

STATE OF LOUISIANA

LOUISIANA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

LOUISIANA BOARD OF INTERNATIONAL COMMERCE MEETING

BEING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6, 2024

AT THE BATON ROUGE AREA CHAMBER

564 LAUREL STREET

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

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- 1 APPEARANCES:
- 2 CHAIRMAN GREGORY RUSOVICH
- 3 SECRETARY SUSAN BONNETT BOURGEOIS
- 4 ANNE VILLA
- 5 RACHEL SHIELDS
- 6 BEN FONTENOT
- 7 JESSICA STEVENSON
- 8 ABIGAIL DEPINO
- 9 COURTNEY MACIASZ
- 10 WILLIAM "WYLY" GILFOIL
- 11 PAUL MATTHEWS
- 12 KATE MACARTHUR
- 13 NESTOR NAVARRO
- 14 DOUGLAS BOURGEOIS (ABSENT)
- 15 KEVIN MELTON
- 16 DON SANDERS (ABSENT)
- 17 BRENDA STELLY
- 18 TOM SPIERS
- 19 NICHOLAS COLE, REPRESENTING MICHAEL STRAIN
- 20 JESSICA RAGUSA, REPRESENTING BRANDY CHRISTIAN
- 21 STEPHEN HOLLIDAY
- 22 RANDALL WITHERS
- 23 JAY HARDMAN
- 24 TAMARA KENNEDY
- 25 TEDRA CHEATHAM

1 MANDI MITCHELL (ABSENT)

2 JILL DONAHUE (ABSENT)

3 CAPTAIN MICHAEL BOPP (ABSENT)

4 DREW HEAPHY (ABSENT)

5 APPEARANCES CONTINUED:

6 JEANET CAZENAVE

7 JENNIFER MARUSAK

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12 REPORTED BY: KELLY S. PERRIN, CCR

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

3 Okay. Thank you all very much. Good
4 morning. Thank you for being here. Secretary
5 Bourgeois, it's an honor and a pleasure to
6 have you with us today.

7 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

8 Thank you very much. Happy to be here.

9 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

10 So looking forward to working with you.

11 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

14 Thank you. And we'll get to that in just
15 a moment. But I'd like to start by calling
16 the meeting to order and also getting right
17 into the roll call.

18 Jeanet, can you help take us through the
19 roll call? Good morning.

20 MS. CAZENAVE:

21 Yes, sir. Good morning, everyone.

22 All right. Please say present when your
23 name is called.

24 Brandy Christian?

25 MS. RAGUSA:

1 Jessica here in her absence.

2 MS. CAZENAVE:

3 Brenda Stelly?

4 MS. STELLY:

5 Present.

6 MS. CAZENAVE:

7 Don Sanders?

8 (No answer).

9 Doug Bourgeois?

10 (No answer).

11 Drew Heaphy?

12 (No answer).

13 Michael Bopp?

14 (No answer).

15 Gregory Rusovich?

16 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

17 Present.

18 MS. CAZENAVE:

19 Jay Hardman?

20 MR. HARDMAN:

21 Present.

22 MS. CAZENAVE:

23 Jill Donahue?

24 (No answer).

25 Kate MacArthur?

1 MS. MACARTHUR:
2 Present.
3 MS. CAZENAVE:
4 Kevin Melton?
5 MR. MELTON:
6 Present.
7 MS. CAZENAVE:
8 Mandi Mitchell?
9 (No answer).
10 Mike Strain?
11 MR. COLE:
12 Nicholas Cole, present, on behalf of Mike
13 Strain.
14 MS. CAZENAVE:
15 Nestor Navarro?
16 MR. NAVARRO:
17 Present.
18 MS. CAZENAVE:
19 Paul Matthews?
20 MS. KENNEDY:
21 He is present.
22 MS. CAZENAVE:
23 Susan Bonnett Bourgeois?
24 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:
25 Present.

1 MS. CAZENAVE:
2 Tom Spiers?
3 MR. SPIERS:
4 Present.
5 MS. CAZENAVE:
6 And Wyly Gilfoil?
7 MR. GILFOIL:
8 Present.
9 MS. CAZENAVE:
10 All right.
11 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:
12 Quorum?
13 MS. CAZENAVE:
14 Yes.
15 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:
16 Yep. Great. Thank you very much again
17 for being here. Do we have, as we start, a
18 motion to approve the minutes from the last
19 meeting?
20 MR. GILFOIL:
21 I'll move.
22 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:
23 Wyly. Second?
24 MR. SPIERS:
25 Second.

1 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

2 Second from Tom. Any discussion on those
3 minutes?

4 Okay. All in favor, say aye.

5 ALL:

6 Aye.

7 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

8 Any opposed? Okay. Minutes are through.
9 So just a few introductory remarks. I want to
10 say, first again, welcome to Secretary
11 Bourgeois and her team, or a team that you're
12 assembling and have put together here, so
13 congratulations on that. You know, I think I
14 speak on behalf of the Board that there really
15 does seem to be, and we know there is, a real
16 sense of optimism in the sense of energy and
17 vigor and the sense of urgency that you're
18 bringing forth. So we want you to know that
19 we're here to act as your global partner.

20 Anything global, anything that we can do
21 to assist in any way, shape, or form, have us
22 on speed dial. We are there for you 24/7, any
23 time. And it's really an honor to have you
24 here and look so forward to working with you
25 and really growing to the next level, that

1 whole global infrastructure that we've put
2 together.

3 And, you know, when this legislation was
4 first passed by Conrad Appel back in 2013,
5 this Board was really set to have a unified
6 structure. The reason being, Louisiana never
7 had, as you all know, a real voice for global
8 affairs, never had someone focused solely on
9 International Commerce and for a direct
10 investment, you know, as a voice. And I think
11 Conrad saw that and Conrad and Jim Tucker and
12 the group put together this legislation to
13 really formulate a structure and a voice that
14 would be the proponents and the advocacy and
15 the implementer, in effect, for global trade,
16 you know, and for commerce and also giving the
17 ports a good place to convene and a good place
18 to have good cooperation and then to go ahead
19 and execute on that.

20 And then, from a foreign direct
21 investment perspective, to go out and reach
22 out to the globe and be an arm for bringing
23 businesses in so we are excited about that.
24 You know, anything we can do to further carry
25 out that mission, we just completed our master

1 plan, as I know you've mentioned earlier to
2 me, and thank you for that. And so, that
3 master plan is there. I think we spent a lot
4 of work at the Board going through it. And so
5 we're proud of some of that and we'll talk
6 about that master plan during the meeting as
7 well, and also further how we can implement
8 and really drill down into the components of
9 that to make sure that that's brought to
10 fruition.

11 So, overall, I just say this is a new day
12 and it's an exciting day and we are here tan,
13 rested, and ready, and ready to serve. So
14 thank y'all very much. Yeah. Thank you.

15 I would like to say also, I think during
16 the meeting, that I know we'll talk about what
17 the staff has been doing, you know, we get
18 normal staff reports that are really excellent
19 and show the global outreach we've got in the
20 various conferences we go to and the grants
21 that we've secured so looking very forward to
22 hearing that too, Ben. So we'll be off and
23 running on that.

24 So with that, I don't have any further
25 comments. We can get on to the meeting. Any

1 thoughts or anything, anybody, any Board
2 members want to add to what I said or we can
3 wait to get into the agenda and into it?

4 Okay. Please, Nestor?

5 MR. NAVARRO:

6 Basically, welcome, Madam Secretary.

7 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

8 Thank you.

9 MR. NAVARRO:

10 And as Greg said and I think explained it
11 very well, and we'll relay to you how we feel,
12 I think we're a very diversified group. We
13 have a lot of experiences internationally.
14 Some of us have lived overseas, some of us
15 have been working traveling internationally
16 for 23 years, some of us. But I think we'll
17 have a -- it's a new era, as Greg just
18 mentioned, that you could come with us. This
19 is me personally.

20 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

21 Sure.

22 MR. NAVARRO:

23 I don't speak on the Board. But we're
24 here to support you, through you to make
25 Louisiana better. I grew up across the river,

1 even though my accent, I'm Cuban American, I
2 grew up working at east port over there and
3 that's how I paid my way through LSU, so I
4 love Louisiana. I lived overseas and people
5 don't realize how much we have to offer until
6 you live overseas. So we're just here to come
7 with us to spread the good word to make
8 Louisiana better.

9 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

10 That's great.

11 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

12 Thank you very much. Any other?

13 MR. MATTHEWS:

14 Yeah. Mr. Chairman, if I may?

15 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

16 Please, Paul.

17 MR. MATTHEWS:

18 I think it's critical, as we look at
19 these goals for foreign investment and trade
20 division, as we keep goals and they are just
21 supposed to look at consistent prioritizing
22 projects for ports. The key to that, at the
23 end of the day is (inaudible) and we know that
24 with the people in East Texas and Alabama,
25 Florida, California. And the significant

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1 difference between our state and other states,
2 when it comes to the port development, is
3 funding with our ports. Right now, we have a
4 great merit system called the Port Priority
5 Program that all of the ports in the state
6 absolutely love.

7 Texas wants a system like that, but the
8 difference between us and Texas is that
9 they're having a significant amount of
10 funding. And so, if we can properly fund our
11 ports on the merit basis, which we're already
12 doing, and prioritize these projects based on
13 the master plan, we'll be in a better position
14 compared to Florida, Alabama, California, or
15 Texas.

16 MR. HARDMAN:

17 I second that motion.

18 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

19 Yeah.

20 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

21 Paul is lobbying me before I even get
22 to -- I just want everybody to realize what
23 Paul just said. Do I get to say hello first,
24 Paul?

25 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

1 Now you can say hello, and please,

2 Secretary Bourgeois.

3 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

4 Okay. Are you sure?

5 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

6 I'm sure. I'm sure. We want to make

7 sure the Board is on its best behavior.

8 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

9 That's right. That's right.

10 MR. MATTHEWS:

11 Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

12 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

13 Thank y'all very much. Thanks, Greg and
14 Paul, and for having me obviously and for
15 those words. But I'm glad you said what you
16 said because I want to lead off by saying, you
17 know, I've been in this job for about five
18 weeks now, right, old hat. But what continues
19 to amaze me, and I want everyone in this room,
20 and ultimately everyone in this state, and
21 then ultimately everyone, period, to
22 understand is the opportunity that exist right
23 now in this state for growth, for success, for
24 capitalizing on our legacy industries, the
25 things that have built Louisiana, and the

1 things that we have historically been very
2 good at, that perhaps in the last 30 to 40
3 years, we have not focused on or paid as much
4 attention to as we should have. We're at this
5 very special place and time for geopolitical
6 reasons and a number of other ones that we're
7 back on the precipice of incredible
8 opportunity and success, right, and now our
9 goal is to all work together to achieve that.

10 And I will say that that feeling, I'm
11 glad you said, it's a palpable, it's certainly
12 palpable in the Department, but I hope and I
13 would say, I think the governor echoes this,
14 that that is -- that's very real, and that
15 needs to be palpable statewide and beyond. So
16 thank you for your words about opportunity.

17 MR. NAVARRO:

18 You're very welcome, Madam Secretary.

19 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

20 So I'd like to talk a little bit about --
21 again, I ask everybody for a little bit of
22 grace, five weeks, right, five weeks in, so a
23 little bit of grace. But I do want to talk a
24 big picture about the department and what's
25 going on right now. There's both an external

1 and an internal conversation. As many of you
2 know, when Governor Landry appointed me to
3 this role, he appointed me with the concurrent
4 messaging of a restructure of the Department
5 and what that really needed to look like and
6 how LED could position itself as a department
7 and, therefore, Louisiana to ultimately
8 succeed aggressively and win, simply, in all
9 things growth, opportunity, et cetera.

10 So we are in partnership with the
11 Committee of 100 right now doing an external
12 study with consultants on, we're looking at
13 five states in the country that have a
14 reputation for doing economic development
15 really well. And we're looking at them for
16 best practices and then we're getting
17 recommendations from the Committee at 100 on
18 what Louisiana could change to fit into one of
19 those or tweaked version of those structures.
20 So that's happening right now concurrently.
21 And the governor is looking at those
22 recommendations and will ultimately take
23 action on that some in this legislative
24 session and some beyond. So that's the
25 external conversation.

1 The internal conversation is that we
2 knew, and the team at the Department knew that
3 we weren't going to wait. Obviously, this
4 work still continues and our need to be great
5 continues. And so we focused immediately on
6 doing internally what we thought needed to be
7 done to reposition the Department somewhat.
8 And I'll tell you, there are four or five
9 priorities in that internal space that are
10 important that I want everybody to hear.

11 First and foremost is we are completely
12 reorganizing how we do all things business
13 development. That includes expansion,
14 retention, lead generation, and of course, it
15 includes our Office of International Commerce
16 and what they can offer and the opportunities
17 we have in that space. So that internal
18 re-org is happening as we speak. It continues
19 to happen and that will continue to become a
20 much more robust function of our department,
21 all of those things.

22 Number two is that we are looking at our
23 regional structure. For those of you who
24 don't know, we have eight regional economic
25 development organizations that are partner

1 organizations, and we have currently a less
2 formal structure with them. So we will create
3 a very formal structure to interact with those
4 regionals because, at the end of the day, just
5 like all politics are local, all economic
6 development is local too, and the locals need
7 to be involved on every level of that, so
8 formalizing our relationships with our
9 partners.

10 Thirdly, a really important piece of this
11 is we are intentionally and purposefully
12 formalizing relationships with the private
13 sector. Rachel Shields, who many of you know
14 from her 25 years at GNO, Inc., just started
15 on Friday to be our Director of Partnerships
16 and engagement in the department to be
17 purposeful about creating private sector
18 partnerships and leveraging subject matter
19 expertise and not having to continue to
20 reinvent the wheel inside of state government,
21 which doesn't seem like an efficient way to do
22 it. So that is Rachel's role and a tremendous
23 focus of our department.

24 The fourth piece is that we have to be
25 better about our storytelling. Back to the

1 opportunity piece, right? We all know it but
2 the fact that other people don't know it, to
3 me, is emblematic of the fact that we don't
4 tell the story very well. We allow the
5 narrative to continue of this, not a poor,
6 pitiful us, but we are -- we are going to
7 change the narrative certainly inside of our
8 department. And to the degree we have the
9 budget and the impact and the ability to
10 change it in the broader picture, we will. So
11 the storytelling piece and a completely
12 restructured plan around how we communicate
13 our message of opportunity and growth in
14 Louisiana is our internal focus.

15 So, those are our four structural
16 internal focuses. And then, I have two notes
17 here to talk to you about, just out of
18 interest is, the governor recently signed a
19 new executive order regarding our ITEP
20 Program, and it's a really significant change
21 and an important piece in our ability to
22 attract investment and to attract capital
23 investment in the state. The changes he made
24 will go a long way in doing that. And I stop
25 there because that is really the only

1 certainties we have around ITEP right now.

2 The rest of it goes into the rule-making,
3 which we will begin that process.

4 MR. MATTHEWS:

5 Sure.

6 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

7 And then the fourth piece, or the next
8 piece, and final piece is sort of a, I know --
9 I only know enough to be dangerous. I know
10 there's lots of conversations about the ports
11 again in this legislative session and what
12 we're going to do. The McMath Bill that
13 placed the department, or the function inside
14 of our department, it's my understanding that
15 Senator McMath has now prefiled a bill to
16 repeal that entire statute. So we have that
17 piece at the request of the transition -- the
18 governor's transition team.

19 MR. MATTHEWS:

20 Right.

21 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

22 I also know Representative Wright has
23 filed a bill to create more of a robust, all
24 things intermodal and port department. I
25 don't know yet where the fourth floor is, will

1 align, will land on any of that. I just know,
2 once again, and I think y'all know better than
3 I do, this conversation is very much going to
4 be part of the legislative session.

5 And I think that's a good thing because
6 it brings the focus to the importance of it,
7 right, to the importance of --

8 MR. MATTHEWS:

9 Right.

10 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

11 -- solving the things that are
12 problematic and supporting the things that
13 aren't --

14 MR. MATTHEWS:

15 That --

16 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

17 -- problematic and that are, in fact,
18 working. So where any of that will land, I
19 will let someone else with the Ouija Board
20 make that call, but it is very much in the mix
21 again. So...

22 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

23 Great. Thank you for those comments.
24 And we are fully aligned. I think everything
25 on the internal side, completely support, same

1 thing on the external side. I will say that
2 two comments, on the narrative, I'm really
3 happy to hear you talk about the narrative and
4 the communication side because we've had a lot
5 of frustration over the last eight years in
6 terms of being able to get the messaging out
7 in terms of what the international side is
8 doing for the state of Louisiana. You know,
9 it seems like we were always stuck in the
10 Communications Department and kind of went
11 into a vortex there.

12 So I think that being able to put
13 together a really good narrative for the
14 globalization of Louisiana and Louisiana
15 performing through its ports and through its
16 global infrastructure and global outreach will
17 be really good because we've lacked that
18 completely. So I think that's certainly an
19 area that we can do much better on in terms of
20 getting out our messaging. And so I think
21 that's something you'll find.

22 And I think that many of the Board
23 members have reached out, and I think we'll
24 hear from them today, concerning the different
25 pieces of legislation. Now it's interesting,

1 you know, to know that there are new pieces
2 coming in the current session because one of
3 the things that really concerned us when those
4 bills passed, and we did reach out to the
5 legislators in many of those cases, all of the
6 cases, and part of the concern that we
7 expressed was to ensure that, as we all know
8 in running our businesses or running our
9 operations, you have to have alignment and you
10 have to have -- you can't have silos. You
11 know, when you've got those silos, it's one of
12 the worst things you can possibly have. And
13 Louisiana has been known over the years for,
14 you know, having formed one thing and then all
15 of a sudden, they form something else and
16 something else and nobody's talking and has
17 no --

18 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

19 Unintended consequences.

20 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

21 -- lack of alignment. Yeah, exactly. So
22 I'm happy to hear you address that too. So
23 that's good and we'll be all hands-on-deck
24 during the session if that's something we can
25 do there too.

1 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

2 Great.

3 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

4 Tom, I noticed you had an issue.

5 MR. SPIERS:

6 I do, Madam Secretary. One of the points
7 that Paul was making in terms of, you know,
8 what we're looking at with the ports, and of
9 course, you know, getting the new information
10 that, you know, the legislation may be
11 redacted, but there's nothing more important
12 in going forward in terms of having a
13 collaborative in, you know, sort of a
14 collegial approach to how we address the ports
15 in going forward. You know, I have a business
16 over in Florida Panhandle. I drive past
17 Mobile and I remember days when we used to
18 have, you know, container trucks lined up to
19 get to Tchoupitoulas. I see now their exits
20 having trucks lined up. And the competition
21 is just, you know, ramped up.

22 And, you know, the only way we're going
23 to get better and be, you know, a player with,
24 you know, the region as it relates to
25 Gulfport, Biloxi, and even Houston is, you

1 know, having a sort of solid, you know, one
2 direction collaboratively working towards
3 bettering our boards and having that voice.
4 And, you know, to me, that would be, you know,
5 flatout one of the most important things, you
6 know, in your first couple of months and
7 especially as it relates to whatever
8 legislation comes about going forward that,
9 you know, we have as, you know, our main, you
10 know, approach to international finance trade,
11 transportation, you know, and the direction
12 that the state goes.

13 So I would implore that, you know, in
14 terms of what we do here and what we're tasked
15 with to leverage this group and this, you
16 know, Committee and Commission to support, you
17 know, whatever we can do to, you know, be a
18 part of that voice. You know, obviously, Greg
19 is in constant contact with you but, you know,
20 I would say respectfully that, you know, this
21 group, with all of its experience, expertise,
22 knowledge, especially to have, you know, Port
23 Directors involved with this group that, you
24 know, we're, you know, kept in the loop and
25 leveraged in a way that could be beneficial

1 to, you know, what you're looking to do.

2 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

3 Thank you for that. And, you know, I
4 will say, too, very obvious to this room, but
5 maybe not some other rooms, points about that.
6 Number one, the fact that we're competing with
7 ourselves instead of competing with Mobile is
8 part and parcel of what we need to sell,
9 right.

10 And the second piece of that is maybe
11 this is an oversimplification, but I do feel
12 like no matter what we do in this space, if we
13 come from a "what are you best at," right, the
14 "who's best at what" mentality, it's the
15 launching pad for how we develop a system that
16 works most effectively most quickly. And so
17 as we go into these conversations and continue
18 these conversations, we have to get the target
19 and the focus off of each other as competition
20 and on a much, much more, not even global yet,
21 but global scale to how we do this.

22 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

23 Yeah. Right. Oh, that's such a great
24 point because, you know, each port and each
25 facility that deals with trade and

1 transportation around the state, you know, has
2 its own uniqueness --

3 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

4 Exactly.

5 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

6 -- and own specialization and own
7 capabilities that can support one another as
8 we go forward.

9 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

10 Right.

11 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

12 And there are ways to find that. So,
13 that's a really good -- I think the way you
14 framed it, "what are you best at" is --

15 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

16 "What are you best at."

17 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

18 -- really good and then moving from there
19 to combine. So that's music to the ears. So,
20 yeah, I think we all --

21 MR. MELTON:

22 And, Greg, if I may, and to Tom's point
23 too, and we haven't met yet, ma'am, but we
24 will, Kevin Melton, Chennault International
25 Airport.

1 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

2 Nice to meet you.

3 MR. MELTON:

4 Number two producer of jobs in the State
5 of Louisiana, by the way, so there's my
6 elevator speech. But I usually go with LED
7 (inaudible) which is coming up in July.
8 Hopefully, you'll have the opportunity to go
9 to the parish airshow kind of thing. But to
10 Tom's point is that our common competitors are
11 that southern region. It's the Mississippis,
12 it's the Oklahomas, and the Floridas, and all
13 that. So if you compare what we do at those
14 shows, there is no comparison to what those
15 other states are putting into that.

16 So I would just offer up that while the
17 ports -- we all have to work together, but the
18 aviation piece is a significant piece of the
19 transportation mode. And so we've got to
20 start putting some, I believe, some greater
21 emphasis on the aviation aspect too and figure
22 out how we can better work with the ports and
23 capitalize and synergize our efforts. But
24 from a state perspective, we've definitely got
25 to put some more focus on the aviation sector,

1 I believe, too.

2 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

3 Appreciate it.

4 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

5 Thank you for bringing that up. It's an
6 excellent point.

7 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

8 And, then, if you don't mind, Greg, since
9 Michael walked in --

10 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

11 Yeah.

12 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

13 -- and it sort of toggled me to say this
14 piece too, I don't yet know what this would --
15 will look like, but on the partnerships and
16 engagement and leveraging the private sector
17 in our success, a more formalized and
18 intentional and purposeful relationship
19 between the World Trade Center and the
20 Department is absolutely in the future. The
21 details of that are yet to be worked out.

22 But, again, to the point that we're not
23 going to continue to reinvent the wheel inside
24 of state government when we don't need to.
25 Clearly, formalizing and locking arms with the

1 World Trade Center in those efforts is on our
2 very close radar.

3 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

4 Excellent. Wonderful. Thank you. Any
5 comments, Michael, to that?

6 MR. HECHT:

7 No, actually. I'm so excited about the
8 coming together of opinion on how to do this
9 right. This is something we've been working
10 on for over a decade, frankly, trying to get
11 attitudes straight. And now, I think we have
12 not just attitudes right, but the right
13 people, you know, in charge. So it's an
14 exciting moment for us and, you know, not a
15 day too soon.

16 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

17 Okay. Thanks, Michael.

18 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

19 Great. Thank you, Michael. Other
20 thoughts from the Board?

21 MS. STELLY:

22 I'd like to mention that I'm just a small
23 business --

24 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

25 No "just a."

1 MS. STELLY:

2 Well, the oil industry, which hasn't
3 been, you know, the most favorite industry,
4 although we sell to more than just oil
5 industry, but we have participated in
6 something I feel like the state did correctly,
7 trade shows. Louisiana had a pavilion at
8 ADIPEC, which is the largest oilfield show,
9 and we had just such great success. We had a
10 place to meet our customers. We got our
11 biggest order that we've ever gotten, and
12 we've been in business since 1958.

13 So, you know, we're an older company, but
14 still, these opportunities to go abroad is
15 just invaluable for us. We're working on two
16 contracts; one for Saudi Arabia; one for Oman.
17 We have a guy that we had never met. We met
18 at him ADIPEC. He placed a giant order for us
19 and he's stocking our products in Ras Al
20 Khaimah, which is, you know, kind of on the
21 border of UAE and Oman. So those
22 opportunities are huge for us.

23 I'm very involved in exporting with, you
24 know, in organizations in DC and -- two in DC.
25 I'm on this Board. I'm on the LAGCOE Board.

1 I was on the World Trade Center Board. So my
2 passion is exporting and bringing these
3 opportunities to Louisiana companies, not just
4 for my own company, but other companies. But
5 I just want to say that was one thing that, as
6 a small business owner, it really helped us.

7 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

8 That's great input. Anne already leaned
9 over to me and said, "We've already talked.
10 We're going to get the story." If that's a
11 great story, it's a good story to tell, but
12 it's also an incredibly good strategy. So for
13 us to -- for us in the Department to invest in
14 a booth and get our partners to be the face of
15 the booth, right, not the -- that it seems --
16 it doesn't seem like it should be an aha, but
17 perhaps it is. And so that's great feedback.

18 MS. STELLY:

19 And all -- like, there were people from
20 other states and they were, like, Louisiana?
21 What is that? They could not believe that we
22 had a, you know, a --

23 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

24 And it's a great booth.

25 MS. STELLY:

1 -- booth.

2 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

3 It's a great presentation too that we
4 had.

5 MS. STELLY:

6 Yeah. I mean, it was -- it was so
7 perfect last year.

8 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

9 That's great.

10 MS. STELLY:

11 It just was a great opportunity for us.

12 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

13 Thanks for that.

14 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

15 Thank you, Brenda. Nestor?

16 MR. NAVARRO:

17 As just a small business, I would like to
18 follow up with that. We are a good example of
19 an internationally small business in the
20 bagging corporation of dry products, such as
21 rice, beans on the river. And thanks to the
22 Commissioner Strain and Jessica, we had
23 attended the last two years, past two years
24 the Food and Beverage International Trade Show
25 in Miami Beach and our business have doubled.

1 So I just wanted to share that with you
2 because, as a small business, for us
3 sometimes, it's very difficult to set up our
4 booth, you know --

5 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

6 Right.

7 MR. NAVARRO:

8 -- and its expensive.

9 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

10 Yeah.

11 MR. NAVARRO:

12 But, like she's seeing it, we see it as
13 well --

14 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

15 Yeah.

16 MR. NAVARRO:

17 -- that --

18 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

19 We can do the booth. Y'all can tell the
20 stories.

21 MR. NAVARRO:

22 Well, but we need to get us in front of
23 the world.

24 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

25 Yes.

1 MR. NAVARRO:

2 They don't realize how good we are.

3 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

4 That's great. Thank you.

5 MR. NAVARRO:

6 I just wanted to follow up with you,

7 ma'am.

8 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

9 Okay. Thank you, Nestor. Thank you,
10 Brenda.

11 MR. NAVARRO:

12 Yeah.

13 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

14 Thank you, all. Okay. Ben, do you want
15 to go to reports? Do you have anything else

16 --

17 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

18 No, I'm good. Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

20 -- Secretary Bourgeois?

21 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

22 I'm here to listen.

23 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

24 Okay.

25 MR. FONTENOT:

1 Thanks, Greg. Yes. I'll start off with
2 our Board Reports. So our international reps
3 continue to support us, LED, with attracting
4 foreign direct investment. Our most recent
5 announcement last week, some of y'all may have
6 seen UBE, which is a Japan-based company.
7 They announced a project, a \$500 million CapEx
8 with 56 total new jobs. And our rep in Japan,
9 Masao Kumori, was the one that originally gave
10 us that lead back in March of 2021. So these
11 projects, international projects, as you all
12 know, take a long time to come through. So
13 that's a recent success there.

14 Also, last month, along with our rep that
15 is based in Brazil, we attended a SelectUSA
16 Brazil Roadshow. And so for those who don't
17 know what SelectUSA is, SelectUSA is a
18 division of the U.S. Department of Commerce
19 that focuses on FDI. And so we attended this
20 roadshow along with our counterparts in Texas,
21 Virginia, South Carolina, Idaho, Georgia, and
22 Florida.

23 So what the roadshow was, it consisted of
24 prearranged meetings, one-on-one meetings with
25 Brazilian companies looking to invest in the

1 U.S. And the meetings were held in Rio,
2 Puerto Alegre, Florianópolis, and Sao Paulo.
3 And also SelectUSA organized CEO level
4 receptions at the Consul General's residence
5 in Rio and Sao Paulo. And so what's the
6 value? The value of this, you know, if we did
7 this on our own as LED, it would cost us over
8 50 grand easy to arrange all of this. But
9 going through SelectUSA, it cost \$2,500. So,
10 that's the value of doing it through
11 SelectUSA. And from there, I'll turn it over
12 to Jessica.

13 MS. STEVERSON:

14 We're currently managing two awards from
15 SBA. This is for the STEP Grant. Most people
16 know it, but it's a small business grant from
17 the SBA for companies that are looking to sell
18 their products outside of the U.S. We
19 currently manage two awards totaling 950,000.
20 We were awarded those in 2022 and 2023. Those
21 funds have funded -- or are scheduled to fund
22 71 awards to Louisiana small businesses at
23 10,000 each.

24 We've supported LAGCOE in 2022, ADIPEC
25 2022, ADIPEC, 2023. We've hosted a statewide

1 export boot camp IN 2023. We have a statewide
2 export boot camp planned for this year as
3 well. We're also planning to return to ADIPEC
4 2024. We have a partnership with the company
5 that will offer website localization and
6 online video and marketing for small
7 businesses.

8 We recently closed our FY '21 Program
9 last year at 100 percent utilization, 52
10 companies assisted in supporting 89
11 activities, 519 jobs were created or retained.
12 And although they're only reporting right now
13 12 and a half million in export sales, we
14 expect to, you know, hear more about that have
15 growth there too, and 56 countries sold. We
16 have a notice of funding opportunity expected
17 in the next few months. And the ceiling for
18 that application is a million.

19 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

20 Jessica, about -- thank you for that.
21 About -- and, Ben, you as well, about how many
22 trade shows globally do you -- like, I know
23 that Brenda discussed the Abu Dhabi Trade
24 Show. And how many of those type trade shows
25 does the state -- has the state been

1 sponsoring and you or Ben or a member of the
2 staff been attending each year along with
3 private sector partners? And where are they?
4 Where are the conferences and --

5 MS. STEVERSON:

6 So it just kind of depends. In the past,
7 just based on funding, you know, several years
8 ago, we were only at 200,000 essentially per
9 year. Now, we're at about half a million per
10 year and we're always running two programs at
11 one time. That gives us more ability to look
12 at other shows. The majority of companies
13 that participate in STEP have historically
14 been in the oil and gas energy space.

15 And so, we, you know, focus on shows that
16 would have that large participation that we
17 know we could support based on the companies
18 we have in the program. But, recently, we've
19 also had several defense-related companies
20 come into the program. And so we just took a
21 group there, a group in that space to London
22 last year for another show.

23 Number of shows per year, supported by
24 STEP or LED just funding those shows so that
25 we can take small businesses that are either

1 participating in STEP or not, we've done as
2 many as four, I can think of, in one year.
3 They do take a lot of resources for logistics
4 and planning and all of those things that go
5 into it. But the value is really there. I
6 mean, the sales that companies achieve, it's
7 not immediately like Brenda says, you know,
8 the expectation there is that it could take
9 six months, it could take a year, but it's a
10 good investment. For ADIPEC, we had, I think,
11 like 12 companies in total from Louisiana
12 there and eight inside of our booth.

13 MR. FONTENOT:

14 Uh-huh. And, historically, Kevin just
15 mentioned the (indiscernible) Airshow, we've
16 historically partnered with our aviation
17 allies to go there.

18 MS. STELLY:

19 And also a show in Scotland.

20 MR. FONTENOT:

21 Yeah.

22 MS. STELLY:

23 So what she was saying, like, what --
24 when we filled out our followup form, you
25 know, none of, like -- very little of our

1 sales had been realized. If I were filling
2 out that form today, I would probably add
3 about \$2 million to it because we've already
4 gotten two orders that would, you know -- so
5 that's the problem, y'all aren't seeing the
6 results --

7 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

8 Yeah.

9 MS. STELLY:

10 -- because we're filling out the form two
11 weeks after the show instead of nine months or
12 three months.

13 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

14 That's great feedback.

15 MR. NAVARRO:

16 Right.

17 MS. STELLY:

18 I mean I usually tell, you know, people
19 in charge what -- how we benefited, but
20 there's no second followup form.

21 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

22 No formalized. There's no followup.

23 MS. STEVERSON:

24 Yeah. So the reporting is done with SBA,
25 and so then we continually have -- you know,

1 we do these programs every year, so there's a
2 lot of followup that goes into, you know, do
3 you achieve sales? And we've also moved
4 away -- not moved away -- but also SBA enabled
5 us to fund other activities that won't
6 necessarily directly produce a sale. So we're
7 supporting companies, you know, to develop
8 their website and have a better online
9 presence, which could result in sales but
10 maybe not and maybe it's more difficult to
11 track.

12 You could be supported by helping achieve
13 an ISO certification or a certification that's
14 going to be required from a foreign buyer that
15 they'd like to see you have, so maybe it
16 results right away and maybe it doesn't. So
17 these are things that are just always in mind.
18 I think the real value though is hearing
19 straight from the companies and hearing their
20 success stories especially after a show like
21 ADIPEC where we know there's 160,000 people
22 there. I mean, the likelihood of you making a
23 sale is much higher than if we are going to,
24 you know, smaller shows at times and we have a
25 much larger group there as well. So...

1 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

2 Thank you, Jessica.

3 MS. STEVERSON:

4 And the support from the federal
5 partners, U.S. Commerce, I can't, you know, go
6 without saying that, they're instrumental in
7 helping exporters on a one-on-one basis, even
8 at shows like that. So...

9 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

10 Thank you, Jessica.

11 MS. STEVERSON:

12 Uh-huh.

13 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

14 Courtney?

15 MS. MACIASZ:

16 Okay. LED received 2.4 million technical
17 assistance grant from the U.S. Economic
18 Development Administration from the CARES Act
19 in 2021. International Commerce received
20 400,000 to go towards a virtual methodology
21 for meetings to lead to the facilitation of
22 face-to-face visits. We worked with lead
23 generation firm with the goal of coordinating
24 5 to 10 investor meetings per month with the
25 intention of delivering virtual site visits

1 and then leading to in-person visits. The
2 grant came to an end in December 2023.

3 To recap, we had over 110 virtual
4 introductory meetings with international
5 prospects from the UAE, South Korea, India,
6 Canada, UK, German, Austria, and Switzerland.
7 Some of these industries included
8 agribusiness, renewable energy, manufacturing,
9 biotechnology, AI, food technology, and
10 software development.

11 We hosted five in-person visits from this
12 endeavor, which the last was as recent as
13 February. And some of the challenges that we
14 faced was a slow response time from the
15 companies, but then the companies themselves
16 expressed concern over increased labor costs
17 and transportation costs as well as human
18 rights issues and being in the early stages of
19 expansion.

20 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

21 Thank you. Any questions for Courtney?

22 Okay. Ben?

23 MR. FONTENOT:

24 Yeah. So I think, Greg, we'll just move
25 on to the report -- I'm sorry, Diplomatic

1 Outreach Activity.

2 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

3 Right, Diplomatic.

4 MR. FONTENOT:

5 Yes. Last week or two weeks ago, the
6 French ambassador visited the governor. So
7 Secretary Bourgeois and myself accompanied him
8 with that. And that's -- we're looking
9 forward to be quite a few more requests to
10 meet with the governor since this is his first
11 year in office. So we'll be filling that
12 outline out very quick. So and that's it for
13 that.

14 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

15 Okay. And that, I assume, the Diplomatic
16 Outreach also includes Outreach and
17 Partnership with the Consul Court, right?

18 MR. FONTENOT:

19 Yes.

20 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

21 There's regular -- there's local ordinary
22 Consuls and local Consul Generals as well in
23 the Consul Court.

24 MR. FONTENOT:

25 Right. Yeah. So that's one thing I need

1 to get out and do as well. My predecessor was
2 doing that, so yes.

3 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

4 Okay. That's another nice partnership we
5 have with the Consul Court, yeah.

6 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

7 Sure.

8 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

9 All right. Okay. So do we want to move
10 to the Master Plan Implementation? So, of
11 course, we -- you know, in our last Board
12 meeting, we adopted the Master Plan. And I
13 think Ben and I spoke, and I know Ben spoke
14 with Secretary Bourgeois, and the focus here
15 was to take two of the primary issues and
16 really drill down into those, the strategic
17 goals of Strategic Goal A and Advocacy Goal C.
18 So, you all, I believe these were in the Board
19 packet, right?

20 MR. FONTENOT:

21 Correct.

22 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

23 So it's in the Board packet. And I
24 think, if you go to Goal A, you know, you'll
25 see the discussion under that, that we wanted

1 to have. And I think we alluded to this
2 earlier. LaBIC has, you know, Goal A states
3 that LaBIC has a stable -- this is the goal,
4 "LaBIC has a stable and consistent system for
5 prioritizing state investments and maritime
6 projects that enjoys widespread political
7 administrative and public support within
8 Louisiana."

9 So I think that's what led to our
10 discussion on having a tight alignment
11 collaboration that I think several of us, that
12 Tom alluded to, that Nestor alluded to, that
13 Paul alluded to. So I think that's where that
14 discussion sort of flowed from. We also had
15 then underneath that, we sort of discussed,
16 you know, how they were the SB214 and 74 that
17 had passed in the last session and what we
18 could do concerning that.

19 So part of what the Master Plan called
20 for was a strategic action where the chair of
21 LaBIC would appoint -- should appoint a
22 subcommittee of members to work with the
23 Secretary of LED and the newly-formed Port
24 Authority Advisory Committee, if that stands,
25 and the southeast Louisiana Port of Authority

1 Committee to develop a consensus method
2 process for collecting, prioritizing port and
3 multiple projects. So that is something I
4 just wanted to have some further Board
5 discussion on. I think, Tom, you started the
6 discussion earlier, but I think this is clear.
7 I think the Secretary mentioned the upcoming
8 session and, you know, so I'd like to throw
9 this open a bit to be our Board discussion in
10 some ways.

11 MR. SPIERS:

12 Yeah. Well, I mean, just to the point
13 of, you know, working collaboratively, you
14 know, the Board itself or anything related to,
15 you know, port decisions and, you know, with
16 the maybe reaction of that legislation, I
17 think that kind of changes a little bit of
18 what our intent, focus was, you know, as it
19 relates to these items. I think going back to
20 the original legislation that was passed, as
21 reported by Conrad Appel years ago, this, you
22 know, committee and commission was, I think,
23 established to be that voice, you know, for
24 the ports and collaboratively working together
25 to establish strategic goals and plans, you

1 know, for the future.

2 And just going back to that point, you
3 know, we've got Paul, you've got Jay, you've
4 got Brandy, you've got several of the, you
5 know, major deepwater ports, which, you know,
6 for all intents and purposes kind of what
7 drives, you know, the international trade and
8 transportation engine to this state, you know,
9 in terms of these other smaller ports. You
10 know, their cargo and a lot of what they do,
11 actually does eventually flow through the
12 deepwater ports. So, you know, not that I'm
13 advocating that, you know, the deepwater ports
14 have any, you know, larger voice, but
15 certainly, you know, that's something that is
16 a focus, you know, for how we structure these
17 things and, you know, how we can leverage, you
18 know, that natural resource that, you know,
19 separates us apart from any of these other
20 ports that are, you know, starting to gain a
21 lot more ground on what we do.

22 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

23 Thank you for that. Nestor?

24 MR. NAVARRO:

25 Yes. I just would like to add,

1 basically, with our Goal A is specifically, I
2 think, what we can do, we have each of our
3 ports, you know, the Port Directors,
4 Deepwater, England or Shallow-Draft Ports,
5 they know what their needs are. Who else
6 better than them, right, to identify what
7 their needs are. I think that, us here could
8 be the vehicle to support, through the Madam
9 Secretary, to identify investments and then
10 not each port can handle everything, and being
11 able to support each port the best we can with
12 foreign investment as well as national
13 investment.

14 Because the Port of New Orleans is a
15 container port, I use it a lot, you know, I
16 don't use as much more than Baton Rouge, but
17 shallow-draft ports, inland ports, they also
18 have roads, I10, you know, trucking, barging.
19 So I think that we are here, like Tom was
20 saying, to support all of the ports in the
21 state of Louisiana through you, Madam
22 Secretary.

23 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

24 Thank you for that. Other Board
25 comments, thoughts, suggestions on how to --

1 how best to pursue? Jay?

2 MR. HARDMAN:

3 I had an issue up there that would
4 require some statutory changes, you know, and
5 I think, if you look at the proposed
6 legislation, our right to put forth, it tries
7 to bring some of that underneath LaBIC, you
8 know. So I think that Bill is probably going
9 to, in my opinion, probably be modified going
10 forward to a certain extent. There could be
11 some avenues there --

12 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

13 Okay.

14 MR. HARDMAN:

15 -- to strengthen that.

16 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

17 Okay. Yeah.

18 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

19 Does Marksville move it? What does
20 Marksville do with LaBIC?

21 MS. MARUSAK:

22 So --

23 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

24 Jennifer, he's trying to -- Jennifer
25 Marusak.

1 MS. MARUSAK:

2 Congratulations, Madam Secretary.

3 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

4 Thank you.

5 MS. MARUSAK:

6 I'm Executive Director of the Port
7 Associations now and I talked with Mark an
8 hour yesterday. We're going to meet with our
9 Executive Committee and some other members
10 yesterday -- I mean, next week. But what he
11 does, though, is within DOTD, he kind of
12 creates a council --

13 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

14 Uh-huh.

15 MS. MARUSAK:

16 -- and that's kind of in the anticipation
17 of the changes that are going to be coming to
18 DOTD.

19 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

20 Uh-huh.

21 MS. MARUSAK:

22 So he would create this council, which
23 LED will be a part of --

24 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

25 Uh-huh.

1 MS. MARUSAK:

2 -- to oversee port projects in the Port
3 Priority Program as it is now. And I was
4 going to say this, save this for public
5 comments, but then he also has a second -- he
6 has one component that deals with Port
7 Priority Program. He has a second component
8 that deals with the Master Plan and a
9 Strategic Plan. And that's where LaBIC is
10 involved in looking at that and --

11 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

12 Good point.

13 MS. MARUSAK:

14 -- giving input as well as joining
15 transportation committees as well. So there's
16 really two parts to his legislation. But I
17 will tell you that whatever comes out of
18 everything, because we know it's all sausage
19 and we don't know what it's going to end up
20 looking like, I would like to go ahead and
21 tackle the elephant in the room, and what
22 Florida, what Texas, and what Alabama are
23 doing right now that Louisiana is not, is
24 investing in their ports. I mean, we've been
25 splitting \$40 million a year among 32 ports.

1 So I just think that also needs to be a part
2 of any kind of --

3 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

4 Right.

5 MS. MARUSAK:

6 -- plan strategically or whatever you're
7 doing. It's great to come up with a plan.
8 But if they don't have the money to implement
9 it, then it's as good as the paper that it's
10 sitting on.

11 MR. HECHT:

12 Jennifer, if I can just add to that, I
13 mean I think it's the plan and then the proper
14 resourcing. I mean when you actually look
15 objectively at what Mobile, really kind of led
16 by Senator Shelby, Alabama has done for 20
17 years, they've been investing between 50 and
18 \$100 million a year in --

19 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

20 In one port, right.

21 MR. HECHT:

22 -- one port. Right. And that's why it's
23 gone from being a coal and timber port to now
24 Port of New Orleans containers. And we've
25 been splitting the Port Priority Project

1 amongst all of our ports. And so it's a, you
2 know, it's a complete mismatch.

3 And so I'm not -- I would never advocate
4 to take away the Port Priority Program because
5 that's important to many of the ports and I'm
6 sure it's a lot of ports in the state, and
7 also politically, it's important. But we need
8 to then kind of say, if we're going to commit
9 to our raise on debt as a state, you've got to
10 come up with dedicated funding to support the
11 strategic plan.

12 MS. MARUSAK:

13 Right. And a lot of those smaller ports
14 and inland ports and coastal ports are
15 building things that the bigger ports use,
16 whether there's the ships or it's other
17 navigation --

18 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

19 Right.

20 MS. MARUSAK:

21 -- avenues.

22 MR. HECHT:

23 That's right. It's integrated.

24 MS. MARUSAK:

25 Yes, it's everything right now. But

1 what's happening, for instance, in Central
2 Louisiana is they're having steel that's
3 coming down on barges, offloaded on the
4 trucks, and trucked to Houston. And so, I
5 know they've been working with the Port of New
6 Orleans and changed that trajectory, but
7 that's the kind of thing that the partnerships
8 that we have been working on and they have
9 memorandum of understanding now between those
10 two ports to try to stop that from happening.

11 But I mean, like Michael was saying,
12 we've got to fund them. And it's not taking
13 funding from anybody else. It's making the
14 pot worth the investments that should be
15 there.

16 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

17 I'm going to ask a question that might
18 seem obvious or not, but if we call it a Port
19 Priority Program, but everybody gets a piece
20 of it, are we actually prioritizing? And I
21 mean that --

22 MS. MARUSAK:

23 I mean we can change the name to the Port
24 Development Program.

25 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

1 I mean, because is it really prioritizing
2 or is it distributing?

3 MR. HECHT:

4 It's the Port (indiscernible) in every
5 pot program.

6 MR. MATTHEWS:

7 Well --

8 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

9 That's what I suspected.

10 MR. MATTHEWS:

11 Yeah, it's sort of a -- that's what I was
12 going to --

13 MS. STELLY:

14 But they do have to meet the -- a State
15 Economist has to evaluate every project.

16 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

17 Sure.

18 MS. MARUSAK:

19 And for those that are submitted or
20 recorded, then those are prioritized by which
21 one has the most return on investment. So for
22 the quarterly, they're prioritized, but then
23 you just go on the list.

24 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

25 Then we just go down the list?

1 MR. MATTHEWS:

2 Yeah, you go down the list. But
3 everyone -- every project has to be vetted --

4 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

5 Yeah.

6 MR. MATTHEWS:

7 -- so it's a merit-based program which
8 has --

9 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

10 Okay.

11 MR. MATTHEWS:

12 -- a certain amount of jobs, certain
13 amount of investment and --

14 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

15 Okay.

16 MR. MATTHEWS:

17 -- in order to pay --

18 MS. MARUSAK:

19 And once you're on that list, you can go
20 to the bank, or you can go to a tenant,
21 private investor --

22 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

23 Gotcha.

24 MR. MATTHEWS:

25 Right.

1 MS. MARUSAK:

2 -- and have them go ahead and --

3 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

4 Yeah.

5 MS. MARUSAK:

6 -- do the work --

7 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

8 Part of the package.

9 MS. MARUSAK:

10 -- because they can't wait for the
11 funding --

12 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

13 Okay.

14 MS. MARUSAK:

15 -- and then you get paid back when the
16 funding is available.

17 MR. MATTHEWS:

18 Right.

19 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

20 All right. That's helpful --

21 MR. MATTHEWS:

22 Uh-huh.

23 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

24 -- ish.

25 MR. MATTHEWS:

1 I think the priority more means making
2 ports a priority, not necessarily making the
3 projects --

4 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

5 Making the list prioritized --

6 MR. MATTHEWS:

7 Yeah, exactly, right.

8 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

9 Yeah. So maybe it's just misnamed.
10 Because but then it's still a free-for-all
11 capital outlay as it's always been.

12 MR. MATTHEWS:

13 Yes, right.

14 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

15 Right.

16 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

17 So one of the things I heard, so we have
18 a strategic action called for by the Master
19 Plan to go ahead and appoint a committee that
20 would engage with the other -- with the other,
21 you know, the pieces of the legislation with
22 what would be the outcome of that. Perhaps,
23 we should defer on that until we see what the
24 legislative session does. However, if we also
25 appoint the committee, what we could do too is

1 pretty actively engage both with you,
2 Jennifer, and with Wright and to start
3 coordinating sort of our priorities to that.

4 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

5 That was going to be my suggestion is
6 maybe tweak your language so it's not a
7 committee put in place just to start
8 interfacing with us about something --

9 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

10 Yeah.

11 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

12 -- that's about to be repealed, but to
13 start interfacing with wherever this lands.

14 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

15 Yeah, with a different --

16 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

17 Go ahead and do the work.

18 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

19 Yeah. Yeah.

20 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

21 And we'll just interface where --

22 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

23 Yeah.

24 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

25 Yes.

1 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

2 Yeah, with the pieces, with the authors
3 of that legislation and we can work with PAL
4 and others to make -- to work on ensuring, at
5 very minimum, a tight collaboration --

6 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

7 Exactly.

8 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

9 -- and a recognition and alignments. So,
10 okay.

11 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

12 I think that makes sense, yeah.

13 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

14 So, do we -- so why don't we do that
15 then, if I think maybe -- can we frame that
16 into a motion? Does someone want to frame
17 that into a motion that we would -- that we
18 would just take the language of the strategic
19 action -- I don't want to get too bureaucratic
20 about this, but I do want to make sure that we
21 cover public record, official record under the
22 chair of LaBIC should appoint a subcommittee
23 of members to work with the Secretary of LED.
24 Do we want to just tweak that?

25 Can someone put forth a motion that would

1 tweak that language to focus on the working
2 with the legislators to ensure that the Master
3 Plan and the goals of LaBIC are properly
4 addressed?

5 MR. MATTHEWS:

6 Uh-huh.

7 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

8 Okay.

9 MR. MATTHEWS:

10 I move.

11 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

12 Can I make a suggestion?

13 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

14 Yes, please.

15 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

16 I don't know if I had --

17 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

18 Please do.

19 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

20 I would say the chair of LaBIC should
21 appoint a subcommittee of members to work with
22 legislative and administrative partners to
23 develop a consensus method and process for
24 collecting --

25 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

1 Perfect.

2 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

3 -- and prioritizing.

4 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

5 Perfect.

6 MR. MATTHEWS:

7 Beautiful.

8 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

9 And then you've covered the
10 administration, wherever it lands --

11 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

12 Perfect.

13 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

14 -- and your legislative.

15 MR. MATTHEWS:

16 Perfect. I make a motion to state what
17 the Secretary just said.

18 MR. SPIERS:

19 Second.

20 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

21 Great. Great. We've got the motion. I
22 know you, as the court reporter, you took that
23 down so you have the very specific and
24 recorded too. Paul, you've made the motion on
25 behalf of the Secretary's statement.

1 MR. SPIERS:

2 Second.

3 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

4 Did you have a second? Is there any
5 discussion on that? Any concerns? Any
6 discussion on that language?

7 Okay. All in favor, say aye.

8 ALL:

9 Aye.

10 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

11 All right. Any opposed?

12 Okay. Good.

13 Anything else on Strategic Goal A? There
14 are other elements, but I think that was the
15 major one. The other ones are more longterm,
16 you know, more jointly, organizational
17 structure similar to Florida and I think some
18 of these others, if you go through them, draw
19 up a list of annual maritime projects. I
20 think those are longterm and more overt term
21 and more methodical. So if it's okay with
22 everybody, I would suggest we defer on those
23 and then get to Strategic Goal c. Is that
24 okay?

25 So why don't we go to Strategic Goal C?

1 And this, I think, gets back to the narrative
2 that the Secretary spoke of. Strategic Goal
3 C, "LaBIC will inform political and economic
4 development actors of the critical importance
5 of enhanced and stable maritime and
6 infrastructure funding -- which we've been
7 discussing -- improved quality of life, and
8 stable and consistent regulatory and business
9 climate on FDI and global trade development in
10 Louisiana."

11 So then if you go down, you see the
12 different goals that we want, consistent
13 funding that we just talked about and robust
14 funding, robust and stable funding. And to go
15 on to speak about, yeah, then, you know,
16 predictable and regulatory environment and
17 then sort of the actions that we can take
18 which is for, I'll just at the first two at
19 the top, actions by LaBIC, "LaBIC formally
20 shares its vision for FDI and trade
21 development with leaders in the Louisiana
22 legislature, the governor's office, local and
23 state political and business leaders."

24 And then number two, "LaBIC communicates
25 a defined funding gap for maritime and

1 infrastructure investment to the governor's
2 office." I would think both of those, or the
3 second one, will take some more work, some
4 more assessments, obviously financially, but,
5 clearly, I think it's in the right tone, you
6 know, the right messaging that everyone has
7 articulated during this meeting. I think the
8 first one is more about getting back to that
9 communication zone that we talked about, the
10 merit development.

11 I do want to mention that I've come up
12 here several times, and our vice chair has
13 too, he's not here today because his car broke
14 down actually on the way, so that's Don
15 Sanders. He was texting me earlier. But
16 we've come up to actually testify with
17 previous secretaries to the legislature in
18 terms of what the need is. I think, Anne, you
19 recall this, as well as Ben, and Jay may have
20 been there as well, and just sort of talking
21 about the importance of this. So, again, from
22 a communication's angle, we're ready to do
23 anything that's required in terms of getting
24 the messaging out.

25 Any comments on Goal C and what's called

1 for in these two action items or any of the
2 other action items that the Board may have
3 reviewed? Again, I want to open it up for any
4 Board discussion that might be present on
5 those items?

6 MR. MATTHEWS:

7 I would just say we have to make sure, as
8 we're having these discussions of having a
9 clear, critical message that we have Jennifer
10 Marusak on lead with the ports to make sure
11 that we're all on the same page in
12 communicating. There's this narrative out
13 there that the ports don't talk, which is a
14 false narrative. We actually meet monthly,
15 all the ports in the state. I met with some
16 folks in the Landry administration who didn't
17 even know that. And we've been meeting
18 monthly every year for the last 30 years and
19 we have these conversations about how we can
20 work together, what can we do, what is the
21 proper messaging and things like that.

22 So I would just ask that we defer to
23 Jennifer to help us get that right messaging,
24 and get a one-pager to LaBIC of what real
25 interest of the ports are.

1 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

2 I think that's certainly -- I think PAL,
3 you know, can play an important role here, but
4 certainly we need to be collaborating more.
5 So we should do so and will do so.

6 MS. MARUSAK:

7 Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

9 Thank you for that. That's a good point.
10 Another point, Jay?

11 MR. HARDMAN:

12 Thank you, Paul. Yes, that's a good
13 point absolutely.

14 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

15 Great. Other thoughts? Okay. I think,
16 then, sort of internally, we get the
17 communication's piece. I think we all concur
18 there. Whether it's, you know, there are
19 ways -- all kind of ways to get messaging out,
20 whether it's to the editor or the office. By
21 the way, you had a great letter to the editor,
22 and absolutely correct that it's fine to --
23 that economic development ties to quality of
24 life issues.

25 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

1 Interesting timing by the Advocate -- I
2 mean, by Nola.com because I sent that in on
3 day two of the special session.

4 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

5 Okay.

6 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

7 So I think that was very interesting that
8 they waited until the end of the close, but at
9 any rate, they --

10 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

11 Yeah.

12 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

13 -- they can --

14 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

15 Yeah, they can.

16 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

19 Yeah. So, great article, you know,
20 sitting there reading my hard copy --

21 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

22 Hard copy paper.

23 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

24 -- you know, hard copy paper last night
25 and, you know, so, yeah, I read it, so it was

1 good. Yeah. Nice. Thank you for that. But,
2 anyway, there are all kind of ways to get
3 messaging out, pledge to the editors, oppeds,
4 going to different chambers around the state,
5 ports around the state. So there are a lot of
6 ways we can get our messaging out and I think
7 we need to, Ben, figure out ways to do that
8 better.

9 MR. FONTENOT:

10 Okay.

11 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

12 And I think the Secretary alluded to --

13 MR. HECHT:

14 Also, Mr. Chairman, I apologize. I'm
15 going to step out a say (indiscernible) to
16 Newell Normand. You know, Normand has been
17 incredibly supportive of this effort and of
18 the Louisiana International Terminal in
19 particular, so he's going to always be
20 available for us to get members, get the
21 Secretary, get yourself, team members on the
22 radar.

23 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

24 I think you have a standing invite from
25 him on a weekly basis and the port, I think,

1 Port of New Orleans --

2 MS. RAGUSA:

3 We also do, yes.

4 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

5 -- also has a standing invite from him to
6 address different projects on a regular basis
7 too. So...

8 MS. MARUSAK:

9 And I have the same with Jim Engster here
10 in Baton Rouge. He had me on just two weeks
11 ago talking about the legislator auditor and
12 the report.

13 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

14 Yeah, excellent. So we've got -- but
15 that's the Baton rouge, New Orleans market, so
16 that's great on radio. So anything we can do
17 to keep getting -- I think it's incumbent,
18 too, let me say this, on all of us as Board
19 members, to make sure that we're all regularly
20 talking and getting our own narrative out
21 about this Board and about our efforts and
22 successes and about just overall ports, the
23 importance of ports. And I know we do that
24 but sometimes it's, you know, overlooked in
25 certain discussions so with the stakeholders.

1 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

2 Not to engage, perhaps, where I'm not
3 welcome, but I'm going to say it anyway --

4 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

5 You're welcome everywhere.

6 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

7 -- until he tells me not to, Greg, I will
8 say this isn't -- this isn't brilliant, but
9 it's an old saying, the clear and concise
10 message communicated consistently over time.
11 I like alliteration if you can't tell. So
12 this is -- that's great strategy. But if
13 we're not all saying the same thing, it's
14 wasted. So a clear and concise message
15 communicated consistently over time.

16 So the mechanism is there to your point,
17 right? The people in this room, Newell,
18 Michael, Jennifer, her audience. The message
19 is what's --

20 MR. HECHT:

21 Well, maybe we can do, Secretary, if I
22 could suggest, so we just do this for the
23 Super Bowl, we put together a two-pager to
24 become kind of the --

25 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

1 Elevator speech.

2 MR. HECHT:

3 Well, yeah, and maybe we could -- I'd be
4 happy to draft one for your amendment for
5 LaBIC and for international trades so we can
6 have a same set of talking points and facts.
7 Then, what we do typically do is we update it
8 every month --

9 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

10 Right.

11 MR. HECHT:

12 -- as new numbers come in or new links
13 come in, and that could be something available
14 on the website and just be kind of the --

15 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

16 And if Jennifer's language is embedded in
17 that, then we know we're covering the port
18 language in the bigger --

19 MR. HECHT:

20 Exactly.

21 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

22 -- LaBIC message just, I mean, it just
23 simplifies what --

24 (CROSSTALK)

25 MR. NAVARRO:

1 One message.

2 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

3 And then we're not recreating the wheel
4 in our department and we're all echoing the
5 same message.

6 MR. HECHT:

7 Yeah. Okay.

8 MS. STELLY:

9 Kind of talking points.

10 MR. HECHT:

11 And the one thing we could describe what
12 each one does best and how it all comes
13 together and works together.

14 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

15 Yes. Well, Michael, why don't you go
16 ahead then, on the Board's side, if it's -- I
17 don't think we need a motion for this, but if
18 you just go ahead and work up a statement for
19 that, you know, one-pager --

20 MR. HECHT:

21 We can just draft it --

22 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

23 A one-pager, send it to us, we'll look it
24 over. We'll send it out to the Board so the
25 Board can take look at too.

1 MS. MARUSAK:

2 Mike, I'll send you what I have.

3 MR. HECHT:

4 Please do, yeah.

5 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

6 And then, Jennifer, you work with Michael
7 and then we'll get one page. That's a great
8 suggestion then we have -- we're all speaking
9 from the same sheet of music.

10 MS. MARUSAK:

11 Same thing.

12 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

13 Same talking points, same narrative. And
14 something we can all agree with. Okay. That
15 sounds good. So good discussion there. I
16 think that's good.

17 Any further comments on Advocacy Goal C?

18 Okay. We're buzzing right along here.

19 Okay. Do we -- public comments, do we have
20 any comments? I don't see any outside public
21 here, but you can -- maybe we do.

22 MS. MARUSAK:

23 I've made them all.

24 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

25 Maybe we do. Go ahead.

1 MR. COLE:

2 So not outside public but just --

3 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

4 Yeah.

5 MR. COLE:

6 -- opportunity to speak.

7 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

8 And let's start with that actually.

9 Thanks for correcting me. Let's start with
10 any kind of final Board comments or
11 assessments, suggestions? Go ahead, please.

12 MR. COLE:

13 So just to start kind of on behalf of
14 Commissioner Strain, congratulations to you,
15 Secretary Bourgeois --

16 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

17 Thank you.

18 MR. COLE:

19 -- on your position. I know the
20 Commissioner will be more excited -- excited
21 to be able to sit down and visit with you if
22 you have the opportunity to. Just as, you
23 know, kind of a reminder for everyone and
24 everything else that the agriculture industry
25 remains strong and vital to the economy of

1 this state. I know that we hear a lot of
2 discussion at these meetings as far as ports,
3 but of course, agriculture greatly important
4 in that International Commerce, not only of
5 this state, but for this country as well. And
6 so I wanted to update y'all on a few things
7 from within the agricultural realm that might
8 be beneficial to knowledge and importance to
9 some of the small businesses in here, but
10 those of you who work with small businesses
11 and groups.

12 One opportunity that we are working on
13 currently right now was from a USDA Grant that
14 was awarded to the state. It was called the
15 Resilient Food Systems and Infrastructure
16 Program. We are awarding competitively \$4.6
17 million to focus on middle of the supply chain
18 activity; so distribution, aggregation,
19 storage, processing, manufacturing on food
20 products and things. So we realize that
21 there's a great need throughout the country
22 and especially here in Louisiana. COVID
23 pointed that out greatly, as we saw the
24 disruptions in the supply chain during that
25 time for a lot of our food systems.

1 And so, that Grant program is currently
2 open. So if you have companies and
3 individuals and stuff that you know that would
4 be interested in that, while it doesn't focus
5 specifically on international, anything that
6 we can do to shore up and to build and develop
7 the infrastructure systems within our state,
8 leads to a company's ability to get into those
9 export markets and everything else and stuff.
10 So that is certainly important. If you have
11 anyone that is interested, they can simply
12 just Google LDAF, RFSI and that will take them
13 right to our page that has all of that
14 information on that as well. So, we are -- we
15 are still playing in that sphere as well.

16 And as it comes to trade shows, we
17 participate -- we're an active participant and
18 member of SUSTA, Southern U.S. Trade
19 Association, and trying to capitalize on
20 foreign ag service dollars through USDA and
21 helping our Louisiana companies to participate
22 in over 20 trade shows across the globe. I,
23 myself, actually participate -- or I
24 participated for the first time this past fall
25 in Espacio, which is the Chile Trade Show.

1 U.S. also had a Food Trade Mission, active
2 trade mission at the same time as that show as
3 well. And so we always invite and try to get
4 companies down for the pavilions for both U.S.
5 and SUSTA pavilions and everything else in
6 trying to put investment in that to be able to
7 open up our markets.

8 So I just wanted to make y'all aware of
9 that information. Of course, we do know our
10 ports are important. Our ports are important
11 to us just as the agriculture industry is very
12 important and vital to our ports with the
13 commodities and everything else that passes
14 through those. So anything that's done to
15 build up and support the agriculture industry
16 is always going to be beneficial to the state
17 as a whole and to the economy as well. So we
18 just wanted to -- I wanted to reiterate those
19 comments on behalf of the Commissioner.

20 We also do, as my role as Director, for
21 lack of the ag finance authority, Secretary,
22 for your information, we do have an industrial
23 park out in the southwest part of the state
24 and stuff that is operating a brand new rice
25 mill that is beneficial to hundreds of

1 farmers --

2 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

3 Okay.

4 MR. COLE:

5 -- within the southwest Louisiana part of
6 the state. They are shipping a lot of their
7 rice out, especially contracts to Mexico,
8 currently. And so we are working on phase two
9 of that project to increase their storage
10 abilities and capacity. But we are also
11 enthused to try to work with LED as far as
12 attracting new businesses out there. And
13 there is some companies out there in mind that
14 can certainly use those rice holes as
15 byproducts for products that they are making
16 and everything else as well. But we do have
17 space and capacity out there and so we're
18 eager and willing to work with LED and the
19 administration to see how it can best be
20 utilized.

21 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

22 That's great.

23 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

24 Thank you for that report. Thank you
25 very much.

1 MR. COLE:

2 Yes, sir.

3 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

4 Other thoughts? I do know there were
5 some really interesting announcements from
6 some of the ports this week. I saw, Jay, both
7 you and the port of New Orleans, I think, had
8 announced some really good barging.

9 MR. HARDMAN:

10 Yeah, Container-on-Barge.

11 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

12 Container-on-Barging. So if you all want
13 to maybe talk about that for a moment? And
14 then, Paul, I know you had a really good
15 announcement, knocking that out of the park
16 the last two years. And I know, Jessica, you
17 have something too on a little update on
18 Louisiana International Terminals.

19 So if you want to take the
20 Container-on-Barges?

21 MR. HARDMAN:

22 Yeah, the Container-on-Barges seems to be
23 growing. We're excited about that having its
24 dedicated barge dock, which I think would be
25 a -- smooth out a rough edge that we

1 occasionally had in the past in that regard.
2 Our business back there is robust. Ingram,
3 which is a player in the market, as you well
4 know on the barge side of Bob Sequel Holdings,
5 and we're excited about that, I think, the
6 possible infusion of capital into that
7 service. Numbers are good. Shippers'
8 acceptance of it is strong. And we're looking
9 to continue to growing.

10 So Michael left, but New Orleans and
11 myself, and I think maybe Drew --

12 MS. RAGUSA:

13 Yes.

14 MR. HARDMAN:

15 -- is with St. Bernard, we're going to be
16 on the new Norman Show --

17 MS. RAGUSA:

18 Thursday.

19 MR. HARDMAN:

20 -- tomorrow.

21 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

22 Oh good.

23 MR. HARDMAN:

24 Yeah.

25 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

1 Good, speaking of collaboration.

2 MR. HARDMAN:

3 Exactly. We're talking about that. It's
4 among those other things that Paul talked
5 about the way we needed --

6 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

7 Great.

8 MR. HARDMAN:

9 -- to communicate with each other.
10 Absolutely.

11 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

12 Sounds fantastic. Good. Good. Good.

13 MS. RAGUSA:

14 Yeah.

15 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

16 Okay. Jessica, do you want to take it,
17 then Paul?

18 MS. RAGUSA:

19 Yeah.

20 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

21 Go ahead.

22 MS. RAGUSA:

23 You know, kind of speaking to Jay on that
24 barge service, you know, we moved over 20,000
25 containers just in 2023. That's the most

1 we've ever moved on the barge service since it
2 started in 2016, so great progress on that
3 side.

4 In this room, I will tell you that we
5 also have lost some business via the barge
6 service on the export side, and so it would
7 probably be remiss to not speak about that in
8 this room, that we've lost Exxon's business as
9 far as the Container-on-Barge Service goes.
10 They're exporting out of Savannah and
11 Charleston now totaling --

12 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

13 Wait one second, Jessica. Is there any
14 media here?

15 Okay. I just wanted to make sure.

16 MS. RAGUSA:

17 Thank you. I appreciate it. As well as
18 Dow and Shintech, you know, Dow is one of our
19 biggest exporter, they're using -- moving
20 60 percent of their cargo, they're exporting
21 it out of Charleston and Savannah as well now.

22 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

23 Do we know why?

24 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

25 Yeah.

1 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

2 Could somebody --

3 MS. RAGUSA:

4 Yes.

5 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

6 -- give me the why?

7 MS. RAGUSA:

8 Basically, cost and as well as
9 efficiencies here and so basically --

10 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

11 But throw down into that a little more,
12 cost and efficiency, why cost and efficiency?

13 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

14 Why?

15 MS. RAGUSA:

16 Why? Basically, because it's cheaper to
17 go to Charleston and --

18 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

19 I know but it's cheaper to go, but is it
20 because you don't have the containers
21 available because --

22 MS. RAGUSA:

23 Yes.

24 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

25 -- of the import --

1 MS. RAGUSA:

2 And we need the empties as well, right,

3 so --

4 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

5 You need the --

6 MS. RAGUSA:

7 Yeah.

8 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

9 And you need the -- let me elaborate on
10 that. You need the empties because we have a
11 lack of imports coming in because we don't
12 have enough distribution centers that are
13 driving --

14 MS. RAGUSA:

15 Correct.

16 MR. NAVARRO:

17 Yes.

18 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

19 You don't have enough distribution
20 centers that drive the import. You have the
21 exports --

22 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

23 Well, the formula doesn't work, right?

24 MS. RAGUSA:

25 Yeah.

1 MR. NAVARRO:

2 Yes.

3 UNKNOWN:

4 I mean, when they go into Houston, they
5 have seven million people --

6 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

7 Right.

8 UNKNOWN:

9 -- in Houston.

10 MS. RAGUSA:

11 Correct.

12 MR. NAVARRO:

13 Let me answer that.

14 (CROSSTALK)

15 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

16 Okay. That's it.

17 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

18 Thank you.

19 MR. NAVARRO:

20 Basically, we are hurting right now
21 because of that, the lack of imports, quality
22 containers, we are receiving a lot of empties
23 that I call it scraps they're sending to
24 Mexico. And it's very hard right now. But at
25 least, it's getting better. Brandy is aware

1 of this, I have shared this with her, of
2 obtaining food grade containers that affected
3 us, our value. Because many times, in lieu of
4 getting 60, 80, 100 containers food grade, we
5 might get 20 of them. So that's affecting our
6 export. And this is -- I'm glad that's
7 happening.

8 So, Madam Secretary, that's a big help
9 that we need to and LaBIC can address that. I
10 feel that we need to bring more imports so we
11 can have more containers here in our ports so
12 we can use them and turn that around, exports.

13 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

14 Okay.

15 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

16 All right. So why don't we take this,
17 because we could go on for hours with this.

18 MS. RAGUSA:

19 Yeah.

20 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

21 So why don't we take this offline. But
22 okay, so you've -- I'm glad you brought up the
23 subject. We understand it. We'll put more
24 focus on it.

25 MS. RAGUSA:

1 Yes. We're pitching it while the
2 Secretary is here.

3 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

4 I appreciate it.

5 MS. RAGUSA:

6 And then, on the International Terminal
7 side, we got \$300 million investment from the
8 federal government during the holidays. Merry
9 Christmas to us, so that was a positive plug
10 there. That has us at \$1.6 billion secured
11 for the Louisiana International Terminal
12 looking at a \$1.8 billion project.

13 To Jennifer's point, we'll be coming this
14 session for a Capital Outlay and ask of
15 \$150 million because it has to be in a special
16 Capital Outlay request because Port Priority
17 can't accommodate that request. However,
18 that's what the Port of New Orleans is
19 currently up to in that space. So we're
20 moving along in the terminal area, and we're
21 in the Army Corps process now.

22 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

23 Thank you, Jessica.

24 Paul?

25 MR. MATTHEWS:

1 Yeah. And to those points, their
2 customers, in many ways, are our customers.
3 You know, there's operations within our
4 jurisdiction. For example, BAMA Foods, which
5 every job with Crystal's Hot Sauce comes
6 through, and then they may move it out by a
7 container that's going to the Port of New
8 Orleans. So there's always coordination
9 within the region, which is good. So we just
10 made an announcement back-to-back net tonnage
11 square for the first time having the
12 consistent gross in Port South Louisiana in
13 almost a decade.

14 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

15 And what were the sectors -- what were
16 the --

17 MR. MATTHEWS:

18 Mainly grain and chemicals and
19 fertilizer. So because of the Ukraine,
20 Russian conflict that is happening, more --
21 there's more of a need of America's farmers'
22 grain, particularly wheat, because we are not
23 a major export of wheat in the world. So
24 that's a game changer for us. So we've seen
25 consistent strength, over 10 million tons of

1 cargo over the last two years. We're still
2 the second largest tonnage port for the
3 western hemisphere, creeping back up against
4 Houston which has always been our competitor
5 what was on Louisiana.

6 We're still the number one domestic trade
7 port and number one exporter in grain in the
8 United states. So we see the uptick, but we
9 also made growth with new developments on
10 site. So our global plex, which is a 335-acre
11 site, our main public terminal, we announce
12 life retires just a few weeks ago. So that's
13 going to be recycling tire facility. Turn
14 that into a turn fuel source. That's actually
15 the first new development at global plex in
16 almost 20 years.

17 Yeah, it's exciting and also embarrassing
18 at the same time. Right. But I have to say
19 it. And the reason why I say this is because
20 the Port of South Louisiana of 2021 is
21 different than the Port of South Louisiana in
22 2024. Right. We have really changed our
23 culture, leadership, team. We're being very
24 aggressive and strategic as best as we can to
25 move the port forward.

1 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

2 Thank you, Paul.

3 MR. MATTHEWS:

4 Yeah.

5 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

6 Thank you. Finally, I would like to say
7 that there are just an administrative matter,
8 I overlooked it earlier, but we do have five
9 board seats, Ben and I were talking about it
10 earlier, that can be filled that are open. So
11 that's something we might want to take a look
12 at as well. If we can -- Ben, I think you
13 were going to send me those seats and where
14 they're from and stuff and what the -- but
15 there are five seats that were not filled last
16 year that we should fill.

17 Any other Board comments or thoughts?

18 Okay.

19 MR. NAVARRO:

20 Yeah. So to add something what Michael
21 said --

22 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

23 Yeah.

24 MR. NAVARRO:

25 -- I think after we received the power

1 points, you know, the points --

2 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

3 Yeah.

4 MR. NAVARRO:

5 -- I talked to some of our legislature,

6 I'm down from down the bayou --

7 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

8 Yeah.

9 MR. NAVARRO:

10 -- but some of them are not even aware
11 about LaBIC. I think it's very important to
12 make them aware of who we are, how they can
13 support us, and not only at the local level,
14 the Mayors, but also our elected officials,
15 parish presidents, representatives and
16 senators to let them know and each one of us
17 know our local representative, that I think
18 we, whatever, let them know what we do and
19 what our goals are so they can help. LaBIC
20 can help the state.

21 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

22 We agree entirely and we'll do so and I
23 think that's one of the takeaways from this
24 meeting that we need to do more of that.

25 MR. NAVARRO:

1 Thanks.

2 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

3 Thank you, Nestor.

4 Any other comments? Yes, sir?

5 MR. HOLLIDAY:

6 Madam Secretary, Steve Holliday on behalf
7 of the Office of Multimodal Commerce. We
8 don't have a secretary or commissioner yet.
9 We think that is coming very soon. So to that
10 point, it's been nice to hear all the
11 conversation about the Office of Multimodal
12 Commerce within the DOTD and the priority
13 program that Randall runs.

14 I think it is interesting that a lot of
15 the freight-based economic development that
16 the state does is focused through the efforts
17 of the Multimodal Commerce. We talk about
18 deep in the Mississippi River where you, to
19 50 feet, that makes grain more competitive,
20 150 miles of one side of the Mississippi all
21 the way up. So it's exciting to see these
22 different perspectives and to understand that
23 there's a single messaging point that every
24 group wants to do.

25 But they've always said that DOTD, we're

1 the development part, the Multimodal Commerce
2 part, the rail, aviations. We have two ports
3 that have airports in them, so that's Kevin
4 Melton's point. So it's nice to -- if we can
5 be a better messenger of some of these
6 resources of how we make freight and trade
7 competitive for the state, it's always nice to
8 be included here and I hope our commissioner
9 can be of service in bringing that information
10 to you.

11 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

12 Yeah. So Michael is not here, but we'll
13 make sure Michael gets the talking points to
14 include any of that language that needs to be
15 in as well, not separate from.

16 MR. HOLLIDAY:

17 And if Michael doesn't, then I'm sure
18 Paul will call.

19 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

20 And if I could build on that, because,
21 Stephen, one thing I really have to commend
22 the Office of Multimodal commerce for, so
23 three years ago or so when you were formed,
24 there was a lot of trepidation on this Board's
25 part or concern that that would be the same

1 old thing, that we'd be tripping on each
2 other, and we were concerned about it; what
3 would be the collaboration? Well, immediately
4 there was a total outreach. We named Don
5 Sanders, who's our vice chair, under your
6 roof. He's attended all the meetings you've
7 got. He goes in the room and he's the voice.

8 So we've got a nice collaboration. So
9 the Office of Multimodal Commerce did it in a
10 very positive manner. They didn't come in and
11 say, oh, well, we can do that. Instead, it
12 was very collaborative and we've all worked
13 together. We've got a representative on that
14 Board. You're here at our meeting, and that's
15 the way it should be. So...

16 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

17 Absolutely.

18 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

19 That's worked well, so thank you for
20 that.

21 MR. HOLLIDAY:

22 Freight, 70 percent moves on truck, but
23 we've also been trying to emphasize truck
24 parking. We got a \$10.5 million Grant from
25 the infrastructure to go trucking in the Port

1 of Columbia. So safety issues are a big deal.
2 Warehousing in Robert, Louisiana, that is
3 Walmart's flagship operation. They can't --
4 they have enough truckers. There are a lot of
5 things in Louisiana that work in our freight
6 system. So we would like to use your
7 microphone to leverage that message.

8 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

9 Absolutely.

10 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

11 Thank you, sir. Other comments, Board
12 members?

13 Any public available that would like to
14 comment?

15 Okay. Do I have a motion to adjourn?
16 Before we close, Madam Secretary, do you have
17 anything further to add?

18 SECRETARY BOURGEOIS:

19 No, I don't think so other than just
20 appreciation. I think this is helpful for me
21 certainly. I thank our whole team, appreciate
22 what y'all are doing. And even just to, you
23 know, even to the folks from DOTD, just to
24 continue, and I'm sure you're hearing it from
25 your new Secretary as well, the governor is,

1 insisting is not even a strong enough word, to
2 make sure that what used to be sort of
3 informal collaboration becomes the matter of
4 business in the way we operate.

5 So I feel like y'all are ahead of the
6 curve in this space because it's -- I mean,
7 it's the only way to operate. So that's
8 certainly coming from the messaging of the
9 fourth floor. And so this is all -- it's a
10 great example, I think. Thank y'all.

11 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

12 Thank you very much. Thank you. And
13 thank you all for coming. Thank you. I've
14 said my piece. And I think we all have said.
15 So thank you all.

16 Do I have a motion for adjournment?

17 MR. GILFOIL:

18 So moved.

19 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

20 Motion, so moved.

21 MR. NAVARRO:

22 Second.

23 CHAIRMAN RUSCOVICH:

24 Okay. Adjourned.

25 (WHEREUPON, THE MEETING ADJOURNED.)

1 R E P O R T E R ' S C E R T I F I C A T E

2 I, KELLY S. PERRIN, a Certified Court
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