

Engine consultants revving up river transportation business

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DAVID ZALAZNIK/JOURNAL STAR

Paul Dicke, left, and Mike Bima of DJMP Engine Solutions stand along the Illinois River, one area of focus in their consulting business. Along with two other partners, the former Caterpillar, Inc. employees created DJMP Engine Solutions to focus on marine engines.

PEORIA —Paul Dicke and Mike Bima have a double mission along the Illinois River.

First, they want everyone to understand the river is an alternate transportation system that links the middle of the country from New Orleans to Canada.

Second, they want government and business owners to understand how they can help that system become more environmentally friendly.

Along with two other former Caterpillar Inc. employees, Dicke and Bima have pooled decades of experience to form DJMP Engine Consultants LLC. "Our focus is the marine highway," Dicke said. When it comes to major shipping, both Bima and Dicke said, water works. A barge may not be speedy, but it is economical, efficient and already more environmentally friendly than you might expect. Most of the fuel for O'Hare International Airport, for example, goes up the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. "It's not for everything," Bima said. "It's not UPS. A barge is not going to deliver to your house. But when you're talking jet fuel, it's most efficient, by far."

DJMP's timing appears to be excellent. On Aug. 11, Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood identified 18 marine corridors, eight projects and six initiatives as part of America's Marine Highway Program. The Heart of Illinois Regional Port Authority, or TransPORT, was designated and funded by the U.S. Maritime Administration to be a key component. "It's a way to help expand ports. It's a way to get trucks off the road. It's a way to relieve congestion," LaHood said here last week. "We're really promoting the marine highway. It can be an economic engine."

That engine would appear to be a vehicle for DJMP, as well. The marine highway, like the regular road system, contributes to air pollution and is subject to increasingly strict government regulations. Nationwide, Dicke and Bima estimate that 75 to 80 percent of marine engines don't meet the standards." They're just as dirty as they were in the '70s," Bima said. "These engines last 30 to 60 years." Potentially, it's a \$300 million market and from the engines to potential fix-it funding, DJMP has the very specific skills required to serve it.

"They've got kind of a unique niche," said Steve Jaeger, executive director of TransPORT. "I don't know of any other group championing the re-engineering of marine towboats."

Now the technical manager, Dicke is an engineer and Six Sigma Black Belt. Operations manager Bima worked in project management. Third partner Jim Peugh is the business manager who did strategic planning with dealerships as part of Caterpillar's Global Used Equipment Division. Fourth partner Don Haar, the marketing director, was an engine products consultant and field rep.

"We know the regulations. We know the grant programs. We know the engines," Dicke said. "We do a fleet analysis .. . If there are grant opportunities, we look at that."

Application for some federal funding such as Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER and TIGER II) discretionary grants, has to be made by a "public sector entity," said Jaeger. So TransPORT has put in a couple of grant applications for DJMP. The company has received a grant for work in Granite City in the first year since it started.

Although the consultants haven't received funding through his organization yet, Jaeger said it "makes sense" for TransPORT to tap into their blend of skills and goals. He added that may have a particular urgency since central Illinois air is on the verge of non-attainment status, meaning it may not meet U.S. EPA standards. "If they're successful, we'll benefit, they'll benefit," Jaeger said. "Obviously, the air quality will benefit."

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Barge it

There are a lot of advantages to shipping by water, according to a 2007 study sponsored by the National Waterways Council and the U.S. Maritime Administration.

One 15-barge vessel:

- Carries the equivalent cargo of two 100-car trains or 1,050 trucks.

- Moves 52,000 ton-miles of cargo per ton of greenhouse gases. By rail that would only be 37,000 ton-miles of cargo. By truck, the figure drops to 14,000 miles.

- Gets 576 ton-miles per gallon of fuel. By rail, that's 403; by truck, 155.

- Sees one fatality per billion ton-miles of cargo. By rail, there would likely be 23 fatalities; by truck, 155.

Source: Texas Transportation Institute.