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PORT OF PASCAGOULA

PRESS RELEASE

Port of Pascagoula to receive \$6.6 Million in Gulf Coast Restoration Funds

Pascagoula, MS, July 13, 2020: Senate Bill 2977, which details projects awarded BP oil spill money, became law on Wednesday, July 9, 2020. Included in the list is \$6.6 million allocated for the Jackson County Port Authority's North Rail Connector Project.

According to Port Director Mark McAndrews, "The North Rail Connector is the last segment of the \$37+ million-dollar rail relocation project that was funded primarily with a \$14 million federal TIGER grant. However, funding for the North Rail Connector was not included in the TIGER grant. The North Rail Connector is the final link to complete the entire project which affords enhanced rail service in Jackson County and into the Port. In addition to the BP funds, the federal CRISI Program, Mississippi Dept. of Transportation and the Port have made financial commitments."

The North Rail Connector is new construction of 4,300 ft (8/10 mile) of rail to connect the railroad bridge over the Escatawpa River to the recently relocated Mississippi Export Rail line, which is now complete. This vital connection will enable full operation of the rail relocation plan which also provides far-reaching benefits for local municipalities, including the closing of 16 crossings and alleviation of switching in downtown Pascagoula which provokes significant traffic congestion several times a day.

McAndrews added, "This has been a slow process due to complex changes and negotiations with our many partners as well as the need for additional funds. We are extremely grateful to our Jackson County delegation, state officials, and the entire Mississippi legislature for their perseverance in the last several years to assist in bringing this major Mississippi economic development project to fruition.

We are not there yet, but this substantial \$6.6 million award enables us to get beyond the planning, engineering, and permitting to move on with construction in the near future. The benefits our communities have been long anticipating are going to happen. We sincerely appreciate your patience. Once the North Rail Connector is under construction, we estimate completion in approximately 15-18 months. "

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