

US Senator Maria Cantwell

Remarks at Confluence Parkway Project Groundbreaking

April 17th, 2025

[\[AUDIO\]](#) [\[VIDEO\]](#)

Sen. Cantwell: Well, thank you, Laura. Good afternoon to everyone. And it certainly is a full house of wonderful people who have been working a long time for a great success. So, congratulations to all of you today.

I'm so glad to be here with my colleague, Congresswoman Kim Schrier, who has been, as she just mentioned, a very big advocate of Wenatchee and a very big advocate of this project. And I thank her for her partnership in the US Congress in constantly bringing up this part of Central Washington to the agenda. Now, I just want to know where the heck is Frank Kuntz, if he got all of us involved all this time, he can't even show up today?

Audience Member: Arizona!

Sen. Cantwell: Oh, we don't have sunshine here, Frank? I thought he was out at Lake Chelan, but okay. I want to thank Mayor Poirier and the East Wenatchee Mayor also for being here. I want to thank Commissioner Hawkins; you just saw a lot of enthusiasm, Brad. I just keep coming over here to do ground breakings. That's all I know. And Wenatchee just keeps growing, and so I feel like you're in good hands.

I want to thank the public works director Tom Watchholder, obviously Douglas Commissioner Straub, and Sheriff Morris, and PUD Commissioner Bergren, and all the members of the city council in both Wenatchee and East Wenatchee.

So, we heard a lot about freight, but literally, what we did was take an idea that was birthed here in Washington. And that is that when you're making infrastructure investment, you should try to prioritize projects that move freight, and that is because they grow jobs, they help the economy, they help us get product to the market -- and obviously apples being that key product -- and the market just continued to grow, but we couldn't get the product on to where it needed to get quickly enough.

So the Washington State Freight Commission literally was the impetus for an idea to take that to the Federal Government and create the INFRA program. That was done when Ray LaHood was transportation secretary in the Obama Administration. I became such a pest that he dubbed me 'Senator Freight.' And I was like, "Okay, I'm all good with that."

And one of my colleagues, Jim Inhofe, who's no longer with me, he was a big part of the appropriations process. When I got into the elevator one day, he said, "I know, I know freight can't wait." And I was like, okay, the message has been delivered.

So, the outcome, though, of us as a state, showing the Federal Government that investments like this helped grow the economy, then got the rest of the country thinking, and we were able, as Laura was just mentioning, to get a record amount of investment in that 2015 effort, and then we were able to [nearly] double that money in the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law]. So, literally got it up to that \$8 billion.

So yeah, for sure, Kim, I expected that money to go to this project and definitely that was the conclusion: that out of that money, that \$9[2] million investment to get apples to market faster and not deteriorate our huge economy that the entire central part of Central Washington depended on was a great economic investment for the nation.

So, I just want to give my congratulations today to everybody that's been working hard on this. I know that the Confluence Project obviously is going to solve some of those transportation challenges by reducing that congestion. Four thousand trucks travel through the area each day, as well as twenty-four trains. So, making all of that work, and right now, just getting these products from the processors to less delay, and by building the two overpasses, all of this is going to make Wenatchee a little bit better from the transportation infrastructure investment. And certainly the options in the whole project are going to improve the pedestrian experiences too.

So, I couldn't be more excited to be here. We won't, when it's all done, have a divided waterfront anymore, and that will be a great asset as well to both residential and commercial development along the river. So, what a great day for the Confluence Project. What a great day for Wenatchee. And please invite me back to many more things, because I can tell you one thing, Wenatchee is on the move. Thank you very much.