

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

January 9, 2012

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-221 Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Majority Leader Reid:

The efficient movement of freight on our nation's transportation system is critical to America's ongoing economic recovery. Greater freight mobility enables our farms and businesses to sell their products around the country and the world at lower cost, making them more competitive, leading to greater job growth at home. For this reason, I ask you to bring to the floor for consideration the two-year surface transportation reauthorization legislation prior to the expiration of the current extension on March 31, 2012, and strongly encourage the inclusion of job-creating freight-mobility provisions such as those recently passed by the Commerce Committee in December 2011.

There is a critical need – both in Washington state and throughout our country – to move products from farms and factories to our ports and export markets efficiently and cost effectively. To that end, improving our freight infrastructure will also help us meet the President's National Export Initiative's goal of doubling U.S. exports by the end of 2014.

Freight is particularly important to Washington's economy. Our 75 ports help support more than 1 million jobs in freight dependent industries – approximately 44 percent of Washington's total employment. In 2010, my state saw the movement of more than 533 million tons of freight, a number which is projected to grow by up to 86 percent by 2040.

The efficient movement of freight and goods means Washington jobs – jobs that will be lost if we do not prepare for that projected growth. In fact, a new study commissioned by the Washington State Department of Transportation found that if congestion increases on our state's roads by only 20 percent, more than 27,000 freight-dependent jobs and \$3.3 billion in economic output will be lost.

Millions of freight-dependent businesses and consumers are counting on us to reauthorize surface transportation programs and ensure that we invest in the infrastructure that lowers the cost of doing business. I look forward to working with you and our colleagues on this important endeavor.

Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

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