

U.S. Navy Contract Spurs Growth and Recognition for Austal USA

Mobile has always been a center of maritime activity. But this year's winner of the Manufacturer of the Year award, Austal USA, puts an innovative spin on a venerable industry.

"Maritime business has always been important to this community," said **Bill Sisson**, vice president for economic development for the Mobile Area Chamber. "And Austal is a key player in keeping that sector healthy and growing."

Austal USA builds large aluminum vessels, including everything from high-speed passenger ferries to dinner cruise yachts. The company's Mobile facilities, which were developed in partnership with Bender Shipbuilding & Repair, are being expanded in 2005.

"Austal USA brings to this market a new dimension in high-speed marine transport," said **Bill Pfister**, Austal's vice president of government programs. "Austal's leading edge lightweight aluminum design and fabrication technology and capabilities were not previously available in the United States."

The company's latest project, a high-speed demonstrator for the Office of Naval



Greg Metcalf (left), CEO of Austal USA, and Bill Pfister (right), vice president of government programs, are pictured at the chairman's reception just prior to the Mobile Area Chamber's annual meeting. Austal USA was named by the Chamber as Manufacturer of the Year.

Research, is the eighth vessel completed at its 14-acre waterfront facility in Mobile. The vessel was delivered at the end of 2004.

Another recent project is an aluminum high-speed, vehicle-passenger catamaran built to operate between two U.S. ports on Lake Michigan. The vessel, named Lake Express, was the first of its kind put into operation in this country.

The company's projects slated for 2005 include a 345-foot, high-speed, car/passenger ferry for U.S. operation and construction of the first General Dynamics team-designed Littoral Combat Ship for the U.S. Navy.

Austal began operations in Australia in 1988 and quickly became a leading manufacturer of 40-meter passenger catamarans. The company is now the world's largest

builder of high-speed ferries.

"Almost every vessel built by Austal is designed specifically to the customer's specifications and requirements," said Pfister. "Whether our vessels are required to transport large numbers of passengers and cars, perform surveillance and defense activities or provide a platform for recreation and entertainment, Austal recognizes the importance of customization."

Austal began U.S. operations in the Port of Mobile in February 2001. "The overwhelming factor in our selection of Mobile was the pro-development attitude of the community and the availability of sufficient skilled and trainable personnel," Pfister said.

Pfister also cited factors such as the area's family-oriented environment, low cost of living and temperate climate.

Overall, Austal officials are glad they made the move to Mobile. "The actual circumstances we've encountered have lived up to our expectations," Pfister said.

The feeling is mutual. "Austal continues to exceed the expectations of this community as they expand their operations on the Mobile waterfront and create hundreds of new jobs," said Sisson.



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