



**U.S. Department of Transportation
Secretary LaHood**

Remarks to:



**Marine Transportation System
National Advisory Council
(MTSNAC)**

Meeting

July 23, 2009



Secretary LaHood for the Department of Transportation addressed the Marine Transportation System National Advisory Council on July 23, 2009. Consistent with America's Marine Highway Program's mandates to reduce congestion, conserve energy, and improve the environment, the Secretary charged the Council to better integrate the Marine Transportation System into the surface transportation system. By relocating freight from highways and urban corridors to commercial waterways (where applicable), the same system which provides the transportation of individuals and families in and between cities can provide a more efficient means to move goods to the shelves of retail stores throughout the United States. Secretary LaHood comments to the Marine Transportation System National Advisory Council are as follows:

"We're here today to begin a new chapter in the long and proud history of marine transportation in the United States. One of President Obama's top priorities is making sure that we strengthen and revitalize our transportation sector – including our waterways. The President and I are looking for new and creative ideas that will enable us to move goods more efficiently, conserve energy, protect the environment, and ensure we can compete globally in the 21st century. Over the last 9 years, the Council has done a very good job describing the maritime and intermodal freight challenges we face. We're grateful for the Council's analysis over the years. Your work has helped us to put the industry in very clear perspective.

"But the time for talking about our problems is over. It's time to start solving them. And that means setting a new direction that will help us meet this Administration's strategic, economic, and environmental goals for all modes of transportation. It also means meeting a Congressional mandate to make better use of our marine highway infrastructure. Today's challenges will require a new version of this advisory committee—one that will be able to begin figuring out how we might achieve these goals in the fastest time possible. Specifically, we're looking for the new board to focus on two tasks:



1. First, the administration is seeking advice on how to better integrate our waterways into our existing intermodal freight transportation system. We should take advantage of inherent environmental and energy benefits of marine transportation wherever possible – while reducing congestion on highways and rail lines.
2. Second, we're looking for advice on how to address the Congressional mandates of the Marine Highway Program. We must find ways to take better advantage of our existing waterways. This will help reduce land-based congestion and emissions, decrease our dependence on oil, and offer an alternative to building and maintaining costly new highway and rail systems.

“This is precisely the right time to launch this ambitious new agenda for the Council and the marine transportation system. As Congress and the Administration begin to debate the future of reauthorization for surface transportation, we will want advice on how the maritime industry can help us achieve integrated and environmentally sensitive transportation solutions.

“Change is never easy, but this is a golden opportunity to maximize the power and value of our marine transportation assets. We've got the goods – let's make the most of them. I wish you much success with your agenda this week, and we look forward to your sound advice in the future.

“Thank you!”