

Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal (WA-07)
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Member Day Hearing, Remarks on Key Priorities
January 14, 2026
5 Minutes

Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen, thank you for this opportunity to share the concerns of Washington's 7th Congressional District.

I would like to raise three key priorities for the remainder of the 119th Congress: supporting our air traffic controller workforce; reauthorization and robust funding for rail, bridge, and ferry infrastructure programs; and fighting the dissolution of the Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement.

First, the last year has laid bare how urgently investments are needed in the nation's air traffic controller workforce, both to achieve full staffing levels and to ensure their health and wellbeing. There are 25 Certified Professional Controllers and 2 in training at SeaTac tower—and, as in many places across the country—it is not enough. These jobs are already incredibly stressful and demanding. All of this is exacerbated by understaffing and mandatory overtime.¹ More than 41 percent of controllers nationwide work 10-hour days, six days a week.² These are impossible conditions to do any job well, let alone one that is so important for public safety.

The 2024 FAA Reauthorization Bill included many provisions aimed at improving controller hiring, training, and staffing to help reduce the strain on our controller workforce and reduce fatigue. However, as the FAA works to implement these provisions, the vast majority of air traffic control facilities remain critically understaffed. I urge the Committee to continue to address air traffic controller fatigue, reduce burdens on controllers in understaffed air traffic towers, and prioritize the wellbeing of our aviation workforce.

Second, ensuring strong infrastructure remains a top priority as the greater Seattle area continues to grow. Sound Transit has been the nation's largest recipient of low-interest U.S. infrastructure loans to build mass transit and is in the midst of the largest transit system expansion in the country. For over 30 years, the Capital Investment Grant (CIG) program has been the backbone of the federal government's commitment towards transit investment. This is true for Sound Transit's capital projects to West Seattle and Ballard,

¹ <https://www.nationalacademies.org/news/2025/06/actions-from-federal-government-needed-to-alleviate-air-traffic-controller-staffing-shortages-at-many-facilities-says-new-report>

² <https://www.natca.org/2025/06/18/national-academies-of-sciences-report-doubles-down-on-failed-controller-staffing-model/>

which will soon enter the CIG pipeline. Investing in robust rail and transit infrastructure is essential to reducing congestion and improving traffic conditions in Seattle, in particular as we prepare to host the 2026 World Cup. I strongly urge the committee to continue to prioritize programs to improve our rail system and remove these unnecessary restrictions on funding.

In addition, I urge you to increase support for bridge infrastructure improvements. Seattle's Ship Canal Bridge is a strong example of the need for federal bridge investments. Nearly 200,000 vehicles use the double-deck 12-lane bridge daily and it is part of a major T1 freight route carrying over 45 million tons of freight per year. In 2022, the state closed parks under the bridge as chunks of concrete fell off it. The nearby University Bridge was stuck upright for two days due to mechanical issues. Investing in bridge funding is critical to safety, earthquake resiliency, and the regional economy in my district.

I also urge the Committee to support increased funding for the Electric or Low Emitting Ferry Pilot Program. Washington State has the largest ferry system in the country and the second largest in the world. Locally, we say you know you're from here when a ferry is part of your daily commute. Ferries are essential across Puget Sound. They transport residents to important medical appointments and get people to and from their jobs every day. Ferries link affordable housing on the west side of Puget Sound to job hubs on the east side. They promote tourism for small businesses, hotels, and restaurants. Ferries are critical to our way of life, yet Washington State Ferries is one of the biggest contributors of greenhouse gas emissions. It is critical to support Washington State Ferries' effort to rebuild and modernize their ferry fleet by transitioning to hybrid electric power.

Finally, I urge the Committee to fight the June 2025 dissolution of the Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement between the federal government, including the Army Corps; tribes; and the states of Washington and Oregon for the management and restoration of the Columbia River Basin. This historic agreement ended a decades long legal fight and addressed both environmental protections and critical energy needs for the region. Breaking up this historic agreement will harm efforts to protect salmon and recover endangered Southern Resident killer whale populations, jeopardize energy stability and production, and abandon our commitments to Tribal Nations.

Thank you.