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Port NOLA CEO Delivers 2022 State of the Port Address
Brandy Christian highlights wins across all four business lines, outlines plan to deliver Louisiana's future in competitive global trade market

NEW ORLEANS – Today, Brandy D. Christian, Port of New Orleans (Port NOLA) President and CEO, and New Orleans Public Belt Railroad (NOPB) CEO, delivered the 2022 State of the Port address highlighting successes across the Port's four lines of business and the completion of several vital maritime infrastructure projects. This was the first State of the Port gathering since 2019 before the pandemic.

In the address titled, "Delivering Louisiana's Future," Christian attributed the successes to collaboration and partnerships, while emphasizing there is more work to be done. Christian outlined key short- and long-term strategies to capitalize on current momentum and to create opportunities for the future of Louisiana.

"The future is bright at Port NOLA as we continue to shine a light on our gateway's diversity that has allowed us to pivot, providing supply chain solutions to customers old and new," said Christian. "We have the opportunity to be the next generation leader in global trade so let's seize this moment of clarity brought by global events, and let's deliver Louisiana's future together."

Christian pointed to the 2022 Louisiana legislative session where Port NOLA secured \$96.595 million in funding support for infrastructure projects across the region with the goal of meeting future growth and creating new jobs and opportunity for the region and state.

Also on the infrastructure side, Port NOLA has finalized a three-year project and \$140 million investment in the Napoleon Avenue Container Terminal. The expansion adds 4 new 100-foot-gauge container gantry cranes and creates additional container yard space for a 1 million TEU capacity. In New Orleans East, the \$42 million expansion of Port NOLA's Jourdan Road Cold Storage Terminal nearly doubled the cold storage complex on the Inner Harbor, creating 50 new direct maritime and warehousing jobs. The project supports economic development across Louisiana, serving the State's \$1.6 billion poultry industry, including more than 300 commercial broiler producers throughout 11 parishes.



“We find ourselves at a crossroads, contemplating the future of our state’s economy. These last few years on the global stage have revealed the fundamental importance of the supply chain in getting food to grocery store shelves, packages delivered to our doorsteps, and manufactured products to markets,” said Christian. “As a state, we have a real opportunity here—not just to retain our access to goods and materials, but to reestablish Louisiana as an integral nexus within the global market.”

Christian noted two historic, decades-long infrastructure projects that have paved the way for the future of maritime commerce in Louisiana: the federal levee system and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) recent 50-foot deepening of the river.

“With flood protection and deeper draft, we welcome bigger ships, more cargo and resilient facilities for decades to come,” said Christian. “It is up to us to seize the opportunity these massive investments bring – we must deliver maritime facilities to match. And that’s exactly what we’re doing.”

Christian pointed to progress on a vital long-term investment in a second container terminal in St. Bernard Parish that will serve vessels of all size and create new jobs and business for the region and state.

“One thing is certain — if our state is to remain in the container shipping business, attract and retain manufacturing and distribution businesses, we must build the \$1.5 billion Louisiana International Terminal,” said Christian. “The new terminal will create 17,000 new direct and indirect jobs and \$800 million in new tax revenue for the state and \$200 million for St. Bernard Parish.”

The project is in the beginning of the permitting process. The Port anticipates construction beginning in 2025, with the first wharf opening in 2028. The location in Violet, Louisiana, is within the 100-year federal flood protection and proximate to the Port’s inland transportation systems.

Port NOLA is finalizing negotiations with private partners who are industry-leading ocean carriers and terminal operators.

“We’re actively working with our neighbors to design a project that provides opportunity and protects quality of life,” said Christian. “The Louisiana International Terminal will serve as the needed catalyst to align resources and partners to deliver long needed projects such as a long-imagined public roadway in lower St. Bernard Parish.”

Christian said the supply chain challenges of the past two years have shined a light on the Port’s diverse business and cargo profile, and the Port is being sought out as an alternative gateway to inland markets.

The Port’s breakbulk volumes doubled in fiscal year 2022, led by imported steel which grew by 123% and natural rubber which grew by 50%. Port NOLA is being sought as an alternative for shippers seeking to diversify and mitigate their exposure to container shipping challenges. As a result, in 2022, the Port saw a huge increase in breakbulk plywood, and welcomed the first breakbulk coffee vessels in 30 years.



The Port continues to see benefits of synergy with the alignment of the New Orleans Public Belt railroad. Emphasis on more efficient operations to increase fluidity and better service to local customers and six class I railroads has paid off with NOPB recording a 47% increase in local customer volumes in fiscal year 2022, storage volumes rising by 15% and overall rail volumes increasing by 4%.

NOPB also named Tomeka Watson Bryant General Manager in 2022. She is a second generation railroader who has received industry-recognition. She's also the first African American woman to lead a short line railroad in the United States.

"Now more than ever, we are offering customers more integrated marine and rail solutions," said Christian. "That includes growing intermodal connections to the Midwest via the CN and to Dallas and Kansas City via KCS. And the Seacor-operated container-on-barge service now moves 30,000 TEUs per year between New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Memphis and now St. Louis."

In addition, the Port continues to grow its real estate portfolio, which is key to attracting new and expanding businesses particularly with an increasing demand for rail served warehousing and trans-load facilities.

Christian also announced the comeback of the cruise business. Carnival Cruise Line was the first to restart ocean-going cruises from New Orleans in September 2021, and they are now celebrating their 50th anniversary with an average of 110% occupancy on their sailings out of New Orleans.

With the return of Norwegian, Disney and Royal Caribbean cruise lines, the Port is back to pre-pandemic passenger numbers. And in October, The Port will welcome Viking Cruise Line's first North American river cruise.

The Port is seeing a tremendous re-commitment to the Louisiana cruise market by our cruise line partners.

"Our cruise business is a vital economic engine that contributes to the local tourism and hospitality industry," said Christian. "Every time a cruise ship docks at our Erato or Julia St. terminals, it's like a mini-convention pulling into town. All this activity creates jobs and injects money into the local and state economy."

Port NOLA also consistently remains an environmental leader. The award-winning Clean Truck Replacement Incentive Program (Clean TRIP) helps truck and fleet owners pay to replace old engines. The program has replaced more than 90 old engines since 2016. Through collective sustainability efforts the Port has reduced 9,000 tons of greenhouse gas in 2021 alone.

"We've also replaced our entire fleet of locomotives, leading to reduced fuel consumption and emissions," said Christian.

All of this progress and success happens because Port NOLA remains safe. After a national search, we named a new police chief from within our ranks. Chief Melanie Montroll, a 21-year veteran of Port NOLA's dedicated police force, made her own history as the first black female chief in Louisiana.

“We are extremely proud of Chief Montroll for all she has accomplished in her early tenure, and we know that under her thoughtful leadership Harbor Police Department will continue to thrive as a law enforcement agency uniquely specialized in maritime and homeland security,” said Christian.

Montroll met her top priorities in the first 100 days of her tenure, launching body-worn cameras for all officers, delivering on recruitment efforts and establishing a dedicated Special Response Team (SRT) with the sole mission of ensuring top security and maritime safety.

“Our future must be greener, more resilient, more inclusive, and most importantly, our future must meet the needs of tomorrow. So here we are at a defining moment,” said Christian. “Let’s seize this moment of clarity wrought by disasters and supply chain disruptions. Let’s use this opportunity to speak with one voice. Louisiana’s future rests in competing in a global market. So we must invest in a trade-based economy. We must invest in transformational projects.”

The Port of New Orleans (Port NOLA) is a modern multimodal gateway for global commerce and an in-demand cruise port — delivering seamless, integrated logistics solutions between river, rail and road. Port NOLA is a diverse deep water port uniquely located on the Mississippi River near the Gulf of Mexico -- with access to 30-plus major inland hubs such as Dallas, Memphis, Chicago and Canada via 14,500 miles of waterways, 6 Class I railroads and interstate roadways. Strategic alignment with the New Orleans Public Belt Railroad, a Class III connecting railroad, strengthens Port NOLA’s position as an integrated hub and supports the Port’s mission of driving regional economic prosperity.

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