



## The Federal FREIGHT Act of 2010: A Step towards Cleaner, Modern Freight Transportation

America's freight transportation infrastructure is out of date and needs to be modernized. It also needs to be cleaned up and its dangerous pollution impact must be reduced. The FREIGHT Act of 2010 (S 3629 and HR 5976) offers an important step toward making America's freight transportation system work for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

### **Freight's Environmental Challenge**

America's freight transportation system is the backbone of the economy. But it is also the leading source of toxic diesel air pollution and a growing source of greenhouse gas emissions. Freight experts expect the demand for freight transportation to continue growing as population and the demand for products—from apples to zip disks—grow.

Will this freight demand growth bring with it even more pollution?

Not necessarily. If the freight system is modernized in a way that encourages energy efficiency, freight transportation can grow *and* decrease its pollution impact.<sup>1</sup> A cleaner freight transportation system will involve multiple modes for moving products-- trains, trucks and ships. But it will use these modes more wisely by matching the most efficient mode to any cargo's destination and by reducing dependence on high-polluting vehicles and engines.

### **The FREIGHT Act of 2010 Promotes a Cleaner Freight Transportation System**

About every six years, Congress develops and passes a federal transportation bill that directs how federal transportation funding should be spent. The current transportation bill reauthorization offers an opportunity to advance the smartest ways to modernize and clean up the nation's freight transportation system.

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<sup>1</sup> For examples of freight transportation modernization projects that have reduced environmental impacts, see EDF's report "The Good Haul" : <http://www.edf.org/page.cfm?tagID=53003>.

The Focusing Resources, Economic Investment, and Guidance to Help Transportation (FREIGHT) Act of 2010, introduced in the House and Senate in the summer of 2010, is a strong step toward redefining how the freight system should be funded, and what public benefits should accompany that funding. The FREIGHT Act does four key things. It:

- Establishes that improving the efficiency, operation and security of the freight system is a national policy, and that reducing environmental and public health impacts are among the important goals of this policy.
- Establishes an Office of Freight Planning and Development within the office of the Secretary of the Department of Transportation to, among other things, develop a national freight strategic plan to help guide federal freight system funding.
- Authorizes a competitive grant program that will fund certain freight improvement projects, particularly emphasizing those at hubs and gateways, which are typically the points where pollution impacts are most heavily collected and felt.
- Establishes selection criteria for the competitive grants. The criteria include reducing freight's environmental impacts.

The FREIGHT Act does not establish a source or amount of funding for the competitive grants. The funding source will be determined as the bill moves through the Senate and House process for federal transportation bill reauthorization. Nor does the act directly address highway improvements, which are generally already included in the federal transportation bill. However, it does include among projects eligible for the authorized competitive grants those projects that improve access to ports and hubs, such as roadway improvements.

As introduced, the FREIGHT Act is especially important because it directly addresses the serious environmental impacts the freight transportation system presents at hubs and gateways, and it offers an approach to help reduce those impacts.

### **For More Information**

In the Senate, the FREIGHT Act was introduced by senators Lautenberg, Murray and Cantwell. In the House, the FREIGHT Act was introduced by representatives Sires, Cohen, Smith, and Richardson.

For more information about the bill's environmental elements or the impacts of freight on the environment, feel free to contact:

Kathryn Phillips  
Director, CA Transportation and Air Initiative  
Environmental Defense Fund  
[kphillips@edf.org](mailto:kphillips@edf.org)