



Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition

May 23, 2016

The Honorable Bill Shuster
Chairman
Transportation & Infrastructure
Committee
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Ranking Member
Transportation & Infrastructure
Committee
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bob Gibbs
Chairman
Water Resources & Environment
Subcommittee
585 Ford House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Grace Napolitano
Ranking Member
Water Resources & Environment
Subcommittee
505 Ford House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Shuster and Gibbs and Ranking Members DeFazio and Napolitano:

Waterborne commerce is an essential foundation block of our national economy. It is the most efficient and environmentally-friendly way to move the commodities that the cornerstone of our economy – the goods producing sectors – depend on. It is a critical link in the smooth operation of regional and national supply chains. Nowhere is water transport more important than in the Midwest and the Great Lakes. For example, the Great Lakes regional maritime sector directly contributes more than \$30 billion to the U.S. and Canadian economies and accounts for more than 220,000 jobs.

We urge you to support the introduction and passage of the as yet unnumbered Water Resources Development Act of 2016. There are two provisions in particular that are essential to our Great Lakes economy. Section 108 would take the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) off budget in 2027, ending the cyclical uncertainty that is a regular part of the annual budget process. Section 109 would establish a beneficial use of dredged material pilot program. Many of the Confined Disposal Facilities on the Lakes are near or have reached capacity, and expansion or construction of new facilities is a lengthy and expensive process. Much of the sediment dredged from Lakes ports and waterways is suitable to beach nourishment and wetland restoration. Section 109 will encourage increased use of dredged material for such beneficial applications.

We also support Section 106, which requires the Corps to assess the condition of jetties and breakwaters and report to Congress on the cost to restore and maintain them. Many Great Lakes jetties and breakwaters are aged and need repair.

Additionally, we support Sec. 202(a)(8) of the bill, which directs Corps to expedite completion of feasibility studies and proceed to preconstruction planning, engineering, and design for the navigation project for the Upper Ohio River in Pennsylvania. The existing locks to be replaced by this project were built prior to World War II and are the oldest structures with the smallest lock chambers in the Ohio River system.

Finally, we would like to voice our support for a provision that the draft bill does not contain, but is sorely needed: A requirement to apply the 10 percent Great Lakes Navigation System HMTF funds to baseline HMTF funds. More than 17 million cubic yards of sediment still clog Great Lakes ports and waterways. The Coalition strongly supports applying the 10% set-aside to for GLNS projects to all HMTF spending. We encourage you to increase funding for Great Lakes dredging in this predictable and productive manner.

We appreciate your leadership, we urge your commitment to moving this legislation forward, and we thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please contact me at ewolking@detroitchamber.com or 313-596-0304.

Sincerely,



Ed Wolking, Jr.
Executive Director

Contributing Chambers of Commerce

The following Chambers are contributors to the development of the Coalition's plan for growth and job creation in the Great Lakes region:

Allegheny Conference on Community Development
Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti Regional Chamber
Battle Creek Area Chamber of Commerce
Buffalo Niagara Partnership
Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce
Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce
Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber
Columbus Chamber of Commerce
Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce
Detroit Regional Chamber
Duluth Chamber of Commerce
Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership
Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce
Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce
Greater Cleveland Partnership
Greater Des Moines Partnership
Greater Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce
Greater Louisville, Inc. – The Metro Chamber of Commerce

Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce
Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce
Kalamazoo Regional Chamber of Commerce
Lancaster Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce
Lima/Allen County Chamber of Commerce
Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce
Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce
Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce
Northern Michigan Regional Chamber Alliance
Plattsburgh North Country Chamber of Commerce
Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce
Rockford Chamber of Commerce
Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce
Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce
Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce
West Michigan Chamber Coalition
Youngstown/Warren Chamber of Commerce