



A LOOK AT OUR PRIORITIES

Areas that can produce tangible results over the next 24 months

After I was appointed by President Bush and confirmed by the Senate as the Administrator of the SLSDC, Secretary Mary Peters challenged all the Administrators in the Department of Transportation to identify projects that could produce tangible results over the next two years. There are several important priorities that, if addressed with vigor and perseverance, I believe can be accomplished and result in measurable improvement for the Seaway over the next 24 months.

Safety. Today's mariners depend upon state-of-the-art communications to provide help should foul weather, engine malfunction, or terrorist attack put them in harm's way. Integrating the Automatic Identification System (AIS) with the system employed by the U.S. and Canadian Coast Guards provides added security in an uncertain world.

The Seaway Corporations made the use of AIS on commercial vessels mandatory in 2002. It's time to ensure that AIS covers the entire waterway from Duluth to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Advanced collision avoidance tools that AIS offers can save lives, protect property, and provide invaluable environmental safeguards.

Short sea shipping. As fuel prices fluctuate, border lines lengthen, and rail and road capacity is squeezed, shipper interest in waterborne movement has increased substantially. Establishing cross lake freight routes, like those envisioned by the MarineLink Coalition, has many benefits, including enhanced safety, reduction of air emissions, fuel savings, and reduction of highway traffic.

These benefits, however, cannot be fully achieved unless policies are adopted allowing marine transport to achieve its potential. A limited exemption to the harbor maintenance tax, if crafted with precision, could provide a good start to energizing the short sea market. When regulatory impediments to moving cargo via freight ferries exist, even as highway traffic congestion increases daily, it's time to re-examine

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■ **AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES** We must find a solution, and that solution must be as fast-tracked as is scientifically and prudently possible.

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whether there is a better alternative.

Aquatic invasive species. Seeking a solution to the problem of aquatic invasive species that enter the Great Lakes via ballast water of ocean-going vessels is an essential priority for our system. The maritime community has been kicking this can down the road for the past two decades. The game has gone on long enough. We must find a solution, and that solution must be as fast-tracked as is scientifically and prudently possible.

This will require support of technology initiatives to solve the problem. The SLSDC is integrally involved in the "Great Ships Initiative," which has the mandate of identifying R&D ballast water solutions that are safe, reliable, effective and affordable. The SLSDC will also be working diligently with the Great Lakes Maritime Research Institute on various economically and environmentally sustainable maritime commerce efforts.

In addition, we are supporting the Green Marine project, which is an industry coalition for resolving maritime environmental issues. We should also not ignore the fact that when a solution is found, owners will have to pay substan-

tial costs for adopting these technologies. I want to explore ways to facilitate funding options that will help them promptly implement aquatic nuisance species technology.

Completion of the Study. The Great Lakes Seaway Study has been underway since May 2003 and is scheduled for completion by mid-2007. This study is an assessment of the system's current and future requirements to maintain safety, reliability, viability and efficiency at levels consistent with those present today. Simply put, it will be a 50-year roadmap addressing engineering, economical and environmental issues for the binational waterway.

The Study starts with the premise that system performance and reliability should not be permitted to degrade from its current performance. That means we have to ensure adequate capital funding for Seaway infrastructure needs. Locks, bridges, operational assets, roads, and navigation devices must be kept in excellent working order. A single lock system provides no margin for error. One lock closure has a costly ripple effect on every ship waiting to transit.

This report is all about improving the waterway that has served us so well for almost half a century and preparing it to do the same for the next generations. It is essential that the study be completed in a timely manner.

The Seaway is indeed facing an historic time of opportunity and challenge. I am honored to serve at the helm during these days of change, and ask your every assistance in helping make the voyage a successful one for all our stakeholders. ■

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