



**SOY TRANSPORTATION
COALITION**

NEWS RELEASE

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Summit highlights innovation, investments key to continued success of U.S. ag transportation, trade

Ankeny, Iowa – Transportation plays a key role in the continued success of the U.S. agriculture industry. While other countries, such as Brazil and Argentina, are ramping up their investments in farm to market routes, the United States’ infrastructure isn’t keeping up. Farmers, grain handlers and international and national transportation experts discussed these concerns at the first ever Agricultural Transportation Summit “A Modern Infrastructure for Modern Agriculture” in Chicago last week.

The summit was organized and hosted by the Soy Transportation Coalition (STC) and the National Grain and Feed Association and co-sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

“One of the most important aspects of this summit was to create stronger connections between farmers, handlers and government officials who create the policies that affect the entire transportation chain,” suggests Pat Knouff, a soybean farmer from Minster, Ohio, and chairman of the Soy Transportation Coalition. “We are an action-oriented group and we look forward to working closely with many of the entities represented at this summit to help strengthen our farm to market systems. In order for U.S. agriculture to maintain its status as a leader in production and trade, our roads, waterways and railroads must keep up.”

Featured speakers included Congressman Randy Hultgren (R-IL), Acting Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Michael Scuse, and Surface Transportation Board Chairman Daniel Elliott. The summit highlighted both the domestic and international transportation developments of consequence to U.S. farmers.

Marcelo Duarte Monteiro, executive director of APROSOJA in Mato Grosso, Brazil, highlighted a number of infrastructure investments and improvements planned for Brazil.

“Right now, Brazil has 10 percent of what the U.S. has regarding railroads and we have very few inland waterways, but there is huge potential,” said Monteiro. While poor road conditions, tighter driver regulations, few railroads and waterway delays hamper the country’s movement of ag products, significant private and public investments in all modes will increase the country’s competitiveness.

In addition, summit attendees learned more about the historical and future relevance of the Panama Canal. The canal's expansion, scheduled for completion in 2015, will offer increased cargo and vessel capacities, offering increased opportunities for U.S. grains, oilseeds and other products.

Closer to home, directors of state departments of transportation from Iowa, Wisconsin and Illinois discussed ways their states are addressing agriculture's needs. Budget restraints and funding inaction are leading to aging locks and dams, roads and rail systems.

Agricultural exports represent vital aspects of Midwestern states' economies.

"Freight is our competitive advantage," said Paul Trombino, director of the Iowa Department of Transportation.

The Soy Transportation Coalition's mission is to gain better understanding of the challenges facing U.S. ag transportation systems and proposing innovative and cost-effective improvements.

"While one of the objectives of the summit was educational, the ultimate success of the summit is yet to be determined," explains Mike Steenhoek, STC executive director. "Our primary goal was to provide a venue at which solutions to our transportation challenges are advanced, which, in turn, will create resolve to see those solutions implemented. We look forward to seeing many of these recommendations promoted in the weeks and months to come for the benefit of U.S. agriculture. If that indeed occurs, the summit will have been a tremendous success."

For more information about the summit and to view presentations, go to <http://www.ngfa.org/events/upcoming-events/transportation-summit/>.

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Established in 2007, the Soy Transportation Coalition is comprised of eleven state soybean boards, the American Soybean Association, and the United Soybean Board. The goal of the organization is to position the soybean industry to benefit from a transportation system that delivers cost effective, reliable, and competitive service.