

Durbin joins bipartisan Senators urging DOT to help implement maritime strategy

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Senators Request Analysis of Bottlenecks Across Great Lakes Limiting Economic Activity and Travel

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) joined a bipartisan group of senators urging the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to take a leadership role in the implementation of a first-ever regional strategy for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence maritime transportation system (MTS). The strategy was developed by the Conference of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers (CGLSGP) in collaboration with industry, environmental groups, representatives from U.S. and Canadian governments, and other regional partners.

“To unlock the potential of the Great Lakes MTS, we urge the DOT to begin a system-wide analysis to identify maritime transportation bottlenecks and barriers across the Great Lakes. This analysis would lay the groundwork to help identify where future public and private investment would have broad, systemically significant impacts,” wrote the senators in a letter to Transportation Secretary Anthony R. Foxx. **“We have a tremendous opportunity to seize on past investments, take advantage of available capacity and infrastructure, and begin to unlock the economic potential of the Great Lakes MTS. The U.S. DOT is uniquely suited to support this mission and we urge you to begin a system wide evaluation of bottlenecks and transportation constraints as an important first step.”**

The letter was also signed by U.S. Senators Gary Peters (D-MI), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Robert Casey (D-PA), Joe Donnelly (D-IN), Al Franken (D-MN), Mark Kirk (R-IL), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Debbie Stabenow (D-MI).

Currently, the Great Lakes MTS is a major regional and national transportation asset, but is significantly under-utilized and operating at an estimated 50% of its full capacity. The CGLSGP Maritime Strategy includes a blend of policies, programs, and projects to rejuvenate the regional maritime system with an overarching interest in increasing efficiency, reducing costs, and encouraging new markets such as cruise ships, containers, short sea shipping. The goal is to double maritime trade while shrinking the environmental footprint of the region’s transportation network and supporting the region’s industrial core as the backbone of our regional and national economies.

The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence MTS is the longest deep-draft inland navigation system in the world, and includes the five Great Lakes, their connecting channels, and the St. Lawrence River. The MTS extends 2,300 miles into the North American heartland and serves more than 100 ports in the eight Great Lakes States, Ontario, and Québec. The region’s maritime sector contributes more than \$30 billion to the US and Canadian economies and accounts for more than 220,000 jobs. With an improved strategy for MTS, the region would experience significant growth, including economic expansion in all Great Lake States and Canada.

Full text of the letter is available [here](#):