



Environmental Impact Statement Project Update



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Introduction

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Charleston District is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement to assess the potential impacts associated with the construction and operation of a new marine container terminal on the Savannah River by the Jasper Ocean Terminal Joint Venture, a partnership between the Georgia Ports Authority and the South Carolina Ports Authority. The JOT marine container terminal would be constructed on an approximately 1,500-acre site (an existing Dredged Material Containment Area) on the north bank of the Savannah River in Jasper County, South Carolina across the Savannah River from Elba Island in Chatham County, Georgia.

The JOT would be a state-of-the-art marine container terminal to transfer containerized cargo between container ships, over-the-road trucks, and intermodal rail cars. The proposed JOT is required for the GPA and the SCPA to meet the current forecasted demand for additional containerized cargo for the Port of Savannah and the Port of Charleston through the Design Year 2055.

Elements of the proposed JOT project would include:

Terminal Site

- 12,500-foot long pile supported wharf and a 210-foot wide berth
- 790-foot wide access channel between the proposed berth and Savannah Harbor Federal Navigation Channel
- 2,200-foot diameter turning basin to accommodate Neo-Panamax and Ultra Large Container Vessels
- Intermodal rail yard
- Container storage yard
- Administrative buildings and equipment service facilities

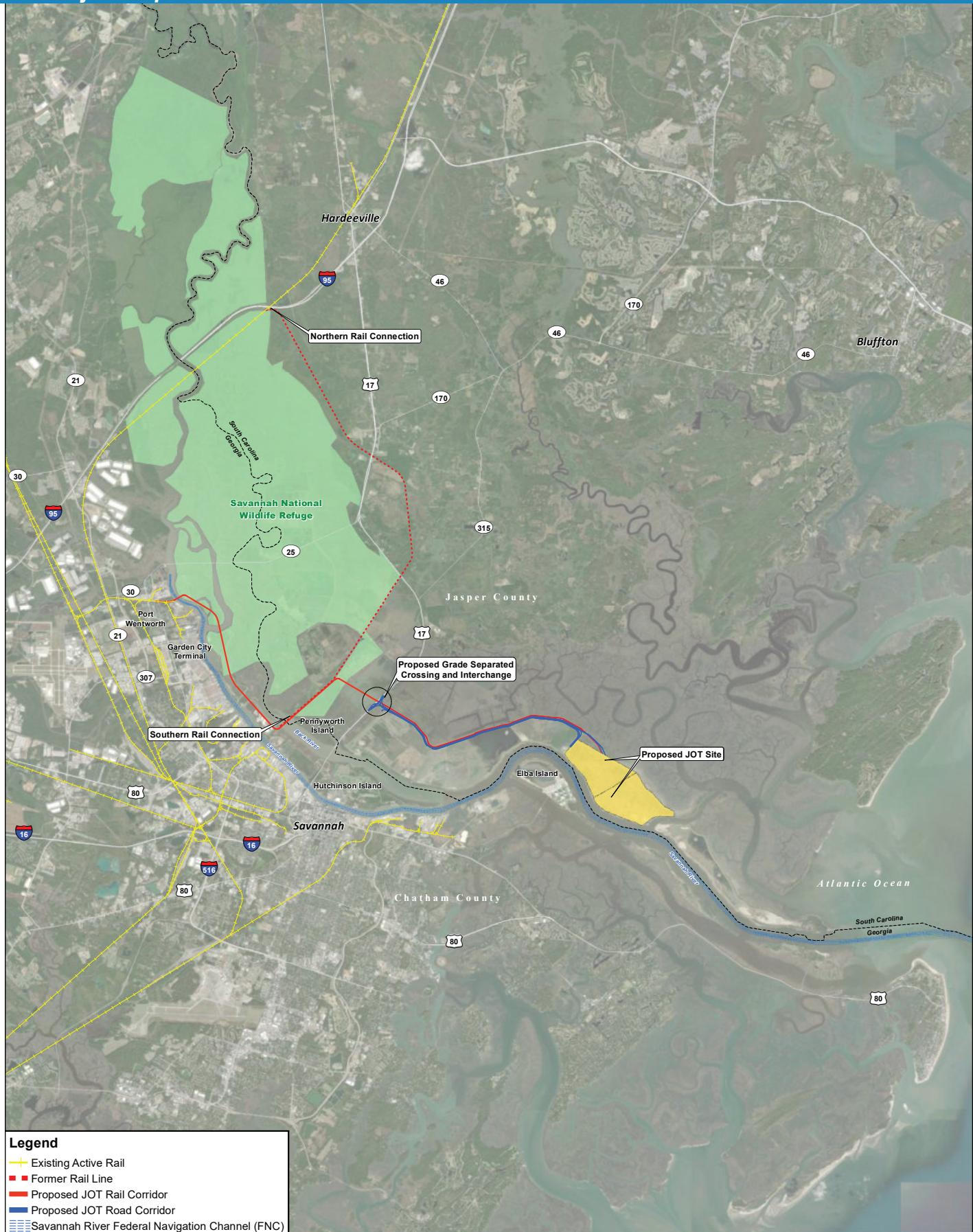
Road & Rail Access Corridor

- 4-lane divided highway to connect the terminal site to U.S. Highway 17
- Double and single track rail to connect the terminal site to existing CSX Transportation and Norfolk Southern rail lines
- New rail bridge across the Back River near US 17 and across the Savannah River upstream of Garden City Terminal
- Grade separated rail crossing and access road interchange with US 17

A public scoping meeting was held on January 31, 2017, to solicit input from adjacent property owners and interested parties about the proposed JOT. Additional information can be found on the project website at www.JasperOceanTerminalEIS.com.

This newsletter is intended to update the community on what has occurred since the scoping meeting: where the USACE is in the National Environmental Policy Act process, work accomplished to date and studies forthcoming in 2020-2021, changes to the proposed JOT, and related activities and projects in the surrounding area.



JOT Project Map




Current Related Activities in the Area

The construction and operation of the proposed JOT would increase the total volume of containerized cargo that is transported using existing roads, rail lines, and navigation channels. Operation of the proposed JOT would require improvements to the local road and rail networks to provide a direct connection to existing Interstate Highways (I-16 and I-95) and Class I rail lines (CSX and NS), including reactivation of the abandoned CSX Hutchinson Island rail lead. As a result, the draft EIS must also include information about other ongoing and planned projects within the surrounding area. These related activities include the following:

Savannah Harbor Expansion Project

The USACE Savannah District is currently deepening the Savannah Harbor federal navigation channel from a depth of -42 feet Mean Lower Low Water to -47 feet MLLW. The SHEP project began in 2015 and the estimated time frame for construction is 7 years. Deepening of the 20-mile entrance channel was completed in March 2018. The status of the remaining work and the associated mitigation activities can be found [here](#).

What's New with JOT?

Although the location and the acreage of the proposed terminal and the associated road and rail corridors have not changed, the following changes have occurred since the scoping meeting:

- The JOT JV updated their terminal operations model in June 2018 and notified the USACE that the proposed JOT would be designed to accommodate 8 ultra-large container vessels and an annual throughput capacity of 8 million twenty foot equivalent units (an increase of 1 million TEUs per year).
- The JOT JV determined that GPA improvements to existing terminals and a proposed marine container terminal on Hutchinson Island, (see below), as well as SCPA modernization of the Wando Welch Terminal and construction of the Hugh K. Leatherman Terminal would meet their short-term needs for additional annual throughput capacity. Based upon current projections from SCPA and GPA projects, the proposed JOT's opening year is projected to be 2035 and the design year (full build-out) is projected to be 2055.
- The JOT JV has executed an agreement (called a Section 408 agreement) with the USACE, Savannah District in order to evaluate potential impacts on the Savannah Harbor project, such as the loss of existing Dredged Material Containment Areas.
- The JOT JV has indicated that improvements to the existing Federal navigation channel, such as further deepening, would be required to accommodate fully loaded Neo-Panamax container ships and ULCV's without tidal restriction.

U.S. 17 Widening

The South Carolina Department of Transportation has obtained a Department of the Army Permit and awarded a contract to construct improvements to U.S. 17 (Speedway Boulevard) from the I-16 Spur on Hutchinson Island approximately 4.2 miles north to S.C. 315 (South Okatie Highway) in Jasper County. The authorized work includes widening U.S. 17 from two to four travel lanes, divided by a median, constructing a second two lane bridge over the Back River, and constructing a bike lane. These improvements to the existing roadway are scheduled to be completed in 2025.

Garden City Terminal

The 1,250-acre GCT is located approximately 8 miles upriver of the proposed JOT. The following completed, ongoing, and planned improvements to GCT are expected to increase the annual, operational throughput capacity from 5.5 million to 7.2 million TEUs:

- obtaining and commissioning additional, taller ship-to-shore cranes,
- investing in newer cargo-handling equipment, which produce less air emissions,
- constructing additional racks and plug-ins for refrigerated containers,
- changes to container stacks to allow more efficient movement,
- re-alignment of berths 1-3 to accommodate Neo-Panamax container ships, and
- expanding the entrance/exit gates and installing state-of-the-art computer systems to reduce truck idling time and associated air emissions.

Mason Mega Rail Facility

The GPA's Mason Mega Rail project is located at GCT and is designed to expand service to the Southeast and Midwestern U.S. Once completed, the project will add 97,000 feet of new rail lines, increase the number of working tracks from 8 to 18, and be able to handle six (6) 10,000-foot trains simultaneously. Latest updates to this project can be found [here](#).

Future Planned Activities in the Area

Based on the available information, the USACE also believes the draft EIS must include information about the following planned projects within the surrounding area:

Proposed Savannah Container Terminal

The GPA has announced plans to construct and operate a new marine container terminal on a 200-acre site on Hutchinson Island in Chatham County, Georgia. The proposed SCT would have a 3,000-feet long pile supported wharf and is projected to have an annual, operational throughput capacity of 2.1 million TEUs. When added to the improvements at GCT (described above) it would enable the Port of Savannah to handle the projected growth in containerized cargo through 2035.

Riverport

The RiverPort project consists of the construction of a 4,368.81-acre mixed-use development including industrial, commercial, civic and residential uses as well as a new interchange with I-95 at mile marker 3 in South Carolina. A public notice was issued for this project on May 27, 2020.

