



# **GREAT LAKES ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

## ***FY 2025-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN / FY/CY 2024 PERFORMANCE REPORT***

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### ***Introduction***

The Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation (GLS), a wholly owned Government Corporation within the U.S. Department of Transportation, was created by the Congress in 1954 as the U.S. federal agency responsible for the operations and maintenance of the U.S. portion of the St. Lawrence Seaway between Montreal and Lake Erie.

The St. Lawrence Seaway is a binational waterway and lock system, which connects the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean for commercial waterway trade and is jointly operated by the United States (GLS) and Canada (St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation – SLSMC). By law and treaty, the GLS is required to operate and maintain its portion of the St. Lawrence Seaway with an identical legislative mandate in Canada for the SLSMC. In addition to these legislative authorities, both nations also executed an Exchange of Notes in 1952 and 1954 establishing the terms of constructing, managing, and operating the Seaway jointly. These diplomatic notes, which have the full force and effect of a treaty between the two countries, have remained in effect since their official exchange.

The St. Lawrence Seaway directly serves an eight-state, two-province region that accounts for one-quarter of the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP), one-half of North America’s manufacturing and services industries, and is home to nearly one-quarter of the continent’s population. The Great Lakes region is the world’s third largest economy with annual economic output of \$6 trillion.

The GLS is primarily responsible for maintaining and operating the two U.S. Seaway locks located in Massena, N.Y., and controlling commercial vessel traffic in areas of the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario. Primary activities include U.S. lock operations and maintenance, vessel traffic control, vessel inspections, trade and economic development, and capital infrastructure renewal.

GLS programs and activities are principally focused on the performance measure of meeting the 99 percent or better goal for U.S. Seaway sector reliability. The GLS is directly responsible for ensuring the safe, efficient, and secure passage of commercial vessels through the St. Lawrence Seaway, and it has historically maintained a 99 percent reliability rate. Since the 15-lock binational waterway’s opening in 1959, more than 3 billion metric tons of cargo has moved on the St. Lawrence Seaway valued at over \$500 billion.

## ***External Factors/Basis for Data Reported***

External factors affecting GLS performance and strategic goals include: vessel incidents due to mechanical failure and human error; weather conditions; global economic factors affecting demand, production, and pricing of commodities and vessel services; and federal policy decisions by the United States and Canada.

The Great Lakes Seaway System and related operations are on a calendar year (CY) basis. In accordance with calendar year operations, both CY and fiscal year (FY) (October 1-September 30) data are reported as appropriate.

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### **GLS Mission Statement**

*The Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation operates and maintains the U.S. infrastructure and waters of the St. Lawrence Seaway, while performing trade development activities focused on economic development for the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway System region. Our mission is to serve the marine transportation industries by providing a safe, secure, reliable, efficient, and competitive deep draft international waterway, in cooperation with the Canadian St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation.*

### **GLS Vision Statement**

*The Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation will be a model federal agency, leading the Great Lakes Seaway System as the safest and most efficient, competitive, and technologically advanced marine transportation system in the world.*

### **GLS Organizational Core Values**

*Commitment / Dependability / Leadership / Service / Stewardship*

# **GLS STRATEGIC GOALS AND RESULTS**

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**SAFETY: Promote navigation and workplace safety by reducing vessel incidents and employee injuries and increasing protection of facilities.**

## **Outcome Goals:**

- Increase the application of innovative technologies and programs to improve transit times, ensure navigation safety, and protect of the river environment.
- Protect critical infrastructure and other navigation and workplace-related assets.
- Comply with navigation and workplace safety standards.

## **How We Will Achieve This Strategic Goal:**

- Insist on excellence in occupational safety by providing the education, training, equipment, and commitment needed to make the GLS an accident-free employer.
- Utilize Automatic Identification System (AIS) / Global Positioning System (GPS) / Draft Information System (DIS) technologies and related systems to enhance vessel transit safety and efficiency.
- Utilize hands free mooring (HFM) technology at both U.S. Seaway locks for safer, faster, and more efficient commercial vessel transits.
- Seek advancements in new navigation-related technologies through industry and government partnerships to enhance safety, reliability, and efficiency, and ensure interoperability with the Canadian SLSMC.
- Perform inspections of all ocean vessels on their initial transit into the St. Lawrence Seaway, in coordination with the Canadian SLSMC and the U.S. and Canadian Coast Guards in Montreal, Quebec, before the vessel enters U.S. waters.
- Promote Seaway System safety through traffic control procedures, rules and regulations for transit, vessel speed surveillance, deployment of fixed and floating navigation aids, operation of weather and visibility stations, and water level and flow-rate monitoring.
- Implement critical infrastructure protection measures to enhance maritime security and Northern Border protection.
- Organize periodic meetings/exercises among U.S. and Canadian law enforcement and transportation entities to discuss and test procedures and policies for improving security along the St. Lawrence Seaway.

- Participate in federal security and emergency response training exercises as part of the national transportation system.
- Perform regular security training for GLS employees to include active shooter training and shelter-in-place simulations.
- Maintain and improve the GLS’s capability to react to a hazardous materials spill by conducting annual simulated emergency response exercises and updating the GLS’s Emergency Response Plan and equipment accordingly. In addition, continuously improve coordination with local/state governments and emergency response agencies to respond to an incident through training, simulations, and incident evaluations.

Performance Measures and Results: CY data sourced from the GLS offices of Lock Operations and Marine Services. Annual historical data for baseline measurement is included in annual performance agreements, performance plans, and budget justifications. Selected historical data are shown below.

- ✓ Maintain 100 percent of ocean vessel first-transit-inbound inspections at Montréal, Québec, outside of U.S. waters, each navigation season.

CY 2020	100 percent	258 vessels
2021	100 percent	228 vessels
2022	100 percent	246 vessels
2023	100 percent	187 vessels
2024	100 percent	102 vessels

**RELIABILITY AND AVAILABILITY: Maintain user confidence in the continued viability of the Seaway System by ensuring that plans and decisions sustain the long-term reliability and availability of the U.S. sectors of the St. Lawrence Seaway.**

**Outcome Goals:**

- Ensure availability and reliability of the U.S. sectors of the St. Lawrence Seaway, including the two U.S. locks in Massena, N.Y., each shipping season.
- Reduce the risk of vessel delays due to lock equipment failure.
- Enhance maintenance and inspection programs to ensure an accessible, safe, and efficient System for users.
- Increase management planning focus on meeting operations and maintenance needs and long-term critical capital infrastructure investments through the Seaway Infrastructure Program (SIP).

**How We Will Achieve This Strategic Goal:**

- Ensure the structural integrity and mechanical reliability of the GLS's locks and facilities through a comprehensive program of inspections, preventative maintenance, and modernization through the GLS's SIP.
- Utilize AIS/GPS/DIS technologies to more efficiently manage vessel traffic control and vessel lockages at the two U.S. Seaway locks.
- Seek advancements in new navigation-related technologies through industry and government partnerships to enhance safety, reliability, and efficiency, and ensure interoperability with the Canadian SLSMC.
- Strictly maintain weekly/monthly inspections for electrical systems and lock machinery during the navigation season.
- Ensure water levels are sufficient for maximum allowable draft commercial navigation throughout each navigation season.
- Utilize HFM technology at both U.S. Seaway locks for safer, faster, and more efficient commercial vessel transits.
- Continuously evaluate and improve our operating procedures, regulations, and policies to better serve our customers. Actively seek customer feedback.
- Perform periodic channel maintenance and improvements, including sweeping and maintenance dredging.

- Coordinate with Canadian SLSCMC on system operating dates and related safety goal activities critical to reliability: traffic control procedures, rules and regulations for Seaway transit, vessel speed surveillance, vessel inspections, Emergency Response Plan (ERP) updates and periodic simulations, operation of weather and visibility stations, and water level and flow rate monitoring.

Performance Measures and Results: CY data sourced from the GLS offices of Lock Operations and Marine Services. Annual historical data for baseline measurement is included in annual performance agreements, performance plans, and budget justifications. Selected historical data are shown below.

- ✓ Ensure that the all engineering designs, specifications, and drawings for Seaway Infrastructure Program (SIP) winter projects are completed by July each year to allow for sufficient pre-construction planning and Q4 funding obligations.
- ✓ Increase the percentage ratio of Seaway System reliability, versus downtime in the U.S. sectors of the Seaway, for any incident, cause, problem, or occurrence, including weather (95.5 percent in CY 2024). Five-year rolling average of Seaway System reliability:

CY 2016-2020	98.6%
2017-2021	98.7%
2018-2022	99.3%
2019-2023	98.7%
2020-2024	98.8%

- ✓ Reduce delays to navigation due to lock equipment maintenance failure (99.73 percent in CY 2024). Previous five years of hours of lock-related delays:

CY 2020	2.5 hours
2021	8.7 hours
2022	2.0 hours
2023	5.3 hours
2024	18.9 hours

**TRADE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Encourage increased System utilization that benefits both the Great Lakes regional economy and the national economy.**

**Outcome Goals:**

- Increase the volume and/or value of commercial trade through the Great Lakes Seaway System.
- Increase ocean vessel fleet System utilization in terms of laden vessel transits and tonnage per transit.
- Increase Great Lakes regional economic development opportunities for job creation and economic growth.
- Increase domestic and international trade development programs to improve the Seaway's competitive position in serving the Nation.
- Increase the movement of new business/commodities, including containerized goods, heavy lift/project cargoes, and regular liner services.
- Increase cruise vessel fleet Great Lakes Seaway System utilization in terms of cruise vessel port calls.

**How We Will Achieve This Strategic Goal:**

- Develop a Great Lakes regional presence to support Great Lakes Seaway System stakeholders and work directly with regional organizations, businesses, and communities to foster increased trade, economic development, and job growth.
- Serve as a catalyst to unite the Great Lakes Seaway System community to improve communications and cooperation on system-wide initiatives directed toward improving customer service.
- Target domestic and overseas trade development programs to highlight potential markets and regions. Focus trade activities on specific commodity groups and vessel service, including refitting existing ships and construction of new vessels for Seaway operation.
- Maintain a binational Internet web site and social media presence to provide current and prospective users with a single resource for Seaway-related information on rules and regulations, real-time vessel locations, water level and weather conditions, trade and economic development activities, and promotional information.
- Continue to educate and inform public policymakers, trade and transportation officials, the general public, and other stakeholders on the economic and safety advantages of Great Lakes Seaway System maritime transportation.

- Develop operating initiatives to improve current capacity and future utilization of the system.
- Expand GLS capabilities to analyze and disseminate traffic information and publications and develop trade and economic development leads.
- Work with carriers, ports, pilots, agents, cargo handlers, and other interests in the Great Lakes Seaway System community to contain costs and participate in trade and economic development programs.
- Participate on various federal and departmental working groups related to trade and/or maritime transportation, including the federal interagency Committee on the Maritime Transportation System (CMTS).

Performance Measures and Results: CY data sourced from the Canadian SLSMC’s monthly and annual navigation statistics. Annual historical data for baseline measurement is included in annual performance agreements, performance plans, and budget justifications. Selected historical data are shown below.

- ✓ Increase commercial tonnage through the St. Lawrence Seaway (long-term goal of 1.5 percent growth annually based on baseline level of 37.7 million metric tons in 2020; target for 2024 navigation season was 40.0 million metric tons). Annual commercial tonnage through the St. Lawrence Seaway:

CY 2020	37.7 million metric tons
2021	38.1 million metric tons
2022	36.3 million metric tons
2023	37.6 million metric tons
2024	37.1 million metric tons



**MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTABILITY: Improve Seaway customer service, increase employee proficiency, and be accountable for sound financial management.**

Outcome Goals:

- Increase customer/stakeholder satisfaction with GLS services.
- Improve employee morale through workforce initiatives.

How We Will Achieve This Strategic Goal:

- Conduct outreach with all customers, employees, industry, federal and state agencies to involve the customer in the development of policies and programs.
- Continue binational partnerships with Canadian counterpart to drive service improvements and share resources.
- Facilitate quarterly meetings of the GLS Advisory Board.
- Participate on the Board of Directors for the Seaway International Bridge Corporation as co-owner of the South Channel Span of the international bridge crossing.
- Ensure adequate staffing levels to meet GLS mission and goals.
- Address operational and maintenance workforce needs given the real and anticipated technological advancements impacting Seaway operations.
- Supplement outreach activities with customer surveys to obtain direct feedback concerning operations and regulations in practice and recommendations for program modifications.
- Maintain a basic standard of quality (including objectivity, utility, and integrity) on all publicly disseminated information.
- Safeguard GLS assets and transactions performed in accordance with federally mandated government corporation accounting principles.

Performance Measures and Results: CY and FY data sourced from the GLS annual financial audits and management reports, as well as customer and employee satisfaction surveys. Annual historical data for baseline measurement is included in annual performance agreements, performance plans, and budget justifications. Selected historical data are shown below.

- ✓ Increase the customer survey ratings of GLS performance and service quality, measured over time against baseline survey results.

- ✓ Reduce the administrative overhead expense ratio of total operating expenses, excluding depreciation and imputed expenses, to 23 percent or lower. Annual administrative expense ratio at the end of each fiscal year:

FY 2020	21%
2021	17%
2022	17%
2023	19%
2024	23%

- ✓ Ensure that a “clean” annual financial audit rating is maintained. Under the auspices of the Chief Financial Officers Act and the Government Corporation Control Act, the GLS has received 61 consecutive “clean” unqualified financial audits since the first audit in June 1955 through FY 2024 (early audits were not conducted on an annual basis).
- ✓ Continue to successfully maintain the appropriate ISO certification of the quality management system by meeting requirements of certification and obtaining zero non-conformity notes from biannual external audits.
- ✓ Ensure that GLS hiring and training timelines are met to ensure operations and maintenance workforce needs are met and quality service levels remains continuous.
- ✓ Increase the overall agency-wide workplace satisfaction rating of GLS employees, measured over time against baseline survey results. The data will be collected through federal, departmental, and internal employee satisfaction surveys.

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