

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

March 6, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy,

I am writing in support of the Port of Bellingham's application to the Department of Transportation's Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program. The Port of Bellingham is seeking \$25 million for its Bellingham Shipping Terminal Rehabilitation Phase II: North Pier Rehabilitation project.

The Port of Bellingham is a coastal seaport and special purpose municipal corporation serving all of Whatcom County. With a viable working waterfront and designation as a Foreign-Trade Zone, the Bellingham Shipping Terminal (BST) is a prime alternative to the congestion importers and exporters face at the Ports of Seattle and Vancouver, Canada. BST also holds a central role in Washington state disaster response plans as a major distribution site for essential goods. The terminal has served breakbulk customers since 1920, but after major employers departed in the 1990s, the Port undertook one of the largest environmental cleanups in Washington state history to restore commercial capacity. Since then, BST has secured federal investments including a \$6.85 million PIDP grant for its Central Pier rehabilitation and a \$17.5 million BUILD/RAISE award to re-establish Class I rail access. The North Pier rehabilitation is the final step toward fully activating BST.

Currently, the North Pier's decking strength is only 250 pounds-per-square-foot, which is far below what is needed for cargo operations, and its mooring infrastructure is rated at just 60 kips, well under the 300 kips required for modern cargo vessels. These deficiencies limit vessel calls, restrict storage capacity, create safety hazards, and prevent the full utilization of the Port's crane and the adjacent 37,000-square-foot warehouse.

If successful, the Port will use funding to demolish and replace the North Pier's aging infrastructure with modern capacity matching the rehabilitated Central Pier. The upgraded pier will allow the Port's crane to discharge from five cargo holds simultaneously instead of two, doubling vessel capacity annually. The project will increase longshore employment from 32 to 80 workers per shift, decrease vessel time in port by 50%, and generate an estimated \$11.8 million per year in economic impact for Whatcom County.

Thank you for your full and fair consideration of the Port of Bellingham's application to the BUILD grant program.

Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell

United States Senator