



Nor'wester Newsletter

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West Coast members introduce Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund reform bill

Senators Murray (D-WA) and Cantwell (D-WA) and Representative Reichert (R-WA) worked together to introduce the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) Reform Act of 2017 in the Senate ([S.1488](#)) and House ([H.R.3152](#)). Rep. Reichert was joined by the following cosponsors from the House: Smith (D-WA), Larsen (D-WA), DelBene (D-WA), Heck (D-WA), Kilmer (D-WA), Jayapal (D-WA), Barragan (D-CA), Napolitano (D-CA), and Lowenthal (D-CA). The Members introduced the bill to address cargo diversion from U.S. ports, and highlighted Seattle, Tacoma, Los Angeles and Long Beach.

In addition to providing a new "donor port" set aside, the bill is also intended to help small ports by updating the baseline for the small port set-aside. The bill would also establish full use of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund immediately. To learn more, click through for the press releases from [Senator Murray](#) and [Representative Reichert](#) for additional information on this proposed legislation.

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Department of Transportation releases revamped INFRA Grants to replace FASTLANE

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has [released the Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) for the new Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) Grants, which will replace the FASTLANE grant program. This year, the INFRA grant program is combining FY2017 and FY2018 funding

levels and will have \$1.56 billion available for project funding with an application period of 120 days. Applications will still need to be made through www.grants.gov.

The INFRA grants do not change the eligible project types which can apply for grants, but the selection criteria have been changed to include a new focus on innovation potential, performance tracking, and better leveraging of federal funds. One of the goals of the grant program is to reduce permitting time and allow greater regulatory consistency between permitting agencies. The program will look to establish interagency liaisons to manage the permitting process on behalf of projects to help ensure timely review processes with progress tracked through an online portal. Participation is voluntary and does not change the permitting requirements for a project but DOT is seeking projects which will allow it to test and evaluate the process.

The DOT will also be focusing on projects which have already identified non-federal funds to help with construction costs with the goal of increasing the amount of projects which can be funded by federal investment. Non-federal funds include State, local, and private funding. Similar to the FASTLANE program, 25% of funding will be specifically for rural projects and DOT will take into consideration rural applicant resource constraints when evaluating the leverage of outside funds criteria. Grant awards for large and small projects will be awarded under the INFRA grant program. Large projects must be at least \$25 million and small projects must be at least \$5 million.

Projects which applied for the second round of FY2017 FASTLANE are encouraged to resubmit their old applications if the project aligns with the new criteria. These applicants can attach an appendix to their original application to show how the project aligns with the new INFRA criteria and provide updated information. However, projects which applied for the FY2017 Small Project awards under FASTLANE will not need to resubmit and the DOT will be announcing the award winners shortly.

For additional information, the DOT has prepared a [fact sheet](#) with questions about the new INFRA Grant program. The agency will also be hosting a series of webinars to provide more in-depth answers to the application process. Dates will be announced in the future for these webinars.

DERA reauthorization bill introduced

Last week, Senators Carper (D-DE), Inhofe (R-OK), Barrasso (R-WY) and Whitehouse (D-RI) introduced a bill in the Senate to reauthorize the Diesel Emissions Reduction Program (DERA) for another five years. The House version of the bill was introduced by Representative Poe (R-TX) and co-sponsored by Representative Matsui (D-CA).

DERA is administered by the Environmental Protection Agency, and provides grants to replace or upgrade diesel engines with the goal of reducing carbon emissions. PNWA has long supported the DERA program, as it has been an important resource for ports and vessel operators as they work to reduce emissions in the Northwest.