

# U.S. Marine Transportation System



## MTS Fact Sheet

### Components and Functions

The U.S. Marine Transportation System (MTS) is composed of an array of interdependent components: Over 25,000 miles of navigable waterways and harbors, 239 locks at 193 locations, hundreds of bridges, and 8,227 U.S. waterway facilities (Table 1).

**The MTS carried 69 percent by weight and 40 percent by value of U.S. international merchandise in 2016.<sup>xiii</sup>**

**Marine transportation touches virtually every aspect of American life:** The MTS is an integral part of the national economic supply chain, bringing food, clothes, oil, manufactured goods, and many other items to our shores and around the country.

|   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Miles of coastline  | 12,380 <sup>i</sup>           |
| Miles of commercially navigable waterways (2017)  | 25,000 <sup>ii</sup>          |
| Total U.S. waterways facilities (2017)  | 8,420 <sup>iii</sup>          |
| Lock chambers at 193 sites (2017)   | 239 <sup>iii</sup>            |
| Cargo handling docks  | 8,227 <sup>iii</sup>          |
| Total U.S. ports handling over 250,000 short tons annually                                    | 181 <sup>iii</sup>            |
| U.S. mariners with unlimited credentials  | 11,768 <sup>iv</sup>          |
| Vessel calls at U.S. ports (2015)   | 82,044 <sup>v</sup>           |
| Total U.S. waterborne commerce (short tons) (2016)  | 2.3 billion <sup>iii</sup>    |
| U.S. foreign waterborne commerce (short tons) (2016)  | 1.4 billion <sup>iii</sup>    |
| Passenger ferry passengers (2016)   | 118.9 million <sup>vi</sup>   |
| Adults and children under the age of 18 that went boating (2016)                              | 142 million <sup>vii</sup>    |
| Total sales generated by commercial and recreational fishing (2015)                           | \$208 billion <sup>viii</sup> |
| Jobs supported by commercial and recreational fishing (2015)                                  | 1.62 million <sup>ix</sup>    |
| U.S. cruise passengers (2016)   | 11.52 million <sup>x</sup>    |
| Federal Aids to Navigation including Automatic Identification System (AIS) & Wreck (WR) Buoys | 45,854 <sup>xi</sup>          |



Photo courtesy of USCG

**The MTS is vital to national security and military mobility:** The MTS enables most U.S. military power to move around the world by ship, providing logistical support for the rapid deployment of American forces and materials.

**A typical tow of 15 barges can take over 1,000 trucks off the roads and move a ton of freight almost 600 miles on a gallon of fuel.<sup>xiv</sup>**

**The MTS is vital to local economies:** In 2016, deep sea, coastal, Great Lakes, and inland water transportation generated over \$4 billion in annual wages to over 67,710 employees.<sup>xiii</sup>

For more info about the MTS go to:

[www.CMTS.gov](http://www.CMTS.gov)



## Challenges facing the MTS

**Growth:** Many ports are under pressure to service and supply increasingly larger ships. Operational challenges can impact navigational safety and efficiency, increasing costs to consumers and reducing competitiveness of U.S. exports.

**The Congressional Budget Office estimates that a one week shut down of the container ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach may result in losses of \$65 million to \$150 million per day.<sup>xvi</sup>**

**Environment:** As waterborne trade increases, stresses to sensitive marine environments will continue. Increased efforts to make the MTS safer and more efficient (e.g. through technologies developed by the CMTS Future of Navigation Integrated Action Team, for example) comes with a corresponding decrease in risks to the environment.

**Funding:** Federal expenditures for MTS infrastructure are not keeping pace with its use and importance to the U.S. economy, therefore coordinating and prioritizing infrastructure funding is highly important.

**Safety and Security:** The Federal Government, along with local entities, is responsible for insuring the safety and security of the MTS. For example, every day the U.S. Coast Guard conducts 45 search and rescue cases, screens 360 vessels for security threats prior to arrival in U.S. ports, and conducts 105 marine inspections.



Photo courtesy of USACE

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