



REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE ACCELERATOR PROGRAM

PNWER's RIA Program

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The Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) is one of five organizations awarded the U.S. Department of Transportation's Build America Bureau Regional Infrastructure Accelerator (RIA) program grant in its first iteration. PNWER will use grant funds to establish a Regional Infrastructure Accelerator for the Pacific Northwest. The RIA will serve as a convener for transportation projects across the five state member region, specifically multistate and multi-jurisdictional initiatives that are needed, but lack funding for completion.

While the PNWER RIA does not directly finance infrastructure projects, it will convene key leaders through its roster of policy, finance, and transportation experts and help states, tribes, and local communities identify traditional and innovative methods of financing to get these projects over the finish line. The Accelerator will bring public and private sector stakeholders together to examine projects with region-wide benefits to reducing transportation-related CO2 emissions while increasing economic and environmental justice for historically underserved communities.

Proposed Projects

In collaboration with the Great Northern Corridor Coalition (GNCC), PNWER has identified two initial projects - one urban, and one rural - to be accelerated by the RIA. These projects have significant impacts on U.S. supply chains, and their completion will enhance community safety, reduce CO2, and increase regional economic productivity. Both projects have community support, and interest from private capital, but lack a convening body to bring together these interests.

- **Seaport Emission Reduction by Accelerating Drayage Truck Electrification**
 - Ports of Seattle and Tacoma
 - RIA Objective: Provide platform for innovative financing options for low-income port drayage drivers to obtain higher-priced electric drayage trucks needed to reach Port CO2 emission reduction goals.
- **Pines Road Highway / Rail Grade Separation**
 - City of Spokane Valley, WA
 - RIA Objective: Identify innovative financing options to replace an existing at-grade highway / rail crossing, which is currently responsible for 4 hours daily of vehicle wait time, tragic accidents, and slowing the transport of goods across the region.



Legislative Overview

The PNWER Transportation Working Group has long been an advocate of innovative infrastructure financing projects. Starting in 2015, PNWER began advocating for the appropriation of Section 1441 of the FAST Act, which authorized the establishment of the Regional Infrastructure Accelerators (RIA) demonstration program.

The RIA is designed to assist entities in developing improved infrastructure priorities and financing strategies for the accelerated delivery of projects that are eligible for funding under the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act of 1998 (TIFIA) program under Chapter 6 of Title 23, United States Code. The Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, enacted on December 20, 2019, appropriated \$5 million for this program.





Program Services

RIA Services Include:

- Bringing together multi-state stakeholders
- Working with state and local authorities on prioritization
- Advocating project ideas to improve environmental justice and reduce emissions
- Identifying projects that could be 'bundled'
- Promoting bundled projects to get private investment
- Establishing a multi-state project pipeline
- Providing technical assistance on financing projects
- Hosting workshops with local transportation carriers on innovative financing
- Developing multi-state regional catalogue of finance options

Moving forward, projects can apply for RIA assistance by:

- Recommendation from a multi-jurisdictional stakeholder group
- Submitting applications to the RIA board

For more information, please contact Betz Mayer (Betz.Mayer@pnwer.org)



Opportunities for PNWER States

PNWER member states - which includes Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington State - will be able to access the RIA's services. PNWER serves as a collaborative forum drawing on the engagement between policymakers and private sector stakeholders to strengthen the regional economy of member states and provinces in the Pacific Northwest and Western Canada. The roads, railroads, and waterways that cross U.S. western states connect manufactured and agricultural goods from the Midwest to Pacific ports where products can be exported to Asian markets, making them a critical component of the national economy.

With this regional perspective, the PNWER RIA is well-positioned to advocate and assist infrastructure projects that have significant region-wide impacts. By working closely with state departments of transportation, and organizations like the Great Northern Corridor Coalition (GNCC), the PNWER RIA can convene multi-state stakeholders in the public and private sectors to coordinate in updating the region's infrastructure to ensure safety, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, all while improving livability and economic growth well into the 21st century.

Innovative Project Financing Opportunities

While the RIA does not directly finance infrastructure projects, it will convene key leaders through its roster of policy, finance, and transportation experts and help states, tribes, and local communities identify traditional and innovative methods of financing to get these projects over the finish line.

U.S. DOT financing solutions including the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA), Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF), and Private Activity Bonds (PABs) programs are currently under-utilized. The RIA would focus on helping communities understand these programs, and identify sources of revenue to finance infrastructure initiatives. The Accelerator would convene public and private stakeholders to enable the region's ability to look corridor-wide, and develop the necessary community and regional support to move priority projects forward for the benefit of local communities and the region.

Given the historic relationship between telegraph lines and railroads connecting communities, innovative thinking through an accelerator presents an opportunity to improve the well-being of rural, remote, and Tribal populations. With major broadband demand on the horizon, a multi-state RIA provides an opportunity to leverage federal broadband programs to help fund needed infrastructure projects, while also reducing the digital divide in rural and tribal communities across the U.S.