

# Investing in Our Future: Infrastructure Needs in Washington



2025 UPDATE



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**The Associations of Washington Business, Washington Cities, Washington Public Ports, and Washington Counties partnered in 2019 to develop the first edition of this infrastructure report to highlight critical infrastructure needs. The Associations have come together again to present this 2025 updated report, which highlights new and continuing needs, clarifying the urgency with which partnerships, programs, and investments must be made to keep up and fulfill our promise to future generations of Washingtonians.**

# Infrastructure needs in Washington

Infrastructure provides the backbone needed to support the people who work in manufacturing, technology, agriculture, public utilities, and trade sectors. Infrastructure provides the often invisible networks that keep the water running, the lights on, the shelves stocked, and the streets and sidewalks in good condition.

Washington's climate, natural beauty, quality of life, and economic opportunity are driving migration to the state and in turn increasing the population. With more people come more opportunities, more connections, and more innovation; it also means greater needs and increasing strain on the systems that support families and employers. Washington's population is forecast to grow to 10 million people by 2050, from about 8 million today. The population will grow by 25%, but electric power demand is set to increase by 100% in the same time frame—with an increase of 30% alone in the next decade—due to increasing electrification of the transportation system, power demand from the technology industry, and sheer growth in the population and the economy.

While strides have been made in recent years to address the backlog of infrastructure needs statewide, continued and increased investment is needed to keep pace, to embrace emerging industries, and maintain our quality of life. State and federal support are crucial to keep critical systems functioning and meeting the needs of the state's evolving economy. These investments will continue to pay dividends to every family and business in Washington.

Washington **contributes more than \$800 billion to the U.S. economy annually**, but the infrastructure supporting Washington's communities and critical industries is falling behind. The scale of investment needed is substantial, but Washington is up to the challenge.

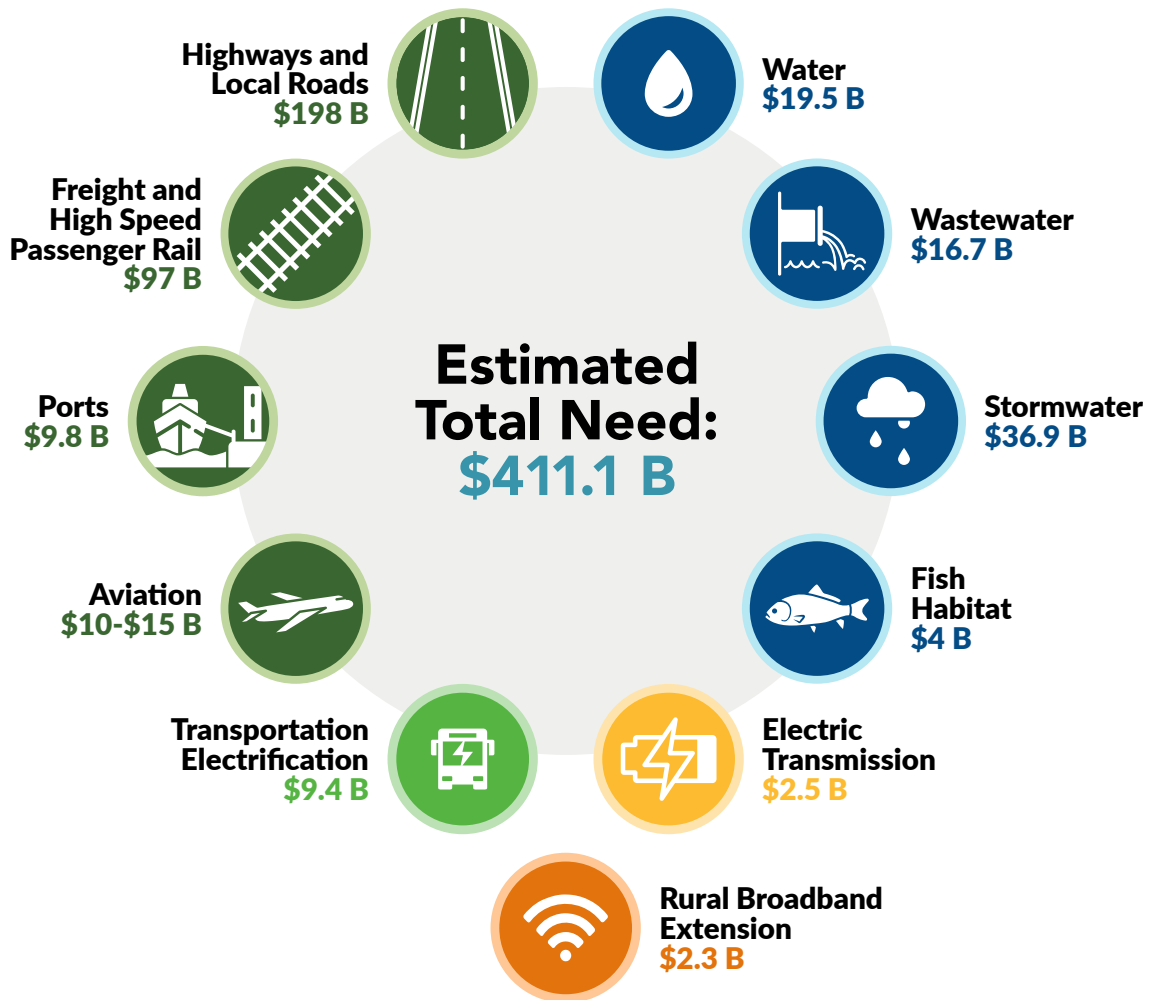


*Strong economies and livable communities are built on infrastructure. Modern infrastructure supports Washington state's vibrant communities and thriving and diverse economy; delivers clean water and affordable energy to new homes and safe sidewalks; and provides transportation to community and job centers.*

**In 2021, the White House released state-by-state fact sheets highlighting infrastructure needs: Washington state's infrastructure received a C grade. We need to take steps now to invest in our future. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) owns 585 bridges across the state in need of seismic retrofitting, with an estimated price tag of \$1.5 billion. Additionally, local governments own 740 bridges, many of which also need to be retrofitted.**

# Snapshot of needs

While much progress has been made, construction inflation and ever-increasing needs mean that continued investment is required. Needs represented here are based on publicly-available infrastructure plans and assessments. These needs estimates should be considered approximate and subject to change as new investments are made and new needs emerge over time.



Since the first infrastructure report was published in 2019, our society and economy have made it through a global pandemic along with its resulting shifts and realignments, including inflation, changes to work and travel patterns, and increased automation, among other trends. Through all this change, Washington remains a leader in sustainable and forward-looking investments to ensure a bright and resilient future for all.

Some sectors have grown thanks to state and local investments in transportation, ongoing investment in water infrastructure from existing programs, and other investments from diligent asset management programs. Some sectors—such as electricity generation and distribution—still need investment to preserve their function and support our state’s significant growth; others require new dollars to expand capacity and build out networks to deliver services to new customers.



## The benefits of infrastructure investment

Infrastructure investment is a crucial driver of economic growth and community development. Investing today in Washington infrastructure unlocks wide-ranging benefits:

**Grow domestic and international trade and exports.** By enhancing our transportation networks, modernizing our ports, and expanding our digital infrastructure, we can continue supporting growth in trade. This will ensure that Washington remains a pivotal hub for both domestic and international commerce. Enhanced infrastructure reduces logistical bottlenecks and opens up new markets for our goods and services, providing a direct boost to our economy.

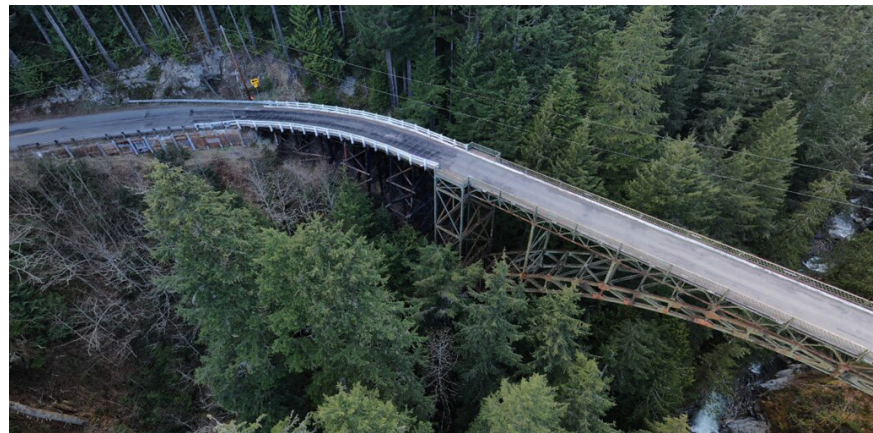


The state's multimodal freight system handles almost

**600** MILLION TONS of cargo annually,

valued at **\$677** BILLION

**Invest today to avoid costly problems later.** Investing in infrastructure now helps us avoid expensive problems in the future. Proactive maintenance and upgrades prevent deterioration that can lead to costly emergency repairs and system failures, saving taxpayer money in the long term.



### Bridge deterioration prompts closure

**Carbonado:** WSDOT was forced to close the Fairfax Bridge on SR 165 over the Carbon River Canyon to all vehicles due to the deteriorating condition of the bridge support structure. Closure of the bridge means that residents who depend on this connection are forced to take longer detours. It also disrupts access to popular hiking trails at Mt. Rainier, which bring tourists to the area who support local businesses. Across the state, bridge condition is a concern for state- and locally owned bridges. WSDOT has begun a planning study to determine whether to replace the bridge or reroute SR 165 on a new alignment; however, there is no funding currently available to replace the bridge.

## Meeting the challenge

From agriculture to aerospace, Washington is a leader in the global economy. Keeping Washington communities strong and competitive requires not just maintaining existing infrastructure but also continuing infrastructure investment to support growth. However, Washington faces emerging headwinds.

Since the 2019 version of this report was published, significant infrastructure investments have been made across the state to address aging infrastructure and build new capacity to keep up with growth. At the same time, new issues must be addressed to keep moving infrastructure forward in Washington.

**Construction costs have soared.** Construction bids are coming in higher than estimates and budgets across every sector. Cost escalation means that new dollars devoted to infrastructure at the state and federal levels often end up supporting existing projects where budgets have fallen short. As a result, more funding is required just to keep existing projects moving, let alone start new ones.

**Tight labor markets and a lack of housing result in a constrained construction workforce.** A lack of skilled construction workers contributes to an increase in project costs and delays project timelines. Washington's construction employment declined in 2024, despite no apparent decrease in construction projects or funding; not enough skilled laborers to hire is a significant issue. One national industry organization warned that the construction industry needs to bring in 450,000 additional construction workers in 2025 above and beyond normal hiring just to keep up with construction demand. Further investments in workforce training and living-wage housing will ensure Washington has enough skilled workers to deliver projects of all kinds.

*Housing is critical infrastructure too. With a widespread lack of affordable housing, there is a risk that workers and families will choose to leave the state and pursue opportunities elsewhere.*



**Emerging industries, growth markets, and the need for resiliency and sustainability mean our infrastructure must continue to evolve.** Maintaining existing streets, bridges, water and wastewater systems, ports, and the electric grid are paramount to the function of our everyday lives. However, just maintaining infrastructure is not good enough; new sources and methods for producing electric power are critical, as are investments that transition the state's transportation system to low-emission and electric power. These new areas of focus are not just challenges; they are great opportunities for Washington to lead in sustainable infrastructure that meets the needs of 21st century industries.



## Rising costs affect all sectors

**Seattle:** Construction bids on the planned replacement of the Portage Bay Bridge—a key link in the heavily traveled SR 520—came in \$700 million over the original project budget of \$1 billion. Nationwide, construction costs have escalated dramatically due to cost increases and scarcity of labor and materials. Highway construction costs increased 59% from the end of 2020 through the middle of 2023.

**Washington can build on recent momentum.** While great progress has been made, renewed focus on infrastructure investment is needed for the state to continue fueling population and economic growth. The opportunities afforded by investment are many: job creation, reduced energy costs, healthy communities, increased sustainability, and an expanded economy. While the challenges are significant, Washington has proven that it steps up to make bold investments that pay dividends for Washingtonians.



## Building a resilient transportation link

### Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) Project:

Interstate 5 is a critical connection between Oregon and Washington that supports local jobs and families. It is a vital trade route for regional, national and international economies. The twin bridges connecting Oregon and Washington are aging, vulnerable to collapse during an earthquake, and are congested for much of the day. The IBR Program includes new highway bridges, extends light rail to downtown Vancouver, and improves the walking and cycling connection across the Columbia River—while also ensuring the project does not harm vulnerable communities or the natural environment. This WSDOT project is funded in part by the Connecting Washington transportation package, which provides funding to enhance the statewide transportation system and maintain critical infrastructure as well as the Move Ahead Washington funding package, which provides \$3 billion for public transportation.



**Maintain quality of life and improve community health.** Although often unnoticed, public infrastructure provides the foundation for the high quality of life enjoyed in Washington communities. The network of streets, sidewalks, transit, and highways make it easy to travel and enable the flow of goods. Seismic upgrades for bridges, schools and community buildings will keep residents safe. Innovations in water and waste management provide clean and safe water and sanitation, while protecting the natural environment.

**Support the next generation of Washingtonians.** Supporting population and job growth is another critical benefit of robust infrastructure investment. As Washington’s population continues to rise, our infrastructure must evolve to meet increasing demands. Improved roads, public transportation, and utilities ensure that our cities and towns can accommodate the next generation comfortably and sustainably. This growth, in turn, attracts businesses and industries looking for a reliable and efficient operational base, thereby creating new jobs and strengthening our economy.

**Attract and support emerging industries.** Making Washington a go-to destination for emerging industries hinges on our commitment to state-of-the-art infrastructure. By investing in renewable energy, grid modernization and capacity, and efficient backbone infrastructure, we position ourselves as leaders in innovation. This not only fosters growth in burgeoning sectors but also ensures sustainable growth.

**Grow sustainably.** Sustainable infrastructure development, such as smart grids, efficient water and wastewater, and transportation electrification and transit, underscores our commitment to environmental stewardship. With these investments, the state balances economic growth with the imperative to protect and conserve natural resources.



## Enhancing water conservation

**City of Pasco:** The Butterfield Water Treatment Plant Improvements Project is a 20-year, multiphase project that addresses deficiencies and limitations at the almost 80-year-old plant using current treatment technologies and enhanced water conservation measures for the City of Pasco. The first phase of the project includes a new electrical building, intake screen and raw water pump station improvements, and various preconstruction- and construction-related activities. The City has been awarded \$1 million in funding from the Washington State Public Works Board to advance the project, but millions more dollars are required to construct needed improvements.

# Advancing infrastructure investment

## Supporting housing growth with public utility investments

New and revitalized infrastructure of all types is required to support the growth of urban and rural communities of all sizes. Investments in public utilities and the transportation network can improve conditions and encourage new housing construction. In Mabton (population 2,286), American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding contributed to improving the municipal water system to help spur new housing starts in a community where the population has declined in recent years.

Similarly, the City of Walla Walla partnered with Habitat for Humanity to upgrade water infrastructure needed to support new housing development. An aging water system that needed to be upgraded was an impediment to any new development on a city block. Habitat for Humanity had acquired properties on the block to build eight new homes and had available Connecting Housing to Infrastructure Program (CHIP) funding by direct legislative appropriation but needed water system upgrades to move ahead. The City's utility investment will replace a portion of the water pipe in the street, which will enable the Habitat for Humanity development and any future development in the surrounding blocks.

Port Townsend is also leveraging water and sewer upgrades to unlock affordable housing development. The City has combined a grant for sewer with CHIP funding, City Abatement funds, a Jefferson County cleanup grant, and other funding to install a force main and larger sewer line intended to benefit new affordable housing projects. This project also provides the opportunity for private homeowners and businesses to switch from septic systems and connect to public sewer systems. There are two primary affordable housing projects to be served by this work, with the potential for more developments in the future. The CHIP portion of this project has not begun at this point.

*The need to invest in Washington's backbone infrastructure cannot be overstated. By committing to sustainable and comprehensive infrastructure development, we can secure a vibrant and resilient future for all residents and businesses across the state.*



**Valley View Sewer District:** CHIP provided funding for the System Development Charges and Utilities Improvements for connecting water and sewer. The developer constructed 585 apartment units available to people at 60% Area Median Income. Developers in this area have expressed their concerns regarding the cost to construct affordable housing, partially due to the cost of upgrades to the current water and sewer systems. Valley View Sewer District took the position that system-wide improvements were not the sole responsibility of one developer, and designed the sewer improvements for this project to provide sufficient capacity for this site, while allowing for connections to be used by future sites near the light rail station.

## Investing in our infrastructure backbone

The backbone of our economy relies on critical but overlooked infrastructure elements. Often unseen, this backbone infrastructure requires continued investment to support growth and meet the needs of the 21st century economy. They are the lifelines of our communities, ensuring that residents and businesses have access to the resources they need to flourish. Moreover, when maintenance or preservation on these systems is deferred, the future cost to keep them functioning (or replace them entirely) increases substantially.

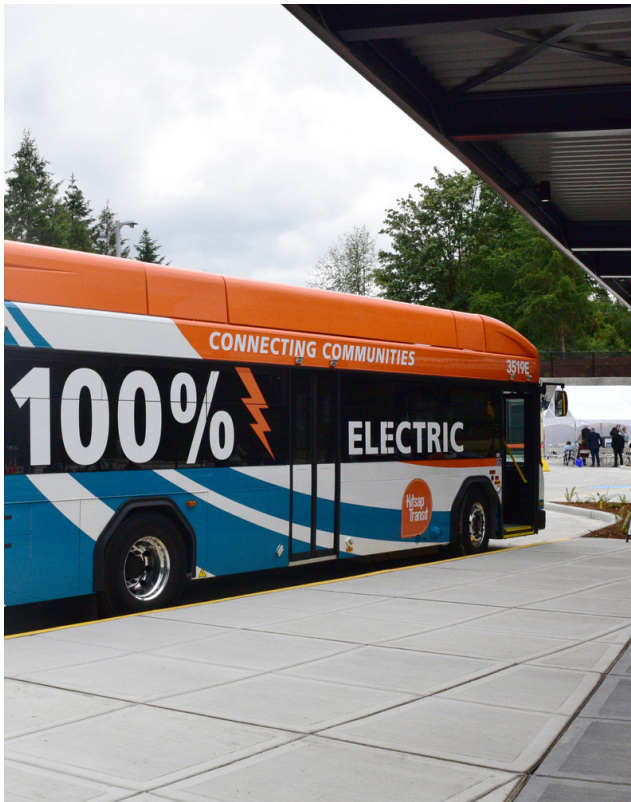


*Investments in water and wastewater systems, irrigation, electric transmission, pavement preservation, and telecommunications infrastructure are all essential—they don't always get top billing in infrastructure investment discussions, but these critical systems are foundational to everyday life.*

### Water system upgrades open the door to new housing

**Town of Oakesdale, WA:** The Town of Oakesdale has plans to construct numerous improvements to the water system, and sought \$2.5 million in Washington State Public Works Board funding, but was denied due to a lack of available funds. Desired projects include installing a new water main pipe and services on three major streets to replace WWII-era surplus pipe; removing the existing lead pipe components; and complying with the State's Water Use Efficiency Rule to address water system leakage well above targets.





## Leading on sustainability

Washington stands as a leader of innovation, at the forefront of efforts to build a sustainable future with investments in transportation electrification, renewable energy, and environmentally friendly construction. These projects not only reduce our carbon footprint and improve air quality, but create jobs and foster economic growth. And with the Climate Commitment Act, signed into law in 2021, Washington is on the path to a 95% reduction in statewide carbon emissions by 2050.

As we experience rapid population growth and increased demand for resources, it is vital to invest in sustainable and resilient systems that underlie and support urban and rural communities across Washington. We must continue to prioritize sustainable infrastructure investment for Washington to continue to thrive economically, to meet the challenges of a changing climate, and to maintain our natural beauty and quality of life.



## Defense sector: a critical player in the statewide economy

National defense continues to be a major factor in the statewide economy. As of 2022, there were 95,000 active duty, civilian, and reserve defense personnel in Washington, and the state received \$14.6 billion in defense spending that year. There are six active duty military installations in the state, including Joint Base Lewis-McChord, which is the largest joint base west of the Rocky Mountains. That spending ripples through the economy, with approximately 2,000 businesses supporting the defense sector in Washington and nearly \$30 billion in economic impact. The defense sector relies on a strong infrastructure backbone to function, making the state's highways, roads, rail, and ports critical not just to the economy, but to national defense as well.

## A snapshot of progress

In recent years, Washington State, local governments and the federal government have made substantial investments in infrastructure, spending responsibly to fund critical needs. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) brought nearly \$9 billion to 600+ Washington projects as of 2024, with more to come. Of that nearly \$9 billion, \$5.7 billion has been devoted to road, highway, port, aviation, and transit projects while hundreds of millions of dollars have been dedicated to water infrastructure, broadband internet, and telecommunications. Additionally, Congress passed the ARPA in 2021, which has provided billions of dollars to support state and local government needs that skyrocketed during the worst of the pandemic, as well as dollars to support infrastructure.

Washington State has similarly made strides with recent commitments to transportation, including the future replacement of the Portage Bay Bridge, a critical link on SR 520, and replacing the Interstate Bridge on I-5 in Vancouver on the Columbia River.

These investments have led to meaningful progress in addressing Washington's substantial infrastructure needs and will make a real difference in communities across the state today. The benefits of additional investment are illustrated by these snapshots of how the BIL, ARPA, and state and local dollars are supporting communities and growth.



*The following pages showcase examples of some standout project achievements from across the state and across sectors.*



### Supporting transportation and trade

**US 12, Walla Walla to Tri-Cities – WSDOT:** For 20 years, a coalition including Walla Walla County, WSDOT, the City and Port of Walla Walla, and business partners have worked to advance upgrading US 12 from a rural two-lane road to a four-lane highway. As population and commerce have grown, so too has the need for a safe connection between Walla Walla and the Tri-Cities that serves the mobility needs of local and regional traffic. While significant work has been completed, an approximately 10-mile-long gap remains. The construction cost is estimated at \$280 million to complete this project that is critical to regional economic development, safety, and everyday mobility. In January 2025, Walla Walla County received \$108.5 million to complete the final phase. This investment will open up major industrial development, where multiple business are already in agreement with the Port of Walla Walla to invest nearly \$9 billion at the Wallula Gap Industrial Park.

## Community-led investments prioritize housing, safety, small businesses

**Vancouver:** ARPA funds are supporting a range of important investments in the community along Fourth Plain Boulevard, a major arterial in Vancouver that's home to thousands of people, many of whom earn incomes below poverty thresholds. Over 30 languages are spoken, and dozens of small businesses line the corridor. The Fourth Plain for All program will invest nearly \$10 million in ARPA funds into education, economic development, housing, public health, and transportation improvements that address long-standing needs. The funding supports services such as tutoring in local schools, small business improvement grants, and local affordable housing.





**281**  
cities

**39**  
counties

**75**  
port  
districts

that own, maintain, and improve most of the day-to-day infrastructure that supports the economy.



### Connecting everyone to broadband

**Point Roberts:** Washington has received \$1.6 billion to connect everyone in the state with broadband internet. The BIL provided \$11 million to Whidbey Telephone Company for the construction of 100+ miles of new underground and undersea fiber optic cable to support broadband and telecommunications connectivity in Point Roberts. This investment will provide reliable internet to support people and businesses.



### Keeping water systems flowing

**Sumner and Bonney Lake:** The Biosolids Wastewater Modernization Project will replace aging equipment with new updates that meet requirements to improve safety, energy efficiency, air quality, and reliability. These new systems reduce the facility's risk of failure and carbon footprint while increasing reliability and safety for the surrounding area, the Puyallup River watershed, and Puget Sound. The project is currently in final design. The project cost is estimated at \$16.5 million.

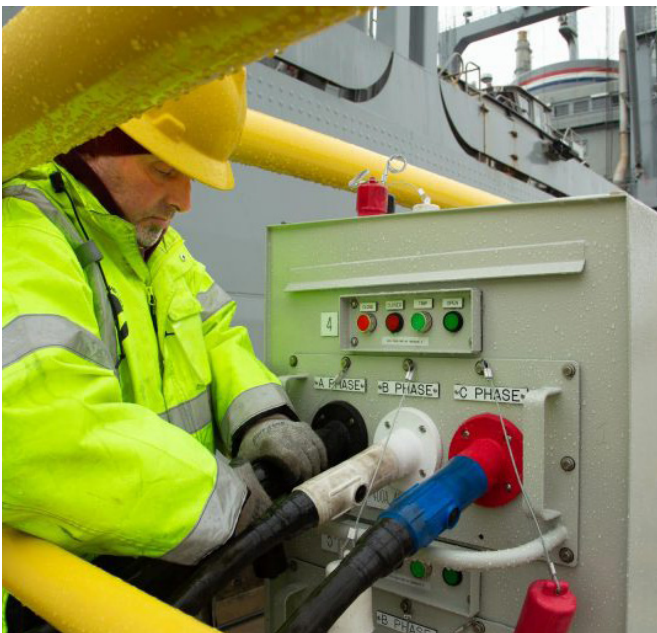


## Advancing port electrification

**Port Decarbonization Projects – WSDOT and Partners:** Washington is leading the way in creating the nation’s most sustainable maritime industry by 2050. In 2024, WSDOT invested \$26.5 million from the 2023–25 budget to fund 11 port decarbonization projects statewide. These projects collectively plan to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by more than 140,000 metric tons over the next 10 years. At the same time, major proposals through EPA’s Clean Ports Program highlight the growing need for continued state and federal investment in clean energy infrastructure at Washington’s largest container and cargo ports.



**Port of Anacortes:** The Port of Anacortes and private-sector partners secured over \$65 million in federal grants through EPA’s Clean Ports Program. This transformative investment supports clean air programs, zero-emissions equipment, and electrification efforts—delivering economic and environmental benefits for Anacortes and the greater region. The Port is also leading a community engagement effort to ensure these projects reflect local values, expand workforce opportunities, and advance sustainability while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.



**Port of Vancouver:** The Port of Vancouver USA was awarded a \$22.5 million grant from EPA’s Clean Ports Program, with an additional \$2.5 million contributed by the Port. This investment accelerates implementation of the Port’s Climate Action Plan by deploying two zero-emissions mobile harbor cranes, installing equipment charging infrastructure, and adding shore power at Terminal 1 to reduce vessel emissions. These technologies will expand cargo handling capabilities, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and improve air quality for neighboring communities. Building on progress since 2021, this milestone demonstrates the Port’s commitment to clean energy, sustainability, and healthier outcomes for the Vancouver community and beyond.



## Strengthening a community anchor on Washington's coast

**Westport Marina Modernization Project – Port of Grays Harbor:** The Westport Marina is the heart of Washington's coastal fishing community. It is where tribal, commercial, charter, and recreational fishers come together, supporting nearly 2,700 local jobs and \$227 million in business revenue, and anchoring the culture and economy of rural Southwest Washington. Each year, more than \$50 million in seafood landings flow through the Marina, sustaining families, small businesses, and community traditions. After years of input from planners, fishers, and residents, the Port of Grays Harbor is moving forward with replacement of Float 15, a critical piece of infrastructure serving the Marina's largest commercial fishing vessels. This modernization project will deliver expanded and reconfigured slips, upgraded shore power, and resilient infrastructure to meet the needs of today's working fleet—improvements that protect livelihoods, strengthen the working waterfront, and ensure the Marina remains a vibrant gathering place for generations to come.



## Innovations in water treatment for agricultural processing

**Pasco:** The water used to process fruit, vegetable, and dairy products from seven major processing facilities in Pasco is now sent to the specialized city-owned Process Water Reuse Facility to be treated and repurposed. With the help of multiple state and federal grants totaling over \$54 million, the facility expansion was completed in early 2025. The state-of-the-art facility is able to provide advanced wastewater treatment, in combination with nutrient recovery and energy production, transforming wastewater from food processing into valuable resources.



## Completed Terminal 5 port upgrades expand capacity and economic opportunity

**Seattle:** The multiyear effort by the Northwest Seaport Alliance to modernize Terminal 5 at the Port of Seattle means the port can now handle cargo from the world's largest ships. Four new cranes have nearly 200 feet reach to load and unload ultralarge container ships. As part of the upgrades, the terminal now has expanded acreage of storage capacity, which increases economic opportunities for Washington communities and businesses, as well as increasing employment opportunities both at the port and across industries that benefit from the added capacity.

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## Building on momentum

Recent federal and state investments have resulted in meaningful improvements to the state's infrastructure. New and emerging markets, policies, and ideas—from the drive toward electrification, to the advent of artificial intelligence (AI) software creating new demands for power, to ever-increasing freight on our state highways—have created new needs on top of existing demands just to keep the system up and running. While gains have been made, doubling down on infrastructure will result in major rewards in the near and long term. Without sustained investment, Washington risks falling behind—or worse—not realizing the diversity of opportunities that have emerged in the last few years.



*The state has proven it can and will make infrastructure a priority, and it must do so with renewed vigor to address the challenges of today's economy.*

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## Construction, Freight, Kids walking on sidewalk, Kids drinking water

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## Cover Image (Arthur Ross)

<https://www.arthurrossphoto.com/>