

Bryan Uses Panama Talks to Push St. Croix as Trade, Logistics and Digital Infrastructure Hub

After talks in Panama on a planned Caribbean Special Economic Zone Association, Governor Bryan says St. Croix's industrial corridor, ports, free trade zone infrastructure and proposed fiber link can help build jobs beyond recovery funding.

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Governor Albert Bryan Jr. By. GOV'T HOUSE.

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. is positioning St. Croix as a central part of the Virgin Islands' post-recovery economic strategy, pointing to trade, logistics, energy, manufacturing, marine services and digital infrastructure as areas that could help build the territory's economy beyond federal disaster recovery funding.

The governor recently traveled to Panama to participate in regional discussions aimed at strengthening Caribbean trade, expanding investment and positioning the U.S. Virgin Islands for long-term economic growth, according to Government House.

The discussions centered on the planned creation of the Caribbean Special Economic Zone Association, a new regional organization designed to bring Caribbean governments, free trade zones, investment agencies and private-sector partners together to compete more effectively in the global economy.

Governor Bryan said the initiative aligns with his broader strategy to grow the Virgin Islands economy beyond federal recovery funding by developing new opportunities in trade, logistics, energy, technology, manufacturing, marine services and industrial development.

“Recovery funding has helped drive historic activity across the Virgin Islands, but we know those dollars will not last forever,” Governor Bryan said. “Our work now is to prepare the Virgin Islands for what comes next. That means building an economy that creates good jobs, attracts investment and gives our people more opportunity here at home.”

The governor said the Virgin Islands is well positioned for this work because of its location, deep-water ports, U.S. jurisdictional status, access to American markets and ongoing investments in infrastructure, energy, transportation and communications.

A major part of that vision, according to Government House, is the continued development of the St. Croix industrial corridor and the territory’s free trade zone infrastructure. Governor Bryan said St. Croix has the potential to support logistics, transshipment, ship repair, aviation and marine services, light manufacturing, energy development and digital infrastructure.

“The future of St. Croix can be much bigger than what we have known before,” he said. “With the right planning and the right partners, St. Croix can help connect the Caribbean, the Americas and Africa through trade, energy, technology and industry.”

Governor Bryan also pointed to his administration’s recent work to build stronger trade and investment ties with African nations, including Ghana. Those efforts are aimed at positioning the Virgin Islands as a bridge between African markets and the United States through trade, tourism, investment, logistics and digital connectivity.

One concept discussed was the proposed “Diaspora Link” transatlantic fiber optic cable project, which would create a direct digital connection between West Africa, the Virgin Islands and the mainland United States.

“In the new economy, data is as important as cargo,” the governor said. “If we can help connect Africa, the Caribbean and the United States through modern fiber infrastructure, the Virgin Islands can become part of the future of global digital trade and technology.”

The governor said the discussions are intended to produce tangible benefits for Virgin Islanders, including better jobs, more contracts for local businesses, increased activity at local ports, stronger government revenues and a more stable economy.

“When we talk about trade, ports, fiber, energy and manufacturing, we are talking about opportunity,” he said. “We are talking about jobs for electricians, welders, truck drivers, dock workers, IT workers, contractors, small businesses and young people who want to build a future without leaving home.”

The Caribbean Special Economic Zone Association is expected to formally launch later this year during the World Free Zones Organization Annual Congress in Panama.

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