



FREIGHT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Amended November 20, 2025

605 W. 1st Street, Warden, WA
Telephone: 509-349-2480
Email: portofwarden@ifiber.tv
Website: portofwarden.com

Table of Contents

1	INTRODUCTION.....	2
2	REGULATORY COMPLIANCE AND PLANNING PROCESS.....	2
3	FREIGHT HISTORY AND CONTEXT	3
4	FREIGHT AND ROADWAY INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS AND PRIORITIES.....	4
4.1	Rail Infrastructure Expansion	4
4.2	Connell Rail Interchange Improvements	5
4.3	Truck Access/Bypass road project.....	5
4.4	Land Acquisition for Future Rail & Industrial Development.....	5
5	CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND FUNDING STRATEGY	5
5.1	Funding Sources	6
6	IMPLEMENTATION AND NEXT STEPS.....	7

1 INTRODUCTION

Rail infrastructure plays a vital role in boosting the Port's capacity to achieve business and economic development objectives, as well as ensuring efficient transportation. Through maintenance and expansion of rail services, as appropriate, the Port can advance reliable and cost-effective transportation that helps local industries attract more businesses, facilitate the movement of goods, and reduce transportation costs.

Despite existing rail infrastructure in Warden, rail service is a historically underutilized resource for redevelopment potential in Warden. The Port continues to work in tandem with the Columbia Basin Railroad Company, LLC and adjacent counties to identify opportunities for rail use expansion that will support continued industrial development throughout Port boundaries.

2 REGULATORY COMPLIANCE AND PLANNING PROCESS

Pursuant to RCW 53.20.055, any port district may adopt and amend a Freight Development Plan as an amendment to the Port's Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements. The purpose of the Port of Warden (the Port) Freight Development Plan is to broadly define the Port's freight priorities and highlight existing railroad infrastructure, ongoing rail capital improvement plan projects, and future rail projects and priorities.

In accordance with RCW 53.20.020 and RCW 53.20.055, the Port held a public meeting to discuss the adoption of this Freight Development Plan as an amendment to the Port's Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements on June 5, 2025. The public was notified of this meeting on May 17, 2025 and will be notified of any subsequent meetings regarding amendments to the Freight Development Plan via a local newspaper for at least 10 days prior to the meeting. The Port will utilize public meetings to record public input on the Freight Development Plan and incorporate feedback. Additionally, in accordance with RCW 53.20.055, the Port distributed its Freight Development Plan to the Quad County Regional Transportation Planning Organization (QUADCO), the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Rail, Freight, and Ports Division, the Washington State Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board, and nearby cities and counties' planning divisions. This distribution aims to better coordinate the development and funding of freight mobility projects, ensuring regional freight priorities are reflected in broader transportation planning efforts.

QUADCO encompasses the cities and towns within Adams, Grant, Kittitas, and Lincoln counties. QUADCO regularly updates its Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), which outlines transportation improvement needs, challenges and opportunities, and future trends and growth patterns that will impact the transportation system. By sharing its Freight Development Plan with QUADCO, the Port seeks to coordinate freight and transportation planning efforts with the four counties comprising the QUADCO. The goals and objectives for the Quad-County RTP, as amended in 2016, address safety, preservation, economic vitality, mobility, environment, and stewardship.

The WSDOT Rail, Freight, and Ports Division regularly updates its Washington State Rail Plan, which provides a framework for future rail system actions that meet federal and state requirements. WSDOT also annually updates the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), a four-year prioritized multimodal transportation program compiled of state, local, tribal, and public transportation projects.

The Washington State Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB) was created by the Washington State Legislature in 1988. The Board is tasked with creating a comprehensive and coordinated state program to facilitate freight movement between and among local, national, and international markets, which enhances trade opportunities. FMSIB biannually updates a Six-Year Investment Program to identify priority freight mobility projects across the state that reduce the effects of freight movement on local communities. Projects recommended for funding are reviewed by the FMSIB Board and approved by the Legislature.

The City of Warden's Planning & Inspections Department prepares the Six Year Transportation Improvement Plan, of which the most recent (2025-2030) was approved by City Council on July 9, 2024. Grant County's Planning Division oversees the development of the County's land use regulations. This includes the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (2018), which in accordance with the Washington Growth Management Act, addresses transportation needs in the County over a 20-year period by considering the location and condition of existing traffic, projecting transportation needs, and planning for future transportation needs, and including a multi-year financing plan to fund the needed improvements. The County Six Year Transportation Improvement Program funds near-term capital improvements and is updated annually. The Transportation Improvement Program is coordinated with other jurisdictions, including the Port through QUADCO.

3 FREIGHT HISTORY AND CONTEXT

Russian-German immigrants homesteaded the Warden area prior to the turn of the 20th century. In the early 1900s, construction of the Milwaukee Railroad through Warden attracted early settlers, including Doc Harris, the first civic resident of Warden. Doc Harris influenced the town to be named after his son, Ward. Around 1905, Doc Harris established his Drugs and Sundries store, along with physician services. This coincided with the establishment of railroad camps to support the construction of the Milwaukee Railroad, laying the groundwork for Warden's official incorporation in 1910 (see more historical context in the Port's Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements).

The Milwaukee Railroad operated in Washington State up until 1980. Since 1986, the Columbia Basin Railroad (CBRR) has operated using segments of the former Milwaukee Railroad tracks. The CBRR is a locally owned and operated short-line railroad headquartered in Yakima, Washington. The Columbia Basin Railroad Operations and Maintenance Center is in Warden. CBRR Interchanges freight rail traffic with the BNSF Railway in Connell. In August of 2025, Jaguar Transport Holdings, LLC acquired Columbia Basin Railroad, now known as Columbia Basin Railroad Company, LLC.

The Port of Warden is centrally located on the Columbia Basin Railroad Company, LLC line and is near Interstate 90 in the heart of a multi-state region. The "ability to bring Unit Trains into Warden on the CBRR to service companies is establishing the Port of Warden as a key location in Eastern Washington to

handle freight and significantly promotes economic development with low-cost bulk shipping to and from Warden.”

Recently, a Unit Train Facility was developed at the Port of Warden resulting from a cooperative effort between Pacific Coast Canola/Viterra USA, LLC (now known as Bunge USA, LLC as of August 21, 2025); Columbia Basin Railroad Company, LLC; BNSF Railway; and the Port of Warden. To accommodate the 110 car unit trains, Viterra USA constructed approximately 3,350 feet of new track, in addition to leasing significant existing track from the Columbia Basin Railroad Company, LLC.

4 FREIGHT AND ROADWAY INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

4.1 RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE EXPANSION

In 2017, the Port launched a Rail Infrastructure Expansion project to increase rail service capacity by constructing new facilities for inbound and outbound bulk shipments. The expansion is designed to boost capacity and enhance service for bulk shipments, strengthening infrastructure for future industrial growth. The Port has completed Phase I of the project and will commence Phase II pending funding.

The Port completed the first phase (Phase I) of a rail infrastructure expansion that is usable, as constructed, for a future manifest rail shipper or expanded in future potential phase(s) to support construction of a linear configuration shuttle (bulk unit train) facility. The future loading/unloading location for the linear shuttle is situated on Port-owned property and is positioned to accommodate necessary infrastructure and operations. Phase I, along with potential supplemental infrastructure improvements, provides essential rail service capacity to serve future industrial rail shipping clients.

The proposed linear shuttle project envisions the construction of additional facilities to accommodate 110 rail cars up to 62 feet in length, with four typical modern high horsepower road locomotives. The total train length will be 7, 120 feet. Total future clear length of Track A is approximately 8,175 feet. The potential proposed infrastructure will be designed to comply with the BNSF Design Guidelines for Industrial Track Projects (May 2017) and Agricultural Products Unit Train Facility Design Guidelines (December 2014).

In May 2016, the Port entered into an agreement with Washington State and subsequently applied for a \$2,000,000 grant from the Washington State Legislature to fund the Rail Infrastructure Expansion project. The Legislature approved an initial appropriation of \$250,000, with a non-binding intent to approve future appropriations until the full project cost is funded.

Subsequent phases of project construction being built by CBRR would extend Phase I by approximately 1,260 feet to the south and 4,400 feet to the north. The total project build-out would occupy around 12 acres of Port-owned property, along with a small amount of land within the CBRR right-of-way.

4.2 CONNELL RAIL INTERCHANGE IMPROVEMENTS

The Port of Warden and the CBRR are the lead agencies responsible for the Connell Rail Interchange project, in partnership with the City of Connell, WSDOT, BNSF, and the ports of Moses Lake, Warden, Othello, Royal Slope, and Pasco. The Connell Rail Interchange project aims to accommodate growth in regional rail traffic demand. The project will expand the Connell Rail Interchange, enhance the existing facility, and accommodate more traffic benefiting Warden and the Port of Warden.

In 2015, a \$50,000 Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB) grant from the Washington Department of Commerce kick-started a planning study for a new rail Interchange. Matching funds came from the City of Connell, BNSF, CBRW, Port of Pasco, Port of Moses Lake, Port of Othello, Port of Warden, Port of Royal Slope, Adams County Economic Development Council, Grant County Economic Development Council, and the Tri-City Development Council. The City of Connell selected a design from the planning study for the new rail Interchange that would cost approximately \$24 million. Ultimately, the Connell Rail Interchange project was projected to cost a total of \$19 million.

As of 2024, the coalition responsible for the Connell Rail Interchange project has secured the \$19 million required for the project. This includes \$10 million in funding already appropriated by the legislature in 2015, plus an additional \$5 million in the 2023 legislative session and an additional \$4 million in the 2024 legislative session. The City of Connell secured \$10 million in state funding through the Connecting WA Transportation funding package helping this project to move forward. Since 2015, the City of Connell has spent \$500,000 on design and engineering services.

4.3 TRUCK ACCESS/BYPASS ROAD PROJECT

The Port of Warden received \$5,000,000 in 2023 and 2024 to support the construction of an access/bypass road from Washington SR 170 to Port-owned industrial-zoned properties in southwest Warden. In addition to helping manage the increasing growth in freight from industrial, food processing, and agricultural shippers, this project will enable trucks to bypass disadvantaged residential neighborhoods and attract economic and employment prospects to the Warden community. The Port received \$2,500,000 in Congressionally Directed Spending in FY2023 to fund Phase I of the project and an additional \$2,500,000 in Congressionally Directed Spending in FY2024 to fund Phase II.

4.4 LAND ACQUISITION FOR FUTURE RAIL AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Port of Warden is exploring the purchase of additional properties to accommodate the Port District's proposed rail infrastructure expansion improvements and to increase its inventory of available land for future industrial rail service development.

5 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND FUNDING STRATEGY

The 2024 Capital Improvement Plan identifies three priority rail projects and one priority roadway project. Each with estimated costs and funding sources.

- **Long-term Priority:** Phase II Linear Shuttle Project (\$3M, grant-dependent)
- **Mid-term Priority:** Land Acquisition (\$600K, Port funds)
- **Mid-term Priority:** Rail Expansion Phase I Rehabilitation (\$250K, Port/Tenant)
- **Short-term Priority:** Truck Access/Bypass Road Construction (\$5M, Federal)

5.1 FUNDING SOURCES

The Port plans to utilize multiple streams of funding, including, but not limited to, Port funds and tenant contributions, state grants, and federal funding and economic development grants (See Table 1). The Port will continue to seek additional funding to advance these projects, all of which remain unfunded apart from the Connell Rail Interchange Improvement Project and the Truck Access and Bypass Road Project, which have secured funding. This section, including Table 1, will be updated annually with the Port’s Capital Improvement Plan.

Table 1. Rail Capital Improvement Plan Projects:

Project	Priority	Est. Start Date	Est. Completion Date	Est. Cost to Port	Anticipated Funding Source	Current Status
Rail Infrastructure Expansion – Phase II Linear Shuttle Project	Long-term	2030	No End Date	\$3,000,000	Grants	Unfunded
Rail Infrastructure Expansion – Phase I Rehabilitation & Maintenance	Mid-term	2024	2034	\$250,000	Port Funds Tenant	Unfunded
Land Acquisition for Future Rail & IDD Development	Mid-term	2025	2030	\$600,000	Port Funds	Unfunded
Road Infrastructure Improvement & Expansion	Short-term	2023	2030	\$2,500,000	Federal	Funded
Truck Access and Bypass Road Project	Short-term	2024	2031	\$2,500,000	Federal	Funded

6 IMPLEMENTATION AND NEXT STEPS

The Port will continue to monitor and update the Freight Development Plan in accordance with RCW 53.20. The Port will update the Freight Development Plan every five years or as necessary.