

**Remarks and Notes of Paul H. Bea Jr., Coastwise Coalition
Marine Highway Development: Options and Roadblocks
Roundtable Led by Rep. John Mica (R-FL)
June 18, 2008**

Mr. Mica, thank you on behalf of the Coastwise Coalition. Your attention to this subject is gratifying. This committee has led the way in considering how transportation policy can be improved in this regard.

I also applaud your many strong statements to the effect that Congress should address the infrastructure challenge as an integrated, multi-modal transportation system. ...That we should be using all the modes.

Over the years domestic marine transportation has been largely ignored as officials and planners at all levels of government have planned new system capacity and targeted investments. As you show by holding this roundtable session, it is time to have all surface modes, maritime included, in the mix when working to solve our congestion and capacity problems. And it is becoming harder to ignore a highly fuel efficient mode.

From time to time people in the transportation field can be heard dismissing the call for marine highway development. However there are serious transportation professionals who don't dismiss it because they see it as an essential element in a multi-modal strategy. The New York Shipping Association supports marine highways as a part of its environmental and congestion-fighting programs. The NYSA has invested resources—in one instance millions of dollars—to encourage rail and barge service that could reduce the port's lop-sided reliance on trucking.

My contribution to the discussion today boils down to three main points:

1. First, we should ease away from current labeling that defines "surface transportation" as road and rail, to the exclusion of the other surface mode—water. All three are surface modes, distinct from aviation. Their interconnectivity is easily appreciated when in ports you see rail on the docks and you watch a truck roll off a ship and head toward the interstate.
2. Second, and with that in mind, the Committee should start to integrate the separate modal policies into a forward looking policy. Odd as it may sound, the principal legislative objective should not be to improve the infrastructure on which goods and people travel. Think of it as a mobility policy...not a highway program or rail or maritime program. The infrastructure improvements will be necessary, of course, but the policy emphasis should be on making a multi-modal system that works well. The next surface bill could take some sure steps in this direction.
3. Third, further develop the water mode because of the significant contribution it can make to national economic security through its inherent fuel efficiency.

What are examples? Here are some in no particular order:

- Since ISTEA there has been is a passenger ferry program managed by the Federal Transit Administration with support from Federal Highway. Please consider a freight ferry program that

would serve the same purpose—to provide efficient transportation options where water transportation can extend and connect the highway system.

- The State of Alaska, driven by necessity, designated a water route—the Alaskan Marine Highway—as part of its highway system. In HR 6 Congress directed the Secretary to designate short-sea transportation routes. In the next surface bill Congress should authorize states, and multi-state entities like the I-95 Corridor Coalition, to designate water routes part of the national highway system.
- Improve and expand freight data and research activity with that mobility objective for the benefit of all modes and systems. Insist that USDOT assemble the type of detailed freight flow data that would be meaningful for public and private sector planning.
- Unbury the Office of Intermodalism, now in RITA, and put it high on the USDOT organizational chart. The purpose is to make the modal administrations work well together, serve as an example to the state departments, and to help evaluate how best to integrate the modes.
- Where new corridor capacity is needed invest in parallel water routes. Give drivers, especially truckers, an alternative. Recognize that system redundancy is a good thing, especially in this age of failing infrastructure and terrorist threats.
- Allow mode-blind decisions on infrastructure investment. St. Louis and Boston should have the ability to put funds where it makes sense for those cities, not where rigid programs limit funding only to certain solutions.
- Support the training of transportation planners and engineers so they can learn how and when they could apply water transportation solutions.
- Give the Maritime Administration the resources needed to undertake the short sea transportation mission Congress has given it.
- Marine transportation is highly fuel efficient. Congress should provide short term incentives to shippers—the cargo owners—to use water routes where they are available and meet their logistics needs. This would be an especially effective incentive.
- Open existing financing mechanisms such as TIFIA and the RRIF to water transportation infrastructure requirements and recognizing that vessels are essential aspects of the maritime infrastructure. But first determine why those mechanisms have not worked as well as Congress intended.
- Congress could provide incentives to operators in the marine transportation system to invest in new equipment or retrofits that would produce cleaner emissions. That will ensure that the new system capacity would be greener from the start.
- Finally, and importantly, Congress should exempt certain cargo from the domestic application of the Harbor Maintenance Tax.

Thank you for giving us this opportunity.