

Congress of the United States

March 16, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

We applaud the work that you and your administration have done to respond to the port congestion and supply chain issues that have plagued the West Coast. While your administration has made significant progress on the problems immediately in front of us, we can't lose sight of longer-term challenges. Looking ahead, as your administration implements the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), and in particular, seeks out projects to fund through the National Infrastructure Project Assistance program, commonly referred to as MEGA, we strongly encourage you to invest in our nation's future by dedicating significant funding to increasing West Coast port capacity and regional rail corridor connectivity, including the Coos Bay EcoPort and Railway Corridor in Coos Bay, Oregon, the first state-of-the-art ecoport in America.

The IIJA includes tens of billions of dollars that can be utilized for modernizing our nation's port infrastructure. Even as your administration works to identify investments that can have an immediate impact, we must accommodate for the fact that container flows on the West Coast are projected to grow at a rapid pace well into the future. While current port infrastructure is incapable of handling this future growth in trade, there is one location where significant port capacity can be added – at the Oregon International Port of Coos Bay. In fact, establishing a container port here would immediately increase West Coast port capacity by up to 10 percent. There is simply no other place on the West Coast where that level of additional capacity can be achieved. The fact that the Port of Coos Bay is located in a rural area makes this project all the more important. Establishing a world class port in Coos Bay will create jobs and generate tax revenue in a part of our state that has long suffered from a steep decline in timber harvest revenue.

This project also has significant environmental benefits. While other ports in the U.S. will continue to rely heavily on truck transportation, the Coos Bay facility will be the first ship-to-rail port facility on the West Coast, thereby taking trucks out of the equation. This means additional port capacity without a corresponding increase in greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, green electricity produced by renewable energy sources will facilitate the use of electrically powered cargo handling equipment, vehicle charging and on-shore power. With respect to the latter, the port will be fitted with electric power plug-ins that will power ships at berth during the process of unloading. Using shore side electrical power at berth – referred to as cold ironing – will eliminate ship engine emissions in port waters, thereby reducing pollutants by approximately 90 percent and greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 50 percent.

The Port of Coos Bay has been underutilized for decades, despite an existing federal channel that is regularly maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), a rail line that connects


to the Class I rail system, and hundreds of acres of undeveloped industrial land with quick and easy access to open ocean and international markets in Asia and beyond. While the opportunity to expand port capacity in Coos Bay surpasses all other options, upgrades to existing infrastructure are needed to capitalize on this location, including deepening and widening the federal channel and modernizing the rail line to accommodate rail cars carrying double-stacked containers. The White House fact sheet titled “Competitive Infrastructure Funding Opportunities for Local Governments” states that MEGA is intended to support multi-modal, multi-jurisdictional projects of regional or national significance, and says that funding is intended for critical large projects that would otherwise be unachievable without assistance. In other words, the MEGA program was designed for projects like this one, which are large and nationally significant.

The IJA is a once in a generation opportunity that affords your administration the opportunity to make the investments that are needed to position the West Coast to be successful for generations to come. We respectfully ask that you embrace this opportunity to make investments that will prepare our nation for future growth.

Sincerely,



PETER DeFAZIO
Member of Congress



JEFFREY A. MERKLEY
United States Senator



RON WYDEN
United States Senator



EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress



KURT SCHRADER
Member of Congress



SUZANNE BONAMICI
Member of Congress

CC: Pete Buttigieg, Secretary of Department of Transportation
Shalanda Young, Director of White House Office Management and Budget
John Porcari, Port Envoy to Supply Chain Disruptions Task Force
Mitch Landrieu, Senior Advisor and Infrastructure Coordinator