

Deep Water Port *notes*

The News Portfolio of The Connecticut Deep Water Port Community

New London . New Haven . Bridgeport

America's Marine Highway

By Donald B. Frost



Tanker Ardmare Centurion inbound Port Jefferson with a load of bio-diesel. Photo by Captain Charles Jonas

OUR OCEANS AND RIVERS HAVE BEEN LIFE LINES OF COMMERCE SINCE PRE-COLONIAL TIMES so it was only logical that States and localities saw them as a way to reduce highway congestion and air pollution spewing from all the trucks. In response the Maritime Administration (US Dept of Transportation) turned a long series of studies of using our coastal corridors (I-95, I-10 and I-5) into what we now know as America's Marine Highway Program (AMH). The program fosters the distribution of sea containers by water from our major or "hub" ports to smaller "outports" along our coasts.

The idea is fine but most truck traffic is domestic. Studies of I-95 in Connecticut indicate that less than 20% (the 2002 figures were 8-15% depending on the day of the week) of all truck traffic involves sea containers. Being so close to New York and Boston a very small portion of sea container traffic will ever move to Connecticut by water. The remaining truck traffic is either domestic long-distance trailers, or regional and local delivery box trucks. Being that they represent a much

larger portion of total truck traffic, getting even a small percentage of this traffic off the highways will be far more beneficial than moving sea containers by water.

An article by Stephen M. Carmel, Senior Vice President of Maersk Lines, Limited in the August 2013 issue of the U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings about use of the Arctic brings up another point that is not confined to the Arctic or Connecticut. "More than half of all container CARGO is now component-level goods – that is, materials destined for factories for use in a production process operating on a just-in-time type inventory-management system. This requires deliveries that are consistent, reliable and have schedule integrity. The key goal is 99% on-time delivery."

Delays, whether because the ocean going vessel is late, its berth is occupied, labor work rules do not include 24/7 operation, paper work is missing or delayed, or the coastal vessel is delayed shifting between 2-3-4 ocean terminals in the hub port, cannot be tolerated. The so-called

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outports must also work 24/7 and have enough lay-down space for a full load of both full and empty containers. Congestion is not eliminated, just moved to someplace where local land use and quality of life issues will defeat the imperative for seamless operations around the clock.

If the cargo is mostly semi-finished goods or materials meant for further manufacturing or assembly, and there are no factories close to the outport, where is the gain? If the cargo is not time sensitive, the outports will be used as inventory in transit and the containers will become warehouses on wheels. Crowded container terminals at smaller ports are less tolerated than those in hub ports.

There is a solution that responds to all stakeholder concerns, but the model is not a "seaport". It is an "airport" and in particular FEDEX's terminal in Memphis. The part of their facility that must be emulated is how they use technology and people to quickly move cargo (packages). Every facet of their system is meant to deliver the goods to the receiver as quickly as possible.

America's Marine Highway will not happen until the disincentives to

just add water !



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private investment are removed. These include the absurdly high cost of building ships, even small ones, in the United States. (Ships built here cost 3 to 5 times more than even Europe with all its socialized labor costs). Then there is the Harbor Maintenance Tax, restrictive working hours at both load and discharge terminals, local NIMBY resistance to change of any kind, and inadequate local access to other modes of transportation such as rail and highways.

Cargo brought to this country that might be moved to other places along our coasts by water must pay the Harbor Maintenance tax twice – once at the port of entry and again when it is trans-shipped. Domestic to domestic moves by water only pay once ... but of course trucks and railroads don't pay anything. It is not that they are collecting any money on the rare coastal movements of today. The half of the \$1.6 Billion collected each year that does get used for the purpose it was collected, will not help the shallow draft coastal carriers.

AMH can actually create longshore jobs, and probably ILA/ILWU wage rates can be tolerated, but work rules must to be changed to fit the urgent need to maintain schedules. The model has to be the FEDEX terminal in Memphis.



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Link: http://courtney.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6533&Itemid

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