The importance of ports to the Texas economy

A total of $277.6 billion in economic activity generated by the state of Texas annually is the result of the 564.7 million tons of cargo moving through Texas ports. In addition, Texas Ports create over 1.4 million jobs generating $82.8 billion in personal income and represent approximately 25% of the total State Gross Domestic Product.

As Texas and the rest of the world become a progressively global marketplace, the reliance on ports to import and export goods and materials has become an essential part of doing business. Shipping by sea is often more cost-effective and can house larger volume shipments than other modes of transportation. Texas Ports are connected to one another and to the rest of the U.S. inland waterway system by the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway allowing ocean-going shipping to connect with barge traffic. Based on tonnage, the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway is the third-busiest inland waterway in our nation, pushing cargoes primarily of petroleum, petroleum-related products and chemicals, thus supporting our nation’s energy economy. Agriculture, crude materials, coal, aggregates and manufactured goods round out the portfolio of commerce.

Principal Ports of the U.S. in Texas

Ten Texas ports rank in the 2017 Principal Ports in the U.S. in terms of annual tonnage, according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, including Houston (2nd), Beaumont (5th), Corpus Christi (6th), Port Arthur (17th), Texas City (18th), Freeport (31st), Galveston (59th), Brownsville (61st), Victoria (80th), and Matagorda Port Lv Pt Com (81st).
**Port Houston | Total Tons: 260,070,837**

The Port of Houston is the biggest port in Texas and the largest port on the Gulf Coast. It ranks first in the nation for foreign waterborne tonnage, first for imports, and second for overall tonnage, handling an estimated 2.4 million containers in 2017, a 14% increase in volume since 2016. It is the 5th-largest container port in the U.S., handling over 2 million TEUs last year. The Houston Ship Channel is the busiest waterway in the U.S. and is also the home of the largest petrochemical complex in the nation.

**Principal Cargoes**

**Imports:** Petroleum and petroleum products; iron and steel; crude fertilizers and minerals; organic chemicals; wood and articles of wood.

**Exports:** Petroleum and petroleum products; organic chemicals; cereals and cereal products; plastics; animal or vegetable fats and oils.

**Port of Beaumont | Total Tons: 89,437,326**

The Port of Beaumont is the fifth-largest port in tonnage in the U.S. and is the number-one strategic military onload port in the entire world. With two terminals in separate counties, the port supports $1.8 billion dollars of economic output each year.

**Principal Cargoes**

**Imports:** Forest products, aggregate, military cargo, steel, project cargo.

**Exports:** Bulk grain, potash, forest products, military cargo, project cargo.

**Port of Corpus Christi | Total Tons: 87,322,735**

The Port of Corpus Christi is ranked 6th in the nation for overall tonnage, and the self-proclaimed Energy Port of the Americas. Strategically located between the Permian Basin and Eagle Ford, the port serves as an energy hub as well as a gateway to the Gulf of Mexico and the rest of the U.S. In recent years it has also experienced an increase in the volume of wind turbine cargo it processes.

**Principal Cargoes**

**Imports:** Crude oil, gas oil, fuel oil, bauxite ore, feed stock, naphtha, condensate, reformate, toluene, frozen beef, fresh fruits.

**Exports:** Fuel oil, gasoline, feed stock, diesel, alumina, petroleum coke, toluene, cumene gas oil, asphalt, coal.
**Port of Port Arthur** | **Total Tons: 39,203,245**

The Port of Port Arthur is ranked 17th in the nation for overall tonnage, is located just 19 miles from the Gulf of Mexico, and can handle almost any commodity. Expanded in the year 2000, the Port of Port Arthur paid close attention to the needs and wants of the maritime industry and the many industries that use the port. The Port is connected to the KCS Railroad, providing direct intermodal service to and from major markets of the U.S. and Canada.

**Principal Cargoes**
**Imports:** Steel slabs, wood pulp, newsprint, lumber, plywood, project cargo, military

**Exports:** Linerboard, plywood, steel pipe

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**Port of Texas City** | **Total Tons: 37,751,062**

The Port of Texas City is ranked 18th in the U.S. for overall tonnage and is now in the forefront of the nation’s rise as the world’s largest producer of oil. As the success in the state’s Permian Basin has helped the U.S. produce nearly 12 million barrels per day, the process of exporting crude has led the port becoming perhaps the nation’s leader in welcoming Very Large Crude Containers (VLCC).

**Principal Cargoes**
**Imports:** Crude oil

**Exports:** Gasoline, diesel, jet fuel, intermediate chemicals, petroleum coke

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**Port Freeport** | **Total Tons: 24,484,399**

Port Freeport is a leading economic catalyst for the Texas Gulf Coast, ranking 31st in the nation in overall tonnage. Port Freeport will expand from 45’ deep to 55’ in coming years, making it one of the nation’s fastest growing ports. There are also plans to build two additional berths, increasing its berthing space to 2,200 linear feet. This addition will allow the port to accommodate Panamax to Post-Panamax class vessels. The expansion will also increase the port’s TEU capacity to 800,000 TEU’s.

**Principal Cargoes**
**Imports:** Aggregate, chemicals, clothing, foods (fruit), crude, LNG, paper goods, plastics, windmills.

**Exports:** Autos, chemicals, clothing, foods, paper goods, resins, rice.
Port of Galveston | Total Tons: 7,836,405

The Port of Galveston is the region’s gateway to the Gulf for cruise ships and international trade. The Galveston Island operations are a diversified mix of cargo including roll-on-roll-off cargo, dry bulk, export grain, refrigerated fruit, general cargo, and project cargo. In addition, the Port handles over 1.8 million cruise passenger movements annually, making it the 4th-busiest cruise port in the nation.

Principal Cargoes
Imports: Wind power equipment, bananas, agricultural equipment, machinery, vehicles, fertilizer products, lumber products, military-related cargoes.

Exports: Bulk grains, containers, machinery, vehicles, linerboard and paper, carbon black, light fuels.

Port of Brownsville | Total Tons: 7,763,455

The Port of Brownsville imports and exports steel and other metal products and hosts a shipyard specializing in constructing and refurbishing offshore drilling rigs. The port is also the nation’s leader in ship recycling. In August 2015, Brownsville opened its state-of-the-art cargo dock, funded in part through a $12 million TIGER grant through the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Principal Cargoes
Imports: Steel slab, hot and cold roll, steel plate, steel beams (billets), iron ore.

Exports: Steel products, petroleum products, lubricants, and grain.

Port of Victoria | Total Tons: 4,337,003

The Port of Victoria is a center for the chemical, construction and steel fabrication and agribusiness industries offering access to all transportation modes. The Port is connected by four-lane divided highways to all major arteries in South Texas; the Victoria Barge Canal (a 36-mile-long waterway) connects the Turning Basin in Victoria to the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway; and rail is serviced by Union Pacific and BNSF.

Principal Cargoes
Major products transferred are liquid and dry bulk and general and project cargoes.


Strategic Ports

The U.S. Maritime Administration has designated the Port of Beaumont, Port of Port Arthur, and the Port of Corpus Christi, as strategic ports in its National Port Readiness Network, which supports deployment of U.S. military forces during defense emergencies. The Port of Beaumont handles military equipment shipped to and from Fort Hood and the Red River Army Depot and is recognized as the world’s busiest port of military embarkation.

Projections for the Texas Ports

The use of Texas waterways is forecast to continue to increase—fueled by the expansion of the Panama Canal, the surge in the state’s population and more worldwide waterborne trade. The expanded Panama Canal will enable the natural growth of import demand caused by Texas’ booming population in the “Texas Triangle” of Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, and Austin-San Antonio. By 2040, the state’s population is expected to grow from 25 million to 40 million, with 70% within this area. The most significant impact will likely be the growth of bulk energy exports, petrochemicals and petroleum-based products, grains, coal, and fertilizers, with the most significant the LNG and plastic resins.