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Infrastructure investments

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Barry Parker forecasts a sunny outlook for south Florida's Port Everglades

As ports all along the US Gulf and East coasts vie for more cargo, Port Everglades continues to broaden its reach, partnering with both public entities and private businesses on a group of landside infrastructure improvements that offer a direct interface with national road and rail networks.

In explaining the differentiators between Port Everglades and Miami - approximately 20 miles to the south - the port's chief executive, Steven M Cernak tells Port Strategy: "There's enough business for both ports to thrive." Historically, the port has been heavily involved in the north-south trades.

One major project that has been operational since July 2014 is the Florida East Coast Railway's (FECR) new \$72m, 43-acre intermodal facility that is used to transfer both domestic containers to/from South Florida and international shipping containers between ships and the railroad. This near-dock facility, located at the port, replaced a much smaller yard, located two miles away. International cargo moves through the FECR rail yard directly from inside the port, and domestic trucks have a separate entrance.

Port Everglades contributed the land to the public/private partnership. Florida's Department of Transportation (FDOT) awarded an \$18m grant and the State of Florida provided a \$30m State Infrastructure Bank Loan to the FECR for the project.

One supply chain that has benefited already is the 'Threads Express', an intermodal service for shippers of garments between the South-eastern US and Central America. Deepsea containers are transloaded on the FECR at the dock, linking, in turn, with the CSX railroad (reaching into the Carolinas and beyond).

Through road

Motorway transportation is also important. Last year, the Eller Drive Overpass opened to connect the east end of I-595 (a spur to the interstate highway network) directly to the Port's main entrance. The FDOT invested \$42.5m to build the overpass, which allows vehicles entering Port Everglades, including big trucks, to travel unimpeded over two new at-grade rail tracks that lead into the new ICTF. Interstate-595 is a connector directly to three high speed north-south motorways: I-95, I-75 and Florida's Turnpike.

Construction is mainly complete and is expected to be finished in the next few months. Mr Cernak tells PS: "With our last mile projects almost completed, we like to say that there is only one stop light from Port Everglades to Los Angeles."

Mr Cernak discusses efforts to secure more perishables cargoes, which historically have moved through the Delaware Bay, explaining "we are lobbying the US Department of Agriculture to change the existing requirements."

He mentions a pilot program where Peruvian and Uruguayan produce now enters the US through Port Everglades. Mediterranean Shipping Corp, active in the port, is also reconfiguring its terminal, adding more than 500 reefer plugs and enhancing its throughput ability.

Of course, proximity to Cuba is also on planners' minds, certainly for the truck ferry business; Mr Cernak says: "We've been dealing with the Overseas Foreign Asset Control (OFAC- a US government agency)...we hope to get access for the ferries. Grocery products consolidated here, for end users in the Caribbean, is already a big business for us."

Longer-term capital improvements include the purchase of new super post-panamax gantry cranes and the completion of capacity upgrades to the existing gantry cranes. In an ongoing project set for completion in 2019, the port will be adding new cargo berths and will lengthen its existing deep-water turning basin from



Growth: new container berths should be onstream by 2019

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900 feet to 2,400 feet.

The existing Southport container berths will see the addition of the new cranes, to be placed on rails running the full length of the extended turning basin. The port is also moving ahead with its long-standing effort to deepen and widen its navigational channels to handle larger vessels with a greater draft.

Port Everglades, operated by Broward County, Florida, handles cruise, container and bulk cargo - notably cement - and petroleum products. Its cargo business is in expansion mode and 2014 marked a milestone 1m teu moving through the port.

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