

St. Louis Regional Freightway



New online tool highlights nearly a dozen development ready rail land sites



Mary Lamie (Courtesy Bi-State Development)

The area across the Mississippi River east of the Gateway Arch and St. Louis is rich with industrial parks and development-ready land for all types of industrial and corporate use. A new initiative aims to highlight how ideal this location is for end-users ready to take advantage of the strong rail infrastructure and multimodal benefits in the region. In an effort to streamline the site selection process for rail-accessible sites across the two-state area, the St. Louis Regional Freightway is highlighting a handy new online tool that will enhance the region’s economic development marketing efforts by shining a spotlight on these top rail-served sites. This new tool was created in collaboration with the region’s Class-I railroads and economic development organizations, brokers and business leaders on both the Illinois and Missouri sides of the Mississippi River.

“As rail distribution continues to grow in importance with the Federal Highway Administration estimating that the industry will increase 30% over the next two decades, we’re preparing by producing a pipeline of rail-served sites for the future and highlighting rail sites that are currently ready to go,” said Mary Lamie, Executive Vice President of Multimodal Enterprises at Bi-State Development and head of the St. Louis Regional Freightway enterprise. “The bi-state St. Louis region already is recognized as one of the largest rail hubs in the county and is taking steps now to make the most of this projected growth by focusing on new industrial development within rail-accessible land sites.”

The Development-Ready Rail Land Sites list identifies 11 locations – including seven in the Metro East – with at least 20 available acres that are either shovel-ready or have development plans, active owners, or marketing in place to be considered near-shovel ready. Shovel-ready indicates potential pre-development work has been completed and construction can quickly begin. East of the Mississippi River in Southwestern Illinois, two sites have been through heavy review processes to be selected as Class I Rail lines “certified” sites. The Kelsey Business and Technology Park outside of Greenville, Illinois is both a CSX Transportation select site and a BNSF certified site, indicating that both railroads consider this 439-acre business park an optimal site for development within its rail network and as shovel-ready for development. Mid-American International Gateway near Jerseyville, Illinois is a 1,600-acre site that has been certified by the Illinois Super Site program indicating its development-ready rail potential. These state certifications come with rigorous pre-qualification processes to ensure the sites can support high volume rail users and multiple shippers or carriers.

Among the other shovel-ready sites in southwestern Illinois is America’s Central Port’s Madison Harbor Site in Granite City, Illinois, which totals 24 acres in a Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) area and existing Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District. Operated by Port Harbor Railroad Corporation, the site has access to six Class-I railroads through Terminal Rail Road Association of St. Louis (TRRA) with rail serviced by Kansas City Southern. Nearby Lakeview Commerce Center in Edwardsville, Illinois boasts a 123-acre location also within a TIF district and Enterprise Zone and has rail service potential through Union Pacific and Kansas City Southern. Also located in Edwardsville, Gateway Panattoni’s 240-acre shovel-ready site in Gateway Commerce Center offers 10-year tax abatement with rail service potential through Norfolk Southern.

The list also includes two Metro East sites that are rail accessible but not quite shovel ready. The Kaskaskia Regional Port District (KRPD 2) site in Red Bud,

Illinois, which totals 43.7 acres and is served by the Canadian National Railroad, and the 195-acre site amassed by TRRA along Route 3 both need site grading and/or infrastructure improvements. For these sites requiring pre-development work or those needing more of a long-term vision to address challenging site issues, the region is working with local municipalities, tracking utility infrastructure, preparing market feasibility studies and facilitating meetings with property owners and state agencies.

By helping identify potential locations that can handle industrial development but need support to become development ready, the St. Louis Regional Freightway aims to continue to expand its shovel-ready sites pipeline, with the goal of attracting additional industrial development to serve end-users needing to be near rail for purposes of shipping and receiving from rail/ocean containers. Containerized cargo shipments continue to grow, underscoring the importance of taking advantage of expanding rail demand by

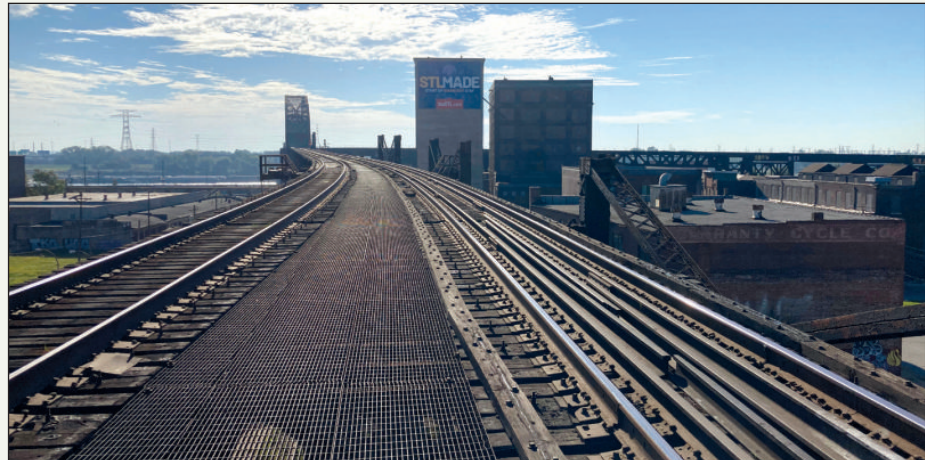
increasing the number of shovel-ready, rail-accessible land sites in the region. “This type of proactive research and outreach around site readiness is absolutely crucial to the region’s long-term success,” said Joe Torp, Industrial Development Manager for Norfolk Southern. “Many high profile site selection wins are the direct result of years of research, planning, development, and advertising that occur before an industry even comes to town looking for an available site. The Development-Ready Rail Land Sites list is a key first step in elevating specific sites to that next level.” This latest initiative by the St. Louis Regional Freightway utilizes the same collaborative approach that was taken to develop, maintain and promote the comprehensive list of Featured Real Estate Sites in the bi-state region and to create the annual list of Priority Projects, which helps to secure funding for and advance major infrastructure projects that reinforce the region as a global freight hub. Both can be found at www.TheFreightway.com.

Infrastructure investment and additional capacity benefits freight network users

Completion of the St. Louis region’s highest priority infrastructure project last fall, the recent start of construction on another top priority bridge crossing project, and plans for improvements to a third Mississippi River bridge underscore the St. Louis region’s continued commitment to adding capacity to its world-class freight network. The \$222 million project to replace the 1890s-era Merchants Bridge over the Mississippi River linking Missouri and Illinois just north of downtown St. Louis was completed in September. The new double-track structure, which serves six Class I railroads and Amtrak, can accommodate trains traveling in the opposite direction at the same time, doubling the capacity of the bridge, so it can move freight faster, more cost-effectively and reliably.

Joe Torp, Industrial Development Manager for Norfolk Southern, believes the new bridge is delivering tremendous benefits for the rail industry and for shippers, eliminating bottlenecks that had been caused when two trains couldn’t pass at the same time. “The Merchants Bridge is one of those few locations in the St. Louis area where rail can cross from one side of the Mississippi River to the other, so any delay in that vital link had a follow-on effect up and down the network,” Torp said. “We are very excited about the completion of the Merchants Bridge, especially from the operations side.”

Replacement of the structure had been the region’s top freight infrastructure priority since 2016. The list of the region’s priority projects is compiled annually by the St. Louis Regional Freightway’s Freight Development Committee and represents the infrastructure needs of the manufacturing and logistics industries in the Eastern Missouri and Southwestern Illinois area. The St. Louis Regional Freightway was established in 2014 by Bi-State Development to create a regional freight district and to advance infrastructure projects to support freight movement through the region. A project’s inclusion on the Priority Projects list signifies unanimous support by the Freight Development Committee and helps raise awareness about the project’s need, while demonstrating all constituents see the benefits of



The MacArthur Bridge (pictured above) and the recently rebuilt Merchants Bridge both connect Missouri and Illinois at St. Louis and collectively represent the highest-volume rail crossing on the Mississippi River. (Courtesy Bi-State Development)

the project to the entire freight network, making it a stronger candidate for funding. Another high priority project is the new Interstate 270 (I-270) Chain of Rocks Bridge over the Mississippi River in a corridor featuring an abundance of manufacturing, logistics and distribution facilities. Construction to replace it began in January, marking another significant milestone for infrastructure investment in the region. It also is a testament to the strength of the continued collaboration helping to add capacity and redundancy to the St. Louis region’s freight network. Over a three-year period during the project planning phase, in a demonstration of remarkable bi-state unity, the Missouri Department of Transportation and the Illinois Department of Transportation jointly secured more than \$600 million in funding for the bridge replacement, along with improvements to adjacent sections of I-270. The new bridge is part of a regional plan to improve a 30-mile section of I-270 from James S. McDonnell Boulevard in Missouri to Illinois Route 157 in Illinois. Nearly \$900 million in funding has been secured for this corridor to date. The project advanced to become one of the region’s highest priorities due to rising maintenance costs for the aging structure, and increased traffic volumes and safety issues associated with narrow shoulders.

At four lanes wide, the current bridge creates a severe freight bottleneck and is not equipped to handle the large freight flow increases forecasted for the region. This joint project will deliver a new twin bridge structure providing two lanes in each direction, expandable to three, with a 10-foot shoulder from Riverview Drive in Missouri to the Chain of Rocks Canal on the Illinois side. This collaborative, future-focused approach will ensure the project serves this region for decades to come. Looking forward, the St. Louis Regional Freightway is adding a \$34 million improvement project for the MacArthur Bridge linking both states at St. Louis to its updated Priority Projects list for 2024. “The MacArthur and Merchants bridges together represent the highest-volume rail crossing on the Mississippi River,” said Mary Lamie, Executive Vice President – Multi Modal Enterprises at Bi-State Development. “These projects are essential to strengthen our region’s role in the global freight network and support our position as a reliever during supply chain disruption. We will continue to follow the region’s model of public-private collaboration for multimodal investment to advance them.” The current list of more than 25 Priority Projects is at <https://www.thefreightway.com/why-stl-region/priority-infrastructure-projects/>.