

August 4, 2022

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

The undersigned organizations, whose members and constituents are extensively involved in exporting U.S. food and agriculture goods, want to express to you and the Biden Administration our support for federal infrastructure development funding of the Oregon International EcoPort container shipping development project at Coos Bay, Oregon.

This promising project would provide much-needed capacity expansion for shipping between the West Coast and our all-important Asian markets that will benefit U.S. food and agriculture exports nationwide for many decades to come.

We commend you for your leadership in implementing the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) approved with bipartisan support by the U.S. Congress. This Oregon container port development project is seeking funding through the Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant (MPDG) combined application process, which includes the National Infrastructure Project Assistance grant program (Mega), the Nationally Significant Multimodal Freight and Highway Projects grants program (INFRA), and the Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program (RURAL).

Key uses for the funding include deepening and widening the navigational channel, already maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and upgrading the port-owned railroad that connects to the Union Pacific intermodal rail lines in nearby Eugene, Oregon, that provide container rail service to intermodal shipping terminals inland throughout the Midwest.

It is notable that funding for this project has earned bipartisan support not only from the entire Oregon congressional delegation but nationally from bipartisan Congressional representatives and organizations who see the benefits for their constituents and for maintaining U.S. competitiveness in the global economy.

Please consider:

- Over the last two years – in fact, since well before that – U.S. agricultural exports have been hampered severely due to congestion at the existing West Coast container ports. Both portside limitations and landside handling limitations at U.S. ports have caused major delays and even prevented our food and

agriculture exports from reaching our customers overseas. The Coos Bay project would have direct, on-dock, rail-to-ship loading capability that offers environmental advantages over trucking-dependent ports, while also providing operationally efficient rail service to and from inland U.S. locations.

- Coos Bay also has hundreds of acres of adjacent, undeveloped industrial land available for needed infrastructure development. This is in contrast with other ports on the West Coast located in major metropolitan areas that experience major constraints on development. We are heartened by the strong support the local community has for this project and the jobs it will bring, in contrast with opposition to port expansion from various interests often seen in other urban port communities.
- We are equally heartened by the active support given this project by Union Pacific, the largest Class I railroad in the U.S., which handles a large share of container ag exports from the heartland to the export gateways.
- Our organizations greatly appreciate the efforts of the Biden Administration's Supply Chain Task Force to encourage West Coast ports, labor, rail, trucking and warehousing sectors to transition to 24-hour operations. While there are challenges to achieve this goal, it is worth the effort to try to gain more productivity through our existing port infrastructure.
- Steadily increasing international trade and projected increased demand for U.S. food and agricultural products abroad, as well as imported consumer and manufacturing goods, simply mean the country will need additional container port capacity that will need to come in part from new locations. The Coos Bay project developers have extensively studied locations up and down the West Coast from Mexico to Canada and have concluded that Coos Bay offers the best, if not the only, viable location to add a new, world-class container port on the West Coast.
- Experienced shippers know that terminal success and container availability require both imports and exports. It is notable that the Port of Coos Bay is partnering with Northpoint Development, the largest private developer of warehouse and distribution center logistics facilities in the U.S. headquartered in Kansas City, which bodes well for attaining two-way flow of goods and exports from inland and the West Coast.

In summary, we encourage you and the Biden Administration to invest in this opportunity to provide infrastructure funding for this unique development project that will benefit U.S. agricultural exporters and our customers worldwide who depend upon us to reliably supply them with protein, grain, fruit, vegetables and high-quality food ingredients.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Feed Industry Association

American Seed Trade Association

California Walnut Commission

Consumer Brands Association

Double River Forwarding

International Fresh Produce Association

National Council of Farmer Cooperatives

National Milk Producers Federation

National Pork Producers Council

Specialty Soya & Grains Alliance

The Pet Food Institute

USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council

USA Rice

U.S. Dairy Export Council

U.S. Pea and Lentil Trade Association