

Grant supports port’s planned container-on-barge operations

America’s Central Port based in Granite City has been awarded a \$1.26 million grant for container-on-barge and intermodal equipment.

The money comes from the Marine Highway Program, created in 2007 by the Department of Transportation, Maritime Administration to help maintain and enhance what the agency calls “America’s Marine Highway.” The expansive network of navigable waterways includes rivers, bays, channels, coasts, the Great Lakes, open-ocean routes and the Saint Lawrence Seaway System.

America’s Central Port officials say the port plays a critical role in leveraging the transportation opportunities that help attract U.S. and foreign direct investment to the Southwest Illinois and Greater St. Louis region.

America’s Central Port has been pursuing container-on-barge (COB) for many years. With the completion of the Madison Harbor construction in 2016, the port says it is primed for container movement.

The harbor was constructed to handle bulk movement of grain from unit trains to barge as well general cargoes, with the movement of containers kept in the forefront of the design of the facility. A dual access road system is one example of how the port designed the facility with the trucking and container industry in mind. Two roads lead to the Madison Harbor general cargo dock: one bypasses a rail crossing, and the other has no overhead height restrictions. This unimpeded, redundant access reduces congestion and emissions, and greatly increases efficiencies of the Harbor operator and truck/chassis drivers.

The Madison Harbor is located just below Locks 27 on the Mississippi River. The port roadway system serving the harbor allows for unimpeded access to the six-lane limited access highway (Illinois Route 3). From the port’s exit onto Illinois Route 3, Interstates 70 and 44 are just 1-mile away. From there, access to Interstates 55 and 64 are just a few miles further.

With the \$1.26 million awarded from this Marine Highway grant, America’s Central Port in conjunction with their operator SCF Lewis and Clark Terminals will be able to more efficiently ship and receive containerized goods by barge, providing intermodal access to the Gulf of Mexico and cities like Chicago, New Orleans, and Memphis.

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Highway grant, a 20.7 percent match of \$331,200 will be shared between SCF and America’s Central Port.

The specific components of the project include:

- Purchase of a 275-ton crane to handle the loading of containers onto barges, as well as other commodities
- Installation of up to 18 new fixed and

pan/tilt/zoom cameras at the Madison Harbor to aid in the securing of containers and notification of trucks

- Purchase of a container tilter for use in loading bulk commodities into containers.

Plans are also in development regarding the laydown area for containers. While the Marine Highway grant will be used for handling equipment, on a separate project

(independent of this grant application), SCF is improving the marshaling yard area in order to more efficiently handle containers as volumes grow.

Given time needed to purchase the new equipment and installation, container-on-barge transportation at America’s Central Port is projected to be operational later this year in 2020.

