

Seaport Investment Federal Policy

Background:

More than 90 percent of the U.S. foreign trade moves through our nation's 300 seaports, representing 25 percent of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product. In Florida alone, this waterborne trade represents \$117.6 billion in total economic activity and generates more than 900,000 direct and indirect jobs. There has been a significant level of new freight/port infrastructure funding on a federal level, including the creation and funding of the new Port Infrastructure Development Program under the Maritime Administration and the BUILD program. These federal programs, combined with freight mobility investments by Florida, have enabled our seaports to improve services to the Southeastern region of the U.S. and the world.

Current Issue:

Florida has invested more than \$1.5 billion in freight infrastructure at its seaports over the last eight years. An additional \$600 million was proposed in the Florida Department of Transportation's five-year Seaport Work Program. The total five-year Florida Seaport Capital Improvement program, including both state and local funding, is over \$3.3 billion.

Under the leadership of Chairman Mario Diaz-Balart, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, HUD, and other related agencies, provided approximately \$300 million for a new **Port Infrastructure Development Program** under the Maritime Administration (MARAD).

The Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Grants program provides grants for investment in road, rail, transit and port projects that promise to achieve critical national objectives. The 2019 omnibus appropriations bill provided \$900 million for these discretionary grants.

The House and Senate continue to discuss full use of HMT funds – including proposals to change the classification and appropriation of such funds.

Recommendations:

The Florida Ports Council supports the **full utilization of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF)** for congressionally approved harbor navigational and maintenance projects. **We recommend additional hearings or negotiated congressional authority to ensure the full use of HMTF funds for approved navigational maintenance and construction projects.**

The Florida Ports Council supports the **creation and annual funding of the Port Infrastructure Development Program. Continued funding of at least \$300 million per year would help establish this program as an additional federal investment in priority port projects identified by coastal seaports.**

The Florida Ports Council recommends **an increase in funding (to at least 2018 levels - \$1.5 billion) for the BUILD program, and language to ensure a minimum of 25 percent of BUILD grants be awarded to freight and port-related infrastructure projects.**