

Office of the Governor

NEWS RELEASE

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GOVERNOR TOURS SUPER CONTAINER SHIP; CITES NEED FOR TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Gov. Christie Whitman today highlighted the importance of upgrading New Jersey's transportation infrastructure to support the state's thriving business economy during a tour of the Regina Maersk. The vessel, which is the largest container ship ever to arrive in a North American Port, is docked at Port Newark.

The Governor stressed that the efforts of her administration, in coordination with the Port Authority and the state of New York, to dredge the ports of Elizabeth and Newark have helped to preserve the 180,000 jobs which rely on the port economy. The Governor said that continuing to improve access to New Jersey's ports is a vital part of her vision for improving the state's transportation infrastructure.

"I have made it a central goal of my administration to create a strategic transportation plan for the 21st Century," the Governor said. "This plan addresses the need to build new train lines, restore bridges, improve and expand our roads, and relieve traffic congestion."

"Our plan also tackles one of the chief challenges we face today -- making our port accessible to the industry that employs tens of thousands of New Jersey workers," she said. "The Regina Maersk and other ships like her will come calling to our ports and we must be equipped to welcome them."

The Governor said that the state's Container Portway Project, a high-priority project, which will strengthen access to port facilities, is currently underway. The Portway Project is dependent on funding from the state's Transportation Trust Fund (TTF). The project includes a proposed dedicated highway route from the port to provide relief from traffic congestion on Route 1 and 9 and improve access to the New Jersey Turnpike.

Under the Governor's plan, voters would decide in November whether to phase-in over three years a four-cent per gallon increase in the gas tax to increase revenues in the (TTF) to help fund transportation infrastructure improvements. The Governor's transportation plan, called New Jersey First, includes dredging the Port of New York and New Jersey to accommodate jumbo ships; upgrading truck corridors within the northern seaport, rail and warehouse distribution system and upgrading facilities in the Port of Philadelphia and Camden.

The Governor said that the number of containers handled through the port is expected to triple by the year 2020 and double again by 2040, creating 170,000 new, maritime-related jobs in New Jersey.

"We are committed to ensuring that our port will be capable of handling these ships and speeding their cargo to inland customers," Gov. Whitman said. "And we are committed to keeping these jobs in New Jersey."

Lewis M. Eisenberg, Chairman of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey said, "Today we celebrate another first in the history of this proud port," Eisenberg said. "I am honored that Maersk chose the Port of New York and New Jersey as its first port of call in the United States. Their decision reflects the excellence of our port facilities, our access to North America's largest and richest consumer market, and the success of the dredging programs that are moving ahead with the help of Governors Whitman and Pataki."

The Regina Maersk is equal in length to three and a half football fields. The ship came in to port light loaded in order to navigate the channels of the port. Fully loaded, the ship has a draft of 47.5 feet and requires safe navigation waters of 52 feet as compared with previous generation vessels that required a depth of 47 feet. The deepest channels of the Port of New York and New Jersey currently are 40-feet

deep, but dredging is scheduled to start in November in the Kill Van Kull and Newark Bay to increase the depth to 45 feet.

The Governor said she is committed to keeping Maersk and Sea-Land shipping lines in the Port of New York and New Jersey. She said the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and the State departments of Transportation, Labor, and Commerce, as well as the Economic Development Authority, are working to prepare a highly competitive lease proposal for review by the companies.

"We understand that protecting and improving access is vital to the long-term success of all the facilities at the port," Gov. Whitman said. "Channel dredging will keep New Jersey's front door wide open to international trade -- meeting present and future demand."