

Notes from Ad Hoc Advocacy Meeting

February 3, 2005

Port Authority Board Room

The reason that this group came together can be defined by this Problem Statement:
The Great Lakes ports are currently bearing a larger share of federal budget cuts and receive less federal investment in infrastructure than coastal ports and inland river ports. In the case of the Ohio River ports, organized advocacy groups have been effective at lobbying federal lawmakers in Washington D.C.

Great Lakes ports are being shorted on funding due to budget cuts and the success of Ohio River ports in lobbying in Washington D.C. The Waterways Council Inc., an Ohio River ports advocacy group, has a \$2 million yearly budget and has been successful in securing funding for its members.

The Army Corps budgets are based on lobbying rather than needs. The Great Lakes dredging budget is \$10 million less than last year. Obey and Oberstar have been helpful in getting funding for the Duluth-Superior harbor.

Harbor Maintenance Tax dollars are being funneled into the general fund and are difficult to access. These funds are supposed to be earmarked for capital port projects. The dollars are not being spent on what was intended when the tax was created.

Currently the Port Authorities Association and the Lake Carriers are advocating Great Lakes port interests. They put together a list of capital needs and forward to the Army Corps.

The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration is a consortium of Great lakes states governors and other stakeholders working with the EPA to form a strategy to restore the Great Lakes. Their focus is mostly environmental with some consideration given to sustainable development.

Most of the Great Lakes advocacy currently taking place is being done by the public sector.

Other Great Lakes Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are not as involved in port planning and advocacy as the Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC). We are not aware of another advisory committee to an MPO like the Harbor Technical Advisory Committee (HTAC). MPOs could be another resource for advocacy.

The Great Lakes Commission could/should be another vehicle to advocate for increased port maintenance funding. Their mission statement includes improving the economic viability of the Great Lakes although most of their efforts center on environmental issues.

An organized collaborative effort of Great Lakes stakeholders would be the most effective method to lobby in Washington D.C. Stakeholder groups include the following:

- Port Authorities
- Lake Carriers
- Great Lakes Commission
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations
- Lakes Users/Industry/Utilities
- Environmental Groups
- Great Lakes Regional Collaboration

Issues that advocacy efforts could address include dredging, water quality, landside access, studies of capital needs and public education. Adjusting the public's attitude toward Great Lakes shipping is important.

A critical mass of stakeholders is needed to get this effort started. Buy-in from industry representatives in conjunction with the Lake Carriers and Port Authorities would be a good beginning.

A mission statement for this group would help clarify what we are trying to accomplish. We also need to decide on an advocacy model to use as we move forward. One such model would be to replicate what the Waterways Council Inc. is doing. Letters to stakeholder groups would help us to determine what their interest is in investing time and money in this effort.