

Urges GOP leadership to quickly conference on Senate Transportation Bill

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WASHINGTON, DC –Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR) applauded the passage of an amendment that protects funds intended for critical maintenance dredging in our nation’s ports and harbors. Currently, funds collected in the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) for dredging are raided to fund a host of non-harbor related projects.

The amendment, offered by Rep. Charles Boustany (R-La.), passed on the floor by voice vote. The Boustany amendment is identical to legislation DeFazio authored that previously passed the House Transportation Committee.

“Oregon’s ports are in serious need of dredging and repair. Jetties at the mouths of the Columbia River and the Port of Coos Bay are failing. And many of the ports in my district or shoaling in. The Corps of Engineers has long been shorted in the budgeting process leaving the cash-strapped unable to deal with its \$40 billion backlog of critical projects. Funds collected for harbor maintenance must be spent on harbor maintenance. The amendment that passed today will guarantee the funds collected for harbor maintenance are used for that purpose so we can begin to properly rebuild jetties and do the other work to maintain our locks and channels. This change is long overdue and will go a long way towards creating needed jobs to rebuild critical maritime infrastructure,” said DeFazio.

The Boustany amendment was attached to another short-term extension of surface transportation funding passed in the House. This passage ensures the House and Senate will come together to negotiate a long-term surface transportation bill. In March, the Senate attached a one-year extension of Secure Rural Schools funding for the 18 O&C counties attached to a two-year transportation bill. This upcoming conference of the House and Senate passed bills will include negotiations over this critical lifeline to Oregon’s forested communities. DeFazio will fight to include this one-year county payments reauthorization in the final bill.

“The House finally found the path out of dysfunction junction on transportation,” said DeFazio. “I supported today’s extension but we need a long-term transportation bill as soon as possible. States are already laying construction workers off because of the uncertainty Congress has created. We need to go to

an expedited conference and come up with a bipartisan long term solution as soon as possible to erase the uncertainty for our states and counties and get people back to work.”

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