

In a rare simultaneous announcement, the US Department of Energy (DOE) and the UK's Department for Transport released separate Requests for Information (RFI) for the "Development of Green Shipping Corridors between the United States and the United Kingdom."

The joint US/UK RFI announcement is part of the larger global effort to decarbonize shipping. The DOE's announcement aligns with both the UK-led 2021 Clydebank Declaration, where multiple countries announced their intent to support the creation of green shipping corridors, and the Green Shipping Challenge, which, in 2022, encouraged the global maritime industry to present decarbonization plans to limit global temperature rise.

Green Shipping Corridors

A green shipping corridor is a specific trade route between major ports where zero-emission vessels are utilized and supported. A green shipping corridor involves zero-carbon emissions vessels and shore-side emissions reduction programs. Establishing a green shipping corridor requires the development of supporting port, bunkering and storage infrastructure, as well as a zero-emission fuel supply chain, all of which are required to support zero-emission vessels as viable commercial options.

The DOE RFI

The RFI solicits feedback from various maritime stakeholders, including vessel operators, ports, shippers, fuel producers, marine terminal operators, specialized insurers (such as P&I Clubs), academia and government agencies, to help set the framework for the development of green shipping corridors with the ultimate goal to achieve zero greenhouse gas emissions no later than 2050.

The RFI sets forth general questions for all stakeholders and separate specific inquires directed to port authorities, and port and marine terminal operators. Areas of inquires include a wide range of topics, including investment strategies, zero and near zero emission fuels, technology challenges, data sharing, commercial issues, cargo operations and bunkering. The full text of the DOE RFI is available [here](#).

Responses to the DOE's RFI must be submitted electronically as a Microsoft Word (.docx) attachment to GreenShipping@ee.doe.gov no later than 5 p.m. (ET) on September 29, 2023.

Summary

The US and UK government's joint Green Shipping Corridor RFI announcement is another step in the evolution of the shipping industry. The joint RFI is illustrative of the combined efforts by governments, non-governmental organizations and the shipping industry to decarbonize marine transportation.

For green shipping corridors to work, economic viability is key. The US/UK RFI comes at a time when ocean carriers are considering the cost to comply with the EU Emissions Trading System. Whether the market will bear the costs to transition to alternative fuels is a work in progress. The transition to net zero or near zero ocean shipping could potentially involve "carrots" such as tax credits or "sticks" such as fines for missing emission goals. As the market develops, there appears to be room for the use of interim fuels such as biofuels or LNG to power vessels, which may prevent challenges from climate advocates.

As net zero or near zero fuels become more widely utilized, marine stakeholders will face new regulations, new market conditions and new contracting documents. This evolving market creates opportunities and will engender unforeseen challenges. Nevertheless, the net zero ship has left the dock and any operator in the shipping world, no matter the level, should acknowledge it and plan accordingly. There is no more time to plan in the future: the future is now.

Our Commodities & Shipping team stands ready to assist interested stakeholders with the US or UK RFI. For more information, please contact:

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