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GPA Holds First Virtual State of the Port **[1]**

On 23 Oct, 2020



Georgia Ports Authority Executive Director Griff Lynch delivers live comments leading into the Authority's first virtual State of the Port event. The Port of Savannah is the nation's busiest container export gateway for American-made products. Find print-quality images here [2]**. Find broadcast-quality b-roll video here** [3]**. (Georgia Ports Authority / Stephen Morton)**

SAVANNAH, Ga., Oct. 22, 2020 – In its first-ever virtual State of the Port Address, co-hosts Griff Lynch and Will McKnight took the Georgia Ports Authority's online audience for an on-terminal view of infrastructure advancements the Authority is making to accommodate record container growth. Lynch, GPA executive director, also highlighted nearly 9 million square feet of industrial construction now under way in Savannah's private market.

"We appreciate the decisions of cargo owners to place their trust in Georgia. As our economy recovers, customers continue to be attracted by Savannah's strong fundamentals – including the people who make our ports work," Lynch said. "I want to thank our GPA employees, the International Longshoremen's Association and our many partners across the logistics industry for their dedication to service."

In the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2021 (July-September), the Port of Savannah handled 1.2 million twenty-foot equivalent container units, an increase of 1.6 percent or 19,663 TEUs. The port set a monthly record in September, growing TEUs by 11.4 percent, or 42,140, for a total of 412,148 TEUs in September.

According to Cushman Wakefield, the Savannah market comprises 79 million square feet of

industrial space. Another 8.7 million square feet are under construction, for an 11 percent increase in inventory. Lynch noted there is enough land permitted for private development to accommodate another 130 million square feet of distribution center space within 30 miles of the port – nearly twice the area's current industrial space.

In a recorded statement, Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp said private development projects delivering thousands of jobs and millions of square feet of industrial space mean the long-term outlook for Georgia's ports is strong. "Over the past year, our nation has faced unprecedented challenges that have impacted our daily lives and our economy. We've had to rethink how we handle the logistics of healthcare, retail, manufacturing – and the global trade that supports these endeavors," Kemp said. "Through it all, our ports have remained steady, keeping cargo moving, attracting investment, and building market share."

Kemp said that as the nation's top export gateway, the Port of Savannah provides the cost-effective connections Georgia farmers, manufacturers and other exporters need to compete globally.

During the live portion of the virtual State of the Port, Lynch announced a 1.2 million square foot facility in Bryan County to be built by medical goods provider Medline Industries. Construction is expected to be complete in late 2021, with FedEx leasing 415,000 square feet to provide e-commerce capabilities.

Will McKnight, chairman of the GPA board and co-host during the virtual State of the Port, said helping to bring new business to Georgia is part of GPA's central mission – and a main reason the Authority is stepping up its capacity. "We're making strategic expansions to ensure cargo fluidity as Savannah's container trade increases," McKnight said. "Our long-term infrastructure investments ensure GPA is ready when our customers are ready to grow."

Ongoing infrastructure improvements include:

- Savannah Harbor Expansion Project. Deepening the harbor to 47 feet at low tide is now 75 percent finished, with completion expected in late 2021.
- Mason Mega Rail Terminal will double the Port of Savannah's annual rail capacity to 2 million TEUs. Nine new working tracks have been commissioned, with another nine slated for completion in 2021.
- Expanding container handling capabilities at Ocean Terminal to serve smaller ships while berth renovations are ongoing at Garden City. This project will be completed by the end of 2020.
- Straightening Berth 1 to allow Garden City Terminal to dock four 15,000+ TEU vessels and three additional vessels simultaneously. The project will take approximately two years.
- Expanding container storage onto 145 acres recently added to the now 1,345-acre Garden City Terminal.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Special guest Pat Wilson, commissioner of the Georgia Department of Economic Development, said the state has maintained powerful momentum in attracting new business. "We have more projects than we have probably ever had. Businesses are making decisions. This is not a true recession in the sense of there was a decline in need, it's just that the world shut down," Wilson said. "Businesses are taking this opportunity to make investments to continue to grow, and they're planning for the future, for when we come back."

In FY2020, the state of Georgia won projects bringing $7.4 billion and 24,000 jobs, across sectors including manufacturing, logistics and technology. In Chatham, Effingham and Bryan counties alone, private investors announced more than half a billion dollars in industrial projects and more than 1,200 jobs just last fiscal year.

Recent economic development announcements include:

- FedEx is taking 415,000 square feet in a brand new, 1.2 million square-foot facility in Bryan County being built by medical goods provider Medline. Construction is scheduled for completion in the fourth quarter of 2021.
- Hooker Furniture, HMI, will open a new 800,000 square-foot distribution facility in Liberty County's Tradeport East Business Center. The $23.5 million investment will deliver 50 new jobs.
- MSI Tile plans a 675,000 square-foot distribution center in Chatham County. MSI projects it will bring 20,000 TEUs of new business to the Port of Savannah annually, and provide 225 jobs.
- Logistics provider World Shipping is opening a 280,000 square-foot facility in Savannah in November.
- Georgia Exports Company has established a location 1.5 miles from the Appalachian Regional Port in Murray County, where it will load logs into containers for export. GEC is expected to export more than 28,000 TEUs annually.
- Huali Floors is establishing its first U.S. headquarters and manufacturing facility in Murray County. The $27 million project will create 315 new jobs.

McKnight said by taking the State of the Port address online, GPA is able to share Savannah's competitive advantages with a broader audience.

"We have been able to reach out to thousands more people than we ever have before," McKnight said. "It's exciting to have the opportunity to virtually bring our stakeholders and customers onto a working port."

Georgia's deepwater ports and inland barge terminals support more than 496,700 jobs throughout the state annually and contribute $29 billion in income, $122 billion in revenue and $3.4 billion in state and local taxes to Georgia's economy. The Port of Savannah handled 9.3 percent of total U.S. containerized cargo volume and 10.5 percent of all U.S. containerized exports in FY2020.

For more information, visit gaports.com [4], or contact GPA Chief Communications Officer Robert Morris at (912) 964-3855 or rmorris@gaports.com [5]

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