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Statement by CAGTC Executive Director Elaine Nessle on the Government Accountability Office’s Report on Project Evaluations under the INFRA Competitive Grant Program

WASHINGTON, DC (July 24, 2019) – “The Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects Program (known as INFRA) represents a significant and focused contribution to addressing national freight infrastructure needs, according to criteria established in law by Congress. In studying the Department of Transportation’s (DOT) application review process during the FY 2017-2018 round of funding, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that DOT lacked consistency and transparency in following up with applicants and evaluating applications.

The INFRA program is critical to funding large-scale freight infrastructure projects, which are difficult to fund through traditional distribution methods such as formula programs. The Coalition for America’s Gateways & Trade Corridors (CAGTC) has long called for such a competitive grant program that selects projects through merit-based criteria that identify and prioritize investments with a demonstrable contribution to national freight efficiency. Like GAO, CAGTC has advocated for consistency and transparency in the competitive grant evaluation process to ensure the best and highest use of public funds.

As DOT administers future rounds of the INFRA program, including the awards expected this week, I encourage decision makers to heed GAO’s recommendations. As GAO states in its findings, ‘competitive discretionary grant programs have promise in better targeting federal transportation spending to areas of national and regional significance; however, this promise cannot be fulfilled if DOT’s process and rationale for making awards remains unclear.’

For more information on the GAO report, please click here.

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About the Coalition

The Coalition for America’s Gateways and Trade Corridors (CAGTC) is a diverse coalition of more than 60 public and private organizations dedicated to increasing federal investment in America’s intermodal freight infrastructure. In contrast to single mode interests, CAGTC’s main mission is to promote a seamless goods movement transportation system across all modes to enhance capacity and economic growth. For more information on the Coalition for America’s Gateways and Trade Corridors, please visit www.tradecorridors.org