

Crosbie Shipping of Montreal should also be added to the list of transportation firms invited to the information seminar as they have the shallow draught vessels essential to navigate TCI harbors. The latter can only handle 15-foot draught vessels.

Port Facilities

The major TCI ports are on Grand Turk and Providenciales. While both ports have been improved in recent years their capacity to handle deep water vessels and to unload quickly remains limited. In spite of the fact that the total volume of current traffic is modest local TCI businessmen and developers complain about costs due to the time required to unload small vessels by lighter, dock/floating crane, etc. Such critics support the idea of further port improvements to handle larger vessels and to expedite unloading; or suggest proposals for the subsidization of shipping costs (by the exporting nation) to reduce CIF rates for imports to the Islands. There was no indication that port infrastructure improvements are being given high priority in the TCI five year development plan.

In 1985 it was estimated that about fifteen cargo ships visited the Islands per month. Estimated international shipping in 1984 included 150,000 metric tons of goods loaded and 164,000 metric tons of goods unloaded (e.g. about 26,167 metric tons per month or an estimated 1,700 metric tons per vessel). Incoming shipments are likely to have increased since the mid 1980s due to the growth in tourism and the construction of tourist facilities.

Port improvements might be economic if the Islands were exporting a significant volume of goods. However, TCI exports by ship are not likely to increase dramatically in the short to medium term. Consequently, the Islands face a "Catch 22" situation of not being able to attract export oriented manufacturing operations (in part due to shipping costs) and are having difficulty in justifying port improvements without the prospects of higher volume traffic. The facilities of existing harbours are not such to attract cruise vessels (compared to some other Caribbean states) and other TCI advantages are necessary to help offset the harbour situation. Consequently, unless the present situation changes significantly or unless an exporting nation is prepared (in effect) to subsidize freight rates, it seems likely that the TCI port facilities will continue to continue to improve modestly in line with increases in traffic. The question of port facilities in the TCI may warrant some discussion at the information exchange proposed in Section IV.