

# TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

## Moving Fresh Produce Around the World

The produce industry is highly dependent upon an efficient transportation system, from trucking, rail and ocean shipping, to ports and border control facilities. There is broad agreement that America's infrastructure system is badly in need of comprehensive improvement. For the produce industry, given the highly time-sensitive nature of our products, an efficient transportation system is essential.

New funding of transportation infrastructure could provide meaningful support to the industry in increased efficiency and lower costs. In addition, the industry may be able to define other capital investments in the public interest deserving financial assistance of the federal government, including renovation of wholesale markets and port facilities. Over the last year, the industry has seen a significant decrease in the availability of trucks to move product around the country. In fact, in 2018 the U.S. marketplace showed a shortage of nearly 35,000 over-the-road, Class 8 tractor-trailer drivers. One of the main reasons we are seeing driving the shortage is the introduction of new regulations, which reduces the industry productivity and drives smaller carriers or owner-operators to exit the marketplace.

Without these small, local carriers who are on stand-by to haul produce cargo, farmers become dependent on calling trucks from the nearest major city. This not only has a massive economic burden and increased costs for the farmers, but it also means a lack of assurance for capacity as well as the additional time which the product will sit idle waiting for the carrier to arrive.

### Policy Priorities

- Increase truck weights to allow for more safe and efficient transportation of time-sensitive fresh fruits and vegetables across the country.
- Hire more personnel at our country's ports and border crossings to increase efficiencies and decrease wait times for produce inspections.
- Shorten the average time for approval on transportation projects. This would go a long way in helping realize the benefits of infrastructure investments. Currently, environmental review approvals take an average of six years for major highway projects.
- Provide additional flexibility to the Hours of Service rule that impacts agriculture.

### Transportation & Infrastructure by the Numbers

- Currently, **65%** of major roads in the United States are rated "less than good condition."
- U.S. businesses overall are estimated to pay **\$27 billion** in additional freight costs every year because of poor road conditions.
- Traffic also delays the trucking industry that ships freight for the produce industry, adding **\$49.6 billion** to operational costs.