



NORTH CENTRAL IOWA
REGIONAL ECONOMIC
PORT AUTHORITY

**2025 Annual Activity Report to the
Iowa Economic Development Authority**

Background

North Central Iowa Regional & Economic Port Authority was founded in 2016 by the Counties of Cerro Gordo, Mitchell, Winnebago, and Worth as authorized by Iowa Code Chapter 28J.

The organization is managed by an 8-member board of directors, which is appointed by the founding governments, with 2 members each. Funding is sourced from founding governments with annual dues, contracts, contributions, or other means depending on the project or activities being conducted.

Port Authority Board Members/Officers

Cerro Gordo County:

- Vice Chair - Casey Callanan, County Supervisor
- Treasurer - Chad Schreck, North Iowa Corridor EDC

Mitchell County:

- Jim Wherry, County Supervisor
- Jenny Backer, Mitchell County EDC

Winnebago County:

- Chair - Terry Durby, County Supervisor
- Beth Bilyeu, Forest City EDC

Worth County:

- AJ Stone, County Supervisor
- Secretary - Melissa Michaelis, Winn-Worth Betco

North Central Iowa Regional Economic & Port Authority 2025 Annual Report to IEDA

Description of Activities

During calendar year 2025, the North Central Iowa Regional Economic & Port Authority (Port Authority) experienced limited new activity. Since the Port Authority's most recent formal update to the Iowa Economic Development Authority, no additional projects advanced to an implementation phase, and no new initiatives were undertaken.

The Port Authority continued to monitor the status of previously identified infrastructure needs in Worth and Mitchell counties, with particular attention to potential energy infrastructure improvements at the Manly Terminal in southern Worth County. That project remains contingent upon private-sector development timelines and financing decisions outside the direct control of the Port Authority. Unfortunately, they had a funding source fall through, and are continuing to search for a replacement investment before they can move forward. As a result, no construction activity, capital expenditures, or contractual commitments occurred during 2025.

Throughout the year, the Port Authority maintained communication with local government partners and private stakeholders as appropriate, ensuring that prior engineering, feasibility, and planning work remains available should project conditions change. The Board did not pursue additional infrastructure studies during this period, recognizing the importance of aligning future efforts with confirmed project demand and financial viability.

For example, a project opportunity to recruit a company in the Aviation industry was pursued for several months in early 2025. The company was interested in locating at the Mason City Municipal Airport, which created an opportunity for the Port Authority to partner with the Airport, City of Mason City, and City of Clear Lake. The airport is owned by Mason City, but is located within Cerro Gordo County, and adjacent to Clear Lake city limits.

This created a unique circumstance where the company would have paid County property taxes, used Clear Lake utilities, and been on Mason City property. The company was interested in being located along the airport runway for operations purposes. With all of the jurisdictions involved, the ability to bring things together through the Port Authority was heavily considered as it would allow all partners to participate in sharing potential costs and benefits of the project.

The project would have created 150 new jobs and over \$50 million in investment. Unfortunately, after working through several site visits and putting together the structure for the project, it was not able to move forward. The FAA notified the airport that after reviewing the proposal, they would not be able to allow the private use of the land along the runway. Alternative locations near the runway were considered, but did not fit the needs of the company. This essentially took us out of the running for the project.

Despite the project not working here, it was a great opportunity to realize the benefits of the Port Authority and how we can use it to bring multiple jurisdictional partners together to work on significant development projects to share costs and benefits.

The Port Authority also held discussions regarding the need for a broader strategic planning effort to reassess the organization's long-term role, priorities, and value to the region given current market conditions and project readiness. A formal strategic planning process was not initiated during 2025, but the board discussed working with North Iowa Area Council of Governments to assist with that process moving forward.

Future Priorities

Looking ahead, the Port Authority's priorities include:

- Monitoring the status of previously identified infrastructure opportunities and remaining prepared to re-engage if project timelines and financing become viable.
- Continuing coordination with county partners to ensure alignment with local economic development needs and priorities.
- Evaluating the role and strategic direction of the Port Authority to determine how it can most effectively support regional economic development efforts moving forward.