

St. Louis Regional Freightway Offers Riverboat Cruises For Students

by Julie Hauser
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ST. LOUIS - The St. Louis Regional Freightway is inviting students and educators to sign up now to take advantage of curated riverboat cruises in 2023 that will provide tours through a portion of the Ag Coast of America. Offered the first Wednesday of the

month beginning in April 2023, the cruises will be open to high school and college student groups, educators and educational administrators, and others interested in learning about the Ag Coast and the many career opportunities available in the region's transportation, manufacturing and logistics industries. The cost per person varies based on age, group size and whether the group is participating in a regularly scheduled tour or a private, chartered tour.

Participants will get an up-close look at critical elements of the region's multimodal freight network, including roads and bridges, rail and barge facilities and multimodal freight transfer services and ports, all of which have garnered recognition for a 15-mile stretch of the Mississippi River running through the St Louis region as the Ag Coast of America. The Ag Coast is home to 16 barge transfer facilities that at total capacity, can handle more than 150 barges per day, providing the highest level of barge-handling capacity anywhere along the Mississippi River. Routinely handling approximately 436,000 tons per mile, the barge industry in this section of the Mississippi River is nearly two-and-a-half times more efficient than its closest competitors, according to the most recent rankings by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

“For student groups and educational administrators, the cruise will help increase awareness of the types of jobs available in the transportation, manufacturing and logistics industries and highlight the pathways to careers that are in demand and offer a great living wage,” said Mary Lamie, Executive Vice President of Multi Modal Enterprises for Bi-State Development and head of the St. Louis Regional Freightway. “This specialty cruise opportunity connects classroom academic knowledge to real world business and industry application.”

Participants will gain an awareness of the impact transportation has on the local economy, and a deeper understanding of the St. Louis region's role as a world-class logistics hub offering global access from a central location at the nexus of America's freight network. A visit to the Gateway Arch museum can be included to learn about the St. Louis Region's Riverfront Era – highlighting its early role as a distribution point for U.S. goods and an entryway for global imports.

The Ag Coast Cruises take place aboard replica 19th century paddlewheel riverboats that are part of Bi-State Development's Riverboats at the Gateway Arch enterprise. The Becky Thatcher and Tom Sawyer riverboats offer a variety of Mississippi River excursions with unique themes and breathtaking views of the St. Louis skyline and riverfront. The boat dock located at the base of the steps to the Arch also offers live music events and other fun activities.

“Given the proximity of the Laclede's Landing MetroLink station, we encourage the use of the MetroLink for transportation to the Gateway Arch and the riverboats to also

highlight transit-related employment opportunities and to provide a fun introduction to a mode of transportation that can be used for job interviews, the commute to work or participating in work-related training programs, and to access many of our region's most popular attractions," Lamie said.

Small groups will be accommodated on regularly scheduled one-hour-long cruises on the first Wednesday of each month, with narration by the captain who will share information about the Ag Coast. Pricing for those regularly scheduled cruises starts at \$24 for adults and \$14 for those aged 3 – 15, but additional discounts are available for groups with more than 20 participants. Any groups of 20 or more wanting to purchase tickets at a group discount or inquire about a private charter can contact groupsales@gatewayarch.com. Private charters would include rental of one of the riverboats in its entirety for a 90-minute, private, narrated cruise on the Ag Coast that could accommodate up to 125 guests. For information on the regular sightseeing cruises and other specialty cruises and entertainment available, visit www.gatewayarch.com/riverboats.

About St. Louis Regional Freightway??

A Bi-State Development enterprise, the St. Louis Regional Freightway is a regional freight district and comprehensive authority for freight operations and opportunities within eight counties in southwestern Illinois and eastern Missouri, which comprise the St. Louis metropolitan area. Public sector and private industry businesses are partnering with the St. Louis Regional Freightway to establish the bi-state region as one of the premier multimodal freight hubs and distribution centers in the United States through marketing and advocacy for infrastructure development that supports the movement of freight. To learn more, visit thefreightway.com.??