

Port to build \$8 million dock for Steelscape

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By Joel Anderson

joelanderson@gannett.com

The Port of Shreveport-Bossier will announce today plans to build an \$8 million dock to support operations for Washington, D.C.-based company Steelscape.

A cooperative agreement between the port and the Red River Waterway Commission must be approved today before construction can begin on the dock.

A 10 a.m. news conference to announce the plans will be held in a second-floor ballroom at Sam's Town Hotel and Casino in Shreveport.

The Red River Waterway Commission will contribute \$2.4 million toward construction, and the port has set aside \$4.5 million. The rest of the money will come from the Louisiana Port Priority program.

"We're trying to make sure that Steelscape knows that Shreveport-Bossier is a good place to be and is a very competitive port," said Kurt Guidry, executive director of the Red River Waterway Commission. "We're trying to make sure the port has a leg up on the competition. We want Steelscape to know the port has a lot of support."

The Port of Shreveport-Bossier has four docks — two that handle general cargo and two liquid terminal facilities; the new Steelscape dock would be the fifth.

Port officials expect construction to begin in the fourth quarter of the year and for the project to last about one year.

"It's a great big deal," Port Director Eric England said. "Through the (commission's) assistance, the dock will be of great benefit to Steelscape's operation."

Steelscape, which makes cold-rolled, coated and painted coils of steel that are shipped to construction companies, began operations at the port in April 2006.

The steel company has plans to eventually add 240 new jobs and contribute what economists say would be an annual impact of \$400 million to the community. In late July, Steelscape received its first major shipment, from Thailand.

A message left for the plant manager at Steelscape wasn't returned as of Tuesday evening.

The new dock might compel Steelscape to invest more in its operations in the area, said Kurt Foreman, senior vice president of the Northwest Louisiana Economic Development Foundation.

"Steelscape is doing great things — for themselves and for the benefit of the region," Foreman said. "By furthering our commitment to them, we might see them grow here if and when the appropriate time comes. But there are no immediate plans for that."

England said the investment in a new dock for the steel industry could also prove attractive to steelmaker IPSCO Inc., which is considering the port.

The port is competing against Mobile, Ala. — where IPSCO already has a facility that produces steel coils and plates — and San Antonio for a new \$250 million manufacturing and distribution facility.

"Sure, the dock is being designed to accommodate Steelscape and their operations," England said, "but it has the capability to accommodate other operations as well. And that would be viewed as attractive to IPSCO."