



## AMERICA'S MARINE HIGHWAYS PROGRAM



### Frequently Asked Questions

The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 required the Secretary of Transportation to establish a short sea transportation program to mitigate landside congestion. America's Marine Highways Program is designed to integrate our coastal and inland waterways into the nation's surface transportation system, and to reduce congestion, improve air quality and provide other public benefits by supporting increased use of these waterways. The current Interim Final rule solicits comments on the structure of the program and seeks recommendations from public entities for designation as "Marine Highway Corridors". Applications for specific Marine Highways projects will be sought after publishing of the Final Rule in early 2009. Approved projects will receive Maritime Administration support through promotion of the service, coordination of federal agency involvement, identifying funding sources, identifying any impediments and encouraging use of the proposed services.

#### **What is a Marine Highway Corridor?**

A Marine Highways Corridor consists of one or more navigable inland or intracoastal waterways (including lakes, rivers, bays, and sounds), coastal waters, or portions thereof that can provide an alternative to specific road or rail corridors for freight and/or passenger transportation. The purpose of this designation is to focus public and private efforts on using the waterways to relieve landside congestion along coastal corridors as extensions of the surface transportation system.

#### **Who can recommend a route for designation as a Marine Highway Corridor?**

Corridor sponsors are public entities such as state and local governments, metropolitan planning organizations, and port authorities and can make recommendations to the Maritime Administration for designation by the Secretary of Transportation.

#### **What is a Marine Highways project?**

A Marine Highway Project is a proposed new, expanded or enhanced water transportation service along one or more designated Marine Highway Corridors that serves as an intermodal extension of the surface transportation system. To be considered for designation, the project must propose to move either passengers or contained in intermodal cargo containers or wheeled technology that provides an alternative to landside transportation. Projects that offer the greatest public benefit and that are the most likely to become self-sustaining at some point in the near future will receive designation. Public benefits include reduced landside congestion, air quality improvements, reduced energy consumption and offsetting savings to landside infrastructure maintenance or construction costs.

#### **Who can apply for designation as a Marine Highway project?**

Applications for approval and support of a Marine Highways project must be submitted by a public entity as the sponsor of the project. The intent is that the project sponsor represents a

coalition of interested public and private sector entities with the shared interest of bringing the project to fruition.

**How will Marine Highway projects be evaluated for designation?**

The Maritime Administration will review the application against pre-established criteria, including the overall benefit the project offers, the project's feasibility and likely return on investment in the event public funding is provided. The analysis will consider the amount of freight or number of passengers that may be transported, the criticality of the route served (i.e., urban versus rural), and the public benefits the project offers. Reviewers will also consider offsets, such as highway maintenance and repair costs that the project may alleviate, its likelihood of achieving self-sustaining operations, and any possible costs to the government. Projects that rate highest in these categories will be recommended for approval to the Secretary of Transportation.

**Are Marine Highway projects eligible for federal funds?**

There are several existing federal programs that can assist with funding some aspects of America's Marine Highways projects. The Maritime Administration will assist in identifying those mechanisms best suited for each designated Marine Highways Project.

**When can we apply for America's Marine Highways Program Project Designation?**

Once the Final Rule is published in early 2009, a notice will be posted in the Federal Register soliciting applications with submission procedures and deadlines.

**How can potential Project Sponsors get additional guidance and assistance in preparing America's Marine Highway Program Project applications?**

There will be a pre-application process during which time the Maritime Administration will host Project Sponsor workshops through our ten Gateway Offices. The workshops will offer an opportunity to discuss the potential project with Agency officials, who will also provide an "Applicant's Toolkit" to further aid potential sponsors.

**Is there a limit on the number of projects that can be designated along a Marine Highway Corridor?**

No. Each project application will be evaluated on its own merits and whether it can achieve the desired results in congestion mitigation.

**Will the Maritime Administration provide support to applicants for a Marine Highways Project?**

Yes. Projects that receive designation by the Secretary of Transportation, will receive direct support. The Office of Marine Highways and Passenger Services will assist the applicants in coordinating service initiation with other federal agencies, identifying funding sources, promoting use of the service and removing any impediments to successful operations.

**Where can I get more information on the Marine Highways program?**

Contact the Office of Marine Highways & Passenger Services at the Maritime Administration in Washington, DC. Telephone 202-366-5468, Fax 202-366-6988. The Interim Final Rule can be found at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov). Search for "America's Marine Highway Program."