

M-35

WATERWAY OF THE SAINTS



VISION

A modern, reliable, and cost-effective Upper Mississippi River transportation route that:

- **CONNECTS** seamlessly into the existing Midwest and nation's transportation network.
- **GENERATES** regional and national economic growth.
- **SUSTAINS** the river's multiple uses.

MISSION

We strengthen the Upper Mississippi River transportation mobility and utilization, in the context of regional and national transportation networks, and improve the economic competitiveness of the Midwest and nation through improvements to channel and harbor maintenance, locks, and transfer points.

CONTACT

kmickelsen@umrba.org

[www.umrba.org/
commercialnavigation.htm](http://www.umrba.org/commercialnavigation.htm)

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The America's Marine Highway Program, administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation, was authorized in 2007 to achieve full integration of marine highway vessels and ports into the nation's surface transportation system, ensuring that reliable, regularly scheduled, competitive, sustainable services are routine choices for shippers.

The M-35 Route, "Waterway of the Saints," extends from St. Paul, Minn., to Grafton, Ill., located just north of St. Louis. The five state transportation departments lead the M-35 Route optimization.

Under this designation, the states of Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin work with industry and other regional partners to improve freight mobility through innovative, integrated strategic approaches as well as to promote the inland waterways as a means to relieve land-side transportation congestion and improve the nation's overall transportation system. The designation offers new opportunities for ports, terminals, and operators to access federal funding, technical support, and other resources to expand or develop new shipping services and make the river a more cost-effective and self-sustaining transportation route.

The five states are pursuing M-35 development within their shared commitments to the principles of ecological sustainability and multi-purpose use as the foundation of the river's integrated management.



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The Upper Mississippi River states will work collaboratively within a partnership framework among commercial navigation stakeholders, regional and national freight transportation interests, elected officials, and federal transportation and economic development agencies to:

- Promote the value of the river's transportation system, including the economic advantages generated.
- Advocate for infrastructure investments and other planning and financial resources.
- Facilitate regional dialogue about financing mechanisms, economic development opportunities, service expansion opportunities, and federal and state policies.
- Market the river's existing and potentially new services to businesses and potential shippers.
- Better understand and adjust to market trends and forecasts.
- Ensure that the river's multiple uses are sustained and improved.
- Assist efforts in relieving land-side congestion, reducing air emissions, and increasing efficiency of other surface transportation modes.
- Seek programs, tools, and financial instruments to support M-35 Route service development and infrastructure improvements.

INITIAL SCOPING



As a first step in the planning process, the states, through the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association (UMRBA), joined Inland Rivers, Ports and Terminals and Mid-America Freight Coalition to host the first regional workshop in February 2015. The workshop facilitated discussions about how best to increase commerce on the river to meet the region's and nation's transportation needs.

In addition, a survey captured stakeholders' perspectives on the current state of the navigation system, viable options to expand its freight mobility, and opportunities for regional collaboration to advance solutions.

Conclusions of the workshop and survey include:

- ▶ The Upper Mississippi River is a vital transportation corridor, connecting the Midwest to the world economy, that keeps export shipping costs and import goods price-competitive.
- ▶ Shippers make business choices based on the economic advantage of utilizing the Upper Mississippi River; when infrastructure is in place that provides a more cost-effective and reliable transportation mode, free enterprise is supported and economic development is spurred.
- ▶ Existing markets include agricultural products, metals, cement, road salt; emerging markets include containerized goods, industrial sand, lumber, crude oil and other petrochemical products.
- ▶ Growing national and international demand stems from global requirements for food and other U.S. goods as well as increasing agricultural production capabilities, rising export needs requiring container shipping, limited road and rail infrastructure, and increasing waterborne shipping capacity through the expanded Panama Canal and greater ship sizes.



- ▶ Investment in the 9-foot navigation channel and harbors and locks (through the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program) is necessary to meet future demands, enhance the system's efficiency and reliability, and eliminate the single-point-of-failure threat; as well as ports and terminals to create intermodal connection points.
- ▶ The interconnectedness of the Upper Mississippi River inland navigation system requires coordination and collaboration related to advocacy, marketing, planning, and open dialogue about relevant policies and priorities.

GOVERNANCE ARCHITECTURE

ADMINISTRATORS

The Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin transportation departments have primary responsibility for implementing activities under the M-35 Marine Highway Route. As such, they provide the primary leadership and decision making related to M-35 implementation and engage directly with stakeholders who have an interest in Upper Mississippi River commercial navigation.

POLICY GROUP

The policy group is an interstate, inter-agency group consisting of representatives from the states' departments of transportation, agriculture, natural resources, and economic development. This group will serve as a forum for information exchange, issue deliberation, and seeking consensus among the states.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The advisory committee consists of representatives from various stakeholder groups, including industry sectors, federal agencies, local governments, regional planning agencies, labor groups, academia, and environmental and flood control interests. The representatives will serve in an advisory capacity, by identifying M-35 priorities and contributing to the policy group's discussions.

WORKING GROUPS

The policy group may convene working groups as appropriate to consider issues in more detail or implement initiatives. For example, this could include marketing, service development, or advocacy. The working groups will be either standing/ongoing or ad hoc, based on an end product or outcome, and will make recommendations to the policy group for its consideration.

STAKEHOLDERS

The five Upper Mississippi River transportation departments will engage all commercial navigation organizations and individuals who are interested in Upper Mississippi River commercial navigation. This would include seeking input and providing regular updates on M-35 implementation.

UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER BASIN ASSOCIATION

The Upper Mississippi River Basin Association (UMRBA) is facilitating leadership and coordination efforts on behalf of the five Upper Mississippi River states. Please contact UMRBA at 651-224-2880 with any questions.