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American Shipper Container Infrastructure News

JAXPORT expands funding for harbor deepening

Grant and loan will help complete work in Jacksonville, Florida, shipping channel

Kim Link-Wills • Thursday, July 30, 2020 0 278 2 minutes read



📷 JAXPORT this week welcomed the Siem Confucius, the first ro-ro vessel of its size powered by LNG. (Photo: JAXPORT)

JAXPORT was awarded \$75 million this week to help deepen its harbor.

The Jacksonville, Florida, port authority called the \$35 million grant and \$40 million loan approved by the City Council a “historic win for our community and the 15,000 jobs that will be created or protected” by the project.

JAXPORT said the harbor deepening, which will take the 13-mile shipping channel from 40 feet to 47 feet and allow larger container ships to call, is expected to be completed in 2023. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Dutra began work in February 2018.

The total cost of the project had been pegged at \$484 million but the work is progressing two years ahead of schedule. Previous funding commitments included \$192 million from the federal government, \$140 million from the state of Florida, \$40 million from JAXPORT and \$28 million from private partner SSA Marine.

The \$223 million SSA Jacksonville Container Terminal at Blount Island, slated to be completed about the same time as the deepening project, will feature a vessel turning basin and have the ability to accommodate two post-Panamax vessels simultaneously.

“As northeast Florida’s economic engine, JAXPORT will continue to play a vital role in the economic recovery of our region and state,” CEO Eric Green said in a statement. “We are grateful for the support and leadership of Mayor [Lenny] Curry, the Jacksonville City Council and our federal, state and private industry partners as we work together to build a brighter future for our community through the jobs and opportunities a deeper harbor creates.”

Also this week, JAXPORT welcomed the Siem Confucius, the first roll-on/roll-off (ro-ro) vehicle carrier of its size powered by liquefied natural gas (LNG).

The ro-ro vessel arrived at JAXPORT from Veracruz, Mexico, and unloaded factory-new Volkswagen Group of America cars and SUVs at Blount Island during its maiden voyage to the United States.

The Siem Confucius, with a 7,500-vehicle capacity, is the first of two new LNG-powered ships built by Siem Car Carriers AS and commissioned by Volkswagen. According to Siem, the vessels reduce carbon dioxide emissions by up to 25% and sulphur oxide emissions up to 100%.

“Siem Confucius and its sister ship, Siem Aristotle, are among the most modern and eco-friendly ships serving the automotive industry today,” Siem Car Carriers President Jeffrey Campbell said in a statement. “By investing in world-class technology and maintaining a modern and efficient fleet, we are able to reduce emissions and our overall carbon footprint while delivering the world-class service our customers have come to expect from Siem.”

JAXPORT said it is the nation’s No. 2 vehicle-handling port and the only U.S. East Coast port offering on-dock and near-dock LNG fueling capabilities.

“Northeast Florida is a global leader in the use of LNG as a preferred fuel type for the maritime industry,” Green said. “Some of the world’s most environmentally friendly vessels call JAXPORT and we are proud to support these initiatives and do our part to make the supply chain cleaner and greener for the communities we serve.”

Four LNG-powered vessels are homported at JAXPORT. Three LNG production and storage facilities operate in northeast Florida, and a fourth is under construction, JAXPORT said.

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