



MARITIME DIVISION

# The Navigator

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## Upcoming Events

**Texas Transportation Forum**  
January 4-6, 2016  
Austin, TX

**Port Capital Program Application  
Period (Phase I) Opens**  
January 5, 2016

**Transportation Commission  
Meeting**  
January 28, 2016  
Austin, TX

**Transportation Commission  
Meeting**  
February 25, 2016  
Austin, TX

**Port Capital Program Application  
Period (Phase I) Closes**  
February 28, 2016

## Port Authority Advisory Committee Meets for Rider 48 Projects and Upcoming Port Capital Program

The Port Authority Advisory Committee (PAAC) held a meeting on December 18th in Houston. At the meeting, the PAAC discussed the Rider 48 port access projects, for which several Texas ports nominated projects. TxDOT staff presented the project ranking results, as well as the TxDOT District review process. The PAAC then voted to approve the list of nine ranked projects totaling \$10,099,844 of the \$20 million authorized under Rider 48. An additional call for projects may be held at a later date for the remainder of the funding. The list of projects will be presented to the Texas Transportation Commission in February for inclusion in the Unified Transportation Program.

The PAAC also voted to approve the draft of the Strategic Mission Plan for

Texas Ports, pending agreed upon changes. The Strategic Mission Plan is a document that is required by the Texas Legislature and will describe the economic impact of Texas ports and identify key challenges and opportunities for the Texas maritime system.

The PAAC concluded the meeting by approving the policy and process for the 2017-2018 Port Capital Program. The Port Capital Program will include a two phase application process. The TxDOT Maritime Division will send out the Phase I application and information about the process to ports on January 5, 2016. The first phase of the application process will end on February 28th. For questions regarding the application process, please call (512) 486-5127 or (713) 802-5781.

## Capacity Study of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway In the Works

It is in the long-term interest of TxDOT to encourage greater usage of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW), particularly if cargoes being transported on the state highways system can be diverted to the waterways. However, like all transportation infrastructure, the GIWW is at risk of reaching capacity constraints that impede operations. To date, there has not been a systematic, operational, data-driven approach that examines vessel movements along the entire Texas GIWW to determine if and where capacity problems might exist.

To that end, TxDOT's Maritime Division is sponsoring a GIWW Capacity Study through TxDOT's Research and Technology Implementation Office. The study is

being conducted by the Center for Economic Development and Research at the University of North Texas and the Center for Transportation Research. The study will identify existing operational and infrastructure inefficiencies and capacity constraints along the GIWW. It will also quantify baseline vessel traffic conditions and historical vessel movements, collect existing data on vessel effects, and estimate current and future vessel traffic. The

researchers will develop tracking criteria for improvements to the GIWW's operations and its infrastructure. Interviews and field visits will also be conducted with operators of the waterways, industry that use the waterways, port authorities in addition to federal and state agencies involved with the waterways operation to gain unique perspectives and supplement data acquisition. The study is scheduled for completion by February 2017.



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## Blast from the Past: Construction of the Corpus Christi Harbor Bridge



Photo courtesy of Corpus Christi Public Libraries  
Aerial view of the construction of the framework of the Corpus Christi Harbor Bridge in the 1950's. Plans for replacement of the Harbor Bridge are in the works.

## Lt. Gov. Patrick Announces Major Initiative on Texas Ports

Since the end of the legislative session, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick has toured across Texas and has decided to launch a major initiative on Texas ports. He has announced that he will create a port subcommittee on the Transportation Advisory Board in addition to the interim charges issued to the Senate Transportation subcommittee in October. Lt. Gov. Patrick is also in the process of forming an interim select committee on ports. He and Texas House Speaker Joe Straus have discussed collaborating and making this a joint select committee.

Lt. Gov. Patrick stated, "Ports have not been an issue that the legislature has spent much time studying during my decade in the state legislature. Our ports provide countless jobs directly and indirectly and generate an estimated \$277 billion in economic value to the state."

## Michael Mierzwa Joins Port Authority Advisory Committee

Michael Mierzwa, the Port Director for the Port of Galveston, was appointed to the Port Authority Advisory Committee (PAAC) at the October 29th meeting of the Texas Transportation Commission for a three year term. Mr. Mierzwa has worked with the Port of Galveston since 2000 and has served as the Port Director since February 2012. The TxDOT Maritime Division welcomes Mr. Mierzwa to the PAAC!

## Transportation Commission Names James Bass as New TxDOT Head

On December 17th, the Texas Transportation Commission selected James Bass as TxDOT's new Executive Director. Bass, who has been serving as the agency's Chief Financial Officer since 2005, began his new role on January 1, 2016.



Bass began his TxDOT career in 1985 working summers in the Fort Worth District and as an engineer aide in the Austin District while earning his bachelor's degree in accounting at the University of Texas at Austin.

Bass is replacing General Joe Weber and is the 21st Executive Director for TxDOT.

## First Tanker Carrying U.S. Crude Leaves from Texas

In December 2015, President Obama signed a 2016 spending bill that included a provision repealing the ban on exporting crude from the United States. The ban was enacted in the 1970's as a response to the Arab Oil Embargo.

Texas has taken advantage of the new opportunity to export crude almost immediately. On December 31st, the *Theo T* set sail from the NuStar's North Beach Terminal in the Port of Corpus Christi. This shipment is believed to be the first export of U.S.-produced light crude oil since the ban was put in place more than 40 years ago. The oil was pumped from the Eagle Ford Shale and was loaded onto the tanker by ConocoPhillips Co. and NuStar Energy LP.

Crude exports from Houston are planned for early-January.

**HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM THE  
TxDOT MARITIME DIVISION!**