



CUSTOMS BROKERS & FREIGHT FORWARDERS ASSOCIATION of Charleston, S.C., Inc.



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ORGANIZED 1961

Position Paper – Port Competitiveness

Navy Base Terminal, Harbor Deepening, DCs Essential to Future Position

To re-establish the Port of Charleston's competitive position, the Customs Brokers & Freight Forwarders Association of Charleston supports the timely construction of the Navy Base Terminal, the Reconnaissance Study for further harbor deepening in Charleston and aggressive economic development efforts, including the location of distribution centers in the area.

In the span of just a few years, the Port of Charleston has slipped from the 4th largest container port in the country to 8th. While Charleston has been and remains the 6th busiest U.S. seaport in the value of cargo handled, the loss in container market share to neighboring and competing ports is real and is not sustainable.

Until U.S. Lines went bankrupt in the 1986, the Port of Savannah was twice as busy as Charleston. Then, in the 1990s, Charleston was the fastest growing port in the nation. The principal drivers of this were foreign direct investment that flowed into the state and completion of the Wando Welch Terminal. At one point, Charleston was almost twice as big as Savannah.

While Charleston remains one of the most productive ports in the world and has tremendous navigational advantages, the port's volume has slipped as competing states have taken business away. Major factors impacting Charleston's port volume over the past few years include delays to port expansion, competing ports' success in attracting distribution centers, shipping industry mergers and the general economic condition.

To turn the tide, efforts to develop Charleston's port business must be refocused. The Reconnaissance Study for future harbor deepening in Charleston should be resumed immediately. Additionally, progress must continue on construction of the Navy Base Terminal, including the sourcing of fill material from the Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Site and construction of the Port Access Road.

Finally, we must support the significant distribution center and logistics park projects that private developers are pursuing in Jedyburg and near Orangeburg. In the Charleston metro area alone, companies such as Hillwood, Johnson Development, Lauth Properties, Childress Klein and Trammell Crow are planning and developing more than 20 million square feet of new distribution and manufacturing space. This private sector endorsement of South Carolina's future in international shipping should be supported through infrastructure development.