



January 4, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

The American Great Lakes Ports Association represents the public port authorities on the United States side of the Great Lakes. Each of our member port agencies is a division of state or local government, or an independent agency created by state statute. As a group, and individually, Great Lakes ports work to foster maritime commerce in the region and economic development in their communities.

We appreciate your support for Great Lakes ports and shipping. You have not only met with our members as a group, but you have also personally visited our ports and toured our facilities. As you know, shipping on the Great Lakes supports more than 147,000 U.S. jobs and is critical to industries such as steel production, mining, energy, and agriculture.

We are writing to share our concern regarding the equitable distribution of federal assistance under the Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP). Launched in FY2019, the program provides competitive grants to fund infrastructure improvements to enhance the movement of goods through the nation's ports. The program is significant in that it is the only federal program that exclusively funds port infrastructure.

On November 3, 2023, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) announced the award of \$653 million in port infrastructure development grants to 41 U.S. ports. We were dismayed to learn that only two Great Lakes ports received grants. These two projects totaled \$14.4 million - or 2% of the funds distributed. By any measure, the Great Lakes region received an inequitable share of 2023 PIDP program funding.

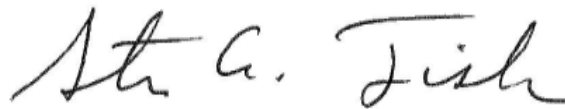
A total of nine Great Lakes ports submitted grant applications during 2023 seeking almost \$140 million in assistance. Post-award debriefings provided by the Maritime Administration indicate that many of the unfunded applications were strong, including two that made it to the final round for your consideration.

We appreciate that USDOT has limited resources and cannot fund every worthwhile grant application. However, we believe it is in the program's long-term interest that stakeholders view the process as equitable.

Our analysis of the last five years of PIDP grant awards raises further questions and indicates a strong regional imbalance in the distribution of funds. As the attached chart illustrates, the Department of Transportation has awarded East Coast and West Coast ports three times as much as Great Lakes, Gulf of Mexico, and Inland River ports. It is hard to imagine an explanation for the imbalance. Each of these regions feature robust cargo flows through diverse ports that are critical to the national economy.

As work begins on the 2024 round of PIDP funding, we urge you to prioritize regional equity in the distribution of grant funds. The program will be stronger if stakeholders and their elected officials feel that the program is fair and of benefit to their communities, states, and regions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve A. Fisher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

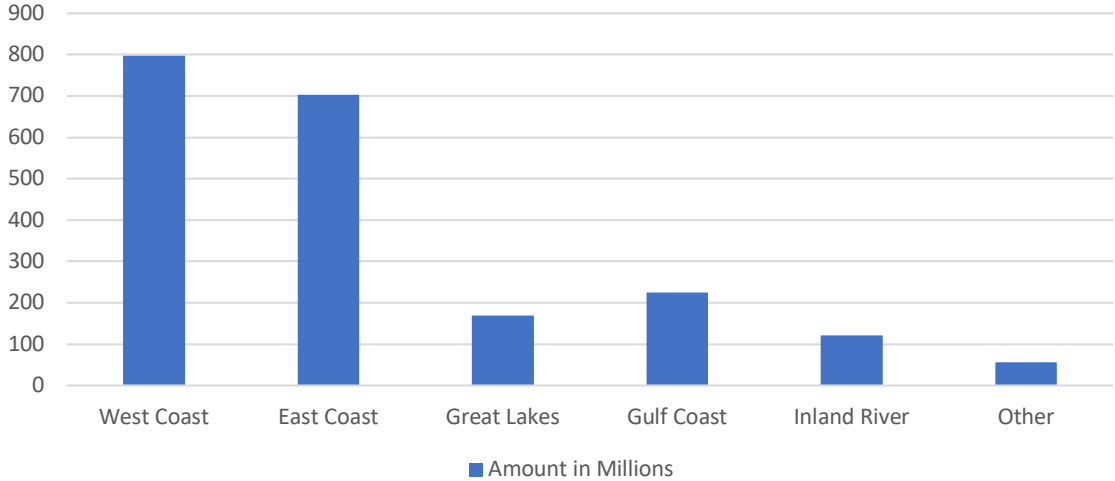
Steven A. Fisher
Executive Director

cc: Great Lakes Congressional delegation

Port Infrastructure Development Program

Grant Awards by Region

2019-2023



Notes:

West Coast includes AK & HI

Other = U.S. territories

Date Source: USDOT / PIDP Program website