

Seoul moves forward with green shipping corridor plans

Regulations to decarbonise shipping are gathering pace and the South Korean government is considering a regulation to guide an agreement on green corridors.

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File Photo: A container ship leaving portCredit: AdobeStock

The Special Act for Supporting the Establishment of Green Shipping Corridors, was introduced to [South Korea](#)'s National Assembly on 2 October by 15 members of the legislature, led by opposition member Dae-rim Moon, with the expectation that that the ruling People Power Party will amend and implement the regulation within a year.

Under scrutiny is the proposed legislation that will see the collaboration of [South Korean](#) ports at Busan, Ulsan and Masan with the US northwestern ports of Seattle, Tacoma and Everett to develop green corridors, initially for pure car and truck carriers and container ships.

Proposals for the legislation were based primarily on a report published by a NGO, Solutions for Our Climate (SFOC) which advocates for decarbonisation across a number of key industries, including oil and gas and power generation, among others.

SFOC shipping lead John Yum, told *Seatrade Maritime News* that its report entitled, A Study on South Korea's 2050 Net Zero Pathway for Shipping, which was published in Late September, aided in developing the regulatory proposals.

"This initiative, led by Daerim Moon and 14 lawmakers, has given the government and related agencies the time to review the regulation and to act on it," said Yum.

Essentially the SFOC report builds on an agreement made between South Korea and the US at COP27 to establish green shipping corridors between the two countries, and that was followed up at COP28 with a declaration to commence sea trials of the green corridor by 2028.

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According to Yum the proposed bill only allows for zero emission fuels, 100% carbon free, but the enforcement decree, a subset of the bill, will establish the details for the law.

“Under the bill, the term "Green Shipping Route" refers to a route designated and announced by the Minister of Oceans and Fisheries where Green Ships operate between two or more environmentally friendly ports using zero-carbon fuels and eco-friendly technologies, and no carbon is emitted throughout the entire maritime transportation process,” he explained.

Moreover, Yum confirmed that the bill defines a ‘Green Ship’ as a ship that uses zero-carbon fuel as a power source, “as specified by Presidential Decree”.

He added: “The specific mention of zero-carbon fuel is significant as it excludes so-called 'bridge-fuels' based on fossil fuels, such as [LNG](#).”

According to SFOC lawmaker Moon’s office had approached the group to help draught the proposed bill because of the group’s reporting on the developments of shipping decarbonisation.

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Seoul had already passed the Eco-Friendly Shipping Act, said Yum, because the Korean government wanted to “be on standard with the IMO and European regulations” as well as any other country’s decarbonisation rules.

However, the Eco-Friendly Shipping Act included [LNG](#), LPG, CNG and scrubbers, all of which are not solutions for decarbonisation, and that led to Moon suggesting only green fuels in the eventual draught.

“There will be some tweaks, some changes, [to the proposals] but the crux of this bill, if it becomes a law, would be to provide more incentives, more support to green fuels and not fossil fuel-based solutions like LNG,” confirmed Yum.

The Green Corridor bill itself accelerates South Korea’s decarbonisation plans and would see initial costs balloon to around \$65 billion up to 2030, for the South Korean transition. Funds that would come from a combination of private and public finances, said Yum.

Assumptions in the SFOC report expect massive early costs to decline rapidly as the transition takes hold.

“The MOF-Net0 scenario, driven by the grandest decarbonization ambition, commands the largest initial outlay of KRW 85 trillion (approx. \$65.38 billion) in the 2026-2030 period, followed by a sharp decline. This reflects the urgent need for the most rapid and radical fleet renewal and technological upgrades.”

In conclusion the report suggests that the IMO’s Net0 scenario requires a shift to a fuel mix focused on green methanol, ammonia and hydrogen to achieve its net-zero emissions by 2050.

“Gray methanol, blue hydrogen, and blue ammonia—which have higher GHG emission factors (EF) than their greener counterparts—find themselves economically unviable due to rising carbon prices under net-zero scenarios. Therefore, a transition to carbon-free fuels must ultimately define the future of maritime shipping,” according to the SFOC.

That future includes planning for a 38% increase in costs through tax reforms and “enhancements” of the financial system to encourage investment in the maritime transition.

Moreover, government must establish a three-pronged strategy that involves government, industry, and research institutes to lead the eco-friendly ship fuel market.