

May 20, 2021

The Honorable Peter Buttigieg
Secretary
US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

Following on the heels of the United for Infrastructure Week, we applaud your work to prioritize investment in our nation's ability to transport goods, people, and cargo both across the country and around the globe. The signatories to this letter represent hardworking Americans across the maritime and transportation sectors. The recent infrastructure plans put forth by Congress and the White House aimed to revitalize our waterways and supporting enterprises are an encouraging starting point. We believe the time to invest in our maritime infrastructure is now. Our global competitors threaten to outpace the U.S. with their national maritime investments, putting into question our competitiveness and leadership. The pandemic has helped reveal how critical our maritime industry is to the health, economy, and security of our nation. During this global crisis, waterfront workers kept moving cargoes needed by medical centers, grocery stores, energy suppliers, and at our homes.

The American Society of Civil Engineers reports that U.S. ports and port users will need to invest over \$163 billion during the next 5 years to meet capacity and efficiency enhancement needs.¹ Driving these needs is a rapidly evolving industry. For example, the size of vessels has doubled over the last 15 years, creating a demand for deeper channels, larger docks, higher capacity equipment, and technology advancements to manage ever-changing global supply chains.

There are over 360 commercial seaports and waterways across the nation. As reported in the 2020 US Department of Transportation Annual Report to Congress, "waterborne vessels are the leading transportation mode for international freight, moving 41 percent of freight value in 2019—over \$1.7 trillion", significantly outperforming air and land freight transportation.² The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) identified a need of \$41.78 billion just for public navigational related waterside improvements including: dredging, lock and dam repair, and not privately owned landside infrastructure and capital equipment.³

We encourage you to consider these facts and statistics in guiding funding levels and new investments. While we appreciate the \$17 billion set aside for ports and inland waterways, our coalition asks Congress to work towards the \$42 billion need identified by ASCE by:

¹ <https://infrastructurereportcard.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Ports-2021.pdf>

² <https://rosap.ntl.bts.gov/view/dot/54022>

³ https://infrastructurereportcard.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/FTA_Econ_Impacts_Status_Quo.pdf

- Increasing existing port infrastructure grant programs, like PIDP to \$20 billion over the life of the infrastructure package to invest in infrastructure with multimodal elements, improving connectivity between waterfront and multimodal facilities;
- Investing at least \$12 billion to meet the ask of terminal operators, ports and other maritime operators interested in replacing older technology propulsion and motors with near zero and zero emission equipment. This includes necessary electrification of key terminals. These advancements are being held back by the steep prices and certain policies. We ask this category include \$2 billion in a tax credit program to encourage acquisition of such equipment outside of Federal funding programs.
- Increasing US Army Corps of Engineers funding to \$10 billion for their Navigation Program and to complete, repair and maintain Federal navigation channel improvement projects.

Without significant Federal investment, these vital gateways are in danger of falling behind our global competitors. The impact from these investments is not only along our coasts, but all over our national transportation system. The impact of our ports, operators, harbors, and supporting industries span every state, and every Congressional District. This interactive map will show you just how interdependent we truly are: <https://nawe.us/nawe-member-congressional-district-map/>.

Increased levels of funding are needed to secure and rebuild America’s maritime transportation system. Federal investment will strengthen the backbone our economy relies upon. Investment in maritime infrastructure provides exponential returns well into 50 years. Few other industries can provide this longevity of a return. Maritime infrastructure is built to last, not just for a decade, but for generations. Without proper support at our waterfronts, the supply chain of goods to and from the heartland of our country stops. The United States deep water port system is estimated to support over 30.77 million jobs, that means that approximately one in ten American workers are reliant on the infrastructure of America’s seaports, operators, and terminals.⁴ We thank you for your leadership in developing an investment plan to prepare our nation’s infrastructure for future generations.

Sincerely,

American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA)
 American Waterway Operators (AWO)
 American Maritime Congress
 Association of Ship Brokers & Agents (USA) Inc.
 Big River Coalition (BRC)
 California Association of Port Authorities
 Columbia River Steamship Operators’ Association, Inc.
 Dredging Contractors of America (DCA)
 Georgia Ports Authority (GPA)
 Gulf Ports Association

⁴ http://aapa.files.cms-plus.com/Martin%20study_executive%20summary%202018%20US%20coastal%20port%20impacts%20final.docx

Inland Rivers Ports & Terminals (IRPT)
International Propeller Club of the United States
Louisiana Maritime Association
Marine Exchange of Puget Sound
Marine Exchange of Southern California
Maritime Association of the Port of NY/NJ
Maritime Exchange for the Delaware River and Bay
Maritime Information Services of North America (MISNA)
National Association of Maritime Organizations (NAMO)
Oregon International Port of Coos Bay
National Association of Waterfront Employers (NAWE)
Port Houston
Port of Hueneme
Port of Long Beach
Port Manatee
Port of Oakland
Port of Tampa Bay
Texas Ports Association
The Northwest Seaport Alliance
U.S. Great Lakes Shipping Association
Virginia Ports Authority (VPA)

cc: Mr. Steven Ricchetti, Counselor to the President
Shalanda Young, Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget
Polly Trottenberg, Deputy US Secretary of Transportation
Lucinda Lessley, Deputy Administrator of MARAD