



2020 Position Paper

Port Infrastructure Development Grants

Summary:

In 2010, Congress authorized a Port Infrastructure Development Program to be administered by the U.S. Maritime Administration. While the program remained unfunded for many years, Congress provided first-year funds in the FY2019 Consolidated Appropriations Act. Specifically, the legislation provides a total of \$292.7 million and stipulates that grant funds are to be issued to public agencies and used for a variety of port improvements, including intermodal infrastructure, terminal equipment, wharf construction, cargo handling technology, etc. Congress provided second-year funding for the program at \$225 million in FY2020.

AGLPA Position:

AGLPA strongly supports continued funding for the Port Infrastructure Development Grant Program and urges Congress to include \$500 million in the FY2021 Transportation Appropriations Bill.

Additional Background:

While the United States has federal grant programs for aviation, highway, rail and public transportation infrastructure, there has not been a federal assistance program specifically targeted at port infrastructure. Ports are eligible to apply for U.S. Department of Transportation "BUILD" and "INFRA" grants, but often find themselves competing with other important airport, highway or mass transit priorities in their communities. For this reason, a dedicated port infrastructure grant program is attractive.

In 2010, Congress enacted legislation (P.L. 111-84) to create a Port Infrastructure Development Program within the U.S. Department of Transportation/Maritime Administration. Known as "StrongPorts," the program's goal is to assist local port stakeholders as they work to improve the movement of freight. This assistance may include planning, project oversight, technical assistance, expediting environmental reviews, coordinating with other federal agencies, and issuing grants.

In 2019, Congress passed the Ports Improvement Act, as part of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2020. This legislation updated and enhanced the original 2010 program. The new authorization improves the program's focus, establishes non-federal cost share requirements, clarifies use of grant funds, ensure a fair distribution of grant awards, and authorizes a funding level of \$500 million in FY2021.

In its first grant round, six AGLPA members applied for program grants in 2019. In February, 2020, four ports received awards totaling \$53 million, or 18 percent of the total distributed.