

'Supership' port needed if Texas to compete well, report asserts

An offshore port facility to accommodate "superships" is mandatory if Texas is to survive worldwide industrial competition, according to a work plan for feasibility studies released here.

Prepared by Dan M. Bragg and James R. Bradley of the Industrial Economics Research Division, the report calls the building of such a facility off the Texas "urgent in view of the deep water terminals and harbors throughout other parts of the world, along with the continuing trend to even larger sizes in new ship construction."

The study was supported by Texas A&M's Sea Grant Program and the South Texas Regional Export Expansion Council.

Hydrocarbon and petroleum industries concentrated along the Texas Gulf coast require low-cost transportation for survival, which calls for deep water ports, the report points out.

The work plan calls for physical and economic feasibility studies to be accomplished in 18 months at a cost of \$460,000.

In addition to the need for an offshore terminal, the report mentions factors to be considered in determining its feasibility.

Engineering studies are recommended to evaluate deepening of an existing port as opposed to building a new terminal offshore in deep water. Studies of environmental effects of the operation of a supertanker port are also outlined.

"Prevention of pollution will be a major factor in these studies," Brimble said.

"Socio-economic studies of what the port will do for the South Texas economy, and possible economic consequences if the port is not built, are other areas recommended for evaluation," he continued.

"If the port is built in deep water offshore from the Texas coast, it will very likely be outside U. S. territorial waters, and for this reason, detailed studies of the legal aspects are important," Brimble added.

By 1983, more than 1,400 of the projected world tanker fleet of 4,384 ships will be unable to enter present Texas ports," said Ray R. Brimble, chairman of the South Texas Regional Export Expansion Council.

"Texas industries — both the shippers and the ports — are going to have to plan and prepare for the size revolution taking place in water carriers," he emphasized.

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Studies on financing, management, storm protection and structural design are also areas covered in the report.

"Construction of a 'supership' port along the Gulf Coast," Brimble said, "must be based on a strong need, sound engineering principles and in-depth environmental studies."

"Other sections of the United States are studying and planning offshore ports," he added, "and if we do not get ahead on this project, Texas will experience a rising freight rate that will mean higher costs for area industries and will stifle economic growth in the region."



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