

Committee on the Marine Transportation System

ISSUE: Federal oversight of the U.S. Marine Transportation System (MTS) is presently spread among 18 different Federal agencies. In recognition of the need for better coordination of Federal MTS activities to address the significant challenges facing the system, President Bush created the Cabinet-level Committee on the Marine Transportation System (CMTS) with a Presidential directive.

ACTION NEEDED: The next Secretary of Transportation may wish to decide if this activity is to be continued, and if so, determine the level of Departmental leadership desired for the effort.

BACKGROUND:

- The President specifically charged the CMTS with creating a partnership among the Federal agencies with responsibility for the MTS to ensure the development and implementation of national MTS policies consistent with national needs and report its views and recommendations for improving the MTS.
- The CMTS is a recently-chartered organization, having been established just two years ago. The organization is still in its nascent phase.
- The Secretary of Transportation is the standing Chair of the CMTS.
- In addition to the Maritime Administration and Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation, the CMTS includes as active members the U.S. Coast Guard (DHS); the Joint Chiefs and US Army Corps of Engineers (DOD), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC); the Federal Maritime Commission and eight other Departments and independent agencies.
- Key White House offices also participate in the CMTS as ex-officio - but active - members including the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, Assistants to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, Domestic Policy, and Economic Council and the Chair of the Counsel on Environmental Quality.
- The Chair of the CMTS is advised by a Coordinating Board of administrators and directors. The 2009 Chair of the Coordinating Board will be the Commandant of the US Coast Guard.
- CMTS activities and achievements to date include: *The National Strategy for the Marine Transportation System: A Framework for Action* (submitted to Congress on 3 Sept. 2008); A compendium of Federal maritime data available on the CMTS web site (www.cmts.gov); a comprehensive assessment of the current state of the Marine Transportation System; the integration of Federal navigational technologies, data, and services; an inventory of Federal MTS expenditures; review of the use and nature of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund; review of the National Dredging Policy; "Views & Estimates" letter in support of the Great Lakes Short Sea Shipping Enhancement Act (July 2007); and Examination of Federal maritime investment policy.

Submitted by: *Committee on the Marine Transportation System, Executive Secretariat*

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