

FROM VISION TO REALITY

ADVANCING ILLINOIS PUBLIC PORT DISTRICTS JACKSON - UNION COUNTIES



September 3, 2026

1:15-2:15 pm

Bonnie Cissell – Vice Chair Jackson Union Counties Port
District

Libby Ogard – Prime Focus LLC

Challenges

- **No assets**
- **No revenue stream**
- **No available financial records**
- **No employees**
- **Inaccessible past board minutes**
- **Limited river access for river port development**
- **Limited transportation experience**

Strengths

- **Awarded Feasibility Grant**
- **Assistance from Greater Egypt Regional Development**
- **SI Now regional economic development hub**
- **Southern Illinois University Economic Development Center**
- **Multimodal transportation hub location**
- **Strong board unity and diverse spectrum of backgrounds**
- **Commitment to creating economic development for region**
- **Deep regional ties and relationships**

Financial Needs

- Website/social media to develop digital presence
- Stakeholder outreach
- Promotional materials
- Funds for matching grants
- Operational funds
- Legal fees
- Operating funds
- Insurance

Good News!

Location

Local support

Consultant support

Grants Interests include:

Clean Ports

State

MARAD

IDOT

Economic Development



Future Possibilities!

- **Develop Foreign Trade Zone**
- **Develop a Prosperity Zone**
- **Partner with local cargo airport**
- **Development projects with Bunge and Cora**
- **Capitalization of port for marine and/or rail access**
- **Improve road access for local marine ports**
- **Clean energy projects**



From Findings to Funding

**Not All Illinois Port Districts Are Created Equally
Once You've Seen One Port You have Seen One Port**



Six Illinois Port Districts Own Land

Port District	Assets	2017 Tons
Illinois Intl Port District (19 terminals)	Controls 2,000 acres including Iroquois Landing & Lake Calumet Terminal.	13.9 Million
America's Central Port District (22 terminals)	Controls 1,200 acres and Operates 7 docks and warehouse space.	4.4 Million
Joliet Regional Port District (36 terminals)	Owens and operates the 732-acre Lewis University Airport.	3.2 Million
Massac-Metropolis Port District (4 terminals)	Acquired the former Lock and Dam 52 site in 2025 of approximately 46 acres .	8.7 Million
Kaskaskia Regional Port District (10 terminals)	Operates terminal facilities, 111 acres adjacent to 20,000 acres of DNR property	16.2 Million
Waukegan Port District (2 terminals 54 hangers)	Received grants for dock wall repairs. 520 acres	0

These districts are authorized to acquire, hold, and lease property, with all land held by them for public purposes being exempt from taxes. Other notable districts with active projects include the **Ottawa Port District** and **Mid-America Intermodal Port Authority**.

Illinois Port Districts with Aviation Powers

Illinois Port District	Aviation Activity	2024 Emplanements	Role
Havana Regional	Havana Regional Airport –turf runway	0	GA
Heart of Illinois Regional	Quincy Regional Airport (UIN) Jacksonville Municipal Airport (IJX)	4,112	CS
Joliet Regional	Lewis University Airport (LOT)	26	R
Mid-America Intermodal Authority	Decatur (DEC)	12,747	P-N
Waukegan	Waukegan National Airport (UGN)	126	R
Jackson Union County	Southern Illinois Airport (MDH)	435	GA

Roles Legend: GA/General Aviation, CS/Commercial Service, P-N/Non-Hub Commercial, R/Reliever



Feature	Jackson-Union Counties Port	Other Major IL Ports
Primary Focus	Reg. Economic Development	High Volume Maritime Commerce
Asset Ownership	None	Terminals, Docks, Rail or Airport
Geography	2 Counties	Varies from 1 -11 Counties
Top Infrastructure	Southern Illinois Airport	Operators/Landlords of harbors & Airports
Competitive Opportunities to Leverage	“Lock-Free” Ethanol Plant Trade Companies	Various

Comparison of Key Port Characteristics

SPECIAL PURPOSE DISTRICTS



**Illinois has the
most special
purpose
districts of any
state**

Source: U.S. Census

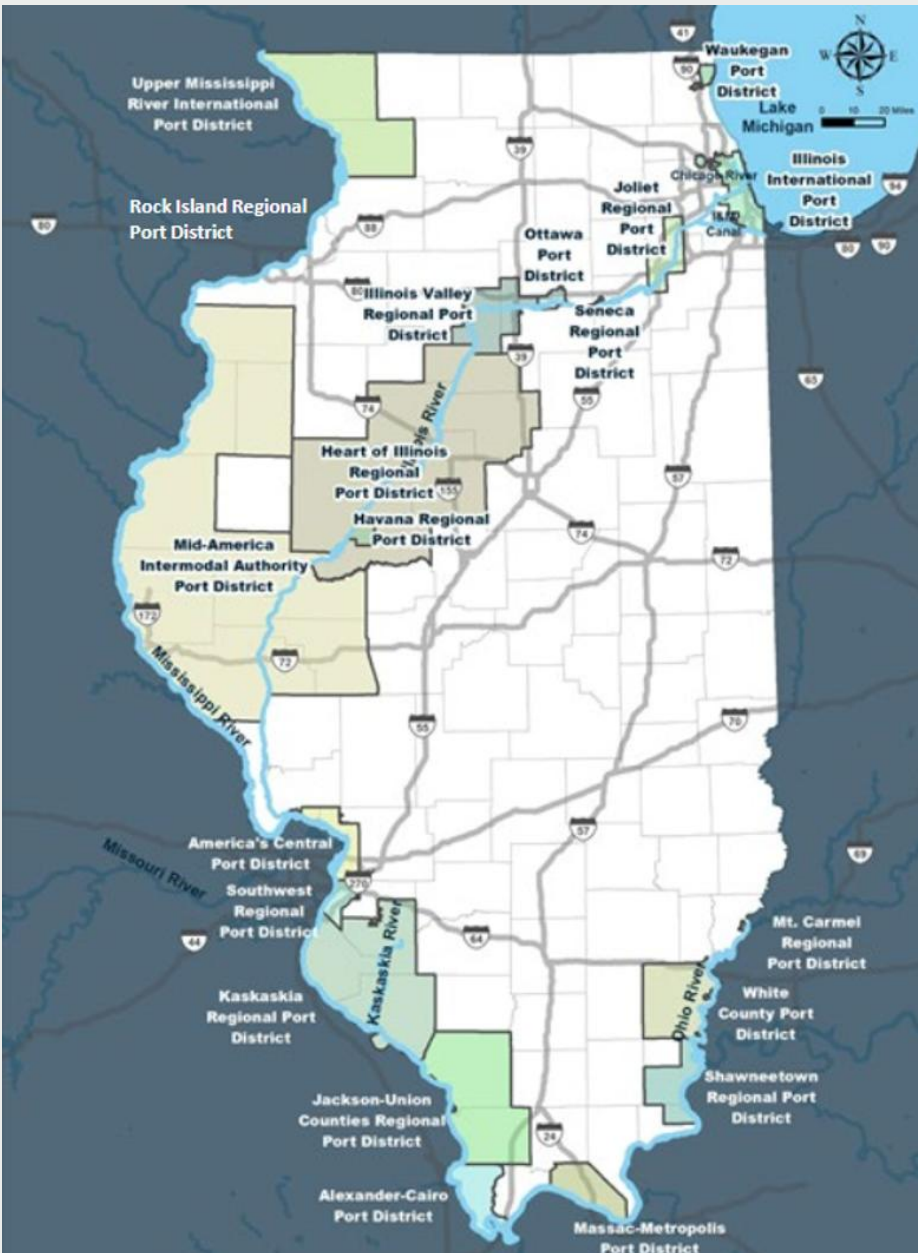


- 3,227 have a budget autonomy
- 1,528 do not have budget autonomy

**4,755 Total in
2015**

Jackson Union County Port District

- Created by Statute in 1976
70 ILCS 1820/4
- 22 Unique Powers/Authorities
- Rural Farmland
- Airport
- Three Private River Terminals
- Two Class 1 Rails (+Amtrak)
- Public Land Available for Conveyance



70 ILCS 1820–Powers Jackson-Union Co.

- 1. To Issue Permits**
- 2. To Prevent or Remove Obstructions in navigable waters**
- 3. To locate and establish dock lines and shore or harbor lines**
- 4. To regulate the anchorage, moorage and speed of water borne vessels**
- 5. To Acquire, own, construct, lease, operate and maintain terminals**
- 6. To Locate, establish and maintain a public airport & public airport facilities**

70 ILCS 1820–Powers Jackson-Union Co.

7. To Operate, maintain, manage, lease sublease and to make and enter into regulations for the operation, management and use of any public airport or public *airport facility*.
8. To fix, charge and collect reasonable rentals, tolls, fees and charges for the use of any *public airport*.
9. To establish, maintain extend and improve roadways and approaches by land, water or ail to any such *airport*.
10. To restrict the height of any object of natural growth or structure within the vicinity of any *airport*.
11. To agree with the State or federal governments ow with any public agency to remove or relocate any object of *airport hazard*.

70 ILCS 1820–Powers Jackson-Union Co.

12. For the prevention of accidents, for the furtherance and protections of public health, safety and convenience in respect to aeronautics for the projects of property and persons within the District from any hazard or nuisance resulting from flight aircraft. **Public Airport**

13. To police its physical property only and all waterways and to exercise police powers to enforce rules and regulations provided by the ordinances of the District. **Police**

14. To enter into agreements with the corporate authorities or governing body of any other municipal corporation or any political subdivision of this State to pay the reasonable expense of services furnished for or on account of income producing properties of the district. **Services**

70 ILCS 1820–Powers Jackson-Union Co.

15. To enter into contracts dealing in any manner with the objects and purposes of this Act. **Contracting Authority**

16. **To acquire, own, lease, sell or otherwise dispose of interests in real property and improvements and personal property as necessary to fulfill the purpose of the District. Asset ownership**

17. To designate the fiscal year for the District. **Administrative**

18. **To engage in any activity or operation which is incidental to and in furtherance of efficient operation to accomplish the District's primary purpose. Efficiency and Productivity Improvements**

70 ILCS 1820–Powers Jackson-Union Co.

19. To build, construct, repair and maintain levees. **Construction Authority**

20. To enter into agreements with banks and other lending institutions guaranteeing contract performance of a person or business entity doing or planning to do business in Jackson or Union County. **Contracting Authority**

21. To make and give grants to a person or business entity doing or planning to do business in the Jackson County or Union County area. **Grant authority**

22. To acquire, *own, construct, lease, operate and maintain industrial plants and facilities including but not limited to ethanol plants, facilities and the by-products therefrom*, within the confines of Jackson and Union County. The charges collected shall be used to defray the reasonable expenses of the Port District and to pay the principal and interest of any revenue bonds

- Eminent Domain
- May lease to others for a period of time not to exceed 99 years
- The District is authorized and empowered to establish, organize, own, acquire, participate in, operate, sell and transfer

Export Trading Companies

- May apply for grants, loans and appropriations to better handle freight.

Note absence of people

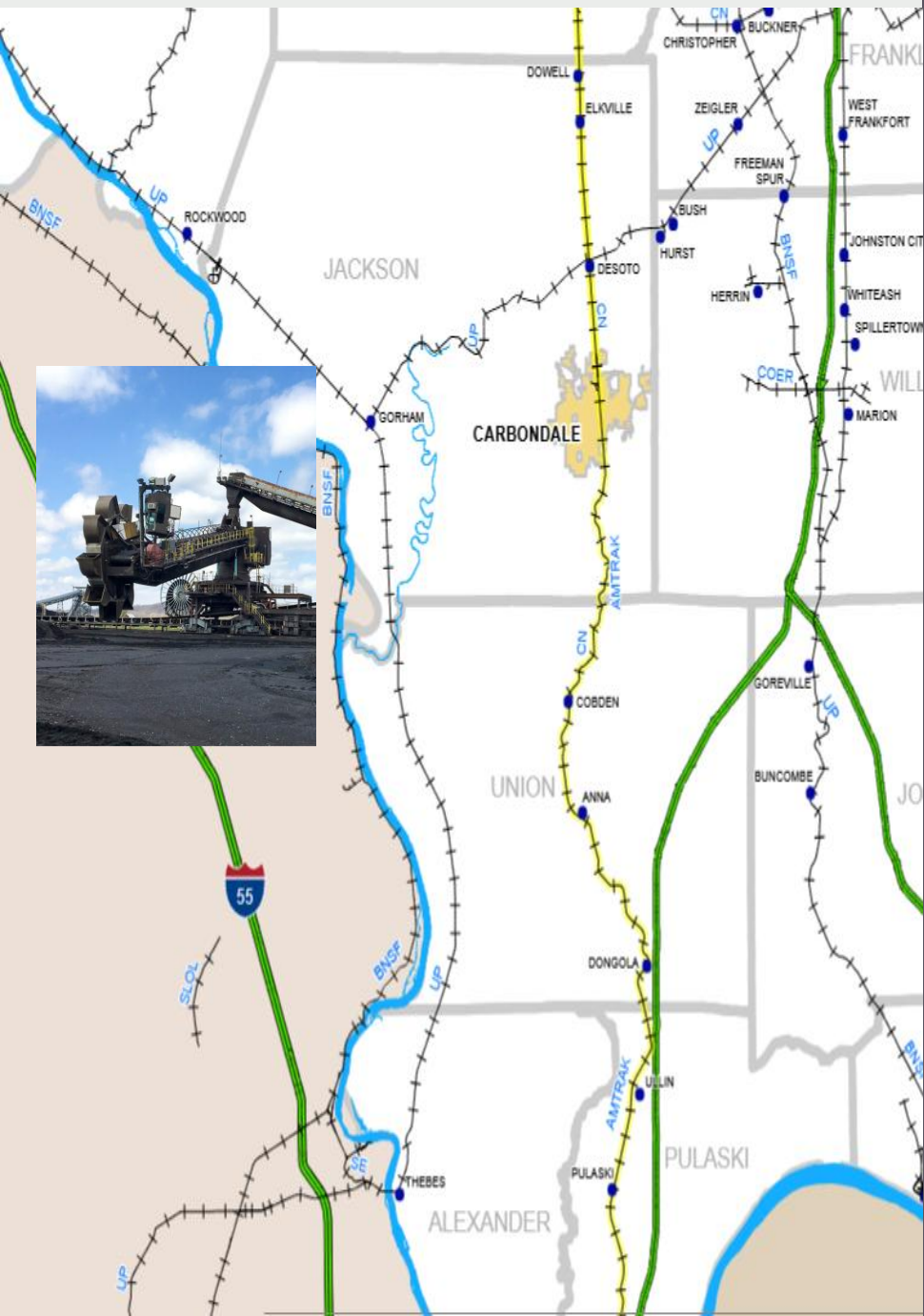
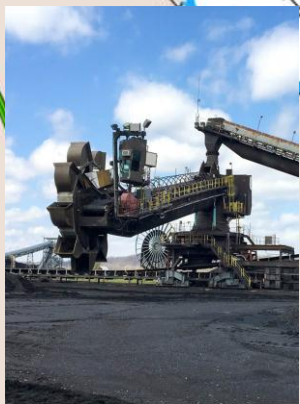
- Power to acquire, purchase, lease, gift, grant any property and rights use for for its purposes and to provide for the development of channels, ports, harbors, airports, airfields, terminals, port facilities and terminal facilities adequate to serve the needs of commerce within the District.

Note Absence of recreation.

Other Financial Authorities

Access to Two Class 1 Railroads

- UP-NS rail merger will open access to Southeastern Markets with single line service
- Expansion of service within the Watershed Markets
- CN Access provides North South freight rail connection along with passenger rail service.
- Short Line Railroads can perform important services for bulk commodity storage and aggregation. And Terminal development partnership opportunities.



Marine Development Opportunities

U.S. Marine Highway Grant July 2026

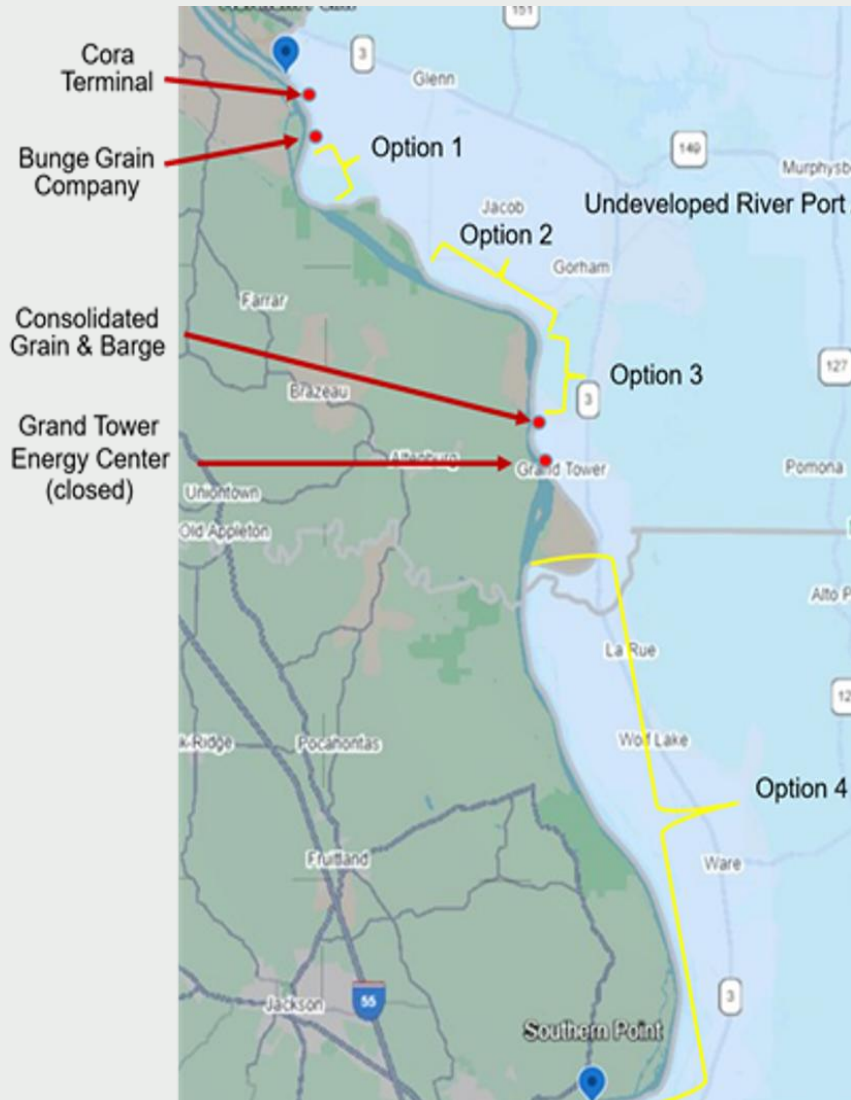
Contacted each Entity to identify potential list of Projects and interest in partnership

Began UEI application filing

Explored State Matching Programs

Lessons Learned:

- **Start Early**
- **Need a Presence**
- **Public Private Partnerships need time to develop.**



Next Steps

Administrative Actions

Secure UEI Number

Prequalify with DCEO

Establish a Presence

Marketing and Outreach

Create Capabilities Brochure

Meet with Port Stakeholders

Host Annual Meeting

Coordination & Collaboration

Analyze Complimentary powers
with neighboring agencies

Identify Stranded Assets

Explore Joint Venture
Opportunities

Leverage the Whole of Government
to accelerate Development

QUESTIONS?

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