



Insight For Port Executives

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Insight & Opinion

Solving the infrastructure funding dilemma

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Sitting in the front row at Port Industry Day, held in New York in the auditorium aboard *Intrepid*, my head began to ache from the sheer complexity of solving infrastructure problems, on a grand scale. Indeed, Surface Transport funding, now expired, has been extended on a month-to-month basis.



Difficulties posed by getting ships through the Bayonne Bridge highlight infrastructure planning problems in urban areas

Speakers described an ongoing battle pitting the New York region against Norfolk (to the south) and Halifax (to the north) and efforts are now underway to resolve issues surrounding the Bayonne Bridge, where new generation vessels are too big to fit underneath it. Port Authority Commissioner Susan Bass Levin explained the study process, with its likely pile of requests for proposals to support the generation of an **Environmental Impact Statement in 2010.**

Here is my dilemma; the district of Congressman Gerald Nadler, a tireless advocate for the New York area, includes parts of the Brooklyn waterfront. Congressman Nadler described a move to revitalise the Brooklyn docks, as the New Jersey side of the harbour sorts out its constraints.

Congressman Nadler suggests that Sunset Park, Brooklyn, where a container terminal will be developed, represents one of the last areas with available land in the congested port, noting inefficiencies in moving of cargo from New Jersey (which would benefit from fixes to the Bayonne Bridge), back across the region into New York.

Congressman Nadler has been a proponent of an under-harbour tunnel rail tunnel that would eliminate much of this truck traffic; mentioned obliquely in the "other options" category as planners try to fix the "Bridge Problem".

Then, newly appointed (acting) Maritime Administrator David Matsuda, talked about the role of MARAD, in Washington, DC, as a coordinator among various programs and agencies. Mr Matsuda, a rail veteran, also described the promise of America's Marine

Highway (AMH) - the inchoate short sea program. If only it were that easy!

Congressman Nadler reminded the audience that delays in reauthorising Surface Transport funding could delay infrastructure discussions (and the promise of AMH funding) until after the next Presidential election, ie. four years hence in 2013.

Too close for comfort, in my view, to the advent of the widened Panama Canal. While the Government grapples with "too big to fail" in other contexts, New Yorkers must deal quickly with "too big to fit".

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