



**South
Carolina
Ports**

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PORT PRESENTS CRUISE INDUSTRY UPDATE, ANNOUNCES NEXT STEPS FOR CRUISE TERMINAL RELOCATION AT THE NORTHERN END OF UNION PIER

Newsome announces formation of Cruise Neighbors Advisory Council

Charleston, SC – South Carolina State Ports Authority (SCSPA) President and CEO Jim Newsome today provided an update on the cruise industry to the community and announced the next steps for the Union Pier property. According to Newsome, this fall the SCSPA will issue a request for proposals (RFP) to architects to design a new passenger terminal at the northern end of Union Pier, and the SCSPA has formed a Cruise Neighbors Advisory Council that includes residents from the neighborhoods closest to the terminal.

Joined by City of Charleston Mayor Joe Riley, Newsome presented what he called a “Report to the Community on the Cruise Ship Industry” and noted that the terminal relocation was in response to community input that was an integral part of SCSPA’s planning process during the past year. “This relocation provides numerous benefits,” said Newsome, “including reducing traffic, removing all cargo operations and trains from Union Pier, and – most importantly – making the southern portion of the 63-acre property available for public and other uses.”

Newsome noted that Charleston has welcomed almost 1,000 cruise ships during the past 37 years. “Cruises are good for Charleston, and good for the port,” he said. “Cruise ships provide jobs and more than \$37 million in annual economic impact.” He added that about one-third of cruise ship passengers spend at least one night in Charleston, about half visit attractions and patronize local restaurants, and almost all of them say they plan to return to Charleston. “They recognize and appreciate Charleston’s special character, and we are firmly committed to manage our cruise business in a way that protects and preserves that character,” he added.

Newsome reiterated the SCSPA’s commitment to a one-berth one-ship terminal capable of handling ships designed to carry up to 3,500 passengers. “We see Charleston as being able to accommodate about two ships per week,” he said. “And, if we see that situation changing, we will consult the community well in advance. After all, it is in our interest to keep Charleston just the way visitors and residents like it.”

According to Newsome, cruise ships are subjected to the strictest environmental standards of all the more than 2,000 ships that annually enter the Charleston harbor. “There is absolutely no objective evidence of any environmental malfeasance by a cruise ship in our harbor,” he stated.

Newsome said that the greatest benefit of relocating the passenger terminal will be unlocking the southern portion of Union Pier for public and other uses. Citing the SCSPA’s Concept Plan for Union Pier, Newsome noted some of the potential uses include an appropriate end of Market

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Port presents Report to Community on Cruise – add one

Street at the harbor, the re-establishment of the historic Custom House wharf, new view corridors, and significant new public access and open spaces. The SCSPA has already committed to immediate stabilization of the historic Bennett Rice Mill façade within the Union Pier property.

“Quite simply, this is the most important redevelopment opportunity in the Charleston area,” he said. “And it is entirely dependent upon the relocation of the passenger terminal. We cannot do one without the other.”

Emphasizing that the passenger terminal relocation is the option preferred by the SCSPA as well as the community, Newsome said that upgrading the existing terminal continues to remain an option. “If, for any reason, we are unable to move expeditiously on the relocation of the terminal, we will need to revert to the much less desirable option of upgrading our existing terminal,” he said. “That would mean cargo operations would continue on the property. The entire property would always be used for maritime uses. And all 63 acres of Union Pier would continue forever to be separated from the rest of the peninsula by a chain link fence. We think that would be a tragedy.”

Mayor Riley stressed how the plan will serve Charleston. “The City has worked very closely with the Ports Authority throughout this collaborative process. The resulting Concept Plan is a tremendous opportunity for those that live, work and visit here in Charleston. But its benefits are contingent on moving the terminal northward. This would allow cruise to continue to serve as an exceptionally positive force for our economy, while enhancing the quality of life in our city. It’s evident to me that the Ports Authority is committed to the right balance for this community, and this Concept Plan demonstrates that,” he said.

“We need now to move forward, designing a new passenger terminal and beginning the process to redevelop Union Pier,” Newsome said. “We are grateful for the broad-based community participation and support for this initiative, and we look forward to continuing our collaborative work with the City, the community, and our newly formed Cruise Neighbors Advisory Council. Ongoing updates will be posted on www.UnionPierPlan.com.”

ABOUT THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE PORTS AUTHORITY

The South Carolina State Ports Authority, established by the state's General Assembly in 1942, owns and operates public seaport facilities in Charleston and Georgetown, handling international commerce valued at more than \$62 billion annually and receiving no direct taxpayer subsidy. An economic development engine for the state, port operations facilitate 260,800 jobs across South Carolina and nearly \$45 billion in economic activity each year.

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