

# OUR NATION'S INLAND AND SMALL COASTAL PORTS AND TERMINALS

## A CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE SYSTEM AT RISK

**Issue:** America's maritime transportation system is comprised of a multitude of ports and terminals along approximately 24,000 commercially navigable miles of inland and intra-coastal waterways and channels that moves domestic and international cargo. It is, therefore, an important component of our nation's overall freight transportation system, especially for transporting bulk commodities, such as coal, petroleum, chemicals and grain. Maintaining the system so that its performance is reliable, cost-effective, and environmentally sustainable, is a key challenge within the context of competing federal priorities and limited resources. Our nation's freight transportation backbone, its ability to survive and compete globally heavily depends as much on America's smaller ports and terminals as on its large coastal ports and harbors. The many smaller ports and terminals that carry our great nation's freight urgently request your immediate attention. **Failure to address these challenges, rehabilitation and maintenance and operational needs have and will continue to lead to supply-chain disruptions and negatively impact the nation's competitiveness in the global market.**

**Threats and Challenges:** Should the nation's port and terminal facilities fail to meet infrastructure investments assisted by federal funding opportunities, the waterborne cargo diversion that would take place would cause truck traffic to nearly double, two inches of asphalt would be needed to increase the pavement thickness to 126,000 lane-miles to intercity Interstate systems. **Increased truck traffic significantly increases fuel consumption and emissions and increases maintenance costs on surface transportation.** Commonly acknowledged challenges include:

- Inland and small coastal ports and terminals have been, and continue to be, neglected in terms of discretionary funding opportunities, especially when compared to other transportation modes.
- Presently there are only limited funding opportunities, such as the BUILD and INFRA programs, that make inland and small coastal port infrastructure eligible for funding at all, and only a very small percent of total funding from those programs typically fund port-type projects. Inland and small coastal port and terminal facilities cannot compete effectively against large highway projects for funding, and most cannot even meet the \$5 million project minimum required by current programs. **Infrastructure projects sought by inland and small coastal port and terminal facilities are typically far less costly** than the minimum required for those programs.
- Due to limited funding opportunities, inland and small coastal port and terminal facilities are forced to compete for the same funding resources against other transportation modes, against coastal seaports, and against each other.

Inland and small coastal port and terminal facilities are nationally significant assets of great value that need to be recognized as important regional supply chain nodes and merit one or more dedicated sources of discretionary funding.

**The Advocate: Inland Rivers Ports & Terminals, Inc. (IRPT):** is a non-profit trade association with nearly 300 members nationwide. IRPT advocates for the inland waterways and the industries and companies that serve and utilize our inland rivers, ports and terminals. IRPT and its members welcome Congressional partnership and pledge to offer their support, organizational resources, and network to aid Congress in achieving long-term sustainability through infrastructure investment.

**The Solution:** The solution advocated by IRPT is specific dedicated funding – for the many private and public facilities that serve the nation's freight transportation needs. For far too long, programs such as INFRA and BUILD and legislation like the FAST Act and WRDA have underfunded inland and small coastal facilities. Therefore, IRPT is requesting that Congress **introduce a new standalone discretionary program** dedicated to inland and small coastal port and terminal projects. \_\_\_\_\_ *For further information please contact:*