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MVFC Authorization Renewed for Additional Two Years

At the recent meeting of the Mississippi Valley Conference of AASHTO, the Executive Committee of the Mississippi Valley Freight Coalition authorized the Coalition for an additional two years, through 2012.

The Executive Committee used the result of the MVFC Business Meeting, held in conjunction with the 2010 MVFC Conference and Annual Meeting, as the basis for their discussion.

The 2011-2012 MVFC Program includes changes to the governance structure of the Coalition to streamline the committees and involve more MPO representatives.

During these two years, the MVFC will focus its research and outreach efforts in several areas:

- Commercial Vehicle Operations Training

- Economic Analysis Training
- Regional Freight Plan

Two thirds of the \$750,000 funding for the 2011-2012 MVFC program is provided by the ten member states; one third is provided by the National Center for Freight and Infrastructure Research and Development (CFIRE). CFIRE will continue to provide coordination and member support for the Coalition.

“The MVFC has been the anchor for the CFIRE research program. We have had good experiences working with the states in our region and we are pleased to continue the collaborative efforts of the coalition,” said CFIRE Director Teresa Adams.

For more information, consult the [2011-2012 Program](#) of the MVFC, approved by the Executive Committee on July 8, 2010.

America's Marine Highways

On August 11, 2010, US DOT Secretary Ray LaHood identified eighteen marine corridors, eight projects, and six initiatives for further development as part of America's Marine Highway Program. The program seeks to encourage the expansion of maritime freight services in order to reduce landside congestion and emissions of greenhouse gasses and other pollutants, save energy, and increase the resiliency of the freight system while stimulating economic growth and competitiveness.

Corridors are all-water routes that extend the surface transportation system and potentially reduce landside congestion. The corridor designation serves to begin the process of focusing public

and private efforts to use these waterways. Initiatives are projects in the early stages of development, to be supported by the US DOT for research and market analysis. Six of these corridors and one of the initiatives are freight-related and fall within the Mississippi Valley region.

The M-55 Corridor includes commercial navigation channels, ports, and harbors on the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers from New Orleans, Louisiana to Chicago, Illinois. This corridor suffers from major truck freight bottlenecks at several points along its route and significant freight rail congestion at Chicago and St. Louis. Sixty percent of all US grain exports move in the Mississippi River, making freight movements through this

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The FREIGHT Act of 2010

Ernie Wittwer, MVFC Facilitator



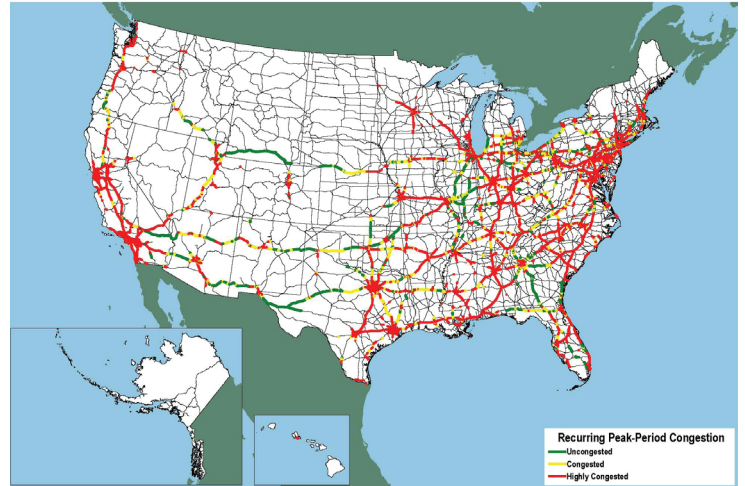
Supporters of improved freight transportation in the United States gave a cry of joy recently as Senators Lautenberg, Murray, and Cantwell introduced the Focusing Resources, Economic Investment, and Guidance to Help Transportation (FREIGHT) Act of 2010. These cries of joy were warranted but somewhat premature.

The FREIGHT Act would establish an Office of Freight Planning and Development within the Office of the Secretary of the US Department of Transportation. The primary function of this office would be to develop a national strategic freight plan, which would be required under the act. This plan would contain: 1) an assessment of the current national transportation system's ability to achieve the policy, objectives, and goals of the plan; 2) an analysis of long term trends that might impact the performance, use, and needs of the systems; 3) a description of the major challenges to meeting the goals of the act; 4) a proposed investment plan to implement the goals; 5) guidelines to encourage a balance in financing that plan; and 6) a list of priority corridors and gateways. Having and using such a plan would be a major step in the right direction for the country in its effort to build a sustainable freight transportation system. The fact that three senators apparently recognize that need is also a huge step forward.

Unfortunately, the proposed act should be called the port and rail act since eligible projects are limited to:

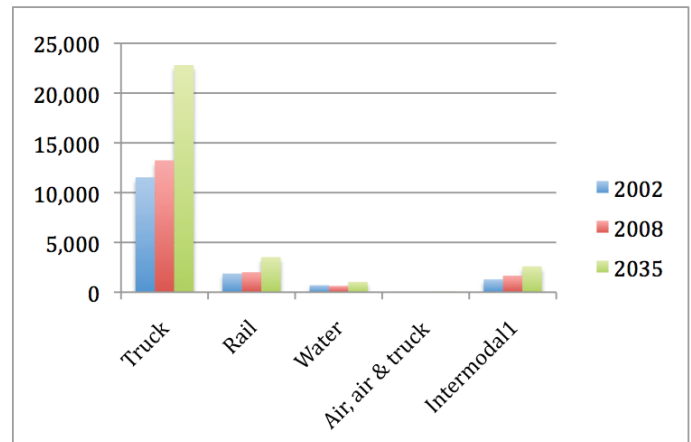
- Port development or improvements
- Multimodal terminals
- Land ports of entry
- Freight rail improvements or capacity expansion
- Intelligent transportation systems
- Port or terminal access
- Planning and design projects to pursue any of the above

In short it would exclude inland waterways and all highways that do not lead directly to a port or terminal. The exclusion of inland waterways is important to our region because we have a wealth of under-utilized transportation resources in its lakes and rivers. The second is important because the bill would do nothing, except perhaps a slight modal shift as trains became more attractive than highways, to avert the congestion that is forecast by the Federal Highway Administration by 2035 (see the following map).



Source: FHWA Freight Management & Operations

Nor does it recognize the fact that truck freight continues to be the largest and fastest growing freight mode. The following graphic presents data from the Federal Highway Administration on the tonnage moved by each major mode at three points in time.

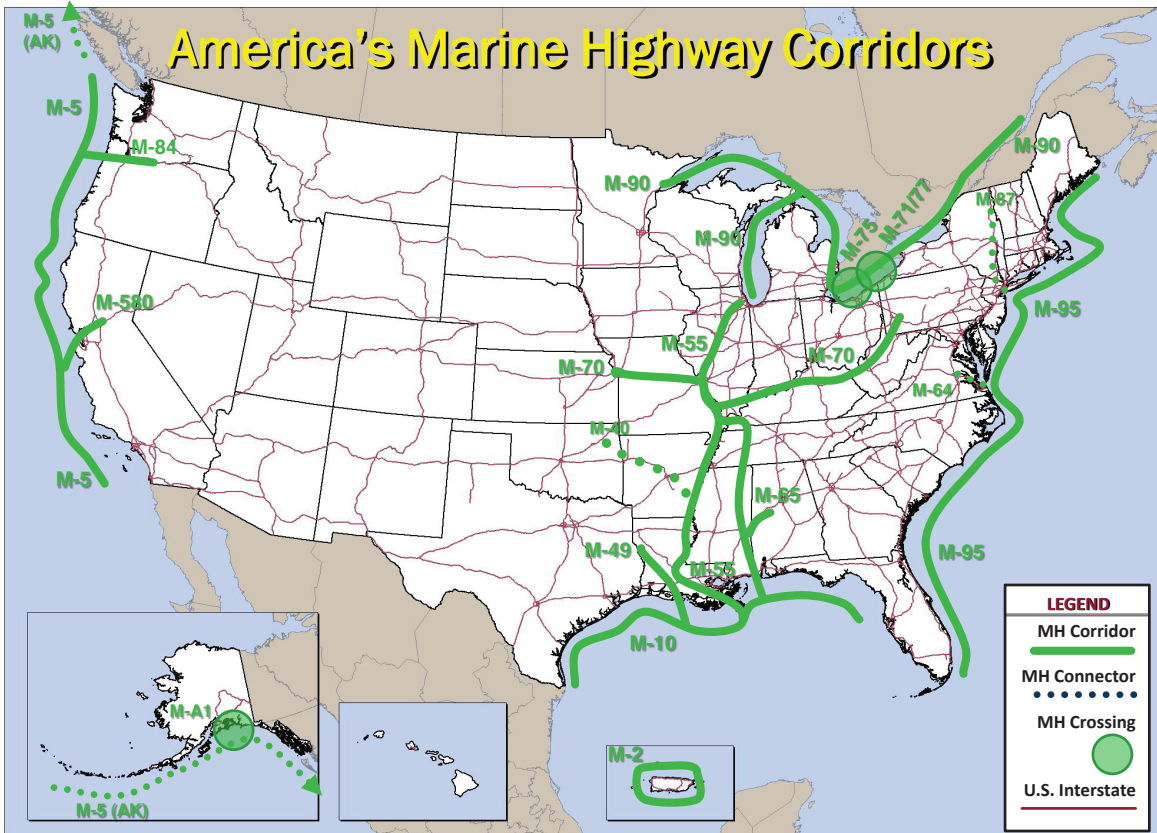


Data source: FHWA Freight Management & Operations

While we need to redress the historic imbalance in our transportation system, which favored highways at the expense of other modes, we will not achieve balance, or solve our freight problems, by ignoring highways.

Finally, any cheering for this new approach to freight transportation is premature since the act ignores the most nagging issue of the day: *how to pay for it*. In the current political climate no bill that proposes to spend significant new dollars is likely to pass. Any bill that proposes new spending while ducking the issue of finance is certain to die quickly.

America's Marine Highways, continued from Page 1...



Source: US DOT Maritime Administration

corridor vital to the economy of the Midwest and the entire nation.

The M-65 Corridor encompasses a number of rivers in the middle South, including the Tennessee, Ohio, and Mississippi in Kentucky and surrounding states. Increased utilization of the Tennessee-Tombigbee waterway could help mitigate some of the projected increases in hazardous materials movements as they move northward from ports in Southern Alabama.

The M-70 Corridor includes the Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri Rivers, and connects commercial navigation channels, ports, and harbors from Pittsburgh to Kansas City. This major east-west freight route through the Midwest contains major freight truck bottlenecks at Kansas City and a number of other major metropolitan areas throughout the Ohio Valley.

The M-90 Corridor is made up of the Great Lakes, Erie Canal, and the connecting commercial navigation channels, ports, and harbors from New York to Wisconsin and Minnesota. This corridor offers virtually unlimited capacity for freight movements from the Midwest to the East Coast via the Saint Lawrence Seaway.

The M-71/77 Lake Erie Marine Highway Crossing transits Lake Erie between ports in Ohio and Ontario and serves to save as much as 200 landside transportation miles, while also avoiding border crossing bottlenecks at Detroit, Michigan and Buffalo, New York. This project could potentially reduce travel delays and emissions while improving safety and stimulating international trade with Canada.

The lone initiative—the Illinois-Gulf Marine Highway Initiative sponsored by the Heart of Illinois Regional Port District and paired with the M-55 Marine Highway Corridor sponsored by the Missouri Department of Transportation—seeks to support development opportunities for marine services between US Gulf Coast seaports and Peoria, Illinois on the Mississippi and Illinois rivers. Combined with the scheduled expansion of the Panama Canal and Gulf Coast container terminal improvements, this project may offer increased opportunities for an all-water route to link the Midwest's agricultural and industrial capacity with international markets.

The designation of these corridors and initiatives is the first step in the development of America's Marine Highway system. In the future, the US DOT will have to shift the focus from designation to project identification and, more importantly, to the funding of these projects.

M/V Mary Lynn on the Missouri River

In the past decade, river shipping on the Missouri River has dwindled to near nothing due to low water levels and other economic factors. But this trend has at last begun to shift in the other direction.

was delivered to the Amelia Earhart Bridge Project at mile 422.5 at Atchison, Kansas. The four hopper barges were destined for Blair, Nebraska and a load of alfalfa pellets.

Photo courtesy of the Missouri Department of Transportation



In July 2010, freight movements on the Missouri River received a boost with the maiden voyage of the M/V Mary Lynn, a new 3800 horsepower shallow-draft towboat owned and operated by AgriServices of Brunswick.

On her return down river, the M/V Mary Lynn delivered three barges of alfalfa pellets, one barge of soybeans, and two barges of dried distiller's grains to St. Louis to transfer to points further downriver.

The M/V Mary Lynn's first assignment was to transport a mixture of project cargo and other barges upriver. She is towing a 160 foot Ringer Barge carrying a massive Manitowoc 4100 Ringer Crane, a 1000 horsepower pushboat called the M/V Cleva Lee, and four empty hopper barges. The M/V Cleva Lee

The M/V Mary Lynn will be used exclusively on the Missouri River. She will help the large loads required by waterborne freight moving on the river, including the newly designated M-70 waterway corridor that includes the Missouri River from Kansas City to St. Louis.

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