

Upcoming Events

Transportation Commission Meeting

October 29, 2015
Austin, TX

Transportation Commission Meeting

November 19, 2015
Austin, TX

Transportation Commission Meeting

December 17, 2015
Austin, TX

Port Authority Advisory Committee Meeting

December 18, 2015
Houston, TX

Barbours Cut Channel Deepened

The completion of the deepening and widening of the Barbours Cut Channel was announced at the Port of Houston Authority Port Commission meeting on September 29, 2015. The Houston Pilots have given authorization to the Port of Houston to receive vessels with a 45 ft. operating depth, up from 40 ft. The MSC Oriane became the first ship to take advantage of the deeper channel.

Port Commission Chairman Janiece Longoria remarked, "The increased vessel operating depth at 45 feet will significantly improve efficiency of ships calling at Barbours Cut and opens the door for future classes of larger ships to call." The improvements to the Barbours Cut Channel is expected to result in over \$900 million in economic benefits over the next fifty years.

Sixty-seven percent of all containerized cargo on the Gulf Coast is handled by the Port of Houston. Over the last year, container volume has increased by 17 percent. Barbours Cut is Houston's busiest of two container terminals. Dredging at Bayport, Port of Houston's second container terminal, will finish next year.

The channel improvements will allow the Port of Houston to accept post-Panamax container vessels. In May of this year, the Port of Houston received four post-Panamax cranes at Barbours Cut capable of unloading ships 22 containers wide. The Port of Houston also plans to improve the capacity of its container yard. The port anticipates a doubling of terminal capacity following the completion of all improvements at Barbours Cut.

Port of Galveston Celebrates 15 Years of Cruising

The Port of Galveston recently celebrated a major milestone as a leader in the cruise industry. September 30, 2015 marked 15 years of year-round cruise service through Galveston.

Mike Mierzwa, the Port Director for Galveston, said, "We celebrate the positive impact the cruise industry has had on our community. It is important that we recognize that not only is this business great for Galveston, but also for the entire state of Texas." The cruise industry in Galveston has generated \$1.2 billion in direct spending and 20,000 jobs paying nearly \$1.1 billion in income.



Since 2000, the port has invested \$85 million in its cruise facilities to continue providing great service. The port is currently investing \$13 million to expand its second cruise terminal, expected to be complete by March

2017. Through the years, the Port of Galveston has had more than 2,600 ship calls, hosted 18 different cruise ships, and served over 7 million passengers. Galveston is an increasingly popular homeport for cruisers. More than 824,000 passengers are expected to sail through Galveston in 2015, a 28 percent increase from 2014. Galveston is currently the 4th busiest cruise port in the U.S.

The Port of Galveston is home to Carnival and Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines. Disney Cruise Lines will return to Galveston for the 2015 holiday season.

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Public Comment Open for the Texas Freight Mobility Plan

TxDOT is in the process of developing the first comprehensive and multimodal Texas Freight Mobility Plan that focuses on the state's freight transportation needs. The Plan was presented to the Texas Transportation Commission during its meeting on September 24, 2015.

A 30 day public comment period for the draft opened on October 9th and will close on November 7th. The purpose of the public comment period is to assist TxDOT with finalizing the Texas Freight Mobility Plan.

To review the draft Texas Freight Mobility Plan and provide comment, please visit:

<http://movetexasfreight.com/>

Panama Canal Included in Lt. Governor's Interim Charges for Texas Senate

Texas Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick recently released his interim charges for the Texas Senate. One of the charges called for a study on the demand placed on Texas ports, roadways, and railways resulting from the Panama Canal expansion and recommendations to ensure that transportation infrastructure is adequate to accommodate any increases in imports and exports.

Planning for Freight at the National Level

The U.S. Department of Transportation released the Draft National Freight Strategic Plan which provides policy proposals and addresses the increasing challenges related to freight transportation in the United States. The draft plan is open for public comment and can be viewed at:

<https://www.transportation.gov/freight/NFSP>.

General Weber Stepping Down as Executive Director of TxDOT



On October 6, 2015, TxDOT Executive Director General Joe Weber announced that he will be departing from the agency at the end of this year. General Weber was selected as Executive Director in April 2014. Prior to joining TxDOT, General Weber served as the Vice President for Student Affairs at Texas A&M University, following his retirement from the U.S. Marine Corps as a three-star general. In his announcement, General Weber said, "The opportunity to lead and serve at your side over the past 18 months has been a true highlight in my life, a good life encompassing a career spanning 44 years of service to country and state. It has been an incredible honor to serve both for you and with you in the higher calling that we as public servants have chosen." The TxDOT Maritime Division thanks General Weber for his leadership and support throughout his tenure as Executive Director.

Ribbon Cutting Ceremony at Port of Brownsville for Dock 16

On August 7, 2015, a ribbon cutting ceremony was held at the Port of Brownsville for a new state-of-the-art dock. Dock 16 is Brownsville's second heavy-load capacity dock and can accommodate deep draft cargo vessels. This was the first time in 16 years that Brownsville has opened a new dock.

Dock 16 was funded in part through a \$12 million Department of Transportation TIGER grant. The port provided the rest of the funding for the construction of the dock. In total, the project cost \$27.5 million. The dock is expected to boost capacity and decrease wait times for cargo vessels.

The ribbon cutting ceremony included the U.S. Maritime Administrator Paul N. Jaenichen and Congressman Filemon Vela, Jr.



Ribbon cutting ceremony at Port of Brownsville on August 7, 2015. Photo courtesy of Port of Brownsville.