

Industry study seeks ways to improve Great Lakes region shipping

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The director of Port Milwaukee says a new shipping industry study will explore ways to move cargo more efficiently and “strengthen our role” in the national freight network.

The American Great Lakes Ports Association recently announced a market analysis study focused on expanding cargo shipping between the Great Lakes and inland waterways.

“Port Milwaukee is the northern most approved point on the Great Lakes with access to the Inland River System and plays a key role in serving manufacturers, agribusiness, and distributors across the Upper Midwest,” Port Milwaukee Director Benjamin Timm said in a statement.

The study will seek to find ways to expand cargo transfers between river barges and lake vessels, while assessing infrastructure needs and ways to improve operations. It will also explore how more maritime service could boost supply chains, support key industries in the region, create jobs and “relieve pressure” on highways.

It’s being undertaken alongside the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation, and involves association members including Port Milwaukee and others in the Midwest. It’s being conducted by global management consulting firm CPCS Transcom Inc.

Along with Port Milwaukee, the Ports of Indiana and the Illinois International Port District are participating in the study.

Wisconsin, Indiana and Illinois collectively make up 65% of the economic activity related to Great Lakes shipping, according to the association. The announcement also references the importance of the Chicago shipping canal and Mississippi River system for regional cargo transit.

But while the Great Lakes and connected inland waterway system collectively move

nearly 700 million tons of cargo per year, the association says “only a small percentage” of those goods move between the Great Lakes and inland rivers. The group notes the intersection of these two systems represents “one of the most important industrial and freight hubs” in the country.

Mike McCoshen, administrator for the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation, points to commitments by President Donald Trump and Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy to strengthen U.S. supply chains. He says improving the flow of goods through the region will boost the economy as well as the country’s long-term competitiveness.

“We recognize that enhancing the connection between the Great Lakes and our Inland Waterways is a vital step toward securing America’s big and beautiful economic future,” McCoshen said in a statement.

See more in the [release](#).