



For Immediate Release
May 23, 2024

Proposed Channel User Fee Outlined in Special Public Meeting
For Funding Associated with Houston Ship Channel Expansion – Project 11
Strengthening the Future through Investments in Infrastructure and Leadership



Photo caption: Guests and members of the Port Commission of the Port of Houston Authority in attendance at meetings held on May 21, 2024.

HOUSTON – On Tuesday, following its regular monthly meeting, the Port Commission of the Port of Houston Authority conducted a Special Public meeting to provide an important public update on the proposed user fee to help finance the ongoing Houston Ship Channel Expansion – Project 11.

An overview of the user fee structure currently in development was the sole item on the agenda for the Special Meeting; the presentation and more information may be found here: <https://www.expandthehoustonschipchannel.com/resources/>

Public comment was also received at that meeting, and Chairman Campo stressed, “We don’t have all the answers today, but we will provide you with as much information as possible. I want to emphasize that today, we want to hear from you.”

Earlier this year, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers once again ranked the Houston Ship Channel the No. 1 busiest waterway in the nation. Widening it will improve the safety and efficiency of all vessel transits, enhance its competitiveness, and promote economic growth in the region.

Project 11 will widen the Galveston Bay reach of the channel by 170 feet, widen and deepen many upstream segments, and add beneficial use areas including marshlands, oyster reefs, and bird islands.

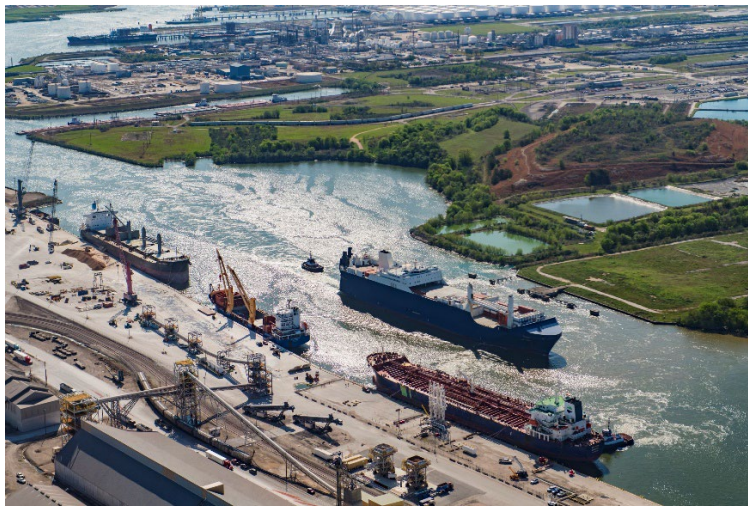


Photo caption: Business working along a segment of the Houston Ship Channel.

“Since 2020, we’ve been evaluating options for payment of this local cost share,” Chairman Campo said. Rather than waiting at least a decade in hopes of getting the channel fully funded, industry members and the Port Authority have worked together to plan to pay for the local cost share. While the proposed user fee would help pay the local cost share, \$154 million in federal funding is still needed to complete construction in the upper segments of the channel.

During the regular Port Commission meeting, Executive Director Roger Guenther commented on the storm that affected the Houston region last week and expressed gratitude for the efforts of Port Police, Fire, Risk Management, and Maintenance teams, among others, for their response efforts during and after the severe weather.

Guenther added that their actions helped the terminals “be ready to go quickly” after the storm, and he was thankful to them for their work and dedication.

During the meeting, Guenther also introduced new members of the Port Houston executive leadership team. Lori Brownell has been promoted to Chief Channel Infrastructure Officer, replacing Charlie Jenkins, the incoming chief executive officer following Guenther’s retirement at the end of August.

Guenther said of Brownell, “We are fortunate to have Lori, who has led the tremendous efforts supporting Project 11 and channel improvement since she has been on board. She is well-equipped and ready to lead Port Houston channel improvement efforts moving forward.”

Prior to her time at Port Houston, Brownell spent 20 years with Taylor Engineering's waterfront group, serving as Director overseeing planning, design and construction for waterfront, marine and dredging-focused projects. As Chief Channel Infrastructure Officer Brownell oversees four strategic-focused departments: Channel Infrastructure Operations, Marine Regulatory Development, Channel Infrastructure Real Property, and Strategic Asset Management, and also acts as Port Houston's primary liaison with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Guenther also announced Port Houston's new Chief Business Equity Officer, Carlecia Wright. He said of Wright, "Carlecia comes to us with a wealth of experience in business equity, change management, public relations, external affairs, and organizational culture, among much other experience."

Most recently, Wright served as the Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for the Office of Culture and Community Engagement at Lone Star College. Previously, she was the Chief Diversity Officer for the City of Houston's Office of Business Opportunity. In her new role, Wright is responsible for implementing and administering contracting diversity, equity, and training programs, including Port Houston's Minority- and Woman-Owned Business Enterprise Development Program and Small Business Development Program, and is also charged with providing vision, leadership, and guidance for Port Houston's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts.

The next Port Commission meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, June 25, at 9:15 a.m.**

About Port Houston

For more than 100 years, Port Houston has owned and operated the public wharves and facilities along the Houston Ship Channel, including the area's largest breakbulk facility and two of the most efficient container terminals in the country. Port Houston is the advocate and a strategic leader for the Channel. The Houston Ship Channel complex and its more than 200 private and eight public facilities is the nation's largest port for waterborne tonnage and an essential economic engine for the Houston region, the state of Texas and the U.S. The Port of Houston supports the creation of nearly 1.5 million jobs in Texas and 3.37 million jobs nationwide, and economic activity totaling \$439 billion in Texas and \$906 billion in economic impact across the nation. For more information, visit the website at PortHouston.com.

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