



For Immediate Release

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The Greater Houston Port Bureau, Houston Pilots, and the Galveston-Texas City Pilots Present Results from Simulations on Proposed Gate Study by USACE.

HOUSTON, TX—February 8, 2023. The Greater Houston Port Bureau today presented the results of a study assessing the navigational impacts of the proposed Bolivar Roads Gate Complex under development by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The Ship Simulation Transit Scenario Modeling & Ship Pilot Study, sponsored by the Port Bureau and presented during a meeting of the Gulf Coast Protection District, looked at the maritime implications for commercial ship transits to determine the impact of future design and execution of the proposed Coastal Texas Protection and Restoration Project. Nearly 60% of deep-draft vessel arrivals for Texas visit the ports of Houston, Texas City, or Galveston bringing commerce and commodities through the Greater Houston Port Region. They provide major economic impact for the Houston area, Texas, and the nation. The Greater Houston Port Bureau ("Port Bureau") sponsored a "Ship Simulation Transit Scenario Modeling & Ship Pilot Study". The Greater Houston Port Bureau supports flood control efforts to protect the citizens and businesses surrounding the Houston Ship Channel, while still enabling the continued growth of the port of Houston, the busiest U.S. deep-draft international trade waterway, which accounts for nearly 60 percent of deep-draft vessel arrivals in Texas.

Captain Bill Diehl, president of the Greater Houston Port Bureau said, "The Port Bureau is 100 percent behind this mission to protect the communities, environment, and economic activity from storm surge but it must be balanced with continued safe navigation of our commercial waterways and the economic benefits they provide for the region, the state and the nation. We have funded a study to professionally evaluate vessel transits through two proposed 650' gates. From what we learned in our study, we are asking for the Gulf Coast Protection District's support to encourage the USACE to expedite its gate study and fully engage both the Houston and Galveston-Texas City pilots' organizations to help ensure a project that addresses the needs of all stakeholders. We also have concerns about the loss of anchorage, which is a key component of the success of the busiest waterway in the US. We acknowledge the USACE will conduct an extensive study in the future that will be presented to you for approval."

The presiding officer of the Houston Pilots, Captain Clint Winegar, who has more than 20 years of experience as a pilot, stated that the Texas Governor commissions state pilots to protect the environment and safely facilitate commerce in the port. The Houston Pilots safely move over 19,000 ships a year of various sizes. Captain Winegar said, "A limited number of simulations was conducted on the original design from the USACE for a single gate. The study concluded the siting was not optimal and the single gate should be wider. Recognizing the importance of protecting homes and industry, we and the Lone Star Harbor Safety Committee sent letters of concern to USACE regarding the gate size and location. When the two-gate design was unveiled, we had concerns about the smaller gates and recommended conducting full mission bridge simulations. We respectfully request that the Pilots, as well as the regular maritime industry, be consulted in the planning, engineering, and design phase before signing the agreement. We ask the Gulf Coast Protection District for their support and commitment to supporting the pilots' participation as the gate design is further studied."

Captain Mark Saunders, the presiding officer of the Galveston-Texas City Pilots said, "Our organization moves a variety of ships, from small offshore supply vessels that are up to 300 feet long long to very large crude carriers, large container ships and the largest cruise ships in the world which can reach lengths of 1,200 feet.. Pilots have extensive experience with ship handling and set safety parameters based on the ship dimensions, the waterway, and dock characteristics, along with variables such as wind, current, and tide levels. Simulations and manned models conducted with pilots are extremely valuable in the planning stage of a project. Designs can be virtually changed and simulated to demonstrate a high degree of success under various conditions, preventing costly design issues, as well as reducing potential safety issues or incidents. The pilots stand ready to assist and collaborate with the USACE regarding the design of the gates to ensure successful and safe transits for long-term success."

George Burkley, the Executive Director of the Maritime Pilots Institute/Locus LLC conducted the simulated study at San Jacinto College in La Porte, Texas along with the involvement of the Houston Pilots and Galveston Texas City Pilots. Leadership from USACE Galveston District observed one of the simulation sessions. By working together with the Gulf Coast Protection District and USACE, the data collected during the study can be used to help develop a plan that provides the best solution for protecting the community and the businesses for today and the future.

About Greater Houston Port Bureau

The Greater Houston Port Bureau helps over 260 member companies work together to promote cooperation and efficiency within the maritime community by providing vessel information, port information, networking, and advocacy. For more information, visit www.txgulf.org or call 713-678-4300.

About Houston Pilots

The Houston Pilots Association provides pilotage services to all foreign flag vessels and American vessels under register (regulated vessels) entering or departing the Port of Houston, Harris County, Texas, as required by Texas state law. They provide 24-hours per day, 365 days per year, in all weather and port conditions, unless closed for safety, for example, poor visibility, high winds, and storm warnings. For more information, visit www.houston-pilots.com.

About Galveston-Texas City Pilots

The Galveston-Texas City Pilots Association provides pilotage services to all foreign flag vessels and American vessels under register (regulated vessels) entering or departing the Ports of Galveston County, Texas, as required by Texas state law. Pilotage is provided 24-hours per day, 365 days per year, in all weather and port conditions, unless closed for safety, for example, poor visibility, high winds, and storm warnings. For more information, visit www.galvestonpilots.com.

About Locus LLC

Locus is an organization devoted to supporting and advancing the maritime industry through rigorous research and consulting initiatives. For more information, visit www.locus-mpi.com.

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