**Wednesday Weekly March 20th, 2019**

TFIC’s weekly legislator briefings on Wednesday, March 20, featured two important voices.

Central Illinois Congressman Rodney Davis was in Springfield for a few meetings with legislators and dropped by to update the group on federal infrastructure discussions. Congressman Davis is concerned a move by Democrats to impeach President Donald Trump could sidetrack a push for a new $1 trillion federal infrastructure package. But he’s hopeful that extreme bipartisan interest in the issue – the Highways and Transit subcommittee he serves on has 54 members – will prevail.

He noted those discussions will come down to what projects get priorities and how the package is funded. He acknowledged when the question was raised that Illinois should hope that reauthorization of the Federal Highway Bill and additional funding can be approved at the same time, but we should prepare for both to be linked. In that scenario, Illinois will need to match federal funds – right now, those federal funds account for about 90 percent of our state road funding.

Clayton Harris, director of the Illinois International Port District, provided a helpful tutorial on the work of the Illinois Ports Association representing 19 ports around the state – including the vital waterways that carry freight in and around the Chicago area.

Harris noted the port system has infrastructure needs topping $400 million, and they have outlined their specific needs to the Governor and legislative leaders. Among the priorities are repairing dock walls and ensuring warehouses are in good enough condition to allow shippers to store commodities ranging from steel and lumber to magnesium and sugar.

Harris supported legislative suggestions for specific roads dedicated for heavy truck traffic and ensuring the permit process is simple and smooth to encourage utilization and business savings. He said while ports are self-sufficient, they fall far short of the funds needed for maintenance and often need to partner with businesses to make improvements. The state should look at how other states provide support to ports for those needs.