

Airports, Seaports & Waterways:

Digging Deeper Into the 2021
Infrastructure Bill



A large container ship is docked at a port. The ship's hull is dark blue, and its deck is covered with stacks of colorful shipping containers in shades of red, blue, and white. Several large, teal-colored gantry cranes are positioned along the pier, with one crane's arm extending over the ship. The sky is a clear, bright blue. A large, semi-transparent red circle is overlaid on the upper portion of the image, containing white text.

In 2013, \$3.8 trillion in total U.S. foreign trade was reported, from that, the largest amount came from maritime transportation with \$1.7 trillion followed by air transportation with \$900 billion.¹ It is undeniable that the Airports, Seaports, and Waterways are all vital systems to the U.S. economy, moving billions of dollars of goods and supplies every year, invigorating the supply chain.

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The COVID-19 pandemic however, caused a disruption in the supply chain resulting in billions of dollars lost to the U.S. Although shipping traffic increased, operating safely in a pandemic caused a major issue, leading to congested seaports and airports, and price increases.

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Brief Facts About the U.S. Public Airports

Airports in America generates more than \$1 trillion in annual economic activity and supports approximately 11 million jobs.ⁱⁱ One of the busiest airports in the U.S., Hartsfield–Jackson Atlanta International Airport, was reported as the busiest airport in 2020, carrying approximately 103 million passengers and although it's not one of the largest airports in the U.S., it has been awarded as the most efficient airport year after year.ⁱⁱⁱ And Memphis International Airport in Tennessee was ranked as number 1 in air freight transport in 2018 (based on totals from 2017 and 2018), this is mainly due to the fact that it is home to FedEx's SuperHub, which sees more than 180,000 packages per hour.^{iv}

As the FAA reports that the number of passengers will increase from 700 million to 1 billion in the next 10–15 years, the increase in demand will hinder their ability to properly serve their passengers without improvements to the infrastructure. And with airports not only catering to flight passengers but also moving billions of cargoes every year, it is imperative they are able to enhance airport safety, security, environmental protection, and capacity.^v

As the number of public airports in the U.S. began to decline each year during the last few decades, there was a significant increase in active public airports in 2020, going from 5,080 in 2019 to 5,217 in 2020.^{vi} Based on data provided by the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, the graph below shows the number of U.S. public airports operating between 2010 and 2020. (*Note: There is no available data for 2015)



Facts About America's Seaports & Waterways

Seaports

According to the U.S. Coast Guard, there are 360 commercial ports actively serving the supply chain in the U.S. Many of these accommodate ocean-going cargo, barges, ferries, and recreational watercraft.^{vii} Holding honors since 2000, the busiest and largest port in the U.S. is the Port of Los Angeles. Known as "America's Port", it spreads around 7,500 acres of land with a 43-mile-long waterfront and handles around \$1.2 billion worth of cargo every day.^{viii}

Largest Ports in the U.S. (Ranked)	
1.	Port of Los Angeles, CA
2.	Port of Long Beach, CA
3.	Port of New York and New Jersey
4.	Georgia Ports (Savannah & Brunswick)
5.	Port of Seattle-Tacoma, WA
6.	Port of Virginia
7.	Port of Houston, TX
8.	South Carolina Ports (Georgetown & Charleston)
9.	Port of Oakland, NC
10.	Port of Miami, FL

(Source: The Largest and Busiest Ports in the US*. lcontainers.com. 06 Oct. 2021)



In the U.S. there are currently over 45,000 bridges deemed structurally deficient and over 220,000 in need of major repair.

Waterways

The U.S. waterway system consists of over 12,000 miles of inland waterways and 13,000 miles of coastal channels, with over 218 locks at 176 sites.^{ix} Most of the mileage of this waterway system is comprised of the Mississippi River and its tributaries, along with the Columbia, Sacramento, and San Joaquin Rivers.^x The U.S. inland waterways are the backbone of the freight network, moving nearly 830 million tons of cargo each year.^{xi} However, many of the locks and dams are well past their life span, as they were constructed in the 1930's and 50's, and although regular maintenance and rehabilitation can help these structures extend past their lifespan, adequate funding is needed in order to do so.

What's in the Proposed Infrastructure Bill for Airports, Seaports & Waterways

From the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure package, \$25 billion in funding is allocated for airport improvements. This funding will support air traffic control upgrades, terminal renovations, and multi-modal connections. According to the White House, the funds will also address repair and maintenance backlogs, reduce congestion and emissions near ports and airports, and drive electrification and other low-carbon technologies.^{xii}

For seaports and waterways, the bill includes \$17 billion in funding to address repair and maintenance, and to reduce congestions in commercial ports.^{xiii} The funds will also be used to support improvements to port facilities on coasts, rivers, and the Great Lakes. The funds will allocate \$25 million for marine highways and will at least provide \$400 million in grants for port improvements to reduce truck emissions.^{xiv} According to AAPA's overview report, the bill provides higher funding than the yearly appropriations.^{xv}

Although, there is nothing specific on where exactly the funding will be distributed, it is assumed that much of the funding will be handled by the US Army Corps.



Prepare Your Business for Bidding

Now is the good time for your business to start preparing for the influx of opportunities that will become available once the bill is signed into law. One way to prepare yourself is to check out news from local airports around your business area to know the status of any funding they have or will receive. Another way to prepare is to apply for any applicable business certifications and prepare any documents ahead of time that can help expedite the process. Overall, this bill will produce an abundance of new opportunities for businesses, both large and small all across the nation. Take time to research and learn about the government bidding process, both local and federal processes, and make your business come out on top.



i "US Maritime Infrastructure: Investing in America". Slide 5. [Api.org](#). 06 Oct. 2021

ii "Airport Infrastructure Funding". 2021. Background. [AirportsCouncil.org](#). 06 Oct. 2021

iii T. Busson. "The Biggest and Busiest Airports in the US in 2021". 25 Aug. 2021. [GetService.com](#). 06 Oct. 2021

iv "The Top 10 Freight Airports in the US". 12 Mar. 2019. [Nowthat'slogistics.com](#). 06 Oct. 2021

v "Airport Infrastructure Funding". 2021. Airport Improvement Program. [AirportsCouncil.org](#). 06 Oct. 2021

vi "Number of U.S. Airports". 2021. Bureau of Transportation Statistics. [Bts.gov](#). 06 Oct. 2021

vii "The Value of Maritime Transportation". 2021. [api.org](#). 06 Oct. 2021

viii "The Largest and Busiest Ports in the US". 2021. [lcontainers.com](#). 06 Oct. 2021

ix "FY 2020 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Agency Financial Report". Pg 9. [Publications.usace.army.mil](#). 06 Oct. 2021

x "Report Card for America's Infrastructure". 2021. Inland Waterways. [InfrastructureReportCard.org](#). 07 Oct. 2021

xi "Report Card for America's Infrastructure". 2021. Inland Waterways. Conditions and Capacity. [InfrastructureReportCard.org](#). 07 Oct. 2021

xii "Fact Sheet: Historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal". 28 Jul 2021. Briefing Room. [Whitehouse.gov](#). 07 Oct. 2021

xiii "Senate Passes Bipartisan Infrastructure Package". 11 Aug 2021. National Governors Association. [nga.org](#). 12 Oct. 2021

xiv "Coming US Infrastructure Bill promises Port-Funding Splurge". 08 Aug 2021. [Maritime Magazine](#). [maritimemag.com](#). 12 Oct. 2021

xv "Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Overview". 17 Aug 2021. American Association of Port Authorities. [aapa-ports.org](#). 12 Oct. 2021

