

**Secretary Ray LaHood  
U.S. Department of Transportation**

**Journal of Commerce Marine Highway Conference**

**Baltimore, MD**

**April 7, 2010**

**I'm delighted to be here this morning to discuss our plans for strengthening one of America's most crucial transportation assets – our coastal and inland waterways.**

**For too long, we've overlooked the economic and environmental benefits that our waterways and domestic seaports offer as a means of moving freight in this country.**

**This Administration is changing all that.**

**President Obama and I both recognized very early on that it's essential to invest in integrated, multi-modal transportation systems that will enable us to achieve a number of important outcomes – like stimulating economic growth and achieving environmental sustainability.**

**Waterways are a key part of that strategy.**

**During the last year, I've heard from many of you about the need to upgrade and modernize our port infrastructure.**

**My visits to ports around the country have shown me that these facilities have a tremendous impact on their regional economies and well beyond.**

**At our National Port Summit in San Diego in February, I spoke with many port directors about the state of our freight transportation system, and the need to integrate waterways more effectively into our economy.**

**We're all in agreement that making ports greener and more efficient -- and taking full advantage of our marine highways – are top priorities.**

**So I'm pleased to announce an important step forward to meet these goals.**

**Today we officially launch our formal program to build a marine highway system.**

**I'm sure you'll agree this is long overdue. But it will soon be a reality.**

**Under this new program, you'll be encouraged to apply to officially designate a Marine Highway Project, so you can then compete for our new 7-million-dollar Marine Highway Grant Program, which we'll announce later this summer.**

**You can visit MARAD's website for a link to the Federal Register notice explaining how you can apply for this official designation. Or stop by the MARAD booth here at the conference.**

**This approach reflects our commitment to developing the vast unused capacity on our nation's waterways.**

**Moving goods on the water has many advantages: It reduced air pollution.**

**It can help reduce gridlock by getting trucks off our busy highways – which in turn helps make our roads safer.**

**And it's part of our broader strategy to improve our nation's transportation infrastructure across the board by ensuring that shippers have viable, cost-effective options for moving goods throughout the United States and around the world.**

**I'm confident that many of you here today will help us make our Marine Highway Program a tremendous success.**

**It's up to all of you to bring us your best proposals.**

**This program is the latest in a series of efforts by DOT to strengthen our maritime economy and invest in the transportation infrastructure this country needs to compete.**

**Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act TIGER grant program, we've funded more than 120 million dollars' worth of port projects around the country over the last year.**

**This includes 58 million dollars directly invested in marine highway projects ranging from Rhode Island to the Mississippi River to California.**

**TIGER is a national competition that triggered an outpouring of more than 1,400 applications, worth nearly 60 billion dollars, for the kinds of regional and metropolitan inter-modal projects that have been difficult to build through our traditionally segmented funding programs.**

**With so much competition, and so many good applications, only a fraction of the very best projects could be selected.**

**And some of the very best projects involve our waterways.**

**I'm confident the projects we've chosen will have an out-sized impact on your ability to safely, efficiently, and effectively manage freight in ways that were not possible until now.**

**Congress has awarded an additional 600 million dollars this fiscal year for a new competitive grant program like TIGER, so we expect to see more good marine highway grant proposals in the months ahead.**

**We're also pursuing innovative ways to finance our future transportation infrastructure needs.**

**For example, next year's budget proposal includes 4 billion dollars for a National Infrastructure Fund that will issue grants and loans supporting transportation projects of regional and national significance.**

**This will open the door to new, merit-based financing opportunities for a wide range of projects – including port projects that will strengthen our marine highways.**

**Let me close by saying "Thank you."**

**Thank you for all your hard work on behalf of our nation's marine transportation system.**

**I look forward to working with all of you to build the efficient and sustainable intermodal transportation systems our nation needs for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**

**Thank you very much.**