

*“The challenge is to plan for international commerce.” Atlanta Session**

World Market Competitiveness

- About 29% of the Gross Domestic Product and 13 million jobs (20% of U.S. employment) rely on international trade, and most goods travel by water for at least part of the journey.
- The marine transportation system moves more than 2 billion tons of freight, over 60% of the Nation’s grain exports, and 95% of soybean exports.
- Over 99% of U.S. international freight by volume – 1.3 billion tons – moves on Federally maintained waterways each year.
- The U.S. imports more than 3.3 billion barrels of oil each year.
- Today’s mega-containerships, need deep-draft channels and harbors (45-50 feet) to avoid running aground.

Infrastructure Performance

- Lock delays attributed to waiting in line to use the lock are currently over 550,000 hours annually, translating into about \$385 million in increased transportation costs.
- Most of the locks on the inland navigation system were built in the 1930’s with a design life of 50 years.



Tonnage entering and leaving our ports and harbors is expected to double over the next 20 years.

Comments from the Listening Sessions

“The most important water resources challenge facing the Nation is **improving and updating infrastructure** to enable the U.S. to remain competitive in the world’s marketplace.” *Port Authority, St. Louis Session*

“The most important water resources challenge facing the Nation is the aging **infrastructure of the MTS that will not allow Americans to compete** in a global economy.” *Interested Citizen, Dallas Session*

“The most important water resources challenge facing the Nation is **upgrading locks** to meet current and future demands, rather than maintain a system built for the 1930’s.” *St. Louis Session*

“Provide waterborne transportation facilities **without damaging aquatic ecosystems** or unnecessarily impinging on water related recreation” *Dallas, Session*

“Need for **national level coordination** for harbor deepening projects.” *Atlanta, Session*

“**Stop loss of benefits** due to lack of funding.” *Louisville Session*

“National security requires an efficient water transportation system.” *Vancouver Session*

“**Keep infrastructure from deteriorating** through proper maintenance, rather than letting it fail, then face difficulty of repairs/replacement while maintaining traffic flow.” *Vancouver Session*

“**Resolve conflicts** between fisheries and maintenance of water infrastructure.” *Vancouver Session*

“**More safety awareness** is required in ports. Keep ports modern and up-to-date.” *New Brunswick Session*

“**Plan ports based on a regional vision** rather than project by project.” *Williamsburg Session*

Growing Demand

Over the next 20 years, economists estimate that seaborne commerce is expected to double and inland navigation to increase by more than 35%.

Balance Necessary Improvements to Infrastructure with Environment

Participants at the listening sessions identified the need for an improved commercial naviga-

tion system. Many agreed that the navigation infrastructure was generally aged and in need of modernization. They were proponents for replacing locks and dams on the Upper Mississippi and

**Topics in this paper were identified at 16 Listening Sessions between June and November 2000. The purposes of the Listening Sessions were to start a dialogue and to provide citizens an opportunity to tell us what they believed the Federal role should be in addressing water resources.*



America's water resources infrastructure is nearing or surpassing its 50-year planned design life. Ensuring reliable performance levels requires attention to maintenance capacity improvements, rebuilding, or replacing existing locks to meet traffic demands.

Illinois Rivers, and deepening of harbors and shipping channels in the Great Lakes.

Dredging and dredge material disposal was seen as an important issue in navigation improvements. Clean dredge material can be beneficial for beach nourishment and construction projects; however, contaminated sediments must be disposed of in permitted locations. Some believed that greater attention needed to be paid to the dredge material disposal problem to both improve the process for deciding about disposal

siting, and to obtain greater financial contributions of those who directly benefit from the deeper channels.

Along with the dredging issues, participants recommended incorporating environmental issues in feasibility studies to properly assess all potential environmental impacts of suggested navigation improvements.

To ensure that the recommendations are implemented, participants generally suggested making sufficient funds available and making sure that the public is well informed of the value of the marine transportation system.

Regional Concerns:

The state of the Nation's marine transportation system was identified as an important challenge at practically all the listening sessions. For example, at the Louisville session, navigation

infrastructure improvements, the need for adequate funding and the minimization of sediment build-up in waterways were some of the key issues.

In Alaska where the water transportation system is the equivalent of the road system in the lower 48 states, many attendees noted that water transportation improvements for poor, isolated communities were vital to the survival of the communities themselves. However, a special concern for such areas was the limited ability of poor communities to afford local sponsorship requirements.

Many participants at the New Brunswick session focused on dredge disposal and the need to ensure a predictable volume of flow. Some encouraged implementing port modification based on a national comprehensive plan with financial and environmental considerations.

At the national listening session in Washington D.C., participants addressed multiple issues including the need to develop a long-range comprehensive plan that integrates and balances all economic and environmental considerations in marine transportation system planning. Some participants expressed the importance of the marine transportation system remaining competitive in world market. They stated that the U.S. has to keep up with world port growth because global competition affects cost of goods. It was also suggested that marine transportation needed to modernize inland waterway infrastructure to allow greater capacity and efficiency. Inland waterway transportation was said to offer low-cost bulk transportation that affords low consumer prices, while also reducing road and rail congestion, as well as reducing emissions.

Americans say the Federal government should:

- Ensure that the marine transportation system built during the 1930's can meet demands of today and tomorrow.
- Use problem-solving forums with all stakeholders to build consensus about water transportation approaches and solutions.
- Seek solutions that balance economic and environmental needs.
- Educate the public on how navigation infrastructure supports national prosperity and defense.
- Improve the process for deciding about dredge disposal sites.
- Eliminate the backlog of navigation projects.
- Make greater use of the Inland Waterway Trust Fund for improving system capacity and meeting environmental needs.