



April 9, 2020

The Honorable Marcy Kaptur  
Member of Congress  
2186 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Kaptur:

The American Great Lakes Ports Association (AGLPA) represents the interests of commercial ports and port users on the United States side of the Great Lakes. Our regional maritime industry supports more than 147,000 American jobs in the eight Great Lakes states and generates more than \$25 billion in economic activity.

We recognize the considerable initiatives already enacted by Congress to protect the health and economic security of the American people as our nation responds to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a designated essential industry, we want to assure you that we are working closely with state and federal officials to protect the health of our workers while maintaining operations and serving our customers in critical regional industries such as steel making, manufacturing, mining, energy and agricultural production.

Should Congress consider additional action to further stimulate the economy, we urge you to consider investments in Great Lakes navigation infrastructure. Each of the following recommendations will not only create jobs in the short term, but also represent a prudent investment in the economy of the Great Lakes region.

### **1. Complete construction of the new Soo Lock**

Owned and operated by the Army Corps of Engineers, the lock complex at Sault Ste Marie, Michigan ("Soo Locks") enables ships to navigate the St. Marys River, which connects Lake Superior to the lower four Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway. Originally authorized by Congress in 1986, the Army Corps of Engineers has initiated construction of a new large lock at the Soo. To date, the project has received \$241.6 million for construction. At this time, the Corps estimates that an additional \$789.07 million will be needed to complete the project.

Total need = \$789.07 million - Army Corps of Engineers / Construction

## **2. Repair the existing Soo Locks**

The two operating locks at Sault Ste Marie were constructed in 1948 and 1968. Unfortunately, the infrastructure is old and in need of repair. In 2007, the Corps of Engineers began a multi-year program to rehabilitate and modernize the lock infrastructure. To date, more than \$130 million has been appropriated. At this time, the agency estimates that to complete the project, an additional \$190 million is needed.

Total need = \$190 million - Army Corps of Engineers / Operation and Maintenance

## **3. Construct a new Great Lakes icebreaker**

Heavy ice threatens the reliability of Great Lakes-Seaway transportation early and late in the navigation season. Severe winter ice not only delays shipping, but can be a hazard to the safety of vessels and their crew. In 1979, the U.S. and Canadian governments had a total of 20 icebreaking vessels serving the Great Lakes. Today, only 11 vessels providing icebreaking service. In 2015 Congress authorized construction of a new heavy icebreaker on the Great Lakes. The project's estimated cost is \$162 million.

Total estimated need = \$162 million - U.S. Coast Guard / Procurement, Construction and Improvements

## **4. Eliminate the regional dredging backlog**

The Army Corps of Engineers is responsible for maintenance dredging of navigation channels in the nation's ports and waterways. Over the last two decades Congress has restricted appropriations for harbor maintenance due to budgetary constraints. The result is navigation channels and harbors choked with sand and silt. The Corps of Engineers estimates that \$150 million will be needed to address the dredging backlog in the Great Lakes region and restore navigation channels to functional dimensions.

Total need = \$150 million - Army Corps of Engineers / Operation and Maintenance

## **5. Repair and rehabilitate Great Lakes navigation structures**

Commercial harbors and municipal waterfronts are protected from excessive wave action by breakwater and jetty structures, which are maintained by the Army Corps of Engineers. Due to inadequate funding, many of these structures have fallen into disrepair, threatening commercial navigation, recreational boating, and waterfront property. Recent high-water levels and severe weather events have crippled these structures further. The Corps of Engineers estimates that repair and rehabilitation of Great Lakes breakwaters and jetties will cost \$320 million.

Total need = \$320 million - Army Corps of Engineers / Operation and Maintenance

## 6. Repair and modernize port and dock infrastructure

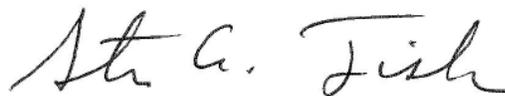
Throughout the Great Lakes region, port and dock infrastructure is in need of repair, modernization and expansion. The Maritime Administration's new Port Infrastructure Development Program provides federal assistance to improve the safety, efficiency and reliability of the movement of goods through the nation's seaports. Congress reauthorized the program in 2019 and the agency awarded its first round of grants in early 2020. We are pleased to note that Great Lakes ports were highly competitive and secured 18 percent of all nationwide funding. It is our understanding that more than 50 project sponsors throughout the U.S. applied for the first round of grants, seeking more than \$1.2 billion. This illustrates that the nation's ports and terminals are ready to deploy up to that amount for qualified projects.

Total recommended nationwide = \$1 billion - U.S. Department of Transportation / Maritime Administration

To be clear, the amounts cited above for each recommendation represent the estimated total need and may require several fiscal years to be deployed. These investments are all ongoing projects and programs. They have been authorized by Congress, and Members of the Great Lakes Congressional delegation have championed past funding for each of them. In this regard, we believe they represent prudent and responsible options for infrastructure investment.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steven A. Fisher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Steven A. Fisher  
Executive Director