

PANAMA CANAL & EXPANSION

Updated: June 23, 2011

WHAT IS IT?

The Panama Canal is a manmade ship canal linking the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. In 1914, United States completed the massive project which allows ships traveling from New York to San Francisco halve their distance to 5,900 miles, from 14,000 miles around Cape Horn. The canal is over 50 feet long. It takes between 20 to 30 hours to transit the canal.

The United States continued to operate the Panama Canal until December 31, 1999, at which point it was returned to Panama. In 2010, there were over 14,000 ship traverses, which carried over 200 million long-tons of cargo.



CURRENT SHIP SIZE RESTRICTIONS (PANAMAX VESSELS)

- 965 feet long
- 106 feet wide
- 39.5 feet of draft
- 190 feet height (205 feet at low tide)

NEW SHIP SIZE (PANAMAX VESSELS)

- 1,200 feet long
- 160.7 feet wide
- 49.9 feet of draft

EXPANSION

Construction on the Panama Canal expansion began in 2007. The expansion of the Panama Canal will construct two locks, one on the Atlantic side and one on the Pacific side. This will significantly increase the size of ships, and, coupled with the existing locks, allow for tonnage to increase through the

canal. Even with the Canal expansion, the largest container and tanker ships already built will still be unable to use the Canal, although many others that are too big for the current canal will be able to use the expanded locks. The new locks are expected to open in 2014

EFFECT ON CENTRAL OHIO

The new capacity will allow increased access to east coast ports for ships that otherwise would have to unload on the West Coast. This will have the effect of reducing congestion at West Coast ports such as Los Angeles and Long Beach. The biggest effect will be felt at Ports on the East Coast, such as the Port of Virginia and the Port of New York and New Jersey. However, the impact will not stop at the ports. Public/private

partnerships have developed to deal with the movement of this new freight inland. Two of the major partnerships have directly impacted central Ohio; NS's Heartland Corridor and CSX's National Gateway. Both of these projects have had major impacts on the region, both in terms of intermodal growth and the location of new intermodal yards/capacity.

morpc