



Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives

Bill Shuster
Chairman

Washington, DC 20515

Peter A. DeFazio
Ranking Member

Christopher P. Bertram, Staff Director

May 13, 2016

Katherine W. Dedrick, Democratic Staff Director

The Honorable Anthony Foxx
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Foxx:

I am writing to support the Oregon International Port of Coos Bay's 2016 FASTLANE grant application for the Coos Bay Rail Line Tunnel Rehabilitation Project.

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, or FAST Act (P.L.114-94), created a new Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects program in order to fund projects that contribute to a strong multimodal transportation system that will support the movement of freight throughout the country. The program specifically dedicates a portion of the overall funding for small projects under \$100 million in total project cost, and dedicates a portion of funding to freight projects in rural areas. The project for which the Port of Coos Bay is seeking funding falls under each of these set-asides, with a total project cost of \$19.6 million and located in a rural area as defined by the statute. The project will also create jobs and spur economic development in a rural economy that has been in decline for decades and that needs the sort of investments this project will bring.

With their FASTLANE grant application, the Port is proposing to complete rehabilitation of the tunnels along the Coos Bay Rail Line and bring them up to a good operating condition. The rail line traverses nine tunnels over an 82-mile section between Coos Bay and Eugene, all of which are 100 years old or older. The general age of these tunnels, combined with the general environment of the Oregon coast and Coast Range Mountains, have caused deterioration of the tunnel and track structures and has disrupted train operations in the past. The improvements made by the requested funding will enhance safety and efficiency of train operations. Additionally, getting speeds up on the rail line will reduce fuel costs, reduce emissions, and provide a reduction in labor costs due to the fact that the trips will take less time.

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The Port has been able to make significant progress in rehabilitating the Coos Bay rail line since restoring freight rail service in 2011 in Southwest Oregon— thanks in large part to investments made by the State of Oregon and the Federal government. These investments have helped move over 24,000 truckloads off the roads and onto the rail line annually. In 2014, the Port of Coos Bay conducted an economic impact study to look at the regional transportation benefits of moving commerce onto the rail line. The study showed savings of \$1.06 million in improved highway safety, highway maintenance savings of \$766,000, and emissions savings of \$453,000.

FASTLANE funding will enhance these investments, and ensure that the rail line continues to grow as an important component of Oregon's intermodal transportation network.

Thank you for your consideration of this grant application.

Sincerely,



PETER DeFAZIO
Ranking Member