

### **Establishment of the Task Force on Ports**

In his FY 2013 Budget, President Obama called for the establishment of a Task Force led by the White House to develop a Federal strategy for future port and related infrastructure investments. Nearly 80 percent of the volume of international trade passes through our nation's ports. Maintaining these ports, and making targeted investments in their improvement where appropriate, can lower shipping costs for U.S exports and imports. U.S. coastal ports are facing new challenges and increased competition, including from ports in Canada and the Caribbean, but new opportunities as well, including those that result from the expansion of the Panama Canal in 2014. The Task Force on Ports will examine these and other issues from a national perspective, recognizing the benefits provided by ports in facilitating the movement of freight in domestic and international commerce. Its work will reflect a strategic, multimodal view of the Nation's investment priorities for the physical and information infrastructure that supports the movement of freight through our ports, including protections for life, safety and property during transportation as well as protections for affected communities and for sustaining ecosystems.

The establishment of the Task Force responds to calls from State and local governments, as well as ports and other maritime stakeholders, for a more strategic framework for allocating Federal investments. The Task Force is comprised of senior officials from five Departments and five White House offices:

- National Economic Council
- Office of Management and Budget
- Department of the Army
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Homeland Security
- Department of Transportation
- Department of the Treasury
- Council of Economic Advisers
- Council on Environmental Quality
- Office of the U.S. Trade Representative

The Federal role in port and related infrastructure – both in the water and landside, including rail and highway connections – is substantial, but dispersed across multiple departments. The Task Force will develop a strategy to inform future investment decisions and identify opportunities for improved coordination and streamlined review of investments in port and related infrastructure.

#### **Building on Progress:**

Establishing the Task Force builds on steps the Administration is already taking to improve coordination across agencies with port-related responsibilities, and to streamline processes for studying proposed projects and issuing permits.

- **Coordinating Investments in America's Transportation Infrastructure:** The Department of Transportation and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) have improved coordination of their review of proposed Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Discretionary Grants. Other Federal agencies, including the Departments of Commerce and Homeland Security, are contributing to these discussions as well. DOT and the Corps signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2012 to solidify this effort.
- **Department of Transportation TIGER Funding:** In FY 2012, DOT awarded \$500 million in TIGER grants to 34 States and the District of Columbia. These awards included seven projects totaling \$68 million to invest in ports to improve capacity for multi-modal freight movement. In

total over the past 3 years and four rounds of TIGER grants, DOT has awarded \$353 million to 25 port-related infrastructure projects.

- **Improving Federal Permitting, Project Planning, and Environmental Review Processes:** The Administration is working to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of permitting and review processes, and to demonstrate best practices through nationally and regionally significant port and related infrastructure projects. The Corps has revised its approach to project planning and is now working to reduce the time that it takes to study a proposed navigation project by several years. The Task Force will seek to identify other such steps that the Federal government or others should undertake, so that the Nation as a whole is able to invest more strategically in our ports and related infrastructure.
- **Increasing Efficiency of Cargo Movement:** The Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Physical Oceanographic Real Time System (PORTS®) provides real-time observations of tides and currents, weather forecasts, and other mapping information to vessels as they transit in or out of participating ports. Three new PORTS® installations are in development with two, Humboldt Bay, CA and New London, CT, scheduled for completion in 2012, bringing the total number of PORTS® installations nationwide to 22 by the end of the year.