

Secretary LaHood Stresses Maritime Highway

News Release

Friday, July 10, 2009

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Yesterday, Congressional Shipbuilding Caucus Co-Chairs Gene Taylor (D-MS) and Rob Wittman (R-VA) hosted a breakfast with Ray LaHood, Secretary of Transportation. The meeting was attended by Representatives Rodney Alexander (R-LA), Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD), Madeleine Bordallo (D-GU), Jo Bonner (R-AL), Henry Brown (R-SC), Anh “Joseph” Cao (R-LA), Gregg Harper (R-MS), Walter Jones (R-NC), Steve Kagen (D-WI), Rick Larsen (D-WA), Bobby Scott (D-VA), and numerous industry leaders, Coast Guard officials, Navy officials, and congressional staff.

Secretary LaHood stated that shipbuilding and the maritime transportation of goods are an integral part of America’s economy and create thousands of jobs. The Administration is pursuing a robust agenda to improve transportation, including in the maritime arena.

Rep. Bobby Scott asked Sec. LaHood if he could provide an example of some of the initiatives the Administration is taking to expand maritime transportation. Sec. LaHood informed the caucus that there are many opportunities to further develop the “Marine Highway” in ports across America that are clogged with trucks and freight rail. He expanded on maritime transportation’s low cost and importance, saying, “These ports are a good economic engine for good jobs, for good paying jobs.”

Rep. Rob Wittman asked the Secretary if the Administration was also going to place an emphasis on the Title XI Ship Loan Guarantee Program to make sure that the United States has enough ships to support an increase in maritime transportation. LaHood said that the Administration supports the Title XI loan guarantee program for financing ship construction in the United States. Sec LaHood acknowledged that we need to improve the execution of Title XI, in response to Rep. Taylor’s concerns regarding the role of the Transportation Credit Council overseeing the loan guarantee program.

This was a great opening discussion with Secretary LaHood on maritime transportation. The Shipbuilding Caucus looks forward to continuing to work with the Secretary on important issues facing the maritime industry. ###