

PORT OF SEATTLE
MEMORANDUM

COMMISSION AGENDA
ACTION ITEM

Item No. 5c
Date of Meeting September 24, 2013

DATE: September 13, 2013
TO: Tay Yoshitani, Chief Executive Officer
FROM: Dan Burke; Program Lead Planner, Public Affairs
SUBJECT: Great Northern Corridor Coalition Memorandum of Understanding

Amount of This Request: \$5,000 **Source of Funds:** Operating Budget

ACTION REQUESTED

Request (1) Commission ratification of the Great Northern Corridor Coalition Memorandum of Understanding between the Montana Department of Transportation and the Port of Seattle and (2) authorization for the Chief Executive Officer to provide \$5,000 for a portion of the local match of a \$299,910 federal grant awarded to the Port of Northern Montana to complete the Great Northern Corridor Multistate Planning and Development Study.

SYNOPSIS

For the past three years, the Port of Seattle has worked with the Ports of Tacoma, Everett, Vancouver, Portland, Longview, Kalama, Grays Harbor, the Washington Public Ports Association (WPPA), Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), the Oregon Department of Transportation, the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad, and the Union Pacific Railroad to identify and address competitiveness issues of rail transportation from the Pacific Northwest to the Midwest. The effort is called the Pacific Northwest Gateway Coalition.

In addition, the Port of Seattle has joined a second rail coalition called the Great Northern Corridor Coalition and with federal grant funds will complete the Great Northern Corridor Multistate Planning and Development Study. The Study promotes regional cooperation, planning, and shared project implementation for programs and projects to improve multimodal transportation system management and operations along the Great Northern Rail Corridor between Washington State and the Midwest. The Great Northern rail corridor is the BNSF's corridor through Washington State, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Illinois.

The Port entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Port of Northern Montana for the Great Northern Corridor Multistate Planning and Development Study on February 26, 2013. The study was awarded one of the 2012 Multistate Corridor Operations and

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Management (MCOM) Program grants by the U.S. Department of Transportation. The Montana Department of Transportation is the lead agency for the study.

In addition, the Port of Northern Montana has applied for a Phase II grant for this project and requested letters of support and additional funding from coalition stakeholders for the local match. The proposed Phase II study will build upon ongoing efforts to identify the opportunities and needs associated with the Great Northern Corridor from the Pacific Northwest to the Great Lakes. Funds will be used to develop solutions to enhance the corridor by addressing topics such as safety, performance, connectivity and economic opportunity. The Port has indicated support for potential additional funding in 2014.

Funding for the initial \$5,000 portion of the study was inadvertently omitted from the 2013 budget. Funding for any additional support of the Phase II study will be budgeted in the Executive's Operating Budget in 2014.

BACKGROUND

In late 2011, the Port of Northern Montana, working closely with the Burlington Northern Railroad, applied for a MCOM Program grant to complete the Great Northern Multistate Planning and Development Study. Due to their similar missions, the Great Northern Corridor Coalition and many members of the Pacific Northwest Gateway Coalition have begun working together to develop a comprehensive plan for movement of cargo across the northern tier of states.

Work has begun on establishing the framework of the coalition and initiating outreach to identified stakeholders. The coalition has also begun to identify opportunities to improve the technology, operations, and infrastructure of the Great Northern Corridor. It held its first meeting May 22-23, 2013.

Additional coalition members providing funding for the planning and development study include the ports of Tacoma, Everett, Quincy, Pasco, Vancouver, Grays Harbor, Northern Montana, the Washington Public Ports Association, the BNSF, and the Departments of Transportation of Idaho, Minnesota, and Montana. There are additional non-funding members in the coalition.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION AND DETAILS

In order for the Pacific Northwest ports to stay competitive with U.S. ports in California, the East Coast, South Coast, and Gulf Coast, as well as Canadian Ports, we must continue to work with partners to identify problems along the rail corridor and work together to implement improvement projects. The Great Northern Corridor Multistate Planning and Development Study provides an opportunity to work with other stakeholders along the corridor who rely on an efficient transportation network to help preserve and grow their economies.

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The project had a kick-off meeting in Shelby, Montana, on May 22 and 23, 2013, where the coalition members wrote a draft request for proposals. When the consultant is selected, the project will take approximately 10 months to complete.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Budget Status and Source of Funds

Staff is requesting Commission authorization for the expenditure of \$5,000 for Phase I as it was not included in the 2013 budget. Funding will come from the Executive's Operating Budget funds. If the Phase II grant is successful, additional funding will come from the Executive's Operating Budget in 2014.

ATTACHMENTS TO THIS REQUEST

- Great Northern Corridor Coalition Memorandum of Understanding between the Montana Department of Transportation and the Port of Seattle
- Port of Seattle letter supporting Phase I of the Great Northern Corridor Multistate Planning and Development Study Grant
- Port of Seattle letter supporting Phase II of the Great Northern Corridor Multistate Planning and Development Study Grant

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS OR BRIEFINGS

- None