
LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

SEPTEMBER 2021



Senate Passes \$1.2 Trillion Infrastructure Package; Includes Support for Ports and Ferry Services

On August 10, the U.S. Senate passed the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure package that reauthorizes existing transportation programs and provides new spending for roads, bridges, electric vehicles, broadband, water infrastructure, and grid resilience, among other priorities. Within the mammoth legislation, billions of dollars will be invested in port and ferry services including: 1) \$1 billion (over five years) for ferry service in rural areas (a portion is expected to support the Alaska Marine Highway System); 2) \$337 million for the “Construction of Ferry Boats and Terminal Facilities Program” under the Federal Transit Administration; 3) \$250 million for the establishment of a Department of Transportation pilot program to provide grants for the purchase of electric or low-emission ferries; and 4) \$2.25 billion for the Maritime Administration’s Port Infrastructure Development Program, among other critical investments. This bill represents one of the largest single federal investments in our nation’s infrastructure that will address longstanding shortfalls in our transportation system. The Senate approved the bipartisan bill by a 69-30 vote and the House is expected to take up the legislation before the end of September.

Bill Introduced to Expand MarAd Federal Ship Financing Program

On August 26, Congressman John Garamendi (D-CA) introduced H.R. 5114, a bill to expand the Maritime Administration’s (Title XI) Federal Ship Financing Program to include repairs (corrective or preventative maintenance) or re-flagging work at US-based shipyards, including for commercial vessels participating in the various joint DOD-MarAd vessel security programs or to convert a commercial vessel to a more useful military configuration to carry out federal contracts. Under the legislation, eligible participants would include vessels under the Maritime Security Program, the Cable Security Fleet, and the newly authorized Tanker Security Program (pending congressional appropriations). The legislation expands on previous efforts to support “Buy America” initiatives previously signed into law and touted by the Biden Administration. In recent remarks on the House floor, Congressman Garamendi stated: “American shipyards are ready, willing, and able to take on this additional work. Expanding MarAd’s Title XI loan guarantee program to support that work means more well-paying jobs for American workers and better maintained vessels flagged in the United States, useful for military and commercial purposes.”
