



**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council Board of Directors  
**FROM:** Matt Ransom, Executive Director  
**DATE:** June 28, 2016   
**SUBJECT:** **FAST Act Freight Provisions and Ongoing Activities**

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**INTRODUCTION**

On December 4, 2015, President Obama signed the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act into law. The FAST Act keeps intact the established structure of the various highway and public transit related programs and for the first time, provides dedicated federal dollars for freight improvements. This summary briefly describes the FAST Act’s new freight provisions and identifies activities underway within the State and RTC region which implement certain provisions of the new programs.

**FAST ACT FREIGHT PROVISIONS**

**National Multimodal Freight Policy**

The FAST Act establishes a national policy of maintaining and improving the condition and performance of the National Multimodal Freight Network. The FAST Act specifies goals associated with this national policy related to the condition, safety, security, efficiency, productivity, resiliency, and reliability of the freight network.

**Freight Plans**

The FAST Act requires the Development of a National Freight Strategic Plan to implement the goals of the new National Multimodal Freight Policy. The National Freight Strategic Plan will address the conditions and performance of the multimodal freight system, identify strategies and best practices to improve intermodal connectivity and performance of the national freight system, and mitigate the impacts of freight movement on communities.

In addition, States are required to develop a comprehensive freight plan. This plan must identify critical rural and urban freight corridors and include a list of priority projects. In 2014, WSDOT completed a comprehensive Washington State Freight Mobility Plan. WSDOT is currently providing an opportunity for local jurisdictions and MPOs to update priority projects, with requests required to be submitted electronically by August 31.

RTC staff is working with local agency staff to prepare a list of projects to be submitted. The discussion of freight priority projects for inclusion in the Washington State Freight Mobility Plan was initiated at the June RTAC meeting.

### **Freight Network**

The FAST Act requires the development of a National Highway Freight Network. The National Highway Freight Network includes the federally designated Primary Highway Freight System and all remaining Interstate routes. In addition, the National Highway Freight Network will include Critical Rural and Urban Freight Network as designated by each state.

Whereas much of the National Highway Freight Network was designated based on national data, states are responsible for designating public roads for the Critical Rural and Urban Freight Corridors in accordance with section 1116 of the FAST Act. This includes a limited number of centerline miles statewide. WSDOT is currently working with MPOs in determining these highway designations, and RTC has been working with local agency staff to develop proposed routes within the RTPO region.

Attached is the latest WSDOT-produced draft map showing candidate Critical Urban Freight Corridors in Clark County. In Skamania and Klickitat Counties the four bi-state Columbia River Bridges (Bridge of the Gods, Hood River Bridge, SR-197 The Dalles Bridge, and SR-97 Biggs Bridge) are proposed as Critical Rural Freight Corridors. WSDOT's timeline calls for submittal of corridor designations to FHWA by August 31, 2016, with final federal designations approved by September 30.

### **FAST Act Funding Programs**

With passage of the FAST Act, specific funding programs for freight were created. The programs are:

***Nationally Significant Freight & Highway Projects Program – FASTLANE:*** A freight-specific, nationally competitive grant program, funded at \$4.5 billion nationwide for the duration of the FAST Act. The program is primarily for projects over \$100 million with 10% set aside for smaller projects. There will be Congressional oversight of project selection. Projects must be on either the National Highway Freight Network or the National Highway System.

Earlier this year, RTC staff consulted with agencies in preliminary grant application discussions (City of Washougal, Port of Hood River). The grant applications were not submitted, but it is expected that these or other agency applications might be submitted during the course of the Act. RTC offers consulting services to member agencies for grant development, review, and general research on funding options and regulations.

***National Highway Freight Program:*** Formula funds apportioned to states intended to be used for projects on the National Highway Freight Network. \$6.3 billion is available nationwide for the duration of the FAST Act with approximately \$108 million available to Washington state.

The Governor's office is set to convene a group to review state policy regarding distribution of federal funds. The results of this process could modify current state policy regarding the share of federal flexible funds made available to the state versus regional allocations. RTC staff briefed the Board on the Fast Act funding provisions and the Governor's funding policy review process earlier this year. RTC staff will provide updates on this process as warranted until completion.

### **Project Delivery**

The FAST Act includes provisions intended to reduce the time it takes to break ground on new freight transportation projects, including by promoting best contracting practices and innovating financing and funding opportunities and by reducing uncertainty and delays with respect to environmental reviews and permitting.

### **Performance Measures**

The FAST Act requires the Bureau of Transportation Statistics to collect and annually report performance measures for the nation's top 25 ports, as measured by total tonnage, containers, and dry bulk tonnage.

### **CONCLUSION**

RTC staff will continue to work with WSDOT and member agencies to implement the freight provisions of the FAST Act. This work will include the submittal of projects for inclusion in the Washington State Freight Mobility Plan and designation of the Critical Rural and Urban Freight Corridors. Additionally, RTC staff will continue to provide grant consulting services to member agencies desiring to pursue *FASTLANE* grant program funds for Regional Transportation Plan improvements.

Attachment

# Candidate Critical Urban Freight Corridors in Vancouver/Camas/Battle Ground UA

