

News and Information from Oregon International Port of Coos Bay

For Immediate Release: August 16, 2005

Port Secures Project Funding through Federal Transportation Legislation

The Oregon International Port of Coos Bay benefited very directly from the recent passage of the reauthorization of federal transportation legislation. In late July, when U.S. House and Senate conferees came to agreement on the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), Port officials knew they could continue to move forward with two critical local transportation infrastructure projects.

Jeff Bishop, Port Executive Director, said "We've got a project underway right now – the North Spit Rail Spur/TransPacific Parkway Realignment, and passage of the reauthorization gives us \$350,000 in federal funds to help with costs. The other thing we are planning is phase II of the Coos Bay Railroad Bridge rehabilitation. There's \$8 million in SAFETEA-LU for us to invest in the bridge so freight rail service will remain viable for the community in the future."

Bishop went on to say that while the Port commission and staff have been working diligently to secure the needed funds, it was Rep. Peter DeFazio's determination and dedication that truly mattered in the end. "Congressman DeFazio understands how critical transportation is to the economic viability of a community. His work on our behalf demonstrates his long-term commitment to the needs of the bay area communities and southwest Oregon," he commented.

Construction is underway on the North Spit Rail Spur project, with substantial completion of the rail line – enough to allow the Central Oregon & Pacific (CORP) Railroad to serve the new Southport Forest Products mill – projected for October 15, 2005. The TransPacific Parkway realignment, basically rebuilding the intersections with Horsfall Beach Road and the Weyerhaeuser mill site access road, should go to bid in the early fall, with a winter completion.

Port Commission President Dave Kronsteiner said, "It's encouraging to see progress on these transportation projects. Our commission realizes the importance of developing the North Spit, and we've heard from industry and the community how critical rail service is to Oregon's bay area and the Coos County region. Congressman DeFazio asked us last winter in D.C. what he could do to help. We told him, and he's delivered."

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During the work up of the transportation legislation in the House and Senate, Rep. DeFazio, ranking Democrat on the Highways, Transit and Pipelines Subcommittee, was aided in his efforts on behalf of his district and the state by Oregon's U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Gordon Smith, who were working to gain support for all Oregon transportation infrastructure needs. The Senators maintained that support through the contentious conference committee process.

In addition to the Southport project, Port staff, working with the South Coast Development Council (SCDC) and the Oregon Economic & Community Development Department (OECD), is talking with a number of potential industrial clients about locating on the North Spit. Rail service has been a requested transportation option in nearly every prospect contact and inquiry.

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For additional media information, please contact:

Martin Callery, Director of Communications & Freight Mobility

Oregon International Port of Coos Bay

Phone 541 267-7678 / Fax 541 269-1475 / email mcallery@portofcoosbay.com