For Immediate Release
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Mississippi River Mayors gather with U.S. Department of Transportation and Partners to announce Marine Highway Grants for the Waterway

December 5, 2016 – St. Louis, MO – The U.S. Department of Transportation Maritime Administration announced today the awarding of Marine Highway Grants for the Mississippi River.

Though the Marine Highway Grant Program is national in scope, many of the grants have been awarded to projects on the Mississippi River signifying the incredible importance of the waterway to the nation.

Further, of the six projects that are receiving grant funds, five of them are for container-on-barge services.

"It is essential that we invest in integrated, multi-modal transportation systems that support the efficient movement of freight and people throughout this country," says Maritime Administrator Paul "Chip" Jaenichen. "Our Nation's extensive network of waterways, riverports and seaports provide an opportunity to help stimulate economic growth while reducing congestion on our national freight transportation system."

Grantees include a planning grant for a partnership led by the Port of St. Louis, the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative, the Inland River Port & Terminal Association, and the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association to build the container economy for the Mississippi River and work with freight forwarders to offer the Mississippi River as a container option.

According to U.S. DOT, population increase in our country will require nearly doubling domestic freight capacity to meet demand. The inland waterway system is a critical part of the solution.

"The Mayors of the Mississippi River have been working to build a sustainable economy for the waterway and the return of container movement on the River is big part of that effort," said Mayor Francis Slay of St. Louis.

America's Central Port of Granite City, IL received a grant for a container-on-barge shuttle project; and the ports of Memphis, Baton Rouge and New Orleans were also part of an awarded project coordinated by St. Louis based SCF Marine.

"The commercial navigation economy on the Mississippi River generates almost $5 billion in annual revenue supporting nearly 20,000 jobs. Yet, of the more than 30 million containers that enter the U.S. every year, very few of them move on our inland waterway system – this is an opportunity," said Chris Coleman, Mayor of St. Paul and Co-Chair of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative.

"The Port of New Orleans, is the gateway for the Mississippi River's global trade. Waterways and ports in my state support over 280,000 jobs and contribute $47.7 billion to Louisiana's economy. It is our intention to build this economy up river all the way to Minnesota," stated Mayor Belinda Constant, Mayor of Gretna, LA and Co-Chair of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative.

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The Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative is comprised of 75 mayors and the association represents cities on the main stem Mississippi from Minnesota to Louisiana. More information can be found on our website at www.MRCTI.org