The first quarterly meeting of the Southwestern Illinois Trade and Investment Council was held on Wednesday, September 23, 2015. After a welcome from Dr. John Navin, Dean of SIUE’s School of Business, and opening remarks by St. Clair County Board Chairman Mark Kern and Madison County Board Chairman Alan Dunstan, attendees did self-introductions. The following were in attendance.

**Board of Directors:**
- Chairman Alan Dunstan, Madison County
- Chairman Mark Kern, St. Clair County
- Tim Cantwell, Director, Mid America Airport
- Erick Dahl, Director, St. Louis Downtown Airport
- Robert Eaton, Managing Partner, Day & Night Solar, LLC
- Proxy for Craig Eversmann, President, MSSC, LLC (Melanie Werner)
- Glenn Fournie, VP Operations, The ROHO Group/Permobil
- Proxy for Ric Frantz, CEO LR International (Paul Jarzombeck)
- Arijana Hoormann, Manager, UniGroup Logistics
- David Kniepkamp, President, Smart Controls LLC
- David Miller, Director, St. Louis Regional Airport
- Paul Toskin, VP Trade Service Group, Commerce Bank
- Ed Weilbacher, Director, Kaskaskia Regional Port
- Dennis Wilmsmeyer, Executive Director, America’s Central Port - FTZ

**Ex-Officio Members**
- Terry Beach, Executive Director St. Clair County IGD and Economic Development
- Margaret Gottlieb, International Trade Specialist, USDOC Export Assistance Center
- Kim Hamilton, International Marketing Representative, Illinois Department Of Agriculture
- Edie Koch, SWIL Trade and Investment Planning Committee
- Margo Markopoulos, Acting Deputy Director, Office of Trade and Investment, IL Dept. Commerce and Economic Opportunity
- Frank Miles, Administrator, Madison County Community Development
- Silvia Torres, Director, International Trade Center SIUE (ITC)
Other Guests in Attendance:
Warren Anderson, US Dept Commerce
Julie Colona, Unigroup Worldwide
Leah Dettmers, Madison County Community Development
Phil Lasseigne, U.S. Congressman Rodney Davis’ Office
John Navin, SIUE School of Business
Nathan Regan, Select USA
Matt Rice, U.S. Congressman Mike Bost’s Office
Kerry Smith, Edwardsville-Glen Carbon Chamber of Commerce / International Trade Center
Jeff Wehling, Madison County Community Development

Purpose of SWIL Trade and Investment Council and Organizational Strategy:
The meeting continued with a discussion by Silvia Torres, ITC regarding the purposes of the Council as follows:

1) Identify needs of exporting businesses in the SW region as well as key obstacles/challenges for further export expansion.
2) Develop and implement best practices and programs to benefit the SW region.
3) Recommend specific growth markets as well as industries to be considered in future regional-based activities.
4) Foster collaboration and partnership among business, government and leadership from the private and public sectors.
5) Identify and fully leverage the competitive strengths SW Illinois.
6) Promote the unique assets that the SW region can offer to countries seeking trade opportunities.

In addition, the opportunity of instituting a Networking Program to assist businesses interested in starting and/or increasing exports was mentioned.

Next, Edie Koch of the SWIL Trade and Investment Planning Committee reviewed the organizational structure for the Council as follows:

1) Initially geographic boundaries would be Madison and St. Clair counties with plans to expand to neighboring SW counties.
2) Board of Directors shall consist of representatives of the counties, ports, airports, freight forwarders, banks, and private sector exporters.
3) Ex-Officio members who would provide support to the Council would be from the counties, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Illinois Department of Agriculture, the International Trade Center at SIUE, the US Department of Commerce and the Small Business Administration.
4) Full Council would meet on a quarterly basis.
Roundtable Discussion
It was noted that this initiative was a work in progress and input from the Directors today in regard to issues, ideas, and priorities was important to formulating future meetings and actions of the Council. The following is a summary of points extracted from attending members during the roundtable discussion.

Training and Resource Awareness:

- SWIL needs a roadmap for businesses that are beginners in exports for international markets (e.g., "Exporting for Dummies"), best practice guides (e.g., banking, financing, grants, services, freight forwarding), lists with links and a flow chart. This would include resources offered locally by the ITC at SIUE, the US Dept. of Commerce, the IL Dept. of Agriculture and Madison/St. Clair counties.
- Many businesses still apply their domestic model to sell internationally
- Focus on small to medium businesses as they don’t have time/money in terms of searching for resources in exporting; specifically in regards to marketing and marketing resources.
- SWIL needs more educational seminars, including documentation training for sellers/buyers, global culture and politics related to exports as well as internal logistics.
- Regional universities, colleges can play a key role in this area.
- Training needs regarding export packaging, shipping lead times; getting paid and dealing with risk mitigations.
- Small businesses don’t have time for a class; might be a willing to pay for an independent resource/consultant to hand-hold companies through what is needed for trade or FDI.
- Joint counseling of clients among the members would be a helpful initiative.
- Clear definitions of exports need to be explored and made concise (bill of lading could potentially solve this).
- SWIL needs more direction in locating buyers for specific market goods or geographical areas.
- SWIL needs more awareness on IL resources. Create a 1-800-Export # to track companies that are interested; answer questions (e.g., how Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) works).
- Silvia Torres of the ITC at SIUE is the 1-800 for now.
- Council needs to designate roles within the group to direct where businesses can go with specific questions. Identify partners in trade and investment for SW IL, needs/assets/issues.
- US Dept of Commerce voiced willingness to create a basic guide to exporting in the region, document best practices, where to get resources, establish roles, how to get answers.
- ILDCEO Trade and Investment Office stated it is ready to partner with the SW Trade and Investment Council on individual and/or group foreign market sales and investment missions and educational programs.
Promoting the Strengths of the Region:

- Freight, freight, and freight! Freight district can be one component of marketing for SWIL Trade and Investment Council.
- Airports and inland ports must work together for the good of the region.
- Find ways to market SW Illinois as the logistics capital of the world.
- Work in conjunction with Panama Canal activities; new opportunities resulting from increased barge traffic.
- America’s Central Port will now have container access to New Orleans, joining the coastal ports in export business.
- Foreign Trade Zone capabilities need to be highlighted and promoted.
- More awareness/marketing is necessary for SWIL in regards to exports/logistics.
- Develop marketing strategies and outreach efforts in targeted industries to maximize trading capacity in SW IL.
- Create a TV spot or other means of getting the word out about the region.
- Expressed desire for more direct marketing efforts in SWIL, specifically a clear marketing campaign for exports/toll free number for trade assistance.
- Get a major freight magazine or transportation magazine to write up an article on the area’s freight capabilities. Others: St. Louis Business Journal, IL Business Journal.
- Organize a Reverse Foreign Trade Mission for region.

Need to Set Benchmarks and Goals:

- Members need to be committed; Council needs sustainability.
- SWIL needs benchmarking for improving exports.
- Need to know what is currently happening in the region so goals and objectives can be set.
- Data collection needed in regards to volume, statistics, and measurable outcomes for proper benchmarks and future marketing strategies.

Administrative Needs:

- Create Council membership list that includes email addresses.
- Develop bylaws.
- With uncertainty of EXIM Bank, to consider a Credit Insurance Broker as a future member of the Council.
- Reach out and collaborate with the Global Cities Initiative. SWIL is currently being represented by Dennis Wilmsmeyer and Silvia Torres, Core Team members of the St. Louis Global Cities Steering Committee.
Regional Assets and Challenges:

- Need investment in homegrown SWIL solutions in terms of multimodal/freight of exports. Not enough road infrastructure to support the rail.
- Build upon infrastructure while planning to mitigate upcoming threats and expanding for future.
- Capacity building is needed in prepping for barges; America’s Central Port is a perfect model in demonstration for this.
- Further development of the Panama Canal activities will bring more commerce opportunities in the St. Louis region, specifically with barge shipments.
- Envisioning barge as the norm in transportation like in China/Europe; barge needs to be mainstreamed.
- Higher demand for containers in regards to agriculture and grain products.
- How to get product on a barge, containerization challenges, how to handle special grains.
- Chinese markets are at high demand for agricultural products, specifically soybean supply lines due to environmental issues in-country; food sourcing to China expected to increase.
- Need to develop agricultural supply lines for Foreign Direct Investment.
- Millions of dollars in current investment on the IL side of Mississippi in terms of multimodal infrastructure.
- SWIL has strong infrastructure/assets in terms of 2 ports, 6 rails, and 3 airports that meet federal safety guidelines and 29 step checklist for safety compliance in all 3 airports (Part 139 Certification).
- Specific assets for each airport: MidAmerica-passenger; Downtown STL airport-river access; STL Regional-cross winds.
- Currently facing a container-deficit market.
- Need to create a mechanism where manufacturing companies can work together to combine shipments (e.g., air freight).
- Make it easier for customers to take our products.
- Safety and compliance certification issues that need to be further explored.
- Definite need for roads, interstate, and freight infrastructure improvements to meet the progressive match of rail/barge and to support more commerce for rail/air/ports.
- Ports need at least one steamboat company who is a consistent provider to bring in others.
- SWIL needs to stimulate product development and entrepreneurial membership in region.
- Strategize collaboration with current businesses to maximize efficiencies in trade/exporting.
- How to address when product hits somewhere else before going out; how bill of lading is cut; whether it is an export.
- Create mechanism where freight forwarders meet earlier in the process with exporters before point of shipment to tell them what to expect and what to do. This will lend to higher efficiencies and get rid of redundancies for businesses.
Exports and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Presentation.
A few facts on SelectUSA (http://selectusa.commerce.gov):
• First Federal FDI attraction organization for the United States.
• Encourages and facilitates domestic and foreign business investment in the U.S.
• Assists state and local governments to address regulatory barriers for domestic and foreign firms wanting to invest in America.
• Customers include state economic development agencies, site selection consultants, U.S. businesses and foreign firms.
• Through detailed analysis of public and private sector FDI information, SelectUSA can help city, state, and regional economic development organizations create an effective, data-driven approach to FDI promotion and can also share best practices on how to improve attraction/retention efforts and create/implement a unique and effective investment strategy.

Nathan Regan, Senior International Investment Specialist with SelectUSA, US Dept of Commerce, International Trade Administration, delivered a PowerPoint presentation that covered the following points to the group:

• Companies and/or service providers participating in domestic U.S. Department of Commerce International Buyer Program Shows (IBPs) can meet with potential clients/investors.
• Suggested to the Council that ports/counties could do a promotional mission in a country/region with SelectUSA.
• Presented to the Council two potential opportunities for next year: participation in Hannover Messe 2016-- the world’s leading trade fair for industrial technology where FDI will be the new focus (http://trade.gov/events/hannovermesse) and SelectUSA Investment Summit 2016—over 2,600 participants from more than 70 international markets in 2015, including companies, business associations and economic development organizations (http://selectusa.commerce.gov/2016-summit.html).
• Suggested to conduct a study of what is going in and out of the area (product related) to know what type of companies to attract for FDI.
• Finally, it was suggested that there should be a clear message that is easy to understand so that a potential client-investor doesn’t choose another area (good delivery).

Summary and Adjournment
Meeting ended with final comments from St. Clair County Board Chairman Mark Kern and a promise to develop minutes and an agenda for the next meeting based on input from today’s meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 10:45 A.M.