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April 4, 2013

Senator John Marty  
Room 3223 Capitol  
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St Paul, MN 55155-1606

Subject: Upper St. Anthony Falls lock

Dear Senator John Marty:

Members of the Upper Mississippi Waterway Association are concerned over expressions by legislators and others that the Mississippi River lock at Upper St. Anthony Falls should be closed as “it isn’t used for much anyway”.

That’s absurd – infrequent use of a navigation lock is what the waterway industry strives for over the entire system: To use locks only when absolutely necessary. That’s what makes locks efficient; that’s what makes them ecosystem friendly; that’s what makes them a positive economic force to the region, state and nation.

The above quote also overlooks the fact that one barge transports the equivalent of 70 truck loads. As a result, a normal two-barge tow in the Minneapolis harbor removes a minimum of 140 loaded trucks from local streets and highways. This should be applauded and encouraged by city officials and environmental groups, not belittled.

#### **Important to the economy**

Transportation corridors may not be foremost in the minds of the general public, but are central to the agencies who construct and finance them and to the people and companies who use them. Perhaps this is why the Minneapolis locks are held in such disdain: The City does not own them, does finance them and does not maintain them; consequently, the City has little interest in them. Instead, they are seen as impediments to reclaiming the entire upper harbor for redevelopment and amenity purposes.

The business community, on the other hand, sees the Minneapolis locks as an asset, as facilitators of low-cost and environmentally friendly transport to domestic and export markets. Minnesota agricultural goods and other material that utilize barge transport is valued at \$1.9 billion of which 645,000 tons originated or was destined to Minneapolis with an estimated value of \$652 million (2011).

#### **Important to landside infrastructure**

While neither the State nor City of Minneapolis have any ownership or investment in navigation locks, both have a vested interest in the street and highway infrastructure they compliment. Navigation locks protect that investment.

For example, over a normal barge season, lock openings at Upper St. Anthony Falls to allow passage of barges filled with aggregates, scrap metal, fertilizer and other products would require 274 truck trips per work day along the Interstate Highway 94 corridor based upon 2011 tonnage (MnDOT). This has been substantiated by the Metropolitan Council’s June 2012 “Assessment of Economic Impact of Potentially Discontinuing the Operation

of the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock” study, although we are still waiting to see how the truck trip figures will be represented in the final Met Council report. The heaviest burden of this traffic will fall on legislative districts 52, 59, 60, 63, 64, 65 and 67.

All in all, according to the Met Council, the Minnesota economy will lose 127 jobs, along with a total of \$40.7 million in wages and other impacts. The Met Council acknowledged that while the impact would not be significant (a mere 4 percent of the state’s \$900 billion economy), the impact to specific business and individuals who lose their jobs would be.

### **Impact on the environment**

A river barge does not impact highway traffic, nor does it create drive-time gridlock. In addition, a tow boat can go more than 4 times further on a gallon of fuel than a truck, while producing only one-tenth the amount of green house gas. For this reason alone, barge transport should be publicized and supported by the DNR, federal and state policymakers along with environmental and water quality organizations. Unfortunately, to date too many should-be supporters are leading the charge to close locks while ignoring the environmental consequences.

### **Necessary for future growth**

Through 2020, the Minnesota Statewide Freight Plan (2005) expects truck traffic to grow by 79 percent, carload rail by 34 percent and water by 22 percent, suggesting that eliminating the water mode with a lock closure will put increase and unsustainable demand on the remaining modes. Efficient transport corridors are huge assets to a state, region or nation; care must be exercised in making future decisions. In an ideal world, the state’s Transportation commissioner would go to great lengths to make policy makers and his Governor aware of corridor alternatives and consequences.

### **Federal control of waterways**

While the State may have an interest in the environmental impact of the federal navigation system, the U.S. Congress has the ultimate authority to make policy and operational decisions for this system. Although the Minneapolis legislature is currently considering HF 1472 to subsidize Minneapolis shippers for not using locks with funds from the invasive species account, two federal bills are currently before the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. One would mandate the closure of the Upper St. Anthony Falls lock under certain circumstances, whereas the other would expand federal efforts over the control of Asian carp on the Upper Mississippi and Ohio River Basins.

Members of our association are concerned over the spread of Asian carp as well as other invasive species threatening U.S. waters. However, we are equally concerned that legislative debate at the state level recognizes the facts and consequences of additional truck traffic within a major corridor, whether that increase results from subsidizing shippers to use truck, or from federal legislation that mandates closure of the Upper St. Anthony Falls lock.

Sincerely,



Greg Genz  
President  
651-775-6660

Cc: Senate Environment and Energy Committee  
Senate Environment, Economic Development, and Agriculture Division  
House Environment and Natural Resources Policy Committee  
House Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture Finance Committee

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