

USA Pulses 2026 Policy Positions Transportation

Introduction

Efficient transportation infrastructure is critical for maintaining the competitiveness of U.S. pulse growers in global markets. Disruptions, delays, or elevated costs in shipping—from rail and trucking to ports and ocean vessels—threaten our ability to export effectively and on time. Recent proposals to impose heavy port fees on foreign-built vessels could exacerbate these challenges by driving up logistics costs by hundreds of millions annually.

Policy Positions

- **Invest in rural rail infrastructure:** The need has never been greater for modernizing and expanding single-line access to export markets, connecting rural communities to critical transportation networks.
 - **Modernize truck weight limits:** The current Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) limit no longer reflects the capabilities and needs of today's freight transportation industry. Advances in vehicle technology and safety systems have significantly enhanced the ability to safely accommodate higher weight thresholds. Modernizing GVW standards would align federal policy with industry innovation, enabling more efficient movement of goods and supporting economic growth.
 - **Oppose punitive vessel fees:** USA Pulses strongly opposes port surcharges or fines targeting Chinese-built or foreign-flagged ships that raise export costs and erode pulse market competitiveness.
 - **Support stable, affordable freight access:** Recognize that unreliable or costlier shipping impedes exports of pulses and other agricultural commodities, risking trade disruption and revenue loss.
 - **Develop dedicated funding for agricultural freight corridors:** Further investments are needed to improve and modernize freight corridors, including expanded rail and highway connections to ports.
 - **Promote multimodal resilience:** Advocate for investments that strengthen trucking, rail, inland waterways, and port infrastructure to enhance flexibility, reduce bottlenecks, and build resilience against disruptions such as climate events or global shipping delays.
 - **Enhance transportation affordability and predictability:** Support legislation that provides grants or incentives to modernize logistics infrastructure—particularly for rural and export-oriented communities—to reduce transit times and costs.
 - **Ensure agricultural representation in transportation planning:** Affirm the role of groups like the Agricultural Transportation Coalition (AgTC), which gives pulse exporters a voice in transportation policy discussions.
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Legislative & Advocacy Recommendations

1. **Oppose inclusion of pulses in punitive port fee schemes**
 - Advocate against any executive authority or legislative actions that impose fees on vessels based solely on origin or flag, particularly when they hinder agricultural export movement.
2. **Support funding for multimodal freight infrastructure**
 - Endorse appropriations through the next Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill to fund:
 - Rural port upgrades
 - Inland waterway channel improvements
 - Cold-storage expansion and precision logistics for perishable goods
3. **Incentivize transportation efficiency**
 - Back legislation offering tax credits or grants to logistics operators that reduce dwell time and modernize equipment, such as rail-to-port intermodal facilities improvements.
4. **Champion agricultural stakeholder inclusion**

- Encourage Congress to require representation of export commodity groups, like USA Pulses, in federal transportation strategy and planning bodies to ensure agricultural concerns are addressed.
5. **Establish emergency logistics relief authority**
- Advocate for a federal mechanism to quickly allocate aid or grants to exporters facing sudden transportation disruptions—due to conflict, climate events, or policy changes—to avoid export interruption.

Conclusion

Stronger, dependable transportation is vital for sustaining and expanding U.S. pulse exports. USA Pulses calls on federal policymakers to:

- Shield agriculture from punitive maritime regulations,
- Prioritize investments in resilient multimodal infrastructure,
- Keep transportation costs manageable and predictable,
- And ensure exporters have a seat at the table in transportation policymaking.

These steps are essential to keep American pulses competitive, market-ready, and resilient in a volatile global trade landscape.

USA Pulses supports the fair, efficient, and cost-effective movement of dry peas, lentils, and chickpeas in the US transportation system. Specific transportation policies are listed below.

Trucking

1. **Exemptions.** USA Pulses supports the continuation of agricultural exemptions from hours-of-service (HOS) rules at the state and federal levels with the following incremental changes:
 - a. **Eliminate “planting and harvesting periods”.** USA Pulses recommends eliminating “planting and harvesting periods” restrictions to provide uniformity for all states and allow flexibility for a diverse range of crops. USA Pulses supports making agricultural exemptions year-round (Jan. 1-Dec. 31).
 - b. **Add 150 air miles from the destination to the current exemption.** USA Pulses recommends providing HOS exemption within 150 air miles of the source and destination of farm goods. The exemption is provided to allow for the slow speeds required by farm access roads and for underdeveloped roads at the source of the haul. Adding the destination to the exemption would allow drivers to complete the trip rather than “running out of time”.
 - c. **Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) Pilot Program for Farm Supplier Transport.** USA Pulses supports the inclusion of farm supplies in an expanded air-mile radius exemption. The pilot program would allow the agency to collect safety data from agribusinesses over a multi-year period to evaluate the impacts of the exemption. The purpose of the program is to help alleviate driver shortages.
 - d. **Update FMCSA definition of agricultural commodity.** USA Pulses supports finalizing the interim rule updating the definition of an agricultural commodity. The updated definition covers current products and allows for the evolution of agricultural commodities in the future.
2. **Load Shifting.** USA Pulses urges the adoption of a 10% load shift axle tolerance for trucks transporting dry bulk goods. A load-shift tolerance would leave the maximum gross vehicle weight limit unchanged but allow for increased axle weight limits.
3. **Minimum Financial Responsibility.** USA Pulses supports the current minimum financial responsibility of \$750,000 for motor carriers.



4. **Harmonizing Weight and Length Limits.** USA Pulses supports legislation or regulations harmonizing weight limits and lengths on all federal highways at the highest safety level.

5. **Electronic Logging Devices.** USA Pulses supports the current exemption for ag producers.

Rail Transportation

1. **Surface Transportation Board.** USA Pulses supports an open process of selection and confirmation of the full complement of five members of the Surface Transportation Board (STB). USA Pulses supports updating the regulations and policies of the STB according to the recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences 2015 Transportation Research Board.

2. **USA Pulses is working to improve the following aspects of rail transportation in the US:**

- a. **Railcar Supply.** Increasing railcar supply and service to all shipment sizes.
- b. **Short Line railroads.** Increase State and Federal funding of short line railroads.
- c. **Northern Tier Double Track.** USA Pulses supports the construction of a double track across the northern tier of the US (Chicago to Seattle) to assist our industry in moving its product to market.
- d. **Equitable Rates for Commodities.** Support equitable rates for similar shipments of pulses and grains.

Inland Waterways and River Transportation

1. **Dredging.** USA Pulses supports adequate funding for the maintenance and dredging of water transportation channels.

2. **Update Outdated Locks and Dams.** USA Pulses supports funding for upgrades to the transportation infrastructure of locks and dams to accommodate the capacity of modern barge tows.

3. **Dam Preservation.** USA Pulses supports the preservation of dams on the Lower Snake River to ensure efficient and economical movement of commodities.

Transportation Networks

1. **Container Hub.** USA Pulses supports the establishment of an inland container hub in all pulse-growing states to facilitate expeditious shipping of container freight to ocean-going ports in the US.

2. **West Coast Port Congestion.** USA Pulses supports measures to prevent disruptions at port facilities and/or mitigate the impacts of any such disruptions. USA Pulses encourages the re-establishment of the Port of Portland container service.

3. **Transportation Infrastructure.** USA Pulses supports continued improvement and funding of the Federal Highway Systems including bridges, roads, and port access. USA Pulses supports the harmonization of heavy haul routes in all port areas and efforts to reduce port congestion to assist the movement of commodities through populated areas.

4. **Review of Ocean Carrier Container Practices.** USA Pulses supports review by the Federal Maritime Commission (FMC) of ocean carriers regarding Demurrage and Detention Guidelines and requirements to provide timely shipping to US exporters by licensed carriers at all US ports.