



# CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

## **CHERELLE L. PARKER**

Office of the Mayor  
215 City Hall  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
(215) 686-2181  
FAX (215) 686-2180

March 10, 2026

Honorable Sean Duffy  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue  
Washington D.C. 20590

## **RE: Southeast Pennsylvania Multimodal Freight Optimization Plan**

Dear Secretary Duffy:

As Mayor of Philadelphia, I want to express my strong support for the Philadelphia Regional Port Authority's (PhilaPort) application for a planning grant through the U.S. Department of Transportation's FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) program. The requested \$3.456 million will allow us to advance essential planning and design work that ties together several major employment centers in South Philadelphia, including the Packer Avenue Marine Terminal, the Navy Yard, and The Bellwether District.

For our city, this work is about creating greater access to economic opportunity by protecting and expanding pathways to solid, family-sustaining, union jobs. PhilaPort is a cornerstone of our regional economy, supporting thousands of workers from longshore labor and truck drivers to warehouse staff, skilled trades, and manufacturing employees throughout Southeast Pennsylvania. To keep these jobs here and ensure they grow, we need infrastructure capable of supporting today's freight demands and tomorrow's opportunities.

South Philadelphia is experiencing significant private-sector momentum. Redevelopment of The Bellwether District is creating a modern center for logistics, e-commerce, and advanced manufacturing. Hanwha's recent investment at the Philadelphia Shipyard is yet another major step forward, one that brings shipbuilding back to scale with good union wages and long-term stability for the workforce that built this region's industrial legacy.

Meanwhile, the Stadium Complex features approximately 300 events each year, including games for all of Philadelphia's major sports teams, and a new multi-use arena hosting the city's first WNBA team is scheduled to open in 2030. But private investment can only go so far on its own. To unlock the full economic potential of these projects, public infrastructure has to keep pace.

That is why this BUILD-supported planning effort is so important. Freight volumes continue to grow, industrial activity is accelerating, and our transportation network needs thoughtful, coordinated planning to move people and goods safely and efficiently. Without this work, congestion caused by aging infrastructure risks slowing commerce, compromising safety, and limiting access to job sites. This grant will give us the ability to work collaboratively with public and private partners to anticipate challenges before they become barriers, ensuring freight flows smoothly, streets remain safe, and workers can reach employment centers reliably.

This initiative also advances national priorities around rebuilding America's maritime capacity and strengthening domestic supply chains. Modernizing and expanding a key East Coast gateway like PhilaPort enhances resilience, improves competitiveness, and ensures that American workers remain at the heart of our manufacturing and logistics economy.

By enhancing multimodal freight links, addressing last-mile constraints, and prioritizing safety and state-of-good-repair improvements, this project will ensure that one of the country's most strategically located ports continues to support a strong, unionized workforce and a growing regional economy. It is exactly the type of partnership between federal investment and private growth that delivers real benefits for working families. I offer my full support for this application and urge its favorable review.

Further, and given the exciting opportunity to build the commercial and industrial base in Lower South Philadelphia as one of the most dynamic and powerful economic engines in the region and country, we welcome you to join us on a tour of key sites. With preparations in high gear for America's 250<sup>th</sup> birthday, FIFA World Cup games, Major League All-Star Week and other major events this year, this is the ideal time to visit.

Sincerely,



Cherelle L. Parker  
Mayor  
City of Philadelphia