

May 11, 2020

The Honorable Elaine Chao  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao,

The American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA) is writing to express its strong support for public seaports' applications for FY 2020 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Discretionary Grants. As noted in our recent comments on the Department of Transportation's National Freight Strategic Plan, direct and sustainable multimodal funding for freight infrastructure remains one of AAPA's top priorities for our nation's surface transportation policy.

Founded in 1912, AAPA is the unified and collective voice of the seaport industry in the Americas. AAPA empowers port authorities, maritime industry partners, and service providers to serve their global customers and create economic and social value for their communities. Our activities, resources, and partnerships connect, inform, and unify seaport leaders and maritime professionals in all segments of the industry around the Western Hemisphere.

Seaport cargo activity supports the employment of more than 31 million people in the U.S. and supports more than a quarter of U.S. GDP. The impact of seaports on our economy and on our nation's ability to project economic power is significant.

In 2016 AAPA released the State of Freight III, which highlighted America's seaports funding needs relating to rail access and multimodal infrastructure. This report laid out the work that our nation's ports have undertaken and the local dollars they have invested to ensure the efficient multimodal movement of freight throughout the nation.

The report identified \$155 billion in planned investment in our nation's port terminals, including expansions, infrastructure investments, and rail, while our members also highlighted \$20 billion in multimodal port and rail projects necessary to fully take advantage of the aforementioned investment. FY 2020 BUILD grants will provide ports the opportunity to obtain much needed funding for these multimodal projects that support America's transportation system and freight network.

Our neighbors in Mexico and Canada are making significant investments in their freight transportation systems, and with the signing of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) it is clear that goods imported and exported do not need to go through U.S. ports. Particularly as we recover from the economic damage wrought by the coronavirus pandemic, we must invest in our nation's trade infrastructure to ensure American ports remain competitive even as trade landscapes change.

As the Department of Transportation begins to evaluate applications for FY2020 BUILD grants, AAPA strongly urges that you to focus on seaports and last mile freight-related projects, including gateways and corridor projects, to help maintain and expand our maritime infrastructure. These projects support U.S. exports and imports and our nation's supply chain, which is vital to our nation's economy, standard of living, and to U.S. jobs.

In this regard we understand that the Port of South Louisiana has applied for funding through the BUILD Discretionary Grants Program for the Port of South Louisiana Greenfield Louisiana Project. If funded, this project will construct a new grain terminal system and dock for the purposes of facilitating more agricultural exports from U.S. farmers within the rural local and regional area to end users throughout the world.

I hope you will give this proposal full and fair consideration.

Sincerely,



Christopher J. Connor  
President and CEO