SI NOW

A **Southern Illinois** Success Initiative

Corn Belt Ports Illinois River Partnership Summit 2025

SI Now

A regional economic development organization serving the 17 southernmost counties in Illinois.

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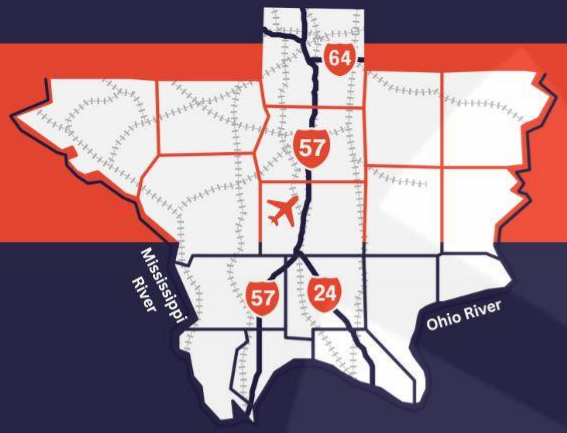
SI NOW
A Southern Illinois Success Initiative

A WIN FOR ONE IS A WIN FOR ALL

STRATEGIC TRANSPORTATION ASSETS: R4 ADVANTAGE



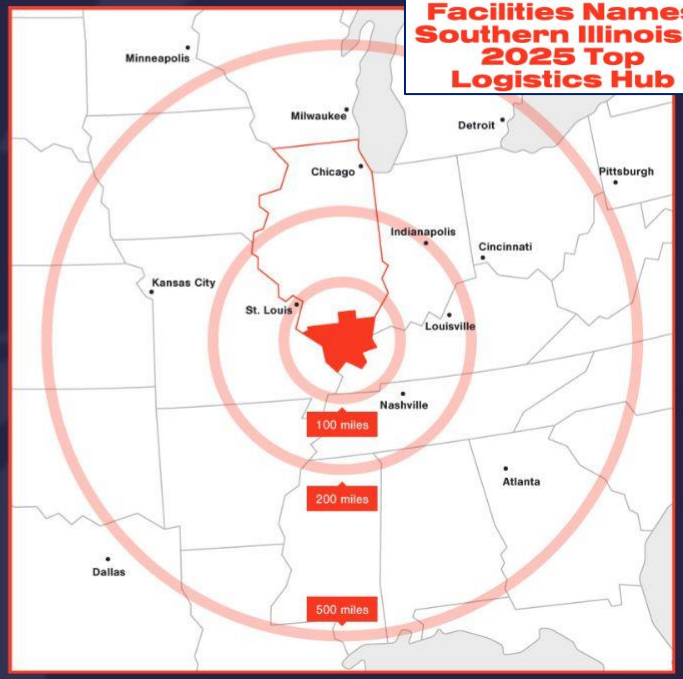
5 CLASS I RAIL CARRIERS
MULTIPLE INTERCANGES BETWEEN RAIL CARRIERS

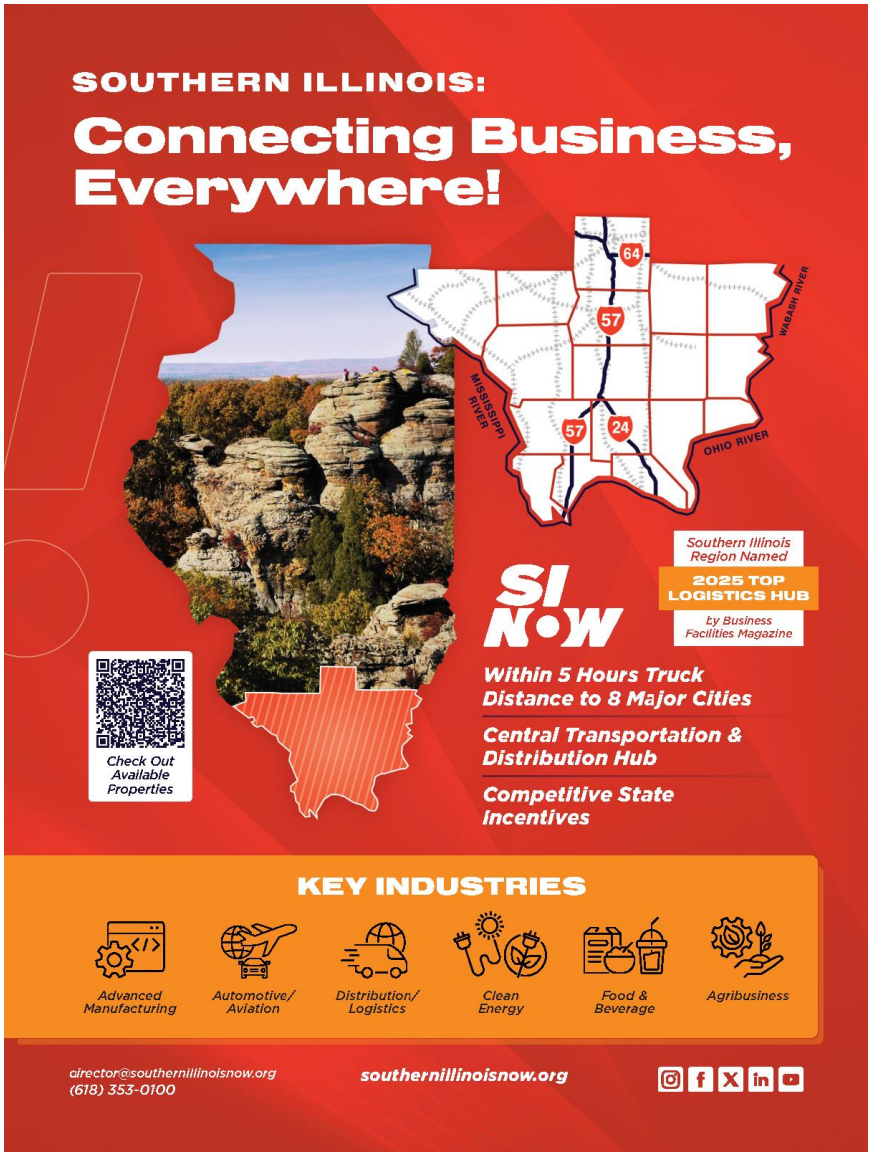
4 HOURS OR LESS TO 5 MAJOR CITIES
AND LESS THAN 5 HOURS TO 8 MAJOR CITIES

3 INTERSTATES
80% U.S. POPULATION WITHIN TWO DAYS DRIVE TIME

2 MAJOR RIVERS
80% OF INLAND BARGE TRAFFIC

1 HOUR FLIGHT TO CHICAGO O'HARE
DAILY DIRECT JET SERVICE




SOUTHERN ILLINOIS:
Connecting Business, Everywhere!
64
57
57
24
WABASH RIVER
MISSISSIPPI RIVER
OHIO RIVER
Southern Illinois Region Named
2025 TOP LOGISTICS HUB
by Business Facilities Magazine
SI NOW
Within 5 Hours Truck Distance to 8 Major Cities
Central Transportation & Distribution Hub
Competitive State Incentives
Check Out Available Properties
KEY INDUSTRIES
Advanced Manufacturing
Automotive/ Aviation
Distribution/ Logistics
Clean Energy
Food & Beverage
Agribusiness
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IN THE MIDDLE OF EVERYWHERE

START HERE

2024 Rural Community Economic Development Conference

IIRA
Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs

35th Annual Rural Community Economic Development Conference

Converting Opportunities into Trends
Agenda

Tuesday, February 27, 2024

6:30-8:30 pm **Registration**

7:00-9:00 pm **Networking Reception**

Wednesday, February 28, 2024

8:00-9:00 am **Registration**

9:00-10:15 am **Overcoming Challenges Facing Rural Illinois**

Moderator: Christopher Merrett, Director, Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA)

"Welcoming Remarks"
Guiyou Huang, Western Illinois University

"Revitalizing Rural Illinois: Using Opportunities to Overcome Challenges"
Hon. Juliana Stratton, Lt. Governor, State of Illinois

"Reimagining Rural: Connecting the Dots with a Rural Framework"
Bonita Robertson-Hardy, Aspen Institute

"Keeping Good Jobs and Sustaining Local Economies"
Steve Storkan, Employee Ownership Expansion Network

10:15-10:30 am **Break**

10:30-Noon **Capturing Potential Opportunities for Rural**

Moderator: Norman Walzer, Director Emeritus, Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA)

"Declines in Local Newspapers: New Alternatives"
Timothy Franklin, Northwestern University Medill

"Swimming Upstream: Appraising the Role of Placemaking in Building Stronger Communities"
Zachary Benedict, MKM Architecture and Design

"Rural Partners Update"
Brian Moody

12:10-1:30 pm **Lunch and Networking**

12:30-1:20 pm **Annual Meeting of Rural Partners®**

1:30-2:15 pm **II. Finding Strategies That Work**

(Sessions Repeat 2:30-3:15 PM)

"Revitalizing Small Towns Through Private Investment & Nonprofit Partnership"
Cindy Frisina, Heartland Development Partners, Inc

"Keeping Good Jobs and Sustaining Local Economies - An Employee Ownership Case Study"
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"Measuring What Matters: Applying a Rural Prosperity Framework to Your Region"
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"Worker Cooperatives: A Viable Business Succession Plan to Sustain Rural Communities"
Stacy Mullinex, Iowa Center for Employee Ownership

"Inclusive Placemaking: Redefining Community Development through Group Actualization"
Zachary Benedict, MKM Architecture and Design

"Amid Expanding Local News Deserts, There Are Oases of Hope"
Timothy Franklin, Northwestern University Medill
Lynne Campbell, Macomb Community Brief

3:15-3:45 pm **Networking Break**

3:45-4:30 pm **III. Success Stories with Outcomes**

(Sessions Repeat 4:45-5:30 PM)

"Making Housing Available in Small Towns: Marion, Illinois"
Cody Moake, Marion, Illinois
Nic Nelson, Jacob and Klein, Ltd.

"Illinois Farm Bureau - Rural Development Grant Program Elevates Key Priorities"
Brenda Matherly, Illinois Farm Bureau
Ryan Tate, Illinois Farm Bureau

"Strengthening Entrepreneur Ecosystems to Foster Economic Development"
Samira Cook Gaines, Rising Tide Capital

"Revitalizing Rural Towns: A TIF-Fueled Transformation"
Elizabeth Pratt, Royal Super Mart
Mary Lanham, Village of Sheffield, Illinois

"The Long, Windy Road to Improving Small Towns"
Kelly Giovanine, Durand Charm
Sheila Hoffman, Durand Village Board

"Corn Belt Ports Partnership"
Bob Sinkler, Corn Belts Ports

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oneshawnee REGIONAL SUMMIT

Building Capacity for Regional Changemakers.

Please join One Shawnee, a regional community development non-profit, as they host a gathering of regional leaders and interested citizens that will include speakers, group discussions, breakout trainings, and learning sessions. All are welcome!

WHEN	WHERE
Friday, October 11, 2024 **Doors open at 8:30 AM** **Program from 9 AM to 12:30 PM**	**Vienna High School** **601 N 1st St, Vienna, IL 62995** **West Entrance**

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

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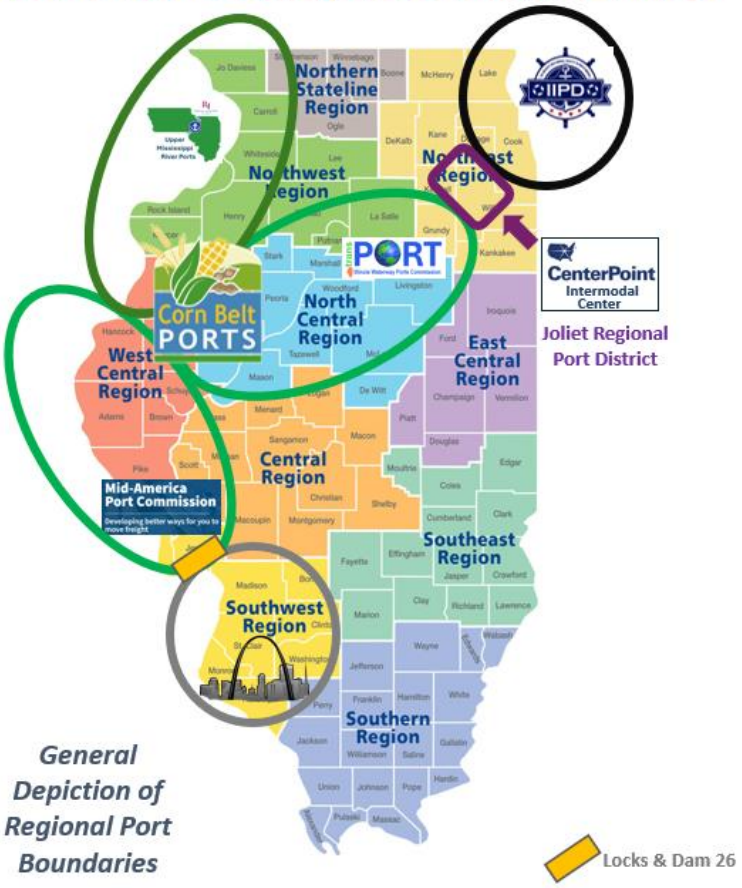
oneshawnee

Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO) Regional Port Alignment Map



https://dceo.illinois.gov/smallbizassistance/regionspecificassistance.html

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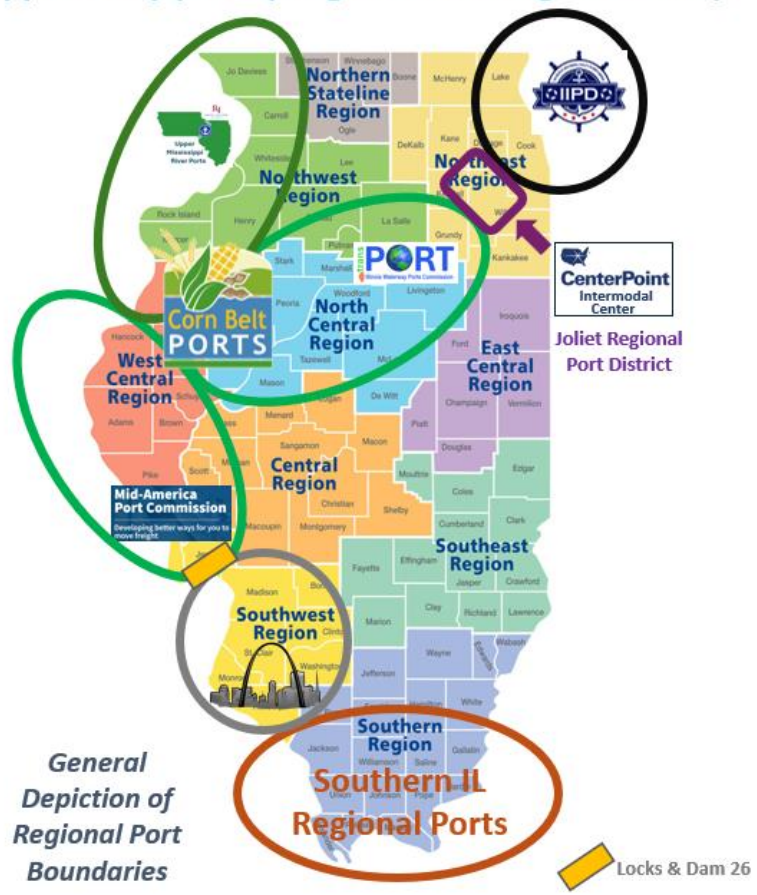

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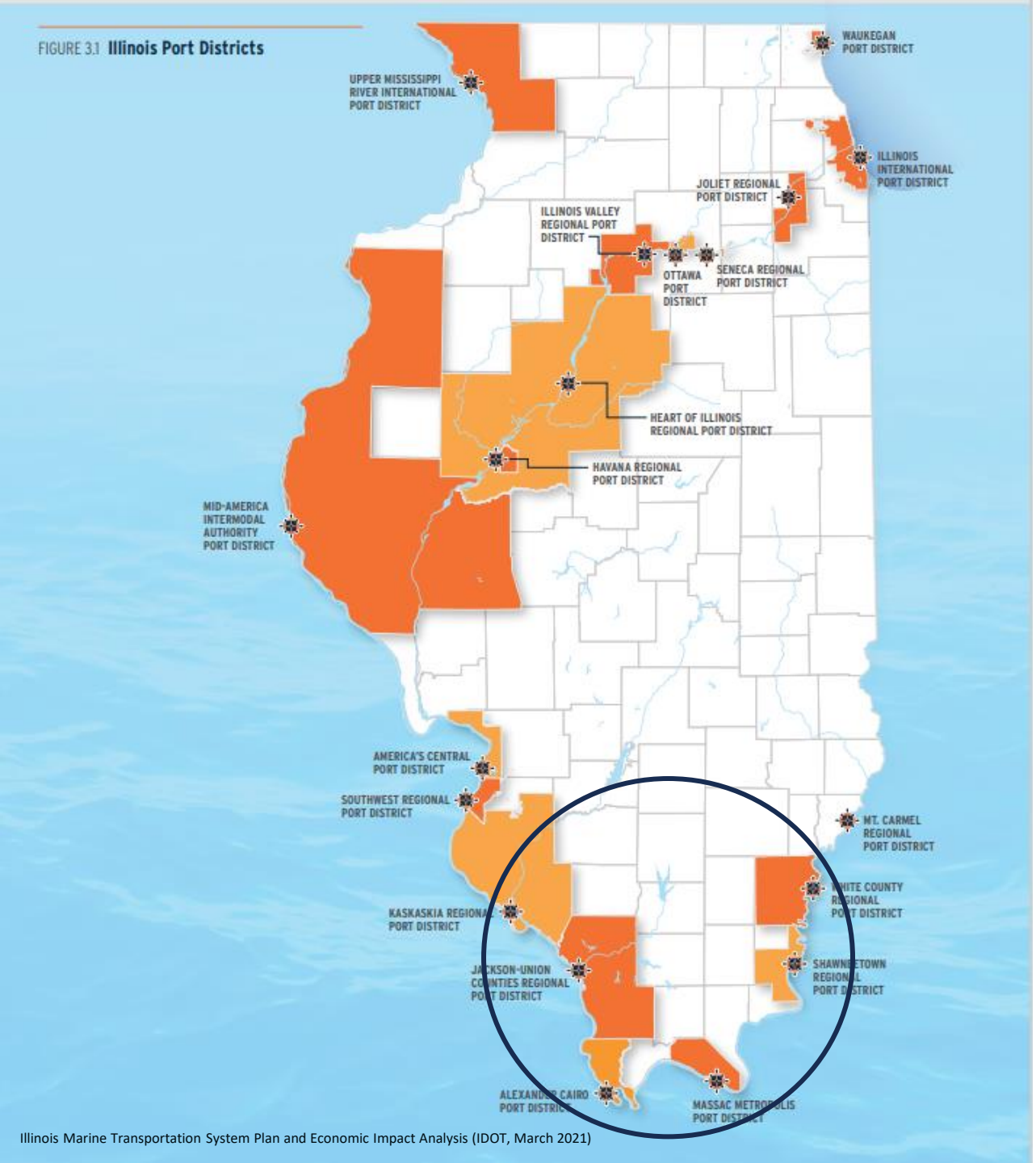

Illinois Marine Transportation System Plan and Economic Impact Analysis (IDOT, March 2021)

- 19 Port Districts
- 1/3 in SI Now's Footprint
- + Private Terminals in non-designated areas

- Alexander-Cairo (2010)
- Jackson-Union (1976)
- Massac-Metropolis (2009)
- Shawneetown (1961)

REGIONAL IDENTITY TONNAGE MATTERS

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oneshawnee

Southern Illinois Regional Port Commission

A Port Collaborative Concept modeled after

Corn Belt Ports and the Illinois Waterway (ILWW) Ports Commission Act

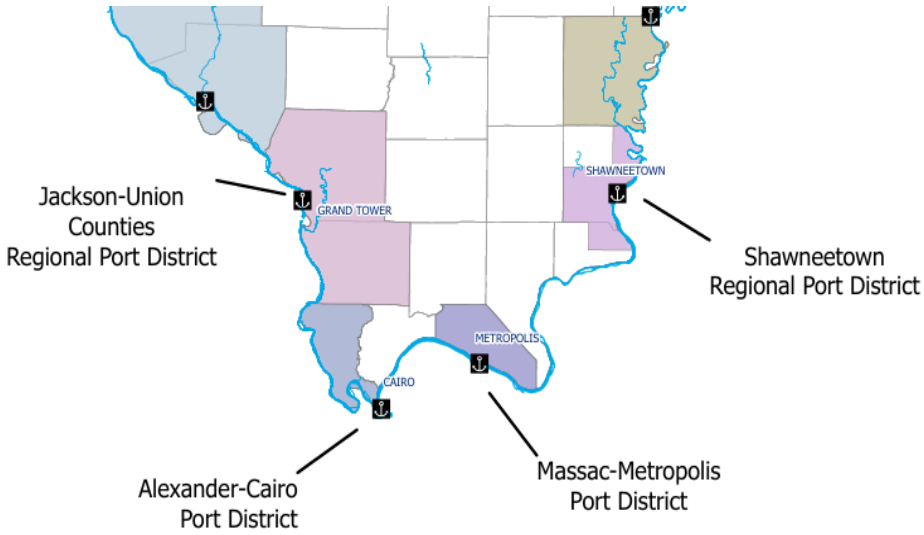
In alignment with other established Illinois Port Commissions, the Southern Illinois Regional Ports will:

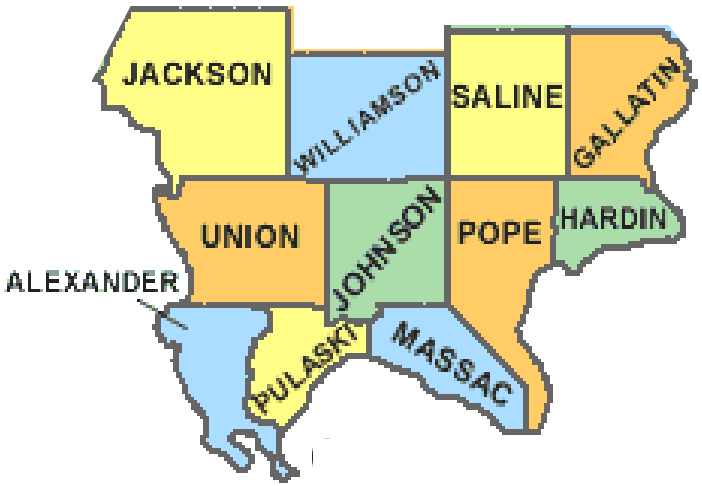
- Respect and support the individual identities of Southern Illinois' **state-designated port districts** while advancing regional interests as a **federally recognized multi-modal port**;
- Elevate the region's profile to **improve regional, national and global competitiveness;**
- Enhance the ability to compete for and **attract public and private investment;**
- Advance **regional marketing and economic development** efforts;
- Create a **regional multi-modal transportation infrastructure identity**;
- Better **serve the State of Illinois and the region** as an expanded economic development tool within Southern Illinois.

Action Plan

- ✓Engage local Senators and Representatives for input.
- ✓Gauge interest from existing Southern Illinois ports in engaging in discussion about a Southern Illinois Regional Ports Commission (*or other name to be determined*) modeled after the Corn Belt Ports and Illinois Waterway Ports Commission examples.
- ✓Goals to **maintain individual port district state designations and boards**, while providing **an avenue for regional tonnage reporting, increased funding opportunities/investment, and administrative support**.
- ✓If port interest exists, explore interest from associated counties.
- ✓Engage Corn Belt Ports/ILWW representatives for process guidance.

Southern Illinois Regional Port Commission





11 Counties

- ❑ Federal Port Statistical Area Application – August 2025
- ❑ Formal Governance Structure

OUT OF SITE, OUT OF MIND

In recent years, KRPD has received $37 million in grants to improve safety and upgrade infrastructure to continue increasing tonnage. With these improvements, KPRD continues to attract companies, particularly those that transport grain, sand and gravel, and fertilizer.

For example, KRPD was awarded $1.7 million from the U.S. Economic Development Administration in 2023 to support the construction of a new laydown space for the movement of current industrial park tenants' equipment and supplies, while also allowing for future growth. The project will be matched with $1.2 million in state funds and is expected to create 50 jobs in addition to generating $20 million in private investment.

KRPD also received over $1 million in 2023 from the United States Marine Highway Program for the acquisition of eight shuttle cars, which will handle 2.25 million tons of new coiled steel and move existing coiled steel to a new laydown yard. Rail infrastructure will be provided through a state freight grant that was approved in spring 2023. This service will eliminate up to 4.8 million truck miles annually – allowing for a more efficient and environmentally-friendly channel for transporting goods.

The future is bright for KRPD as it continues to nurture longstanding partnerships with businesses, attract new businesses, and attract grant funding.

Shawneetown Regional Port District

Shawneetown Regional Port District (SRPD) has also served as a catalyst for economic growth in the Southern Illinois region. Like KRPD, SRPD faced the challenges of losing a coal-loading facility but is now leveraging its infrastructure for new opportunities and growth.

Due to the abundance of agricultural production in southeastern Illinois, SRPD was able to make the case for transforming an existing coal dock into a fertilizer offloading facility. A 20,000-ton fertilizer offloading facility is now planned, supported by a $14.1 million public-private investment along the Ohio River in Old Shawneetown.

For this project, Scates Group Intermodal (SGI) River Terminal, LLC invested $3 million toward a barge and material-handling equipment. Additionally, an $11.2 million Rebuild Illinois Port Facilities Capital Investment Grant will cover the construction of a 1,200-foot conveyor that connects to a new storage building for 20,000 tons of fertilizer. Elevar Agri-Solutions will move fertilizer through the facility which may lead to the unloading, blending and storage of 120,000 to 130,000 tons of fertilizer annually.

Building on this momentum, SRPD was awarded $10 million through the U.S. Department of Transportation's Port Development Program to construct a 1.25-mile road to improve port access for cargo shipment trucks. SRPD currently has only one port entrance with no space for staging trucks. The new road will allow ample space for trucks to line up for drop off or pick-ups.

SRPD Chair Makenzie Golden explained another key reason the road will benefit port's growth, stating, "This road will also increase access to the port's developable property and give us the infrastructure we need to attract new industry. We hope to attract a range of industries to beautiful Southern Illinois."

SGI's Patrick Scates agrees that SRPD is well positioned to attract additional industry, including container shipping, renewable energy, electric vehicles, and dry and liquid fertilizer.

"SRPD provided coal for decades. Its existing infrastructure and seven river cells are huge assets that are ready to be utilized," Scates emphasized.

Scates added that SRPD is one of the most underutilized ports on the Ohio River. With easy access to Illinois Highway 13 and its proximity to the bridge into neighboring Kentucky, he sees the port location as vital to the region.

With infrastructure improvements, the new fertilizing off-loading facility, and businesses choosing to locate facilities there, SRPD is equipped for rapid growth and expansion in the years ahead.

Looking to the Future

The transformative investments and development at KRPD and SRPD exemplify the critical role that inland ports play in Southern Illinois' economy. Alongside KRPD and SRPD, Jackson-Union Counties Regional Port District, Alexander-Cairo Port District, Massac Metropolis Port District, and White County Regional Port District also have vast potential to catalyze growth in Southern Illinois. In particular, the Alexander-Cairo Port District is on the cusp of transformation, having received a $40 million designation from the Illinois legislature to construct a new port terminal.

Our rivers are often referred to as the nation's first superhighways transporting goods throughout the country and beyond. Accordingly, inland ports are vital hubs, facilitating efficient goods transfer, enhancing supply chain resilience, and contributing to environmental sustainability. With strategic locations and targeted investments, Southern Illinois' port districts are well-positioned to continue attracting businesses seeking efficient, cost-effective waterway access – setting the stage for sustained regional economic growth.

The Central Access to the World (R4 Advantage) series will continue with in-depth features on rail (Fall 2024), roads (Spring 2025), and runways (Fall 2025), providing insights into the multifaceted infrastructure driving our region's economic development.

TELLING THE COLLECTIVE STORY

FEATURED STORY

Southern Illinois Ports Drive Regional Growth with Major Infrastructure and Development Milestones in 2025

SEPTEMBER 23, 2025

The Southern Illinois Port Districts are making significant strides in infrastructure development, economic revitalization, and regional collaboration, positioning the area as a rising leader in inland waterborne commerce. For the first time ever, **all five Southern Illinois Port Districts ranked in the Top 150 Leading U.S. Ports** according to the most recent report[1].

The **Alexander–Cairo Port District** continues to advance its development efforts with the completion of important milestones in 2025 including the necessary **Phase I environmental site assessment and a Commodity Flows and Opportunities Analysis**. The findings recommended a diversified approach to port operations and highlighted the potential for container-on-barge applications. A **navigational study** conducted by Seamen's Church Institute's Center for Maritime Education was also completed to evaluate the feasibility and safety of the proposed port and barge fleeting locations under varying river conditions. The study aimed to determine whether the current site supports efficient tow transits, identify necessary adjustments to minimize navigational impact, and recommend optimal facility placements. Of the 24 simulated runs, 24 were successful for a 100% success rate, indicating **favorable results with the fleet and dock facility as proposed**. The next steps include presentation of the navigational study report to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for review to inform future permitting and design decisions. Studies were made possible with funding through the Illinois Department of Transportation along with support from the Delta Regional Authority's Strategic Planning Program.

The **Jackson–Union Counties Regional Port District** is actively engaged in identifying and promoting **economic development investments and partnerships** including, but not limited to, the Southern Illinois Airport, creation of a new Jackson County Industrial Park, repurposing of the Grand Tower Power Plant site, expansion of Ameren electrical capacity, and infrastructure upgrades for existing port facilities. To assist in this effort, in August 2025, the Port District launched a **comprehensive economic feasibility study** funded by the Illinois Department of Transportation to review existing economic development opportunities and identify ways to address infrastructure gaps and regional transportation networks to advance regional economic development.

In a major breakthrough, the **Massac–Metropolis Port District** (MMPD)[2] acquired ownership of the former **Lock and Dam 52 site in Brookport**, Illinois in June 2025. Thanks to a public-private partnership with MMPD, City of Brookport and private landowners, MMPD now has approximately **16,300 feet of continuous river frontage** and the land behind it to offer prospective developers, noting that environmental and archaeological studies are complete along with an access road and utilities. Moreover, discussions are underway about strategies to extend Foreign Trade Zone status to Brookport, which would include the newly acquired site. The Port District has contracted with Bacon Farmer Workman/Maroum Engineering and Consulting to conduct a multi-phase feasibility study to determine the site's best use and long-term transportation plans as strategic economic development tools.

The **Shawneetown Regional Port District** broke ground on a new **fertilizer distribution terminal** in August 2025[3], backed by **$27 million** in public-private investment including a Rebuild Illinois Port Facilities Capital Investment Grant award. The project repurposes former coal infrastructure and is expected to create nearly **50 jobs**. This progress builds upon the U.S. Department of Transportation's investment of $10,120,000 for the Shawneetown Regional Port Revitalization Project including a 1.26-mile port access road to support port expansions and intermodal access[3]. An additional $420,000 was secured to support a master plan to create a road map toward building a *Port of the Future* for long-term economic sustainability.

A major regional achievement was met with the submission of the federal Port Statistical Area (PSA) designation application[4] on August 8, 2025. The proposal received strong regional backing by local port districts and county boards, along with application administrative support from Southern Illinois Now (SI Now).

PSAs were first reported in 2021[5] and defined as "a region with formally justified shared economic interests and collective reliance on infrastructure related to waterborne movements of commodities that is formally recognized by legislative enactments of state, county or city governments". The creation of the statistical boundary will help enable rural, regional transportation operations, support regional multi-modal transportation and other infrastructure planning, and provide for regional marketing and investment opportunities which could lead to job creation and economic growth for rural Southern Illinois. If approved, in addition to the individual port district rankings, **the Southern Illinois region could rank 5th in the nation in total tonnage**, enhancing visibility and attracting strategic investment.

The Southern Illinois Regional Port Commission (SIRPC) Port Statistical Area (PSA) initiative and regional alignment was applauded by representatives of agriculture and port interests including the Mid-America Port Commission, Illinois Waterway Ports Commission, Illinois Soybean Association, Illinois Corn Growers Association, and Illinois Farm Bureau, with support and application assistance from the Corn Belt Ports[4].

Points of Pride

Southern Illinois Ports

- Home to the **confluence** of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers
- Route for **80%** of U.S. inland barge traffic
- Southern Illinois Named a **2025 Top Logistics Hub** for the first time ever!

ILLINOIS AND RURAL ON THE RISE

2025 Milestones

Southern Illinois Ports

All Southern Illinois Ports made the Top 150 U.S. Ports list for annual tonnage – A FIRST!

Alexander-Cairo Port District

- ✓ Phase I Environmental Site Assessment
- ✓ Commodity Flows and Opportunity Analysis
- ✓ Navigational Study – favorable results with the fleet and dock facility as proposed

Jackson-Union Counties Regional Port District

- ✓ Comprehensive Economic Feasibility Study (current)

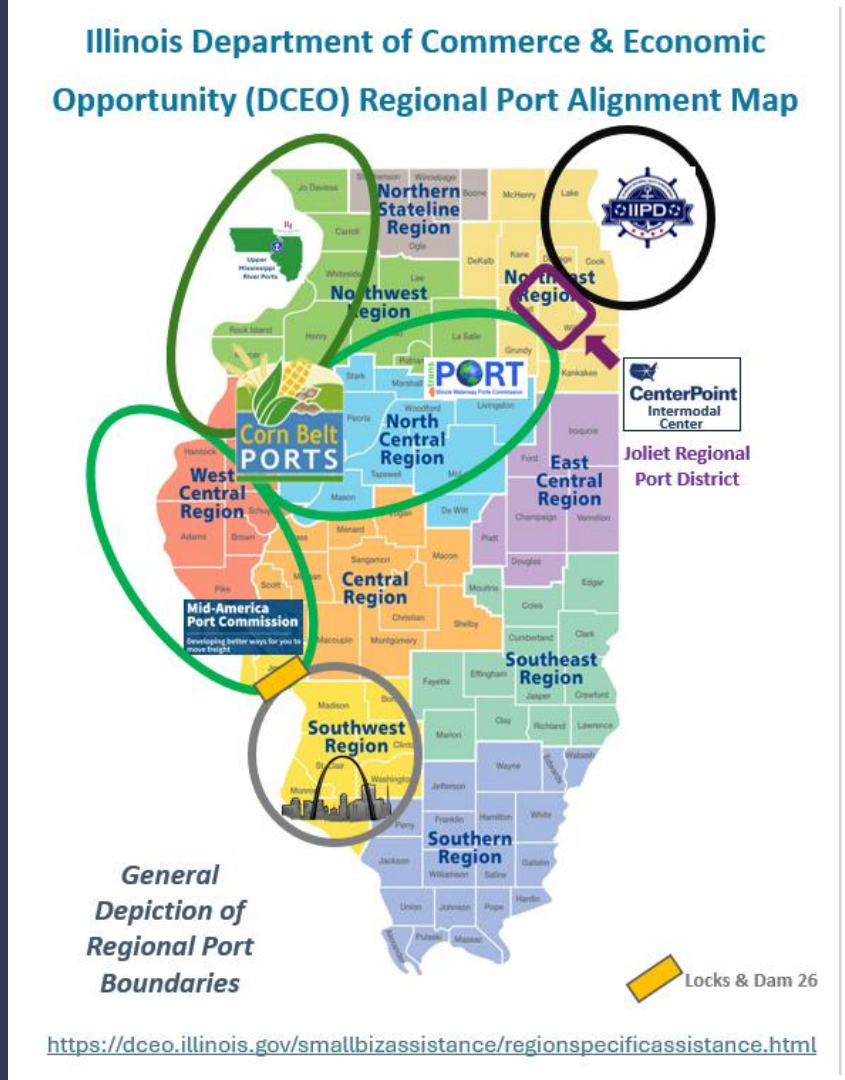
Massac-Metropolis Port District

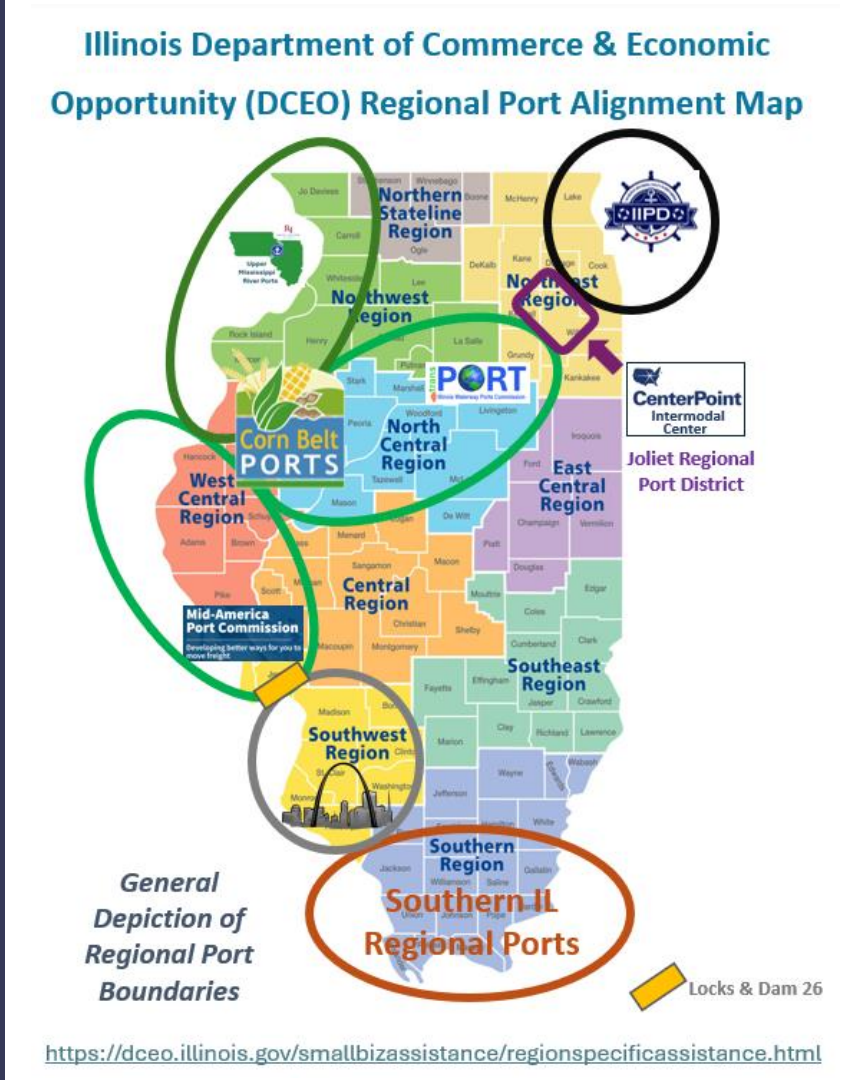
- ✓ Acquired Lock & Dam 52 site in Brookport – 16,300’ of river frontage

Shawneetown Regional Port District

- ✓ New fertilizer distribution terminal (50 jobs)
- ✓ $27M public/private investment
- ✓ + $10M for port access road + $420,000 for master plan

COORDINATED APPROACH





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