

The Vancouver Fraser Port Authority is working with industry stakeholders to advance the development of a dedicated common-user short sea shipping terminal and service to increase the sustainable movement of containers through the Port of Vancouver.

This work is supported by federal funding received from Transport Canada through the National Trade Corridors Fund in 2019.



Short sea shipping: an opportunity to increase gateway resilience and sustainability

Short sea shipping is used to transport containers by barge over short distances to and from deep-sea container terminals and regional container handling facilities. The use of barges and waterways in and around the Port of Vancouver would complement the use of container trucks in transporting containers over short distances around the region, and improve the resilience of the gateway.

As seen in other North American regions, the use of barging has led to some increased trucking efficiencies. The development of a short sea terminal and service for the movement of containers through the Port of Vancouver would complement the existing road and rail network and provide the following benefits:



Increase efficiencies of container trucking on provincial and regional roads, helping to alleviate congestion



Support efficient use of scarce industrial land by moving container handling activities to areas of the region where land costs are lower



Help manage growth in container trade by maximizing the use of container terminal capacity



Decrease greenhouse gas emissions related to cargo movement

Our work to date: confirming industry interest and learning from international success

Our past work and engagement have confirmed that there is strong industry interest in exploring the development of a short sea shipping network to serve the Port of Vancouver.

The following are some of the key milestones and activities that have led to where we are today:

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- 2007–2008** — The port authority and Transport Canada worked with industry to develop a vision for a short sea shipping network, and to secure funding through the Asia-Pacific Gateway and Corridor Initiative to develop a series of short sea shipping projects. However, due to the economic downturn and other factors, these projects were not developed.
 - 2014** — Barging was used to temporarily move containers between terminals during a disruption to trucking services. This demonstrated the potential for short sea shipping to play a bigger role in regional transportation.
 - 2018–2019** — The port authority, in partnership with Transport Canada, completed a study to confirm industry interest and support to advance the development of a short sea shipping terminal and service.

Engagement undertaken as part of the study included direct interviews with associations, transportation providers, terminal operators, shipping lines, railways and cargo owners, and other industry stakeholders and a summit attended by 60 industry partners.

As part of the study, we also undertook site visits and research to learn from a variety of successful short sea shipping operations around the world. This provided insight into how to develop a viable terminal and service here.
 - 2019** — Transport Canada awarded federal funding to the port authority to support the development of a vision for short sea shipping through the National Trade Corridors Fund.

This funding will support our current work, including detailed planning and studies, and engagement with Indigenous groups, local government, communities and industry towards the development of a short sea shipping facility and service.

What did we learn from our short sea shipping study?

Short sea shipping services are likely to be successful when the costs of using the short sea shipping service are comparable to the existing transportation alternatives and the service is expected to be consistent in the short-term and long-term.

Our research of examples of short sea shipping across North America, Europe and Asia also provided insights into successful operating models, such as optimizing the size of short sea shipping barges, terminal infrastructure and operating schedules to maximize efficiency.

These lessons learned will guide our future work in developing a common-user short sea shipping terminal and service.

What's next: advancing short sea shipping in the Port of Vancouver

Over the coming months, we will be taking active steps to advance two initiatives:

1. Participating in industry's establishment of a short sea shipping service connecting existing facilities

In the immediate term, we are working with industry to develop an action plan for the establishment of a short sea shipping service to and from existing container handling facilities.

This may include determining an operating model and potential locations, and identifying the infrastructure and equipment required to launch a commercially viable service.

2. Advancing the development of a dedicated common-user short sea shipping terminal

Building on engagement to-date, we will continue to work with industry, Indigenous groups, local governments and the community to help us establish a vision and define the parameters for a dedicated common-user short sea shipping terminal to serve the gateway in the long-term.

These parameters will form the basis of us seeking proposals for the scope, design, construction, and operation of a dedicated short sea shipping terminal.

We anticipate beginning a procurement process in 2021.



As we meet with our industry stakeholders, we will also take the opportunity to discuss how the broader needs of the gateway supply chain can be further supported by these initiatives.



We want to hear from you

As we undertake this important work, we will continue engaging with industry, Indigenous groups, local governments and the community.

We would like to extend our appreciation to the industry stakeholders who have participated in the development of short sea shipping so far. We look forward to continuing to work with you.

If you are interested in participating in future engagement regarding short sea shipping, please email shortseashipping@portvancouver.com.