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inbound

where politics and ports collide

Port of Seattle CEO Tay Yoshitani says ports can no longer afford to ignore environmental imperatives.

By [DC Velocity Staff](#),
From the [June 2009](#) issue

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You might not think of seaports and airports as beacons of social responsibility, but Tay Yoshitani believes they have the same obligations to society as any other business. The Port of Seattle CEO has established an Office of Social Responsibility, and he's made accountability and earning public trust two of the port authority's guiding principles. He's also challenged his staff to adopt the "faster, better, cheaper" mantra and added "safer and cleaner" to their mission.

Running an environmentally responsible operation is the right thing to do for a lot of reasons, Yoshitani said in a keynote speech at the Coalition of New England Companies for Trade (CONNECT) Northeast Trade and Transportation Conference in Newport, R.I. But a "sustainable" business model is not just about the environment, he said. "The other two ingredients are economic impact and social justice."

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In today's political atmosphere, the environment, the economy, and society are tightly connected, Yoshitani noted. One result is that port operations are coming under increased environmental scrutiny by local citizens. "The days of getting immediate environmental impact approval because projects create jobs are over," Yoshitani said. "Ports that work successfully with their surrounding communities and manage their facilities in an environmentally responsible way will be successful. Those that don't risk local stakeholders' shutting down ports and blocking international trade." That would hurt local, regional, and national economies, he added. "Make no mistake—when cargo disappears, it translates into job losses."

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