

Port Milwaukee: State grant readies Port Milwaukee for increased rail service

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Local Businesses Expected to Benefit from Track Improvements

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation has awarded a grant of approximately \$3-million to Port Milwaukee to upgrade railroad track on Jones Island. The money, from the State's Freight Railroad Preservation Program, will be combined with a previously budgeted 20% match from Port Milwaukee in order to complete work valued at more than \$3.7-million.

The grant will be used to modernize about 8,000 feet of track, directly benefitting a number of the Port's tenants. The work will also prepare Port Milwaukee for a possible resumption of intermodal container service connecting regional manufacturers and transportation companies with railroad service to the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

"Port Milwaukee's railroad infrastructure has served Milwaukee companies for decades. These planned improvements will bring tracks at the Port to the highest standards," Mayor Tom Barrett said. "Looking forward, this work will facilitate the addition of long distance container service so local businesses can reach distant markets efficiently."

Thousands of rail cars move through Port Milwaukee rail facilities annually connecting to either the Union Pacific or Canadian Pacific Railways. That number is expected to increase substantially when intermodal service resumes.

Regularly scheduled rail container movement at Port Milwaukee ended in 2012

when Canadian Pacific streamlined its intermodal operation. Most companies that use shipping containers to move cargo in southeastern Wisconsin are now required to truck containers to Chicago-area rail yards, creating additional regulatory burdens for Wisconsin manufacturers and contributing to highway congestion. A resumption of intermodal service in Milwaukee would reduce transportation costs for many Wisconsin companies.

In making the award the Wisconsin Department of Transportation said it anticipated the grant to Port Milwaukee would improve transportation efficiency and encourage economic growth in Southeast Wisconsin.

“Port Milwaukee is an active transportation hub and vital economic artery for our region. The Port’s multimodal connectivity ensures that Wisconsin-manufactured products can safely and reliably move to domestic and international markets via the Port’s water, rail and highway access,” Port Milwaukee Director Adam Schlicht said. “The Port’s efficiency and infrastructure ensures Wisconsin’s goods can move freely and readily, and with these rail improvements, companies in Milwaukee and around the regional will see added transportation and economic benefits.”

The Port Milwaukee is an economic entity of City government governed by the seven-member Board of Harbor Commissioners, a panel appointed by Mayor Tom Barrett and confirmed by the Common Council. It administers operations on the 467 acres that make up the Port and manages relationships with more than twenty Port tenants. The Port promotes shipping and commerce throughout the region by providing access to domestic and international ships, rail, and over-the-road transportation.