

# BRIEFING MEMO

**To:** Mayor Victor Shen

**From:** Sean Marx, Whittier Resident

**Subject:** Preliminary Concept – FY 2026 Port Communications & Cybersecurity Modernization

**Date:** June 2, 2026 - City Council Special Meeting - Citizen Discussion

## Purpose

To provide an overview of a potential **FY 2026 federal grant initiative** aimed at strengthening Whittier's port-area communications, cybersecurity posture, and emergency coordination capabilities. This memo is intended to support early awareness and inform future Council discussion.

## Background

Whittier's deep-water port is a **critical maritime hub** for Southcentral Alaska, supporting:

- Mega cruise vessels
- Commercial fishing fleets
- Phillips Cruises & Tours
- Cliffside Marina HOA
- Whittier Port & Harbor
- Alaska Marine Lines
- Alaska Railroad intermodal operations
- Alaska Marine Highway System

Each season, **thousands of cruise passengers walk directly adjacent to Cliffside Marina** as they move between the Princess Cruises berth, motorcoaches, tour buses, and the Alaska Railroad terminal. This creates a **high-density, high-consequence intermodal corridor** where reliable, secure communications are essential for public safety and coordinated response.

Whittier and surrounding Prince William Sound communities also face **significant natural hazards**, including severe storms, landslides, earthquakes, and tsunami risk. These realities underscore the need for resilient, redundant communications infrastructure.

## Proposed Project Concept

The initiative under consideration would modernize Whittier's port-area communications environment through:

- **Encrypted, interoperable digital radios**
- **Redundant microwave/fiber backhaul**
- **Cyber-secure network infrastructure** (firewalls, segmentation, zero-trust elements)
- **Shared Common Operating Picture (COP)** for port-area partners
- **Deployable incident communications kit** for emergencies

These components align directly with **Port Security Grant Program (PSGP)** priorities and support regional resilience.

## Funding Pathways

### Port Security Grant Program (PSGP) – FY 2026

- Primary mechanism for City participation
- Supports port-wide communications, cybersecurity, and resilience
- Requires a **City-led application**

### Tribal Cybersecurity Grant Program (TCGP) – FY 2026

- Supports cybersecurity components of shared or interconnected systems
- Requires a federally recognized Tribe as applicant or partner
- **Chenega Tribal Government has confirmed they are not pursuing TCGP in FY 2026**, but expressed openness to supporting a City-led PSGP application

## Regional Partner Engagement

Initial outreach to **Chenega Tribal Government / Chenega Corporation** has resulted in:

- Appreciation for inclusion in early discussions
- Willingness to consider a **letter of support** for a City-led FY 2026 PSGP application
- Interest in an **introductory meeting** to discuss regional collaboration opportunities

This strengthens Whittier’s competitiveness under PSGP criteria related to **regional coordination** and **port-wide benefit**.

## Requested Action

At this stage, no formal action is required. I respectfully request:

- **Initial review** of the concept
- **Guidance** on whether the City wishes to explore a formal FY 2026 PSGP application
- **Identification of a City point of contact** for next-step coordination
- **Consideration of participation** in an introductory meeting with Chenega representatives

## Next Steps (If Directed by the Mayor/Council)

1. City designates a lead staff member or committee
  2. Introductory meeting with Chenega and port stakeholders
  3. Development of a draft PSGP project narrative and budget
  4. Council review and authorization once FY 2026 PSGP NOFO is released
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**CITY OF WHITTIER**

**COUNCIL PACKET**

**FY 2026 PORT COMMUNICATIONS & CYBERSECURITY MODERNIZATION INITIATIVE**

Prepared for: **Whittier City Council**

Prepared by: **Sean Marx, Whittier Resident**

Date: **June 2026**

## **SECTION 1 — EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Purpose**

This document provides an overview of a proposed **FY 2026 Port Security Grant Program (PSGP)** initiative to modernize Whittier's port-area communications and cybersecurity infrastructure. The project aims to enhance public safety, operational resilience, and coordinated emergency response across the City's maritime and intermodal environment.

### **Background**

Whittier serves as a critical maritime gateway for Southcentral Alaska, supporting cruise ships, commercial fishing, Phillips Cruises & Tours, Cliffside Marina HOA, Alaska Marine Lines, the Alaska Railroad, and the Alaska Marine Highway System. Each summer, thousands of cruise passengers move through a concentrated intermodal corridor adjacent to Cliffside Marina and the railroad terminal.

Whittier and surrounding Prince William Sound communities face significant natural hazards, including severe storms, landslides, earthquakes, and tsunami risk. Reliable, secure communications are essential for coordinated response and continuity of operations.

### **Project Components**

The proposed modernization initiative includes:

- Encrypted, interoperable digital radios
- Redundant microwave/fiber backhaul
- Cyber-secure network infrastructure (firewalls, segmentation, zero-trust elements)
- Shared Common Operating Picture (COP) for port-area partners
- Deployable incident communications kit for emergencies

### **Funding Pathways**

- **Port Security Grant Program (PSGP)** — Primary pathway for the City of Whittier.
- **Tribal Cybersecurity Grant Program (TCGP)** — The Tribe is not pursuing TCGP funding for FY 2026. Chenega has indicated openness to supporting a City-led PSGP application once the FY 2026 opportunity is released.

### **Regional Partner Engagement**

The City has initiated outreach to Chenega, who expressed interest in exploring mutually beneficial partnership opportunities and participating in an introductory meeting. Chenega also indicated they would consider providing a letter of support for a City-led FY 2026 PSGP application.

### **Requested Council Action**

At this stage, no formal action is required. Council is asked to:

- Review the concept
- Provide initial feedback

- Identify a City point of contact
- Consider participating in a meeting with Chenega representatives

## **SECTION 2 — PUBLIC-FACING BRIEFING**

### **Overview**

The City of Whittier is exploring a potential federal grant opportunity to improve communications and cybersecurity infrastructure across the port area. This effort aims to strengthen public safety, emergency response, and operational coordination among the many agencies and organizations that rely on Whittier's port.

### **Why This Matters**

Whittier's port is one of the most important maritime gateways in Alaska. During the summer season, thousands of visitors move through the harbor, cruise ship terminal, and railroad corridor. Ensuring reliable, secure communications is essential for:

- Emergency response
- Public safety
- Coordination between agencies
- Continuity of operations during storms or outages

### **What the Project Would Do**

If funded, the project would provide:

- Modern digital radios for port-area partners
- Backup communication pathways
- Improved cybersecurity protections
- A shared information platform for emergency coordination
- Portable equipment for use during incidents or outages

### **Who Is Involved**

The City has begun outreach to regional partners, including Chenega, who expressed interest in supporting the effort and participating in discussions.

### **Funding Source**

The project would be submitted to the **Port Security Grant Program (PSGP)**, a federal program that supports port-wide safety and security improvements.

## **Next Steps**

If the City Council wishes to proceed:

1. Designate a City point of contact
2. Participate in an introductory meeting with Chenega
3. Begin drafting the grant application
4. Prepare materials ahead of the expected **August 2026** application window

## **SECTION 3 — ADDENDUM: FY 2026 PSGP PREPARATION TIMELINE**

### **June 2026 — Concept Alignment & Council Direction**

- Council reviews project concept
- Mayor designates City point of contact
- Identify internal departments (Harbor, Public Safety, IT)
- Begin assembling background materials

### **July 2026 — Scoping & Partner Coordination**

- Hold internal scoping meeting
- Conduct introductory meeting with Chenega
- Request Letter of Support
- Begin drafting narrative, budget, and justification
- Identify match funding (if required)

### **Early August 2026 — Pre-NOFO Readiness**

- Finalize draft narrative and budget
- Prepare ND Grants access
- Pre-load supporting documents
- Conduct internal review with Mayor and Council leadership

### **Mid-August 2026 — Expected NOFO Release**

- Review FY 2026 requirements
- Adjust narrative and budget
- Confirm partner letters
- Assemble final application package

### **Late August 2026 — Submission Window**

- Upload documents to ND Grants

- Conduct compliance check
- Submit application
- Document submission for Council records

#### **September–December 2026 — Post-Submission**

- Respond to FEMA requests
- Prepare for potential award announcement
- Begin preliminary planning for implementation

#### **SECTION 4 — REFERENCES**

##### **1. FY 2025 Port Security Grant Program – Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)**

U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Commons <https://www.news.uscg.mil/maritime-commons/Article/4273235/fy2025-port-security-grant-program-notice-of-funding-opportunity/>

##### **2. FEMA ND Grants Portal (Application Submission System)**

<https://go.fema.gov/login?redirect=%2F>