

America's Central Port bets big on rail

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GRANITE CITY - By the end of 2016, America's Central Port District, located in Granite City and Madison, IL, will have completed the construction of 4.25 miles of new rail track throughout their business and industrial campus. The construction of this new track doubles the amount of new rail construction completed by the Port over the last 15 years.

Midway through September, rail contractors mobilized on two major rail projects at America's Central Port, designed to increase efficiency and rail throughput, reduce congestion, and provide ample capacity to meet future needs. The first of these projects will bring rail access to a 60-acre development site in the center of the Port's campus, which will include direct access to the recently-completed, 126,000 sq. ft. advanced chemical processing building, as well as construct an additional spur for future development on this site. This project also includes the rehabilitation of "Track 3" which

currently serves two of the six primary warehouses located in the Port's industrial campus. The existing track was actually made in the late 1800s and was installed by the Army during WWII to transport military material. The new track will be upgraded to current industry standards, and will provide current and future tenants the necessary infrastructure to handle maximum inbound and outbound traffic.

Both the new track construction and the track rehabilitation project were funded through a US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant and matched with a loan from Madison County (IL) Community Development.

"This is a great opportunity for the Port to assist St. Louis area companies that need rail," said Bill Stahlman, Director of Engineering and Construction for America's Central Port. "Our new rail construction opens us up to many new markets, and above all, keeps our customers' shipping costs to a minimum. Nationwide, sixty percent (60%) of a manufacturing company's costs are in transportation. We are working hard to reduce that number for our tenants."



The second major rail construction project is the expansion of the South Rail Loop. The initial, single, rail loop track constructed in 2009, will now have two additional adjacent

tracks to meet the growing rail needs at the Harbor. Over 15,185 feet of rail will be constructed in this project, allowing additional train capacity.

The Port is paying all of the cost of the \$2.5 million project through loan funds.

Both projects are scheduled for completion by January 1, 2017, and they will create operational advantages at the Port. Going forward, the Port can accommodate multiple unit trains simultaneously, to better serve their customers.

"At a time when our states and federal government are struggling to build and maintain their infrastructure, America's Central Port is showing that it can be done, and businesses will take advantage of a strong and reliable transportation system," said Stahlman.

"We have such a unique opportunity in our region," said Dr. Charles (Chip) King, Chairman of the Board of America's Central Port. "Our location in the heart of our nation's transportation system allows us to offer unique and efficient transportation advantages to our tenants and the region, and the Commissioners and staff at the Port want to be sure that we are capitalizing on all of those opportunities."

Looking to the future, engineering and planning staff members at the Port have worked diligently to map out the next several projects. These future plans would rehabilitate approximately five to six miles of rail track, and improve the capacity for their operators, while constructing new buildings.

"The Port has a commitment to our tenants and our region," said King. "Our talented staff never stops looking for ways to not only improve the infrastructure we have in place, but to add to it. With the growing population and the projected increase in demand for goods, we want to be best prepared to handle those increased amounts of freight. Our goal has been, and remains to provide our tenants and the region with the maximum transPORTunities, so that together we can leverage the St. Louis Region as the transportation powerhouse it is naturally designed to be."