



NEWS RELEASE

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Timely Investments in Navigable Waterways Key to Preserve Economic Opportunity, Prevent Disaster

Tennessee Infrastructure Alliance releases third in a series of six infrastructure reports

Nashville – The Tennessee Infrastructure Alliance today released its *Tennessee Navigable Waterways Analysis*. The report examines the role that locks, dams and ports play in the day-to-day lives of Tennesseans as well as the challenges and opportunities facing the nation's fifth largest navigable inland water system. This report is the third in a series of six in-depth analyses of Tennessee's extensive infrastructure system.

"Water transportation is an incredibly efficient mode, and offers tremendous benefits to Tennessee manufacturing, agriculture and tourism," said TIA Chairman Pete DeLay. Navigable waterway infrastructure also plays vital roles in providing flood control and hydroelectric energy.

As in the previous two studies, *Navigable Waterways* highlights the economic benefits, challenges and funding status of a specific component of Tennessee infrastructure. This installment of the Tennessee Infrastructure Alliance's informative series focuses on Tennessee's 1,062 miles of navigable waterways and 172 waterside facilities and terminals.

"When the petroleum pipeline was shut down because of recent hurricanes, Nashvillians were relieved to read about millions of gallons of gas being delivered to them by barge." DeLay said of the importance of our waterways to everyday life.

Investment in Tennessee's navigable waterways has the ability to decrease congestion and highway maintenance. In fact, goods shipped by barge verses truck or rail equals an annual \$550 million savings in transportation costs.

The economic benefits of adequately funded navigable waterways cannot be ignored.

The International Port of Memphis average total economic impact on the region is approximately \$5.5 billion. Because of the known economic benefits of a local port, county officials in Lake, Dyer and Obion counties established in the Northwest Tennessee Regional Port Authority.

Multimodal ports combine water transportation with other transportation options to make it easier and efficient to move freight.

Burkhart Enterprises in Knoxville offers transportation by rail, truck and water via the Tennessee River. Nashville and Chattanooga have extensive rail and truck networks that could be capitalized to create multimodal ports.

In order to provide the full benefits that waterways can provide, vessels traveling through the state depend on ports, locks and dams.

The Chickamauga Lock just north of Chattanooga is undergoing major renovations. This lock is crucial to the economy of East Tennessee. From 1997 to 2005 the Chickamauga Lock passed anywhere from 1.6 to 2.7 million tons of commodities annually. Unfortunately, the size and condition of the existing lock has the highest delay rate in the Ohio River system at eight hours.□□

Complicating matters even further, the completion date for the needed renovations has been extended to 2013 due to funding delays. It is necessary to seek separate annual appropriations from the Army Corps of Engineers. This year, approximately \$40 million is sought as part of the over \$300 million total cost of the project.

The total unmet need for water transportation for TDOT's 25-year plan is \$220 million. Considering more than \$1.74 billion dollars were allocated to Tennessee for transportation in the 2006-7 budget years the cost is comparatively minimal.

Infrastructure must be maintained to counter normal wear-and-tear, and the demands of a growing population dictate that its capacity be expanded. Tennessee's navigable waterways are no exception. Funds are needed now and in the future to maximize efficiency – as in the case of the state's aging lock system – or to prevent disaster in the form of a dam failure.

“Our policy makers must realize that consistent and adequate funding for infrastructure is a necessity,” DeLay commented. “Our navigable waterway infrastructure is a great example of how we will either pay now for maintenance and improvement, or we will pay later in the form of lost opportunity, or worse, disaster.”

To read the full report, previous reports and a listing of Tennessee Port Commissions and Tennessee Public Terminals visit <http://www.tninfrastructure.org/publications.html>

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The Tennessee Infrastructure Alliance is a not-for-profit association of Tennessee business and community leaders and organizations dedicated to educating policy makers on infrastructure issues and advocating for adequate and consistent funding for infrastructure maintenance and improvement. For more information, visit TIA's website at <http://www.tninfrastructure.org>