

# ISSUE BRIEF: Goods Movement

*Effective + Efficient Freight = Stronger Regions & Economic Benefits*

**F**reight transportation is the backbone of America's commerce. Imports and exports, which fuel our regional, national and global economies, are doubling every ten years. Freight traffic within the United States' borders will increase 100% by 2020. During that same period of time, foreign trade is expected to increase by 187 percent, while containerized cargo will experience an explosive 350 percent increase. The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) is developing federal policy that calls for dedicated freight infrastructure funding and the integration of goods movement into our national surface transportation program and all corresponding legislation.

Trade as a percentage of the U.S. GDP has been steadily increasing during the past quarter century, rising from just over 12% in the early 1970s to approximately 25% in the mid-1990s. Today, it is over 25% and it is expected to grow to 37% in 2015 and 60% by 2030. Rapidly accelerating trade combined with domestic growth has created a \$10 trillion U.S. commodity flow that produces millions of jobs and a higher standard of living. Without the ability to quickly and cost effectively move goods into, out of and through the United States, America will not be able to maintain this standard of living and high employment levels.

The domestic and international freight capacity of our ports, waterways, transfer facilities, and highway and rail connectors will greatly determine whether we maintain our international edge in the global marketplace and the quality of our economic life. There is a clear correlation and necessary relationship between goods movement, regional business and economic development, agriculture, the environment and public health. Goods movement requires a high degree of coordination between multiple modes of transportation – highways, ports, railroads and airlines – crossing multiple

jurisdictions. Connectivity and easy access between these modes is integral to freight mobility and the resulting economic prosperity and community development. For these reasons and many others, freight and goods movement should be integrated into transportation and land-use decisions at the state, regional and local levels.

Current regional transportation planning processes mandated by federal law are collaborative and designed to include the interests of various stakeholders in making recommendations and decisions concerning specific projects and overall transportation policies. In order to meet the impending demands freight will put on our transportation infrastructure, better coordination between land-use and transportation planning activities with private sector freight partners in the regional transportation planning process is critical. Councils of Government (COGs) and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are well positioned to coordinate the freight interests within the regional context of transportation, economic development and environmental planning.

At the federal level, NARC is working with other public and private sector interest groups to secure authority and a positive future role for MPOs and COGs when planning for transportation and good movement. Additionally, NARC is conducting meetings with its membership around the nation to strengthen the voice freight and other important transportation issues will have in the next transportation reauthorization process.

To learn more about the growing goods movement and freight infrastructure challenges, please visit the Coalition for America's Gateways and Trade Corridors' website at [www.tradecorridors.org](http://www.tradecorridors.org).

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