



Port grant program

Position

The alliance supports the adoption of a competitive grant program in the next statewide transportation package for infrastructure improvement projects for ports handling marine cargo.

Background

In 2019, the Senate Transportation Committee proposed *Forward Washington*, as a start in the discussion for the next statewide transportation package.

Included in the package was a proposed \$100 million grant program for Washington ports. Legislative intent remains unclear about where these investments should be targeted.

The FY2019 federal transportation budget contains funds to provide for a federal ports program. That program focuses on grants for infrastructure improvement projects for ports handling marine cargo. Eligible projects include highway or rail infrastructure that develop or extend intermodal connectivity, intermodal facilities, marine terminal equipment, wharf construction or redevelopment, vessel alternative fueling access and distribution, fuel efficient cargo handling equipment, freight intelligent transportation systems, and digital infrastructure systems.

The Alliance is requesting state lawmakers to consider including language in the next statewide transportation package for a ports grant program that parallels this federal program

How do ports benefit?

Ports often require infrastructure investments—such as wharves, cargo handling equipment, or

digital infrastructure— that do not fit easily into existing transportation silos. This program would recognize the unique needs of ports.

Additionally, ports may need to help in making an infrastructure investment quickly in order to respond to market conditions or recruit a new customer to the state. A grant program that they could apply to between transportation packages could provide a timely resource in situations like this.

This program would support ports throughout the state, including: Bellingham, Everett, Grays Harbor, Kalama, Longview, Olympia, Pasco, Port Angeles, Seattle, Tacoma, Vancouver.

How does the state benefit?

By aligning with the federal program, the state could have an opportunity to leverage its investments by bringing in federal dollars into the state and maximize the dollars spent for port infrastructure.

A state port grant program would also help prioritize investments that support economic development, particularly as it relates to international trade. Marine cargo ports serve not only their local communities, but handle cargo manufactured and grown throughout the entire state. Moreover, forty percent of jobs in Washington are connected to international trade. Prioritizing infrastructure investments that support the movement of this cargo makes sense.

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