Aftermath of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria Tests U.S. Infrastructure

On August 25, 2017, Hurricane Harvey made landfall as a Category 4 storm over southeast Texas. The Houston metro area was hardest hit by the storm, receiving over 50 inches of rain in the week after landfall and resulting in flash flooding, record damages, and closure of the Port of Houston for nearly a week. Shortly thereafter, on September 10, 2017, Hurricane Irma made landfall as a Category 4 storm in the Florida Keys. Over 6 million Florida households lost electricity and, though estimates shift as time passes, Moody’s Analytics expects the damage and lost productivity caused by Hurricanes Harvey and Irma will exceed $150 billion.

Most recently, Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico as a Category 4 storm on September 20, 2017, knocking out power for nearly all 3.4 million residents. Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rosselló said the commonwealth’s outdated power infrastructure could take months to repair. According to the catastrophe modeling firm AIR Worldwide, insured losses caused by Hurricane Maria could total between $40 billion to $85 – most of which occurring in Puerto Rico.

The United States had not experienced hurricanes of this magnitude since 2005’s Wilma. In addition to the cost of rebuilding infrastructure, the storms also caused significant disruption to the national freight network. Over a period of nearly four weeks, Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria disrupted interstate and local freight flows as transportation systems were damaged and fuel supplies were crippled.
Continued from page 1

The center of the nation’s oil and gas industries, Harvey’s impact on Houston rippled across the country as it affected 13 refineries and cut U.S. gas production by 10% in the two weeks after the storm. One of the nation’s busiest freight hubs, a Wall Street Journal article estimates that Houston-area disruptions caused by Harvey affected up to 10% of U.S. trucking capacity. In Florida, several of the state’s significant seaports suspended operations to brace for the storm and, once it had passed, reopened to provide much-needed fuel for the state’s residents facing empty gas stations.

In Puerto Rico, infrastructure damages caused by Hurricane Maria have impeded the ability to distribute aid. Limited airport and seaport operations have slowed the flow of food, water, and other essential items, and damaged roads have made it difficult to penetrate parts of the island. On top of damaged infrastructure, Governor Rosselló said Puerto Rico is also lacking the necessary trucks and drivers to distribute aid across the island. Governor Rosselló has also called for a temporary waiver to the Jones Act – a Federal law that requires U.S. owned and operated ships transport goods between domestic seaports – to speed the delivery of aid to the island. On September 28, the Trump Administration announced a 10-day waiver was granted for all products shipped to Puerto Rico.

In the immediate aftermath of the hurricanes, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) provided $25 million in quick-release emergency relief funds to Texas and another $25 million to Florida for urgent road and bridge repairs, detours, debris removal and other initial costs. FHWA made available $40 million in quick-release emergency relief funds to help restore essential service on roads and bridges damaged in Puerto Rico, supplementing $2.5 million released to the island for damages caused by Hurricane Irma. In addition, the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Maritime Administration provided three vessels to support recovery efforts in Puerto Rico by providing power, food, clean water and berthing to first responders, freeing up local hotels for displaced residents.

On September 8, the President signed into law a package providing $15.25 billion in disaster aid, and more is expected. Congress has not yet passed a disaster aid package in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico; in an interview with CNN, Governor Rosselló said any aid package must be commensurate with the scale of devastation.
The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) announced the ninth round of the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grants on September 7, 2017. The Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) provides $500 million for capital investments in surface transportation projects. Applications are due October 16, 2017.

Selection criteria for FY17 TIGER awards has not changed, but the description of each criterion has been updated. In previous rounds, TIGER had an emphasis on the Obama Administration’s priorities, such as “Livability Principles” and “Ladders of Opportunity.” The FY17 NOFO strikes these priorities, but retains a handful of similar principles, particularly as they apply to rural communities. Similar to a shift seen in the Infrastructure For Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant solicitation (previously FASTLANE), the Trump Administration’s first TIGER solicitation places an emphasis on projects located in rural areas, indicating special consideration will be given to projects that improve access to transportation for rural communities.

The updated criteria is specifically focused on project outcomes and quantifying those outcomes to the extent possible. It also expresses an interest in the deployment of advanced technologies and innovative design solutions and has an increased emphasis on the consideration and reduction of life-cycle costs and measurable project outcomes. Unlike past TIGER solicitations, there are no considerations for the transportation infrastructure’s ability to withstand climate change, emergency or major disasters, although the “Environmental Sustainability” criterion does retain much of the language from previous solicitations.

Eligible applicants for TIGER grants remain the same, including state, local, and tribal governments, including U.S. territories, transit agencies, port authorities, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), and other political subdivisions of State or local governments. TIGER grants may not be less than $5 million and may not exceed $25 million. Projects located in rural areas are subject to a smaller grant minimum, at $1 million. At least 20 percent of funding from this round must be used in rural areas and no more than 10 percent of funding can be awarded for projects in a single state.

Since the TIGER grant program was first created, $5.1 billion has been awarded for capital investments in surface transportation infrastructure. In the eight rounds of funding, 40 percent of successful projects have included a strong freight component, with nearly 44 percent of all funds going to projects with a strong freight component.

There is also still time to apply for an INFRA grant; applications are due November 2, 2017. Applicants can apply for funding for the same project under both the INFRA and TIGER programs, but the applicant must submit separate applications and explain how the project meets the different program criteria. TIGER applicants that include INFRA funding as part of a proposed financing package will be less competitive, according to USDOT.

For more information on applying for an award through the ninth round of TIGER visit here.

For more information on applying for an award through the INFRA program visit here.
Members of Congress returned to Washington, D.C. after Labor Day and went straight to work – passing a legislative package to extend current Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) spending levels until December 8, 2017 and to avoid a government shutdown. President Trump and Congressional leaders reached a deal on September 6, and President Trump signed the bill into law on September 8. Included in the bill is $15.25 billion in disaster aid in response to Hurricane Harvey’s devastation in Texas and in advance of Hurricane Irma’s landfall in Florida. The package also provides a temporary suspension of the federal debt limit, which the U.S. Treasury estimated would be reached by the end of September. A default on the national debt would have been unprecedented, causing financial crisis and economic downturn.

Congress’ decision to extend FY17 funding levels and delay the passage of the Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18) appropriations bills resulted in postponement of a scheduled funding increase in federal surface transportation funding. 2015’s long-term surface transportation funding law, the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act includes annual increases in surface transportation funding, subject to Congress passing required annual appropriations bills for each fiscal year. Under the FAST Act, an additional $1 billion in surface transportation funding will be divided among state departments of transportation, consistent with existing formula calculations, in FY18. Until a full FY18 budget is passed, states will not see this increase.

This is the second consecutive year in which FAST Act funding increases have been delayed due to continuing resolutions. The first year of FAST Act mandated increases were delayed after lawmakers passed two continuing resolutions before passing a full FY17 appropriations package in April 2017, six months into the new fiscal year.

State formula programs are not the only delayed funding this year. Discretionary grant programs that provide critical funding for infrastructure projects, like the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA), formerly FASTLANE, and the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program had their funding for FY17 pushed into FY18.

To combat construction delays caused by funding lags and tight budgets, state departments of transportation have utilized innovative financing tools, such as Advance Construction (AC). AC is a federal aid fund management tool that allows states to begin transportation projects using non-federal funds while maintaining eligibility to be reimbursed in the future. Measures like this are not permanent solutions, but allow states to continue updating and upgrading surface transportation as they wait for federal funding.
On September 14, 2017, Congressman Adam Smith (D-WA) reintroduced legislation to create a freight infrastructure improvement program that would provide competitive grants to boost efficiency and capacity of the U.S. freight network. The Coalition for America’s Gateways and Trade Corridors (CAGTC) has advocated for a multimodal, freight-focused competitive grant program since its inception and applauds Congressman Smith for his thought leadership in providing potential solutions to the critical need for freight infrastructure funding in the United States.

“I applaud Congressman Smith’s dedication to identifying solutions to meet the growing needs of our nation’s multimodal goods movement network,” said Tim Lovain, CAGTC Chairman and Executive Vice President of Crossroads Strategies. “Freight movement across all modes is expected to grow nearly 42 percent by 2040 – without a strategic campaign of investment, this opportunity has potential to overburden infrastructure and create a drag on our national economy. Freight infrastructure funding and investment solutions, such as Congressman Smith’s Freight Infrastructure Reinvestment Act of 2017, are needed to address these challenges head-on.”

H.R. 3769 calls for the creation of a new freight fee – a 1 percent tax assessed on the cost of ground transportation within the United States. Collected funds will be dedicated to a new National Freight Mobility Infrastructure Fund and invested in the nation’s freight system through a merit-based competitive grant program.

“While the FAST Act’s freight-focused INFRA program provided a first step in addressing multimodal freight needs, much more is needed, as evidenced by the program’s oversubscription: in its initial round, applicants requested $13 for every $1 available,” said Elaine Nessle, Executive Director of CAGTC. “Congressman Smith’s proposed freight mobility infrastructure fee and National Freight Mobility Infrastructure Fund could provide the next iteration of funding for critical freight projects.”

To find the full text of the Freight Infrastructure Reinvestment Act of 2017: http://bit.ly/2xsN2DO

To find Congressman Adam Smith’s release on the bill, please visit: http://bit.ly/2xsAFaA
**Don’t Miss the Buzz!**

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#FreightCan'tWait

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Industry News

U.S. DOT Releases New Automated Driving Systems Guidance

The U.S. Department of Transportation and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) released new federal guidance for Automated Driving Systems (ADS): A Vision for Safety 2.0 on September 12, 2017. This is the latest guidance for automated driving systems to industry and States.

“The new Guidance supports further development of this important new technology, which has the potential to change the way we travel and how we deliver goods and services,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao. “The safe deployment of automated vehicle technologies means we can look forward to a future with fewer traffic fatalities and increased mobility for all Americans.”

Read the full release here: http://bit.ly/2jod3OK

Industry News

President Trump to Nominate Paul Trombino III to Head FHWA

President Donald J. Trump announced on September 8, 2017 his intent to nominate Paul Trombino III of Wisconsin to be the Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration, Department of Transportation.

Mr. Trombino is currently the President of McClure Engineering Company, a civil engineering company focused on transportation, aviation, water, and structures projects. Mr. Trombino served as the Director of the Iowa Department of Transportation from 2011 to 2016, where he was responsible for the planning, design, construction, and operation of 9,400 miles of highways, 4,300 bridges, the modal programs of transit, rail, aviation, motor vehicle services which included driver and vehicle services, and motor carrier services and enforcement.

Mr. Trombino served as the 2015-2016 President of the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials and as the 2016 Vice-Chair of the Transportation Research Board Executive Committee.

Read the full release here: http://bit.ly/2ys8FSc
Trilateral Statement on the Conclusion of the Third Round of NAFTA Negotiations

Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland, Mexican Secretary of the Economy Ildefonso Guajardo, and United States Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer successfully concluded the third round of the renegotiation and modernization of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on September 27, 2017. The round took place in Ottawa, Canada from September 23 to 27, 2017. Negotiators made significant progress in several areas through the consolidation of text proposals, narrowing gaps and agreeing to elements of the negotiating text. Negotiators are now working from consolidated texts in most areas, demonstrating a commitment from all parties to advance discussions in the near term.


Federal Highway Administration Showcases Cutting-Edge Truck Platooning Technology

On September 14, 2017 the Federal Highway Administration conducted the first of a two-day demonstration of three-truck platoons on I-66 in Centreville, Va., several miles outside the nation’s capital. The results of a four-year research project to test the effectiveness of state-of-the-art driving and communications technologies were showcased at the event.

“The future of innovative new technology to help our drivers navigate the road more safely is so full of promise; it’s a future where vehicles increasingly help drivers avoid crashes,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao. “As technology advances, safety is a primary concern of the Department, but the benefits of these driving technologies extend beyond safety, including productivity and efficiency on our roads.”

New technology like platooning will improve efficiency of freight shipping nationwide says FHWA.

Member News

Port Authority of New York & New Jersey Names New Chief Security Officer

The Port Authority announced on September 19, 2017 that Acting Chief Security Officer John Bilich – a former NYPD Deputy Commissioner of Operations and chief investigator in the Manhattan and Brooklyn District Attorney’s Offices – has been named the agency’s permanent Chief Security Officer.

Mr. Bilich, who was named Acting Chief Security Officer in December 2016, joined the Port Authority in March 2015 as First Deputy Chief Security Officer after serving as the chief investigator at the Brooklyn District Attorney’s Office. Prior to his service in the Brooklyn and Manhattan District Attorney’s Offices, he served for 24 years with the New York City Police Department, rising to the rank of Deputy Commissioner of Operations, where he served as the agency’s primary crime strategist and head of the department’s COMPSTAT program.

“John is a world-class law enforcement professional whose dedication and leadership will help us to better protect the public and the critical transportation assets that we operate and maintain,” said Port Authority Chairman Kevin O’Toole. “John’s efforts in the time he’s been with us have already strengthened and unified our security operations, and we are confident he will continue to fulfill this critical role.”


Member News

WSP USA Projects Recognized with Three CTF Awards

WSP USA, formerly WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff, made significant contributions on three projects which recently received awards from the California Transportation Foundation (CTF). The Exposition Line Light Rail in Los Angeles received CTF’s Overall Project of the Year award. WSP was recognized for its design of the light rail extension. The Expo Line Phase 2 extension features 6.6 miles of new light rail and seven new stations from Culver City to Santa Monica, extending the Metro Expo Line to 15.2 miles. When the Expo Line Phase 2 extension opened in May 2016, it heralded a new era of rail service to the Pacific Ocean that hasn’t been available since the closing of Pacific Electric Streetcar’s Santa Monica Air Line in 1953.

The I-80/Yerba Buena Island Westbound Ramps Improvement Project received the CTF’s Interchange Project of the Year award. WSP was recognized for its construction management services.

**Member News**

**OKI Awards More Than $31 Million for Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Projects**

Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI) Board President and Butler County Commissioner T.C. Rogers announced on September 19, 2017 the award of more than $31 million to be distributed to 13 transportation projects in Ohio.

“Once again, through consensus, the board of OKI has delivered a $31 million infrastructure package that will advance not only Ohio, but the eight-county region,” said Rogers. “These awards make possible needed efficiency improvements in our transportation network, while also lessening our environmental impact and enhancing quality of life.”

The funds were allocated through the Ohio apportionment of the federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program. CMAQ funds support projects that help meet the requirements of the Clean Air Act by reducing congestion and improving air quality.


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**Member News**

**Port Tampa Bay Makes Public/Private Commitment for $60 Million Expansion Project**

Port Tampa Bay approved a public-private partnership agreement with four other entities to divvy up who will pay for a $60 million widening and extension of the Big Bend Channel.

The strategic partners include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), Tampa Electric Co. and Mosaic Co., a global fertilizer company which is one of port’s largest tenants along with Tampa Electric. The port’s board of commissioners unanimously approved the participation agreement at a monthly meeting on Tuesday.

The Big Bend Channel connects to the Tampa Harbor main channel and will be deepened from 34 feet to 43 feet and widened from 200 feet to 250 feet to accommodate larger ships.

The Army Corps estimates the expansion to cost more than $60 million, but future bids may wind up higher or lower than that. Bids are not expected until March 2018. Project funding from the partners would be due at that time.

Research News

Guide for Identifying, Classifying, Evaluating, and Mitigating Truck Freight Bottlenecks

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; Transportation Research Board
August 2017

The Transportation Research Board’s National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) Research Report 854: Guide for Identifying, Classifying, Evaluating, and Mitigating Truck Freight Bottlenecks provides transportation agencies state-of-the-practice information on truck freight bottlenecks using truck probe data rather than traditional travel demand models. The report embraces a broad definition of truck freight bottlenecks as any condition that acts as an impediment to efficient truck travel, whether the bottleneck is caused by infrastructure shortcomings, regulations, weather, or special events. The comprehensive classification of truck freight bottleneck types described in this report provides a standard approach for state departments of transportation, metropolitan planning organizations, and other practitioners to define truck freight bottlenecks and quantify their impacts.

Find the full report here: http://bit.ly/2fGRhl7

Research News

Leveraging Large-Truck Technology and Engineering to Realize Safety Gains

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety
September 2017

Equipping large trucks with advanced safety technologies has the potential to prevent up to 63,000 truck related crashes each year, according to new research from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. In 2015, large trucks were involved in more than 400,000 crashes that resulted in more than 4,000 deaths and 116,000 injuries — a four percent increase from 2014. AAA recommends that all large trucks, both existing and new, get equipped with cost effective technologies that improve safety for everyone on the road.

“There’s no question that truck safety technology saves lives,” said Dr. David Yang, executive director of the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. “This new research shows that the benefits of adding many of these technologies to trucks clearly outweigh the cost.”

Find the full report here: http://bit.ly/2fDLq9
CAGTC & Freight in the News

Congressman Adam Smith Introduces Proposal to Fund Freight Network Improvements
*American Journal of Transportation*
September 15, 2017

Ten Projects Proposed for FASTLANE Funding
*American Shipper*
September 15, 2017

House Bill Would Create New Freight Infrastructure Fund
*Progressive Railroading*
September 18, 2017

Upcoming Events

**October 01-04, 2017:** 2017 American Association of Port Authorities Annual Convention
*Long Beach, CA*

**October 08-11, 2017:** American Society of Civil Engineers 2017
*New Orleans, LA*

**October 21-25, 2017:** American Trucking Associations Management Conference & Exhibition
*Orlando, FL*

**October 24-26, 2017:** 2017 North American Strategy for Competitiveness Continental Reunion
*Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico*

**November 29-30, 2017:** Florida Ports Council’s Ports Security and Technology Conference
*Orlando, FL*
Why Join CAGTC?

Shape Policy
CAGTC Members have the opportunity to help shape policy and legislation with an organization that is known for getting results on the Hill. Membership gives you a seat at the table as our positions are vetted, debated, finalized and carried to the halls of Congress, where we then pull out the votes. All members are invited and encouraged to participate in our various policy and planning committees, which meet by phone, email and, occasionally, in person.

Timely Communication
CAGTC strives to keep our members well informed and keyed in on important national freight developments. Because our work focuses solely on goods movement issues, we are able to disseminate concise, lightning-quick updates. Our members often tell us that CAGTC delivers information quicker than any of their other DC connections!

Access
CAGTC holds one annual, in-person meeting every spring, with impressive member turn out. In addition to our annual meeting, we frequently hold member events, such as a Fly In to engage in pressing issues during the fall of 2015, and a policy discussion in Miami, Florida, in the spring of 2016 to drill down on implementation events. We regularly boast members of Congress, senior members of the Administration, and their staff among our CAGTC speakers and attendees.

Up to Date Information
In all our endeavors, the Coalition highlights its member organizations as examples of good projects and how the process should work. We do this in our regular meetings on the Hill, at conferences and during presentations and in our newsletter, which goes out every other month. Members have a spotlight for recent achievements, a sounding board of experts for advice, as well as an opportunity to network with likeminded organizations.

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