

Morrow Re:Port



\$19 Million BUILD Grant Awarded

Columbia River Barge Terminal Rail Access Project expands economic opportunities

The Port of Morrow has been awarded a \$19,414,875 grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development program, also known as BUILD grants. The announcement was released through U.S. Congressman Greg Walden's office on December 6, 2018.

The grant will fund infrastructure improvements at marine terminals within the Port. The project extends new rail lines from the Union Pacific mainline to four terminals which will enable rail-to-barge access for shipments along the Columbia River. The project includes infrastructure improvements to facilitate seamless intermodal operations, including new bridges, connecting roads, and Terminal 1 improvements.

In addition, the project maximizes a recent expansion of the grain terminal funded by public and private investments from Morrow County Grain Growers, the State of Oregon, Shaver,

and Tidewater. The expansion added 1 million bushels of new grain storage and a new bottom-dump rail unloading facility.

The Columbia River Barge Terminal Rail Access Project is projected to increase economic activity and add permanent local jobs, generating 30 years' worth of economic activity in a rural region. New capabilities to ship and receive cargo via rail and barge supports the local agricultural economy and opens the doors to attract new industry investment.

More information is available on our website: <http://www.portofmorrow.com>

A Legacy of Vision and Leadership

In 1989 the Port of Morrow was looking for a new General Manager.

"I'd heard of this young man up in Clarkston, named Gary Neal, who had developed every acre of industrial land," recalls long-time Port Commissioner Larry Lindsay, "and we invited him to a meeting in Heppner. He came to the meeting along with his whole family. Then it was time to give him a tour of the Port and I just knew he would tell us no after seeing all this sagebrush and desert we have here." Neal not only accepted the offer but has helped turn desert into one of the state's most productive regions.

"The Boardman economy was pretty tough at the time. Food processing operations were running on a limited-scale basis and unemployment numbers were high," remembers Neal. "But what I saw was a lot of opportunity. All the key ingredients were here – freeways, river, railroad mainline, and a large power grid. The foundation was good, and I saw a great chance to add value and create diversity and see if we could make a difference."



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Legacy, Cont.

The map has changed over the past 30 years. What was once vast empty land is dotted with a diversity of old, new, and expanding industries. The Port of Morrow is now Oregon's second largest port. Morrow County boasts an average wage that exceeds the Oregon statewide average. According to an economic impact analysis published in 2017, Port-related businesses account for nearly \$2.8 billion in annual output, up from \$896 million in 2006.

"Gary Neal's vision and leadership brought life to the Port of Morrow's abundant resources of land, water, utilities and infrastructure," says Debbie Radie of Boardman Foods. "Gary and Kathy will be missed in the Boardman community."

Neal's influence isn't limited to the regional economy. "When Gary and Kathy came, they said 'this is not only our job, this is our home,'" says Port Commissioner Jerry Healy. "They've both brought tremendous new ideas and benefits to our communities in Boardman, Heppner, Lone, and Irrigon."

Two accomplishments are significant to Neal. The SAGE Center and the Neal Early Learning Center. "The SAGE Center is an opportunity for people to get a better understanding of our region and is an important communications tool," he explains, "and the Neal Early Learning Center is a project that benefits our youth. My wife, Kathy, was on the InterMountain ESD board and she would come back from her meetings stressing the importance of early education. If students don't have reading, writing, and arithmetic basics by the third grade, their chance of being successful and graduating from high school diminishes. These are personal accomplishments that I feel set the stage for the future."

Neal considers himself lucky. "I've been fortunate and have been able to see a lot of positive change, improvement, and growth," he says, summarizing his almost 30 years at the Port. "I come to work every day just trying to do the best that I can. There are always challenges in everything you do in life, but with support and the right approach, it's been a great place to work."

Bringing Visions to Life

The work of Ron McKinnis has shaped the landscape of our region. For more than 22 years the civil engineer has designed and built bridges, roads, infrastructure, and buildings that have been critical in attracting new industries.

McKinnis earned a bachelor's degree in physics at Eastern Oregon University before studying engineering at Oregon State University. His career began as a dam engineer in Washington followed by consulting with Anderson-Perry and then the Oregon Department of Transportation. He was assigned to work on Interstate 82 from the Columbia River to I-84. Once that project was completed, he chose to stay in the region as a private consultant. His work spanned projects at Finley Butte Landfill, Logan International, Cascade Specialties, Tidewater, and a few for the Port of Morrow.

As a professional engineer, a professional land surveyor, and having his water rights examiner's license, McKinnis caught the attention of the new General Manager Gary Neal in the early 1990's. Neal, through stubborn perseverance, finally convinced McKinnis to begin work for the Port full time in 1996. If Neal envisioned it, McKinnis built it.

"Since I've been here, I've worked on highways, bridges, roads, rail, and we've done a lot of improvements at the barge terminals," recounts McKinnis. "I enjoy the variety – all of it. I didn't specialize in a particular specialty at school, just did it all, kind of like throwing spaghetti against a wall and seeing what sticks."

Although the projects are too numerous to name a favorite, the Riverfront Center



McKinnis stands in front of the Riverfront Center in Boardman, one of the buildings he designed.

is one that stands out to McKinnis. "When we decided to do this building, we had a group and came up with a design concept. I picked that concept up and turned it into a structure and then kind of became the general contractor to boot. We just kept adding the crews on as we needed them – concrete, sheetrock, electrical, the whole works. I spent most of my time over here with a carpenter's apron on pounding nails and doing everything right alongside the contractors."

McKinnis loves designing and building and, though he is retiring from the Port of Morrow, he will continue engineering and surveying. "But, I'll enjoy some time off," he says. "I like to fish and will take my boat out. My wife and I will build our place in Elgin and I'll spend time with my grandkids."

New Staff at the Port

Michael Boeshans started working at the Port in October as the assistant controller. He was born and lived in the Eugene area until moving to Eastern Oregon two years ago as the CFO for a beverage distribution company. Boeshans applied for the position at the recommendation of a good friend and was impressed by the people he met during his interview and by the Riverfront Center. He has 25 years of experience in the accounting field.





Photo by EJ Harris, East Oregonian

A New Executive Director

When Ryan Neal graduated from Oregon State University in 2004, his goal was to return to his roots in Boardman. The opportunity to move home came when the Port of Morrow built the freezer warehouse in 2015. With a degree in Business Management and nine years of management experience, Neal was hired as the Operations Manager for the freezer warehouse and promoted two years later when General Manager Jim Barnes retired.

When his father, Gary Neal, announced his plans for retirement in early 2018, the younger Neal pursued the opportunity to apply.

Port Commissioner Jerry Healy explained that the hiring process was extensive. George Dunkel from the Special Districts Association of Oregon was hired to manage the application process. Three interview panels of community, business, and industry members provided their thoughts on the selected candidates.

“Out of the 33 applicants, Ryan rose to the top,” says Healy. “He has a good business background and a track record of professional growth. At the warehouse, he’d been managing half of the Port employees and budget and doing a great job. The other trait that set Ryan apart was his commitment to the region. In my mind, he was clearly the best qualified for the position and he has made a strong commitment to the Port, to the City of Boardman, and to the region.”

Neal has watched the Port grow. “Back then we did farm tours and looked at the different crops that were grown,” he remembers. “That tour today is a Port tour with infrastructure, roads, bridges, and rail where that farm once was. I think the growth speaks for itself. It’s changed a lot and I don’t foresee our growth slowing at all.”

“I see continued infrastructure development, continued industrial growth, and diversification in our economy,” says Neal. “I foresee technology continuing to take a bigger role, but agriculture is still the base of our economy. The Port has incredible staff and a great board of commissioners. It’s a great team that makes things happen.”

Neal remains passionate about giving back to the community he grew up in. He is active on the boards for Kiwanis of Boardman, Chamber of Commerce, InterMountain ESD, Northeast Oregon Water Association, Morrow Development Corporation, and the Columbia Development Authority and was formerly part of the Boardman Community Development Association. His wife, Sonja, is the Director of Nursing at Columbia River Health. Their son, Ari, is four and a half.

SAGE Center Highlights

More than 30 vendors and over 500 guests filled the center during Winter Market in early December. Visitors enjoyed festive decorations and the opportunity to purchase Christmas gifts locally.

SAGE SATURDAYS – The second Saturday of each month is free admission day at the SAGE Center! Fun activities for families are available while supplies last. (September - May)

SAGE MOVIE EVENTS – Featuring new to DVD movies on the third Friday and Saturday of each month with a low \$3 admission rate. (September - May)

New displays are coming! We will be excited to announce and unveil the exhibitions this year.

Finally, the SAGE Center is an official Oregon Welcome Center, one of only 8 in the State of Oregon!

Follow the SAGE Center on Facebook to receive notifications! - <https://www.facebook.com/SAGECenterOR>



Families participate in the December SAGE Saturday event, hosted by the Riverside High School Key Club.

Join Us on Social Media!

Beginning this month, we invite you to join us on Facebook and LinkedIn to stay up to date on Port news, events, and regional job openings.



Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/PortOfMorrow/>

LinkedIn - <https://www.linkedin.com/company/port-of-morrow>

Grain Terminal is Growing

What started in 1930 as a local grain cooperative of 100 farmers has grown to more than 700 members in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho and a diversity of services and stores throughout the region. Morrow County Grain Growers is once again expanding to meet market needs by adding additional grain storage and high-speed unloading for unit trains.

“The rail lines between Boardman and Portland are congested,” explains Kevin Gray, the general manager at MCGG. “We’re opening another option that allows us to bring grain from the mid-west market both for export and to help meet local demands for feed.”

“It takes a train the same amount of time to get from Kansas to Boardman as it does for that same train to travel from Boardman to Portland because of the congestion,” continues Steve Biehler, the grain operations and project manager. “The mid-west has never had access to the northwest market because of logistics and cost. They’re excited about this prospect because it’s going to open up a whole new market for them.”

The first of the new grain silos has been constructed with a capacity of 600,000 bushels. Additional silos will be constructed to meet the demand. A new bottom-dump rail unloading facility and conveyer system is scheduled to be completed in February 2019. A 2,500-foot rail spur will connect the facility to the existing rail loop. Additionally, just over 20,000 linear feet of rail will be extended in the East Beach Industrial Park on which unit trains can be received, unloaded, and delivered back to the railroad.

One benefit for local farmers will be the ability to offload grain at a much higher rate of speed during the busy harvest



A new high-speed unloading facility is under construction at the grain terminal in Boardman.

season. When a train isn’t unloading, grain trucks will be able to drive through the facility and offload at 60,000 bushels per hour, more than doubling the number of trucks the grain terminal can serve during the busy harvest season.

A second benefit will be access to feed grain from new markets. “Not enough feed is produced locally to meet the demand,” reports Biehler. “Local livestock producers will be able to pick up feed grain here in Boardman. They won’t have to drive to Plymouth or Wallula, Washington and will save mileage and time.”

The expansion project has gained notoriety. “Everyone has been a big support for what we’re doing. Everyone from locals, the Port, the County, the folks we’ve been working with for permits, the people in the mid-west who see what we’re doing and how we’re trying to grow the influence of the Pacific Northwest, all the way to the exporters,” says Gray. “It’s a great location. It’s a great project. We’re working with some really great people to make it all come together.”

What makes our region's agriculture sustainable?



SAGE Center: Discover What's Inside!



At the Sustainable Agriculture and Energy Center, our mission is hands-on learning and education through fun and interactive multi-media exhibits. Soar over Morrow County on a simulated hot air balloon ride. Watch a potato turn into curly fries. Try your hand at milking a cow or driving a tractor. Browse our gift shop and finish your visit with a scoop of delicious Tillamook ice cream!

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SAGE CENTER

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND ENERGY | BOARDMAN, OREGON



welcome
CENTER
OFFICIAL OREGON WELCOME CENTER

The SAGE Center is an official Travel Oregon Welcome Center! Visit us today and pick up your copy of a free limited-edition Magical Oregon artwork poster. (While supplies last.)



Winter Hours of Operation
Regular Hours: Labor Day thru Memorial Day
Monday - Saturday 10a-5p