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The South Carolina Ports Authority's Inland Port Greer remains on track to reach 100,000 rail moves in 2016.

PORT GROWTH STRONG

Officials: Facility will continue to spur economic investment

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The South Carolina Ports Authority's Inland Port Greer remains on track to reach 100,000 rail moves in 2016 after 7,303 last month and 56,875 thus far this year.

Officials consider it proof that the local facility is helping drive the regional economy.

This week, the Ports Authority announced its highest July pier-container volume, ever, and fiscal 2016 marks of $39 million in operating earnings, $211 million in revenues and $172 million in operating expenses.

The organization operates public seaport facilities in Charleston and Georgetown as well as the Inland Port Greer, handling international commerce valued at more than $74 billion annually and facilitating 187,200 jobs statewide, officials say.

"The port closed the (fiscal year) books with solid financials, reflecting our commitment to achieving the necessary performance to support our aggressive capital investment plan," said SCPA Board Chairman Pat McKinney.

The SCPA han led 1.9 million 20-foot equivalent units, standard units for describing cargo ships' capacity, last month, an increase of 1.4 percent over the previous fiscal year.

"With modest container volume growth in spite of a tepid world economy and operating earnings up over last year, SCPA is well-positioned to continue moving forward with key strategic projects and above-market growth," said SCPA president and CEO Jim Newsome.

"Both loaded import and export volumes were up in July, providing a strong start to fiscal 2017. We believe in setting ambitious targets and expect this year's volume goals to be achieved through strength in the automotive segment, increases in specialized cargo like refrigerated cargo and plastics, continued expansion of our cargo base and solid fundamentals in the Southeastern port market."

The Ports Authority operates the deepest harbor in the Southeast and is dredging the Port of Charleston to make it the deepest on the East Coast.

Inland Port Greer opened in late 2013 to extend the port's reach 212 miles into the Upstate, providing shippers with access to more than 95 million consumers within a one-day drive. Norfolk Southern serves the facility through its main rail line along the Interstate 85 corridor between Charlotte, North Carolina, and Atlanta. Its customer base began with BMW, which exports most of the cars it makes at its plant in Greer, but it's grown to include Michelin, Eastman Chemical, Adidas and Dollar Tree, among others.

The facility boosts efficiency for international freight movements between Charleston and companies located across the southeast, and it's expected to continue to spur economic investment in an area where international manufacturers operate.

Earlier this year SCPA officials announced plans for a second inland port, along Interstate 95 in Dillon, a strategic move in the face of competition with the Port of Savannah, according to experts.

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