

The Newsletter of the Port of Pittsburgh Commission

2020 Vol 2

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



We look forward to keeping you informed, working with you, and continuing to do our part to keep the Port of Pittsburgh flowing. Stay vigilant, stay safe!

Mary Ann Bucci Executive Director, Port of Pittsburgh Commission

Since our first newsletter in April, we continue to adapt to our new normal. Our commitment to success under these circumstances has not changed; in fact, it may be more important than ever. In this issue, we will feature those pivotal to our region's response to the matters at hand. Specifically, Senator Kim Ward and Representative Conor Lamb. Senator Ward is a member of the PA State Senate and Chair of the Transportation Committee, and a board member of the Port of Pittsburgh Commission. In "3 Rivers, 3 Questions", she offers her perspective on the response to COVID-19, and its impact on our region's transportation issues. The Commission also recognizes Rep. Lamb, for his work toward a bi-partisan bill (H.R. 7416), the "Coastal and Inland Ports and Terminals Commerce Improvements Act". We thank our region's elected officials for their work and service to our industry and communities.

Congressman Lamb bill approved by House would establish new waterways grant program

"Why can't we apply?" is a question we hear often at the Port office from industry partners when a federal agency issues a grant opportunity. All too often the funding guidelines restrict eligibility only for public entities such as state and local governments, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and port authorities among others while making private businesses ineligible.

Working with the Inland Rivers, Ports and Terminals, Inc. trade association, the Port of Pittsburgh Commission approached our local Congressman Conor Lamb (D-PA) on the need for a new funding program which would allow smaller ports and privately-owned terminals to be able to apply for federal funding in a new competitive grant matching program. A member of the U.S. House's Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, Congressman Lamb's office has heard similar concerns. Recognizing this need and opportunity, Rep. Lamb along with Rep. Mike Bost (R-IL) introduced the bill, H.R. 7416, the "Coastal and Inland Ports and Terminals Commerce Improvements Act" that also had additional co-sponsor support from other members of the House representing inland waterway communities including Rep. Guy Reschenthaler (R-PA).

We're happy to report that this bill was included as part of the National Defense Authorization Act that was approved by the full House on July 21st. The Senate approved their version of the NDAA on July 23rd, and a joint conference committee between the House and Senate will negotiate a final bill sometime this fall.

We greatly appreciate Congressman Lamb's leadership and support on this important legislation!



3 RIVERS, 3 QUESTIONS

with *Senator Kim Ward*



Kim Ward is a member of the PA State Senate, R-39th, and is the chair of the Senate Transportation Committee. She also sits on the board of the Port of Pittsburgh Commission.

1. Can you talk about the important role our transportation industry has in keeping freight moving during this public health crisis?

In the early stages of the Commonwealth's shutdown, freight transport was essential in providing the needed safety supplies to our first responders and hospital personnel. Emergency management plans relied heavily on the ability to move these supplies. Additionally, freight transport was and is a critical element to not only the food supply chain but also our energy industry. I am grateful for the work of our barge companies and terminal operators in keeping commerce flowing along our rivers during this critical time.

2. What are some of the challenges that Pennsylvania will be facing in the future in building and maintaining our critical infrastructure?

The most critical challenge facing our critical infrastructure in a post-pandemic environment will be funding. It's still too early to tell what the overall impact will be on federal and state revenues as a result of the pandemic. However, based on early forecasts,

(continued on page 2...)



The Port of Pittsburgh Commission is working on a new grants guide. Send an email to: scott@portpitt.com if you would like to be notified when the guide becomes available.



3 RIVERS, 3 QUESTIONS *continued* Senator Kim Ward

the losses are going to be heavy. There will be palpable tension related to future funding needs on large infrastructure projects.

3. As a member of the Board of the Port of Pittsburgh Commission, what do you see as the role of the Commission, and what makes you most proud during your time in your Board role?

It is important to promote the value and benefits of the inland waterways. The Port of Pittsburgh's vision is complementary to our region's vision - attracting new businesses, helping local businesses to grow and thrive and contributing to the region's vitality. PortPitt and our inland waterways are a differentiating asset. PortPitt continues to provide leadership, solutions, and ideas to keep our region competitive and attractive to both businesses and residents.



"This bill also recognizes the important role that the inland waterways play in our nation and provides a cost share shift to help in completing construction of much needed inland projects, and prioritized projects of importance to members of the Committee. I thank Rep. Conor Lamb for his tireless efforts for the Inland system."

-- U.S. House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Chairman Peter DeFazio referencing his May 6, 2019 visit to Pittsburgh in his opening remarks during WRDA 2020 mark-up on July 15, 2020.

INFRASTRUCTURE BILLS ARE VITAL AND MOVING THROUGH CONGRESS

Nearly 80 percent of traded goods that Americans rely on is moved through our Nation's ports, harbors, and inland waterways. Maintaining this infrastructure is done by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and is made possible through the House's Water Resources Development Act and the Senate's America's Water Infrastructure Act.

On July 13, 2020, the U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Peter A. DeFazio (D-OR) and colleagues introduced H.R. 7575, the "Water Resources Development Act of 2020". The Committee marked-up and approved the bill on July 15th, and it passed the full House on July 29th. WRDA 2020 authorizes the study and construction of waterway infrastructure projects that were developed in cooperation and consultation with the Corps. These projects are key to preserving our Nation's economy, to protecting our communities, and to maintaining our quality of life. In addition, a key recommended change to the cost-share ratio for inland projects which was supported by the Port of Pittsburgh Commission, and championed by Congressman Conor Lamb, was included in the bill.

Likewise, the U.S. Senate Environment & Public Works Committee approved their America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2020, S. 3591, on May 11th which also contained changes to the cost-share ratio. Both bills now await further action by a joint House and Senate conference committee to produce a final WRDA 2020 bill for consideration by both bodies of Congress before being sent to the President.

"Investing in infrastructure is critical in helping to rebuilding our economy," said Mary Ann Bucci, our executive director. "I commend the Congress for their continued work in moving the WRDA bills forward every two years and encourage both the Congress and the White House to complete WRDA in the coming weeks."



Proposed Cost-Share Change:

The Port of Pittsburgh Commission supports changes to the current Inland Waterways Trust Fund (IWTF) cost-share for construction and rehabilitation projects. Presently, 50% of funding comes from general revenue and 50% from the IWTF. Recent WRDA bills enabled changes to the cost-share but only for certain deep port projects. WRDA 2020 proposes a 65%-35% cost share which would help inland projects to be completed in a more timely and efficient manner.



Gateway Clipper's Return to Business Sightseeing Cruise

The Gateway Clipper Fleet returned to the waters on June 5 after the first pandemic-induced shutdown of non-essential businesses. Gateway Clipper Fleet President Terry Wirginis was there to greet and welcome passengers aboard. The Fleet got back in action, and continued to extol the wonderful sights of the city of Pittsburgh, via the vessel "Three Rivers Queen" as it travelled its short trip starting in the Monongahela, through the Ohio around Point State Park, into the Allegheny, and finally back to the Station Square dock. The view included passing barge tows, which was an encouraging sign that the Port is busy and that waterway transportation has been continuing unabated. The Port of Pittsburgh Commission wishes the best to the Gateway Clipper Fleet, and to all of our river stakeholders dealing with service interruptions due to the COVID-19 outbreak.



OUR TEAM

MARY ANN BUCCI
Executive Director
mary-ann@portpitt.com

SCOTT HARSHMAN
Marketing/Program Mgr.
scott@portpitt.com

MATT PAVLOSKY
Public Relations Mgr.
matt@portpitt.com

MIKE BRINZA
Port Analyst
mike@portpitt.com

ADRIANNA WORKMAN
Administrative Assistant
adrianna@portpitt.com

