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Army Corps of Engineers Approve Permit for New Customs Building in Red Hook

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ST. THOMAS — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has approved the Virgin Islands Port Authority's permit application to build a new U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) facility in Red Hook, Virgin Islands Port Authority Executive Director Carlton Dowe announced Tuesday.

V.I.P.A. said the new building will be located at the Urman V. Fredericks Marine Terminal. Once this facility comes online it will eliminate the need for residents and visitors arriving from the British Virgin Islands to stop in St. John to clear Customs before traveling to St. Thomas. This will significantly reduce travel time between the USVI and BVI. The UVF Marine Facility is VIPA's busiest ferry port and processes about 290,000 travelers between the USVI and the BVI annually, the Port Authority said.

The project entails demolishing an old pier at the UVF terminal. VIPA will then build a 2,376-square-foot, two-story CBP building and a 4,040-square-foot pier. The project also involves dredging 36 yards of material. The new facility is primarily funded via bond financing attained by VIPA in 2014.

Bids should be issued early January 2020. Mr. Dowe expects construction to begin by the second quarter of 2020 and be completed in 18 months. VIPA's Marine Manager Captain Matthew Berry has held pre-construction meetings with ferry operators, taxi drivers and the UVF Terminal's tenants to ensure that travel and operations at the facility will not be significantly impacted during the construction phase of the project. VIPA said it appreciates the public's patience as it works to develop and improve its port facilities, said Dowe.

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