



WASHINGTON PUBLIC PORTS ASSOCIATION

2017 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Washington Public Ports Association

2017 Legislative Agenda

Priority Issues

Modernize Port Broadband Authority: Port districts have the authority to provide wholesale telecom infrastructure, with certain limitations. This authority was granted in 2003, and several aspects of our authority relating to contracting, rural limitations and pricing authority need to be modernized to develop networks and provide the fundamental broadband speeds necessary to retain and grow businesses, foster educational institutions, and provide medical services.

MTCA Funding Preservation: Crude oil prices remain low, which results in lower revenues for the state Toxics Accounts. These accounts fund remedial action (cleanup) grants at the Department of Ecology, which are a critical tool for ports to redevelop contaminated properties. WPPA will work to ensure that the remedial action grant program is funded at the levels necessary to continue this critical partnership.

Issues WPPA Supports

Port Worker Training: Last year the Port of Seattle proposed expanding port district authority to contract with private non-profit entities to provide worker training programs. Discussions on this authority continued over the summer and fall, and a revised approach will be proposed in 2017.

Capital Projects: There is continued interest in a capital budget grant program to fund economic development projects, similar to the program created in 2012. Education mandates will put substantial pressure on state bond funds, however.

Protecting Industrial Lands: Continued gentrification pressures in urban areas are putting pressure on critical industrial lands. The Growth Management Act (GMA) has some language for large cities to preserve and foster port industrial property, but more clear direction may still be needed. As general discussions about improving the GMA proceed, WPPA will advocate for continued work on industrial land preservation.

State Adoption of Real ID: State of Washington is facing a looming deadline to adopt/fund the implementation of state-issued driving documents that comply with the Real ID Act of 2005. The law sets forth requirements for state driver's licenses and ID cards to be accepted by the federal government for "official purposes", as defined by the Secretary of Homeland Security, which includes boarding passenger-carrying airplanes.

Re-Capitalization of Fishing Fleet Vessels: WPPA will support continuing efforts to upgrade the North Pacific fishing fleet, which may take the form of a preferential B&O tax rate for construction of fishing vessels and their components.

Public Records Act: There are currently efforts to address issues and challenges of the Public Records Act. Additional efforts will continue in 2017, relating to cost-recovery mechanisms for local governments, and dispute resolution procedures.

Tourism Funding: The Washington Tourism Alliance continues to advocate for a state-funded tourism promotion program. Last year's efforts creating sector-based business fees did not advance, but other ideas such as tax credits may be proposed this year.

Issues to Watch

Hydraulic Permits: Authority to assess a fee to help pay for the Department of Fish and Wildlife's hydraulic permitting program expires at the end of June, 2017. Recent controversy over the jurisdiction of these permits will ensure a lively debate over the appropriate limits of the agency's regulatory authority. WPPA will support pragmatic solutions that are protective of aquatic habitats and appropriately limit DFW's authority.

Aviation Fuel Tax dedication to WSDOT: The Washington State Aviation Alliance is advocating legislation that would redirect some of the revenue generated from the sales tax on fuel at general aviation airports to the state aeronautics account. The purpose is to make grant and loan funds available to general aviation airports, and to leverage federal funds.

On-Call Contracting: The Attorney General's Office through an informal communication has signaled to the PUD's and the State Auditor that it considers current standard practices used in on-call contracting to be inconsistent with state law. This may create legislative action, but we do not yet see a general consensus on how to resolve this situation.

CERB Funding/Reform: The WPPA has consistently supported funding for the Community Economic Revitalization Board in the form of additional funding for CERB loans and grants as well as increases in CERB technical staffing levels. WPPA has also led efforts to reform median wage requirements placed on certain projects. While not making this a priority now, CERB-reform efforts might emerge in 2017.

Puget Sound Dredging: The management review commissioned by the 2016 Legislature is currently underway. When findings are released by the Department of Ecology, WPPA will determine whether additional legislative action is necessary.

New Issues

Commissioner Districts for Ports of Seattle and Tacoma. By statute, the Ports of Seattle and Tacoma have no commissioner districts. Some interests in South King County are raising the idea of imposing commissioner districts in King and possibly Pierce County, in order to ensure geographic representation of commissioners.

Pilotage Commission Insurance Costs: The Pilotage Commission was successfully sued for gender discrimination. This action has caused the state's self-insurance program to increase the insurance premiums to the Commission by about one million dollars per year. It is unclear how this money will be raised, but options would include tariff increases or finding the funds within the state's budget.