

Cantwell-Backed Transportation Bill Would Help Support Key Projects in WA **Local News**

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Washington D.C. - On Wednesday, Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) voted in support of a transportation bill that would allow the Washington State Department of Transportation to support key transportation projects in the state. The bill, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (S. 1813), passed the Senate with wide bipartisan support [74 to 22](#). The House of Representatives has yet to act on a similar surface transportation reauthorization. The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act will support Washington's existing highway and transit system and help the Washington State Department of Transportation plan for new improvements like US-12 in Walla Walla, the North Spokane Corridor or SR-520 bridge replacement. **"Roads, railroads and bridges connect our state's economy to the nation and the world,"** said Cantwell.

This transportation bill will help invest in the roads, bridges and highways we use every day. The bill's freight provisions improve planning so that we can strategically invest in freight projects with the greatest potential to move freight, create jobs and help businesses grow. In a trade-dependent state like Washington, that additional focus will help create jobs and support local businesses. I now call upon the House of Representatives to move forward on a bipartisan reauthorization of our nation's highway and transit programs. The bill also included a key piece of Cantwell's FREIGHT Act that will support jobs and economic growth by creating a nationwide strategic freight plan to focus freight investments on projects that maximize economic growth. Cantwell highlighted the FREIGHT Act during recent visits to [Port of Pasco](#), [Port of Vancouver](#) and [Port of Seattle](#). Freight planning and investment have long been priorities for Washington state. Cantwell's proposal helps extend that priority to the national level. Her proposal would require the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to develop a nationwide freight strategic plan that takes all modes into account. Currently, planning to expand or improve the freight network is done in silos spread across multiple federal agencies. This results in duplication and a lack of coordination for the nation's freight network, which spans highways, railways, airports and maritime ports. Once established, the freight strategic plan would help focus freight investments across the network on the projects with the greatest capacity to support jobs and economic growth. This will help maximize taxpayer investment in the freight network. Prioritizing freight mobility improvements is especially important to Washington state, which has one of the most robust export economies in the country and relies on multiple modes of freight transportation — including highways, ports, rail, and barges — to transport goods. In 2011, Washington state exported \$64.6 billion worth of goods, which represents an increase of 21 percent over 2010. In 2010, more than 533 million tons of freight were moved in Washington — a number expected to grow by up to 86 percent by 2040. According to a 2008 DOT report, several Washington state cities already rank in the nation's top 125 freight gateways handling international merchandise by air, land and water, including Seattle, Tacoma, Vancouver, Blaine, Kalama, Anacortes, and Sumas.