measure Feb. 24. The House passed the measure a second time March 4 after nearly doubling additional federal subsidies for Build America Bonds from \$2.5 billion to \$4.6 billion and making some other changes unrelated to transportation. Prior to today, Congress had approved four short-term extensions of SAFETEA-LU, which expired Sept. 30, 2009.

"For more than five months, state transportation departments have been in a difficult situation -- going month to month, unable to make long-term financial commitments for projects that create hundreds of thousands of American jobs with a purpose," Horsley said. "Now that we have this nine-month extension, states will have certainty for the remainder of this calendar year. This gives Congress ample time to complete the complex negotiations necessary to approve a full six-year authorization bill, which we strongly encourage the House and Senate to complete action on before year's end."

The Senate this week is debating a longer-term FAA authorization measure, however that is not expected to be reconciled with the House version before the end of this month, requiring a 12th short-term extension for FAA. For additional information, please see the following web-link:

<http://tinyurl.com/ya77f3w>

Source: AASHTO Journal (03/17/10)



NAFTA Surface Trade Sees Highest Gain in 10 Years

Surface transportation trade among the United States, Canada and Mexico rose 19.5% in January from a year ago, the highest gain in almost 10 years, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) said recently.

The improvement to \$56.7 billion in trade among the North American Free Trade Agreement partners was the largest year-to-year increase since March 2000. It marked the second straight increase following December's 10.5% rise, which had been the first year-over-year increase since September 2008.

Trade from December to January fell 3%, though month-to-month changes can be affected by seasonal variations and other factors, DOT's Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) said in its monthly report.

DOT said earlier this month that NAFTA surface trade for all of last year declined 23.9% from 2008. January truck imports to the United States rose 13.3% from a year earlier to \$18.8 billion, while exports grew 14.8% to \$19.8 billion, DOT said.

Rail imports jumped 64.5% to \$6.6 billion, while exports increased 28.6% to \$3.2 billion. Pipeline imports rose 29% to \$4.9 billion, while exports gained 23.7%

to \$452 million. U.S.-Canada trade rose 18% to \$34.2 billion. The value of truck imports to the U.S. rose 7.2%, while truck exports jumped 17.1%.

U.S.-Mexico surface transportation trade totaled \$22.5 billion in January, up 21.7 percent compared to January 2009. The value of imports carried by truck was 18.9 percent higher in January 2010 than January 2009 while the value of exports carried by truck was 11.5 percent higher. Texas led all states in surface trade with Mexico in January with \$8.1 billion.

The TransBorder Freight Data are a unique subset of official U.S. foreign trade statistics released by the U.S. Census Bureau. New data are tabulated monthly and historical data are not adjusted for inflation. January TransBorder numbers include data received by BTS as of March 12th.

For additional information, please see:

<http://tinyurl.com/yha5j2h>

Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS)
Press Release (03/30/10)

DOT freight index falls in January

The U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) freight transportation services index (TSI) for January fell 1.3% from a year earlier but rose from December, DOT said. The TSI is a seasonally adjusted monthly index measuring the output of services provided by the for-hire transportation industries, including railroad, air, truck, inland waterways, pipeline and local transit.

The January TSI fell to 96.6%, 0.4% higher than December's figure, which had fallen 4.1% from a year earlier, the DOT's Bureau of Transportation Statistics said in its monthly report Wednesday.

The reading was the lowest for the month of January since 1997, when it was 89.9, and the year-to-year January downturn was an improvement over the 2008 to 2009 drop of 12.9%.

The index increased 3.3% over the last eight months, beginning in June. The freight index is down 14.3% in five years from January 2005 and 7.5% in 10 years from January 2000, DOT said.

For additional information, please see the following web-

link: <http://tinyurl.com/yc5zntf>

Source: Transport Topics On-line article (03/10/10)

Ports, shippers push for freight policy

March 18th- [Advocates tell Congress of need for improving capacity](#). Freight transportation advocates re-emphasized the need for a dedicated national freight policy before the House Appropriations subcommittee that oversees the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The hearing Tuesday March 16th was part of the committee's consideration of the president's 2011 budget proposal.

John Wolfe, executive director of the port of Tacoma, called for a holistic approach to freight transportation, and a "freight trust fund" that would disburse money for projects that facilitated freight movement, and be awarded through competitive grants.

Wolfe said the U.S. and state departments of transportation should work with freight stakeholders to develop a strategic plan for freight movement, with funds dedicated to freight mobility projects, and establish a multi-modal freight office within the U.S. Department of Transportation. Wolfe represented the American Association of Port Authorities.

Wayne Johnson, director of logistics for American Gypsum in Dallas, Texas, called for dedicated funds for intermodal connectors to ports and rail intermodal facilities, innovative financing options for improving freight capacity, and streamlining of environmental permits for freight projects. Johnson spoke for the National Industrial Transportation League.

For additional information, please see the following web-link: <http://tinyurl.com/yg9juaz>
Source: Journal of Commerce article (03/18/10)

Measures across U.S. target port pollution (cont'd from page 1)

'A balancing act'

The Obama administration has also been more active than its predecessors in both enforcing environmental regulations and in providing federal stimulus funds and other aid to help upgrade equipment, says Mike Reagoso, vice president of McAllister Towing, which operates vessels in Baltimore and elsewhere.

"In these times, it's welcome to get a little help," says Reagoso. Among other steps:

- The Port of Los Angeles plans to begin using 20 new electric-powered trucks this spring, Knatz says. Other new vehicles have already helped cut emissions by about 70% compared to 2005, she says.
- Since 2008, the Port of Baltimore has spent \$272,000 retrofitting cranes and other equipment, Sheckells says. The port is also working on a project that would take waste produced from dredging and recycle it for use in road construction, he says.

- The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey said this month it and the EPA would provide \$28 million in financing to help replace about 600 trucks made before 1993 in an effort to cut soot pollution by two-thirds.

The EPA estimates that shipping companies would, over time, need to spend about \$3.2 billion to adapt to new IMO rules. Some of that cost would trickle down to consumers. Jackson estimates that would, on average, add about three cents to a pair of sneakers made abroad and shipped into the USA.

"This is all a balancing act between cost and the environment," says Lorena Johnston of Vane Brothers, which operates tugs and barges on the East Coast. "But we're convinced it's the right thing to do." For additional information, please see the following web-link:

<http://tinyurl.com/ycg8ns3>
Source: USA Today article (03/26/10)

U.S. DOT 'close' to cross-border trucking plan

Although no details were disclosed, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) is "close" to presenting a plan to Congress on a cross-border trucking program with Mexico.

The assurance that the DOT is moving forward on plans to reopen the border to long-haul trucks from Mexico came during a Senate Appropriations subcommittee hearing held on Thursday, March 4.

Sen. Patty Murray, D-WA, questioned DOT Secretary Ray LaHood about the DOT's progress on a cross-border program. Murray's line of questioning stemmed from her concern over the impact of the tariffs that Mexico slapped on products from her home state following the closure of the cross-border pilot program last year.

"Those tariffs were imposed on 90 U.S. products and undermined the competitiveness of many agriculture products in my home state of Washington," she told LaHood during the hearing.

"These tariffs are going to send jobs north to Canada ... and are threatening the livelihood of many in my state."

LaHood assured Murray the DOT was working toward a resolution with Mexico.

"We are finalizing a plan. The reason it is taking so long is because there are a lot of different moving parts, including about five different Cabinet officials. And every time we make a tweak or a change everyone has to sign off on it," LaHood told Murray.

Safety concerns continue to be the hot button of conversation between lawmakers and officials within the DOT. LaHood attempted to assure Murray those concerns had not been forgotten, even though he did not hint as to what a new cross-border program might entail. "We're very near a proposal that we think will meet all the safety concerns that I heard when I talked with 25 members of Congress," he said. "We're close to talking to all of you about what we

think are our way of addressing the safety concerns Congress brought to us."

Murray mentioned during the exchange that she had also met with U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk about the tariffs – adding to the mounting pressure on Kirk to address the tariffs.

Lawmakers and organizations, including the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association, have continued to increase the pressure on Kirk's office to address the tariffs – tariffs that have been called "illegal" and "retaliatory."

Kirk, while once quoted as saying the easiest way to resolve the tariff dispute would be to open the border, has been quiet on any details his office may have on resolving the dispute.

For additional information, please see the following web-link:

<http://tinyurl.com/y8afmar>

Source: Land Line Magazine article (03/05/10)

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Famous Quote of the Day:

"It is our attitude at the beginning of a difficult task which, more than anything else, will affect its successful outcome."

--William James,
American philosopher

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Information provided is a compilation from other news and on-line media sources, any information relayed is based upon the accuracy of the information provided by other news gathering organizations and does not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the Federal Highway Administration or the State of Texas Border Partnership Working Group.

Next Talking Freight Web Seminar on April 21st

The Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Office of Freight Management and Operations and the Office of Planning host the "Talking Freight" web seminars. These web seminars are part of a broader Freight Professional Development Program (FPD) aimed at providing technical assistance, training, tools, and information to help the freight and planning workforce meet the transportation challenges of tomorrow.

The Talking Freight seminars are sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and are held via web conference. This means that you view the PowerPoint presentations over the Internet while listening to the presenters over the telephone.

The FHWA "Talking Freight" web seminars are held on a monthly basis throughout the year and are open at no cost to all interested parties in both the public and private sectors. The next FHWA HQ's Talking Freight Seminar will be held on

April 21st, and will cover the topic of "Non-Traditional Freight Data Sources".

The seminars are held on the third Wednesday of each month, 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm EDT/ 10:00 am - 11:30 am Pacific. The first hour of each seminar is dedicated to the presentations and the remaining 30 minutes are for audience question and answer. For additional information on registering for this web seminar, please see the following URL web-link: <http://tinyurl.com/ycsvqjz>
Source: FHWA Office of Freight Management & Operations (HOFM)

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The FHWA "Talking Freight" monthly webinar series is now eligible for AICP certification maintenance (CM) credits for AICP members through the American Planning Association. Credits can be claimed at: <http://www.planning.org/cm/search/provider.htm?ProviderCompanyID=246167>

For additional information please contact Ms. Carol Keenan of FHWA HQ's at: carol.keenan@dot.gov

FMCSA fast-tracking texting ban for commercial drivers

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) has outlined its goals to implement a rule to ban text messaging and restrict the use of cell phones for commercial motor vehicle drivers.

The FMCSA hopes to submit a rule to the Office of Management and Budget for review on Monday, March 8, and hopes to receive OMB clearance by March 18. The FMCSA's goal is to publish a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on March 22. The agency is planning only a 30-day comment period, which would last through April 22.

"This rulemaking would ban text messaging and restrict the use of cell phones while operating a commercial motor vehicle," the agency state in a monthly regulatory report.

"This rulemaking is in response to Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration-sponsored studies that analyzed safety incidents and distracted drivers. This rulemaking would also address the National Transportation Safety Board's 'Most Wanted List' of safety recommendations."

Earlier this year, U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood issued regulatory guidance directing the use existing rules to enforce a texting ban on commercial drivers.

For additional information, please see the following web-link: <http://tinyurl.com/yb8r8pn>
Source: Land Line Magazine article (03/05/10)

