

State and Federal Lawmakers Agree to Back Port Project (Market Watch)

Bipartisan Support Urges the U.S. Department of Transportation to Help Save the Port of Palm Beach's Slip #3

The 17 Democrat and Republican Lawmakers that make up the Palm Beach County State Legislative Delegation were unified in their support today of the Port of Palm Beach's Federal TIGER Grant Application for funds needed to repair and upgrade the Port's Slip #3 which serves as the single point of commerce for the sugar grown in the Glades area; fuel for Florida Power & Light; and other bulk commodities such as cement and construction materials bound for the Bahamas.

By adopting a Resolution endorsing the Port's Slip #3 Project, the state lawmakers have now formally joined the Palm Beach County Congressional Delegation as well as the municipalities within the Port's District in urging the Federal Department of Transportation to recognize the current deteriorating condition of Slip #3 when evaluating the Port's application and without TIGER funding, places thousands of jobs at stake from the sugar cane industry workers to on-port personnel.

State Representative Mack Bernard whose State House district includes the Port of Palm Beach offered the Resolution for adoption during a public hearing today of the Palm Beach County Legislative Delegation meeting held at the campus of Palm Beach Atlantic University.

"The Port of Palm Beach is one of area's largest employers and economic engines we have and maintaining their ability to operate at full capacity should be one of Palm Beach County's top priorities," said Representative Bernard.

The TIGER Grant Application, which stands for Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery, submitted by the Port, is for \$20 million dollars which will go towards completion of the total Slip #3 project cost of \$46.4 million dollars. The Port of Palm Beach is contributing almost \$6.3 million and the State of Florida has pledged approximately \$20.1 million, making the project funding structure an attractive mix of local, state and hopefully

federal dollars.

The Slip #3 Project will restore the integrity of the slip's side walls which are in critical condition and in danger of causing a slip failure; widen the slip's capacity to better enable two larger ships to utilize the slip at the same time; replace and modernize the sugar loading operations which exports 100% of the sugar grown in the Glades area; and allow for greater container storage and on-port rail capabilities.

The support expressed today from the State lawmakers follows individual letters of support already submitted from Congressman Allen West; Congressman Ted Deutch; Congressman Alcee Hastings; Congressman Tom Rooney; and US Senator Bill Nelson. Also, in addition to the Board of Palm Beach County Commissioners and the Metropolitan Planning Organization, the municipalities of West Palm Beach; Riviera Beach; Belle Glade; Pahokee; and South Bay have all submitted letters of support. Industry support has come from the Sugar Cane Growers Cooperative; Florida Power & Light; Cemex; Vecenergy as well as other Palm Beach County based businesses which rely upon the Port of Palm Beach.

There were over 800 TIGER Discretionary Grant Applications received from throughout the United States totaling over \$14 billion in funding requests. This of course far exceeds the \$528 million available making the TIGER funding opportunity a highly competitive process. This is the third round of TIGER Grants which are designed to target port and rail infrastructure projects that will have a positive economic and new job creation impact on a particular region. Florida did not receive any awards from TIGER's first round.