Ports Association Calls For Increasing Multimodal Project Funding, Eligibility

ALEXANDRIA, Va. – In written and oral testimony tomorrow (Feb. 13) before a hearing of the U.S. Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, the American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA) – the unified and recognized voice of America's seaports – will say that nowhere in the country are there such stark examples of unmet infrastructure needs than in America's ports, and in the land- and water-side transportation connections to them, the AAPA said in a Feb. 12 release.

"During the past six decades, there've been eight evolutions of the containership, resulting in ships today having capacities of 18,000 TEUs and beyond, while our country has relied upon essentially the same infrastructure to accommodate and facilitate an astronomical growth in freight volumes," says AAPA Chairman William D. Friedman, chief executive officer of the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority, who will testify before the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee. "Clearly, multimodal project funding levels and multimodal project eligibilities need to be improved."

Friedman will note that, in 2018, AAPA issued an infrastructure report in which its U.S. member port authorities identified more than $20 billion in multimodal funding needs over the next decade. "A top priority for the port industry continues to be multimodal funding."

To aid with finding solutions to the multimodal funding and project eligibility dilemma, among AAPA's FAST Act reauthorization recommendations are that:

• All freight program funding be 100 percent multimodal (verses being mode-specific).

• The multimodal cap on U.S. Department of Transportation INFRA (Infrastructure for Rebuilding America) grants and formula funding be lifted.
• A maritime supply chain title be included in the next USDOT reauthorization bill that recognizes the evolving supply chain needs of the multimodal freight network.
• Funding to support freight infrastructure improvements come from a gas tax increase, a Vehicle Miles Traveled program, and/or some concept of a 1 percent charge on the domestic cost of freight movement (i.e., a "waybill fee").
• The financing fee for federal Rail Rehabilitation Innovation Financing loans be removed.

Further noting that AAPA's 2019 freight infrastructure report, The State of Freight IV, identified nearly $4 billion in port security funding needs over the next decade, Mr. Friedman adds, "We need to invest in port infrastructure and we need to secure it."

The Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee hearing, titled America's Infrastructure Needs: Keeping Pace with a Growing Economy, follows a similar U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee hearing on Feb. 7, titled The Cost of Doing Nothing: Why Investing in Our Nation's Infrastructure Cannot Wait, in which AAPA is preparing written testimony that will include information on the association's long-term funding solution for harbor maintenance.