

Ports Of Indiana Enters \$8M Purchase Agreement For Lawrenceburg Site

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The former AEP Tanners Creek Power Plant site in Lawrenceburg is eyed as the site of a potential fourth port in Indiana. File photo.

(Lawrenceburg, Ind.) – A new step is being taken toward the creation of Indiana’s fourth shipping port in Lawrenceburg.

Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb announced Thursday that Ports of Indiana has entered into an agreement to purchase 725 acres of land along the Ohio River in Lawrenceburg and Aurora.

“While we’re only beginning this process, it’s hard not to be excited by the prospect of a fourth port in Indiana,” Holcomb said. “The economic benefits to the region and the state as a whole would be game changing—providing new jobs and development opportunities.”

Much of that land was previously part of the now defunct American Electric Power/Indiana Michigan Power Tanners Creek Plant, a coal-fired power plant that was shuttered in 2015.

Tanners Creek Development, LLC, a subsidiary of St. Louis-based Commercial Development Company, Inc., bought the property last year and has been decommissioning the power plant and cleaning up the site since.

The purchase agreement announced Thursday will allow Ports of Indiana to begin studies to examine the environmental and economic viability of port just south of downtown Lawrenceburg. The agreement gives Ports of Indiana until December 2018 to decide if the site is a viable option for the fourth port. If it is, the agency would pay \$8 million for the land.

“Indiana’s ports are important economic drivers for our state, connecting Indiana to the world every day,” said Rich Cooper, CEO for the Ports of Indiana. “We welcome this opportunity to explore the possibility of a fourth port for our state and are eager to move quickly to determine the viability of this land for use as a port to attract major investments and further spur southeast Indiana’s economy.”



A bird’s eye view of the former AEP Tanners Creek Power Plant site being considered by Ports of Indiana for Indiana’s Fourth Port. Photo provided.

Holcomb’s support of the port is encouraging, but there is no timeline for opening. [Although the state biennial budget passed earlier this year includes some money for port exploration](#), a long-term funding source has not been identified.

Local State Senator Chip Perfect (R-Lawrenceburg) says local state lawmakers will continue to work with everyone involved to make the fourth port a reality.

“We have a long way to go, but Governor Holcomb’s announcement is an exciting step. Great job by our local mayors and county officials keeping this possibility going,” said Perfect.

The senator in particular recognized State Rep. Randy Frye (R-Greensburg) for championing the concept. Frye has long been a behind-the-scenes advocate on the port idea, forming critical relationships and promoting discussions.

“Randy has been working hard, obviously talking to the right people, keeping his foot on the gas for this opportunity for which our community is uniquely qualified,” Perfect added.

Perfect said he is excited to help bring economic opportunity to the area and looks forward to working with everyone involved to make the port a reality.

Frye weighed in on Friday, calling the purchase agreement “welcoming news for our communities.”

A fourth port of Indiana would not simply be a place where barges come to load and unload cargo, but an industrial complex attracting business, commerce and industry to our area of the state,” Frye said. “This location is ideal to establish a port due to the proximity of the Ohio River, access to rail and Interstate 275, and near the metropolitan area of Greater Cincinnati and its international airport.”

Members of the Southeastern Indiana Regional Port Authority were informed by the governor’s office just ahead of the purchase agreement announcement. The development is likely to be a focus of discussion when the SIRPA board meets at 1:00 p.m. Friday at Lawrenceburg City Hall.

Governor Holcomb’s “game changing” statement on the fourth port is not hyperbole. The state’s three existing ports – located in Jeffersonville and Mount Vernon on the Ohio River and Burns Harbor on Lake Michigan – contribute over \$7.8 billion per year to the state economy and support nearly 60,000 jobs, according to Ports of Indiana.

Indiana has not opened a new port since 1985.