

**U.S. Department of Transportation**  
**Maritime Administration**  
**Finding of No Significant Impact**  
**for the Port of Longview**  
**Industrial Rail Corridor Expansion Project**  
**Longview, Cowlitz County, Washington**

This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and the accompanying Environmental Assessment (EA) are submitted pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with the administrative procedures under 42 United States Code § 4332(2).

The Maritime Administration (MARAD) has determined that this project, for which the alternative summarized in this document and more fully described in the NEPA EA has been selected, will have no significant effect on the human or natural environment, individually or cumulatively, under normal conditions.

This FONSI is based on the NEPA EA for the Port of Longview's (Port's) Industrial Rail Corridor Expansion (IRCE) Project (Project). Both this FONSI and the EA were prepared in accordance with the Council of Environmental Quality's 2020 Regulations for Implementing NEPA regulations under 40 CFR § 1500-1508 (as amended 2020). As required by 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 771.119, the EA was posted on the Port's website at <https://www.portoflongview.com/211/Permitting> on July 21, 2023, for a 30-day notice of availability (NOA) period ending August 20, 2023. Comments received during the NOA period were addressed in Sections 3.11.1, 3.11.2, and 5 of the EA.

## **Introduction**

The IRCE Project is located at the Port in Longview, Cowlitz County, Washington. The Project involves expanding the Port's existing two-track Industrial Rail Corridor (IRC) to provide improved rail service between their marine terminals on the Columbia River and a Class I mainline railroad that runs between Seattle, Washington, and Portland, Oregon.

The Port received Federal funding to implement the Project. As a result, review under NEPA is required. Federal funding awarded to the Port for the Project includes a U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) grant under the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) program, congressionally directed Fiscal Year 2022 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) program funds, and a USDOT Federal Highway Administration grant under the National Highway Freight Program (NHFP). The RAISE and NHFP grants are being administered by MARAD and will be used to fund Project engineering design and construction. The CRISI grant is being administered by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and will be used solely for property acquisition to support the Project. MARAD is the Lead Federal Agency for the oversight of the NEPA process on the Project. FRA is a cooperating agency in the development of the EA

because it is providing Federal funding for the Project and has special expertise in rail-related projects. FRA is adopting the EA and incorporating it by reference through the issuance of its own FONSI.

## Project Description

The selected alternative for the Project includes construction of a six-track rail embankment adjacent to the current two-track IRC, lengthening the existing two IRC tracks by 1,000 feet for a total of 8,500 feet, and constructing two new 8,500-foot rail tracks.<sup>1</sup> A detailed description of the Project, including the Port's purpose and need for the Project, is provided in Section 1 of the EA. A discussion of the considered alternatives is provided in Section 2 of the EA.

## Determination and Finding Under NEPA

Based on the information provided in the EA and supporting technical reports and resources, the Project would have no significant impacts on the natural or built environment. The potential effects of the Project range from no impact to moderate temporary and permanent impacts, with most of those effects occurring during project construction.

Construction of the Project will have no adverse impacts on Wild and Scenic Rivers, Section 4(f) resources, public services, traffic and safety, cultural and historic resources, or species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Minor construction impacts are expected to occur on land use, air quality, climate change, geology and geologic hazards, water quality, vegetation communities, wildlife species and habitats, migratory birds, floodplains, hazardous materials, noise and vibration, and environmental justice communities. The majority of those impacts are short term and will end once the construction phase is complete. Minor cumulative impacts are also expected on air quality and greenhouse gas emissions from the future build-out of the additional tracks in the expanded alignment.

Construction of the Project will require the removal of an existing, active bald eagle nest and nest tree, which will require an Eagle Nest Take Permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.<sup>2</sup> Compensation for those impacts will be mitigated

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<sup>1</sup> Under the Project, the existing two-track IRC would be expanded to include a total of four tracks: two lengthened existing tracks and two new tracks. However, the completed embankment will include sufficient capacity to support four additional tracks to be constructed in the future under a separate project(s) in response to future customer growth and redevelopment of Port assets. With those additional tracks, the rail corridor between the Port and the Class I mainline railroad would support a total of eight tracks.

<sup>2</sup> The Port applied for and has received an Eagle Nest Take Permit from USFWS. That permit (Permit No. MBPER2718585) was issued on June 13, 2023, and is valid until December 31, 2024. The Port is proposing to remove the nest tree before November 30, 2023. The Port has purchased mitigation credits from the Eagle ILF Program to compensate for impacts related to the eagle nest and nest tree removal.

via the USFWS's Bald and Golden Eagle Electrocution Prevention In-Lieu Fee Program (Eagle ILF Program).<sup>3</sup>

Construction of the Project will result in moderate temporary and permanent impacts on wetlands and other waters, including 1.12 acres of temporary wetland impacts, 15.64 acres of permanent wetland impacts, 0.13 acre of temporary open water impacts, and 11.54 acres of permanent open-water impacts. Approximately 0.27 acre of permanent impacts on non-Federal jurisdictional wetlands regulated by the Washington State Department of Ecology will also occur. Temporary impacts on wetlands and other waters will result from excavation and temporary fill placement during drainage ditch and utility relocation/reconstruction work; permanent impacts will occur as the result of placing fill material to construct the full embankment. Temporary wetland impacts will be mitigated via restoration in place. Permanent wetland impacts will be mitigated through the use of advance compensatory mitigation credits available at the Port's Willow Grove Advance Wetland Mitigation Site (WGAWM Site) on the Columbia River, approximately 7 miles downstream of the Project site.

Impacts from operation of the Project were also determined to be minor and include some potential beneficial effects as a result of the proposed improvements to the Port's rail system. Potential beneficial impacts include a decrease in impacts on air quality and climate change from decreased greenhouse gas emissions generated by idling locomotives and switching engines; a reduction of rail traffic congestion and improvement of operational efficiency within the Port's industrial rail system; reduction in the frequency of train movements across local, at-grade rail crossings; and provision of safer and improved access for rail crew shuttles, maintenance equipment, and emergency services vehicles. There may be a decrease in operational noise and vibration levels because the need to break down and reassemble unit trains is expected to decrease with implementation of Project.

## Determination and Findings Under Other Laws

The NEPA analysis findings for the Project determined that there would be no significant impact from the Project under the following laws. The EA sections where these laws are addressed are noted in parentheses:

- Section 106 of the National Historical Preservation Act (Section 3.13)
- Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Section 3.12)
- Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (Section 3.2)
- Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (Section 3.9)
- Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (Section 3.7)
- Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management (Section 3.8)

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<sup>3</sup> The Eagle ILF Program offsets eagle and eagle nest incidental take actions by retrofitting existing power poles in USFWS Eagle Management Units to reduce eagle electrocution potential.

- Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations (Section 3.19)

## Mitigation Measures and Permits

The Port is proposing mitigation for resources where the Project was identified as having a greater than minor, short-term impact. As noted in previous sections of this FONSI, the Port is proposing to provide compensatory mitigation for unavoidable impacts on wetlands and other waters via the use of credits from the WGAWM Site and has purchased mitigation credits from the USFWS Eagle ILF Program to compensate for removal of the active bald eagle nest and next tree. Other mitigation measures will also be implemented for Project impacts on land use, climate change, floodplains, water quality, vegetation, wildlife (cavity nesting birds/waterfowl), Endangered Species Act-listed species, and cultural resources. These measures are documented under each resource in Section 3 of the EA.

Additional mitigation measures may also be required for compliance with applicable Federal, state, and local permitting requirements during implementation of the Project. A list of the permits required to construct and operate the Project is provided in Appendix B of the EA.

## Conclusion

MARAD has determined that the IRCE Project will have no significant effect on the human or natural environment, individually or cumulatively, under normal conditions. The Project is located at the Port of Longview in the City of Longview, Cowlitz County, Washington and involves expanding an existing two-track industrial rail corridor. The purpose of the proposed expansion is to improve rail connectivity between the Port's marine facilities and the Class I mainline railroad to alleviate capacity constraints on the Port's current rail system, provide adequate and efficient rail service to support rail demands of the Port's current tenants and customers, and prepare for projected growth at the Port and in the surrounding areas.

MARAD has determined that the EA adequately and accurately discusses the environmental issues and effects of the Project and specifies appropriate mitigation measures and standard conditions of approval in order to minimize environmental effects. Therefore, a FONSI is warranted, and preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (Public Law 91-190), is not required.



10/24/2023

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Erin Kendle  
Office of Environmental Compliance Reviewer  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
Maritime Administration

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Date



10/31/23

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Kris Gilson  
Acting Associate Administrator for Environment and Compliance  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
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Date