

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4319

April 14, 2021

Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves:

Thank you for providing Members the opportunity to share our priorities for 117th Congress. As you continue to develop your proposal to rebuild our nation's infrastructure, I'd like to take this Member's Day hearing as an opportunity to urge the inclusion of H.R. 1608, *The Ports-to-Plains Highway Act of 2021*, in any surface transportation reauthorization legislation. This is an issue of great importance and value to the constituents of TX-19 and rural America.

This legislation designates the Ports-to-Plains Corridor in Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Colorado and a portion of the Heartland Expressway in Colorado as a Future Interstate. Both the Ports to Plains Corridor and the portion of the Heartland Expressway are Congressionally designated High Priority Corridors on the National Highway System.

The Ports-to-Plains region includes states which lead our nation's energy and agriculture economy, producing over \$44 billion in agriculture goods, or 22 percent of total U.S. agriculture production. The Ports-to-Plains corridor generates over \$166 billion annually in trade with Canada and Mexico, accounting for almost 20 percent of all U.S.- North American trade. Simply put, Middle America provides the food, fuel, and fiber that strengthens our nation.

As the United States dominates the global trade market, we must also look to strengthen infrastructure in rural communities. Access and upgrades to adequate rural infrastructure not only promote the wellbeing and quality of life for people living in rural communities, but also ensures the safe and efficient transportation of food, fuel, and fiber throughout the country.

My priority for the 117th Congress is for H.R. 1608, *The Ports-to-Plains Highway Act of 2021*, to be included in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization bill. This critical step in highway expansion would improve economic development, safety, and efficiency for America's Heartland. I look forward to working with you this Congress on this critical legislation.