A year's worth of good news at the Port of Baltimore

On the waterfront

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Last year was a remarkable one in many ways for the Port of Baltimore. As our nation continued to climb out of the worst economic period since the Great Depression, the port continued in its role as a key economic generator for Maryland by making some significant accomplishments in the areas of cargo, cruise, environment, and security.

The most significant news for our cargo business in 2011 was also our most recent news, when in December, Hapag-Lloyd AG, the fifth-largest container company in the world, announced that it would make Baltimore its first U.S. port of call on a service from North Europe. It was a true team effort of Ports America Chesapeake, CSX Corp. and the Maryland Port Administration [MPA] that staved off intense competition from other ports and brought this business to Maryland. We expect to handle about 30,000 containers annually from Hapag.

Last year was also a very successful year for autos at the port. The public terminals surpassed their monthly record for most cars in October, and then exceeded that record in November when more than 51,000 cars (including a record of nearly 22,000 exports) came across Baltimore's docks. By the end of November, the public terminals had already seen more cars through 11 months than during any previous full calendar year.

The port's astounding year for cars included handling more non-containerized auto tonnage than any other U.S. port for the first 10 months of the year.

Baltimore's container business also had a memorable year. With final numbers being tallied as of this writing, our public terminals were expected to break their record for most containers in a year. The year also included a visit of the largest container ships ever to call Baltimore, the 9,200-TEU sister-ships MSC Bruxelles and Sindy.

In preparation for the port's new 50-foot container berth, the

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MPA hosted a business opportunity seminar with Ports America Chesapeake and CSX that was attended by Gov. Martin O'Malley, Highstar Capital Managing Director Christopher Lee, CSX Vice President for Emerging Markets Fredrik Eliasson, and more than 120 companies.

Maryland's cruise business continued to make waves. For the third straight year, we saw a record amount of passengers (over 251,000) and number of scheduled cruises (105). The higher passenger traffic catapulted Baltimore to fifth on the East Coast and 12th nationally for passengers. Last year, we also began using a state-of-the-art, temperature-controlled, mobile passenger boarding bridge.

Our two year-round cruise providers, Carnival and Royal Caribbean, also committed to extending their stays in Baltimore and continuing to serve one of the largest and wealthiest markets in the U.S.