

April 18, 2023

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



Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I am writing to express support for the Portland Harbor Dredge and CAD Cell Project.


The economic activity and value of the Portland and South Portland working waterfronts continue to be threatened by the lack of adequate berthing for our vessels. Due to over seven decades of environmental contamination in the harbor, it is economically infeasible for individual businesses to conduct the required maintenance dredging without assistance. As a result, much of our berthing space is accessible for only a few hours on either side of high tide and is not accessible for most of the day. The longer the harbor goes without adequate maintenance dredging, the greater the likelihood that small businesses along the harbor will face critical, insurmountable hardships. Unlike other small businesses, it is not possible for us to simply rent another storefront and move a water-based business to another part of the city.

The cities, along with the Portland Harbor Commission and the Maine Department of Transportation, have been working hand in hand with the affected communities to complete this project for a number of years. Once the project is underway, it is our plan to invest in the refurbishment and enhancement of our existing pier infrastructure and expand our pier infrastructure. The improvements businesses will make as a result of the completion of this project will not only improve how the piers function but will increase their value and the value of landside properties as well. Without an avenue to bring the harbor into a state of good repair, we cannot secure the funding to improve our pier infrastructure.

This project has obtained approval from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the project sponsors, the community at large, and our private business owners are all supportive of the work and are prepared to support the project financially. All but this last tranche of funding has been allocated, and only needs the federal match for this essential project to take place.

Portland Harbor is a critical economic hub for the State of Maine and greater New England. However, it is impossible for our long-standing and successful small businesses to continue without the harbor being brought into a state of good repair. We respectfully request that you favorably consider and approve this project that is critical to the men, women, and families who rely on the working waterfront.

Sincerely,


Robert Connolly
President
International Longshoremen's Association
Local 861
Portland Maine