

PORT BAILED OUT

Corps of Engineers
OKs harbor study

\$150,000 will fund
work for this year

Project's total cost
may hit \$300 million



ALAN HAWES / The Post and Courier

A megaship passes under the Cooper River bridge. The Army Corps of Engineers will begin a study to deepen the Charleston harbor to handle such large ships that will sail to major East Coast ports after the Panama Canal's widening in 2014.

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The Port of Charleston, long a concern of Upstate business leaders who feared its competitive advantage was slipping away, has been rescued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' decision to spend \$150,000 to study deepening the harbor.

U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham and Reps. Jim Clyburn and Tim Scott said the decision will move the project forward this year, with shared costs between the federal agency and the State Ports Authority.

Graham said tens of thousands of jobs are at stake with

making the port more competitive.

BMW, Michelin and other Upstate employers say the harbor's deepening is critical because it needs to accommodate bigger ships that will sail to major East Coast ports after the Panama Canal's widening in 2014.

"This allows work to begin this year — an important first step to maintain the competitiveness of the port," said Lynn Mann, spokeswoman for Greenville-based Michelin North America. "This is excellent news for the entire state of



CLYBURN

The administration offered support "to ensure the Charleston Port remains a vital economic engine for South Carolina."



GRAHAM

"We've already begun working on funding for next year. I know it will be a challenge as it was not included in the president's budget."

HEAR HOUSE SPEAKER

Listen to state House Speaker Bobby Harrell discuss the port study with the link at this story at GreenvilleOnline.com.

See **PORT** on page 5A

PORT

FROM PAGE 1A

South Carolina."

Federal law requires the corps to conduct a study before improvements can be made.

The money has been caught in opposition to earmarks, the process law-

makers use to attach pet projects to federal spending bills.

More than 20,000 companies across the nation use the port.

Port officials say they ship goods worth \$50 billion a year and pay more than \$600 million in duties each year.

Jim Newsome, the Ports Authority's chief executive, said the funding was a

cause for celebration.

The \$150,000 will start a study process that will take as long as five years and cost \$12 million to \$20 million. The total cost of design and construction is estimated at \$300 million, according to the authority.

Sen. Jim DeMint, a South Carolina Republican who supported port expansion but led the fight against earmarks, said in a

statement that he was pleased "the corps chose to fund the study for Charleston port deepening based on merit instead of being forced to fund wasteful earmarks based on politics."

DeMint has introduced legislation to change the way water resources projects are funded by eliminating the need for earmarks. Graham is a co-sponsor.