

Marketing Of STL Regional Advantages Discussed At North Alton-Godfrey Meeting

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
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ALTON/GODFREY - St. Louis Regional Freightway Executive Director Mary Lamie spoke at the most recent North Alton-Godfrey Business Council meeting on May 9, and discussed the ways her organization has worked to help market the advantages of the St. Louis Region.

Lamie said seven years ago, metropolitan planning organization East-West Gateway looked at the manufacturing logistics industry in the St. Louis region and recognized that when compared to sister cities like Kansas City, Memphis, Columbus, Nashville, and Minneapolis, those cities had better growth in those industries at the time.



She continued by saying the St. Louis region has several strategic and infrastructural advantages, but those other cities were “out-hustling” it with their superior marketing.

“Then we looked at our freight assets. St. Louis has six class one railroads. Those are the national rail carriers, and that's a big deal - not one of those sister cities has six,” she said. “Not one of those sister cities has four interstates like what we have. Not one of them has the most strategic location on the Mississippi River and no one had two international cargo airports.

“So we did a study, and the study came back and said - and for those of us who live in this area all our lives, it didn't come as a surprise - and it basically said that ... those other regions like Kansas City that represent two states, they're basically out-hustling us from marketing perspective.”

Lamie said the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) does a good job of setting priorities for roads and bridges, but going forward, they and the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) are trying to set priorities based on multi-modal transportation. She added that it's important for the Bi-State Development Agency (of which the freightway is a part) to include the private industry, including manufacturing and logistics companies, in the process.

She described the organization as a “marketing consultant for the St. Louis region when it comes to the freight industry.” They started advertising the advantages of the region through press releases and eventually gained national media coverage, but still needed ways to draw manufacturing and logistics companies into St. Louis - or help the ones already in St. Louis expand.

After meeting with barge industry leaders, she learned that a particular section of the Mississippi River right in front of the Gateway Arch moves more agricultural and fertilizer products than anywhere else in the country due to St. Louis's centralized location and ability to handle multi-modal transportation of goods - from barge to freight to truck, and vice versa.

“We ended up branding ourselves as the ‘Ag Coast of America,’” Lamie said. “We continued to get national and international media coverage on that, and by doing that, we continued to raise awareness of those great assets - the available real estate sites that we have available in this area as we try to do our best to get more manufacturing and logistics in this area.”

She said St. Louis's combination of barge, freight, and interstate infrastructure allowed it to be a “reliever” for the supply chain issues during the COVID-19 pandemic, and goods that couldn't be routed through Chicago were often re-routed through St. Louis.

Going forward, the freightway and Bi-State Development Agency are focusing on infrastructure improvement projects like the reconstruction of the Interstate 270 bridge

over the Mississippi River at Chain of Rocks Road. The project has been cited as a high-priority infrastructure necessity for the past few years and has received \$76 million in funding over the past two years combined.

More information about the St. Louis Regional Freightway and the work they're doing is available on their website at thefreightway.com, which also features [several maps](#) showcasing the St. Louis region's global connectivity and industrial real estate assets.