

**Duluth-Superior
Metropolitan Interstate Council**

HARBOR PLANNING 2021 WORK PROGRAM

January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021



"Guiding the Future of Transportation for the Twin Ports Area"

2021 Duluth-Superior Harbor Planning Work Program

The following work program identifies projects and initiatives that support the mission of the Harbor Technical Advisory Committee (HTAC). The Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (Minnesota) and Northwest Regional Planning Commission (Wisconsin) are committed to working cooperatively through the Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC) to complete these tasks. The funding to implement this work will come from the MIC's 2021 Unified Transportation Planning Work Program and Budget, as well as potential funding from HTAC member organizations.

Work Program Funding

The budget for the 2021 Harbor Planning Work Program is \$39,000. The MIC has committed to this amount in its approval of the 2021 Unified Transportation Planning Work Program and Budget.

In the past, the MIC has asked HTAC member organizations for financial support. Agencies that are members of the Partnering Agreement have been asked to set aside \$5,000; these agencies include the Army Corps of Engineers, Duluth Seaway Port Authority, City of Superior, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Wisconsin DNR. Other HTAC member organizations have been asked to set aside \$1,000-\$2,000 or the equivalent in-kind time. Large-scale projects such as preparation of the Duluth-Superior Port Land Use Plan and associated implementation strategy, and involvement in other past larger events have been funded solely from MIC planning funds.

The MIC continues to support harbor planning by maintaining the budget dedicated to HTAC activities. HTAC member organizations should consider budgeting matters for current and future planning efforts. To assist with these efforts, the HTAC Chair will work with MIC staff to contact HTAC member organizations.

MIC staff has verbal agreements with key stakeholders to assist in implementing the 2016 Duluth-Superior Port Land Use Plan. This assistance will be in the form of in-kind staff assistance.

HTAC 2021 Work Program

Coordination, Information Exchange and Group Facilitation	<u>\$15,600</u>
Subcommittee Facilitation and Coordination	<u>\$15,600</u>
Program Development / Other Activities	<u>\$7800</u>
2021 Total HTAC Work Program Funding	<u>\$39,000</u>

1. Coordination, Information Exchange and Group Facilitation

MIC staff will continue to promote the HTAC mission, which is to provide a forum for the discussion of harbor related issues and concerns, promote the harbor's economic and environmental importance to the community, and provide sound planning and management recommendations to the MIC.

Provide staffing services to HTAC

Comprised of representatives from state and federal agencies, local units of government, a variety of maritime interests and businesses, and environmental organizations and staffed by the MIC, the HTAC is an established forum for discussing transportation, environmental, and recreational issues within the harbor. As an advisory committee of the MIC, the HTAC will have the opportunity to forward policy-related motions for the MIC's consideration. The MIC has identified the following tasks for the 2021 work program:

- A. Organize and staff quarterly HTAC meetings to 1) report on progress made on the work plan activities outlined in this document and 2) provide a forum for discussing the status of ongoing harbor-related projects and issues.
- B. Implement the objectives outlined in the Duluth-Superior Harbor Partnering Agreement. That agreement was established in 1996 as a commitment between federal agencies, state agencies, and local units of government to work cooperatively on environmental and navigation issues in Western Lake Superior and along the St. Louis River. Pursuant to this Agreement, the MIC will act as a liaison among federal agencies, state regulatory agencies, local units of governments, private business and environmental interests on issues relating to port land use, dredging, habitat creation, marine safety, port security and maritime infrastructure needs.

<u>Coordination, Information Exchange and Group Facilitation</u>	\$15,600
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2. Subcommittee Facilitation and Coordination

The HTAC has established a subcommittee process in which subsets of the HTAC membership convenes as needed between the quarterly meetings to discuss specific issues or special projects, and bring recommendations or updates to the full HTAC. Currently, the active subcommittees include Bylaws and Membership, Dredging, Navigation, and the committee for the Duluth-Superior Port Land Use Plan Implementation Strategy. A subcommittee for Advocacy exists, but has not been active in a number of years. MIC staff will continue to participate in and assist these subcommittees, as needed and as able.

Active HTAC Subcommittees

Bylaws & Membership

The Bylaws & Membership was active in 2019 and 2020 to update the HTAC Bylaws and eligible HTAC voting membership list. This subcommittee may be called upon to assist in finalizing the new HTAC voting member list, which is ongoing during the first half of 2021.

Dredging

The Dredging Subcommittee will continue to support short and long term strategies for dredged material management. Short term strategies include continuing to develop Erie Pier into a fully developed PRF (processing and reuse facility), develop beneficial reuse habitat creation projects, and re-establish beach nourishment beneficial reuse. Long term strategies include continuing to establish new reuse of dredged materials, both from Erie Pier as well as directly from the navigation dredging cycles. MIC staff will continue to assist this subcommittee by facilitating meetings and by assisting in rewriting and implementing the Erie Pier Management Plan.

Other efforts related to dredge material management include participating in the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Duluth-Superior Harbor Dredged Material Management Working Group, working with the USACE Detroit District regarding updates to the Dredged Material Management Plan for the Duluth-Superior harbor, helping to coordinate stakeholder input of harbor remediation and restoration projects, and working to find additional beneficial reuse projects for the fine-grained, navigation channel dredged materials.

Duluth-Superior Port Land Use Plan

A study committee was appointed in 2014 to assist with the development of the Duluth-Superior Port Land Use Plan and completed the plan in 2016. This plan helps to guide future land use and development in the port area. In 2017 the subcommittee prepared an implementation strategy for the Duluth-Superior Port Land Use Plan. Members of the Subcommittee provide short updates at each HTAC meeting as steps of implementation of the plan are made. The goal is for the Implementation Team of this Subcommittee will meet in 2021 to update the Implementation Strategy.

Navigation

The purpose of the Navigation Subcommittee is to bring navigation and port stakeholders together 1 to 2 times a year (or more on an “as-needed” basis) to discuss navigation safety-related topics. As planned, a main meeting is held every spring around the time when shipping and port operations resume in the harbor. Additional meetings may be held to discuss matters related to encountering early and/or extended ice conditions, dredging, development projects, or other matters as deemed necessary. The Subcommittee and a select group of partners formed what is known as the Harbor Safety Workgroup approximately three years ago and completed work on a recreational boating (primarily paddling) safety in working harbors initiative (Paddle Safe Twin Ports) led by Minnesota Sea Grant and the US Coast Guard.

Existing Non-Active HTAC Subcommittees

Open Water Mitigation

The Open Water Mitigation (OWM) Subcommittee was created in 2015 to examine issues and align existing regulations related to the efficient permitting of development projects within the Duluth Superior Harbor, and to recommend improvements where needed. After two years of work, a dock wall repair and maintenance general permit was developed in 2018. Currently it is not necessary for this Subcommittee to be active. It is likely this Subcommittee may become the Environmental Windows Subcommittee in the future to better address the wider variety of similar issues facing those seeking to conduct state and federal in-water permitted work.

Subcommittee Facilitation and Coordination

\$15,600

3. Program Development/Other Activities

Program Development Activities

In order to allow the HTAC to investigate other harbor issues of concern, MIC staff will assist, as appropriate and as time allows, HTAC stakeholders as they pursue resolutions to issues pertaining to the Duluth-Superior harbor. Some potential ideas and activities are listed below:

- A. Utilizing Erie Pier and new navigation channel dredged materials in state and local beneficial use and reuse projects. Identify barriers to material reuse and work with state and local agencies, as well as private contractors and other potential public and private end users in identifying opportunities to sustainably reuse these materials.
- B. Resolve the issue of what lands Section 10 of the River and Harbors Act of 1899 apply to, including disseminating this information to port stakeholders.
- C. Work with port stakeholders in carrying out strategies identified in the Implementation Framework for Delisting the St. Louis River Area of Concern. Stay abreast of St Louis River and harbor remedial actions and environmental issues.
- D. Assist HTAC partners in establishing more data-based and comprehensive environmental windows for use in waterway permit decisions and conditions. This effort has stalled since 2018, but may become a distinct Subcommittee in the future.
- E. Promoting the construction of a new Soo Lock that is equivalent in size to the existing Poe Lock to provide redundancy and security to Great Lakes shipping.
- F. Work with port stakeholders to better understand recreational uses in the Duluth-Superior harbor, and to build partnerships with Duluth-Superior harbor recreational user groups and recreation-based businesses, as appropriate.
- G. Bring relevant freight issues to HTAC stakeholders as MnDOT and WisDOT develop statewide freight and port planning initiatives.
- H. Assist the Duluth Seaway Port Authority in developing additional port properties.
- I. Promote HTAC as a port planning model for other Great Lakes ports.
- J. Participate with port stakeholders in promoting development of research activities to promote and improve maritime transportation technologies.
- K. Engage federal elected officials to support continuation of GLRI funding.

<u>Program Development / Other Activities</u>	\$7800
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ERIE PIER MANAGEMENT PLAN

Objective: *Assist in the development of an updated and overhauled Erie Pier Management Plan by facilitating the process of updating the plan, assisting in drafting the plan, and providing general guidance and assistance.*

Background

Erie Pier is a confined disposal facility (CDF)/processing and reuse facility (PRF) that receives and processes dredge material from the Duluth-Superior harbor. It is an important asset for the area port and shipping industry. The MIC facilitated the development of the Erie Pier Management Plan (EPMP), the goal of which was to outline the steps necessary to expand the beneficial reuse of dredged materials and revise management and processing of dredged materials to ensure that the need for another CDF would be avoided indefinitely. The plan was completed in 2007 and successfully helped transition the CDF to a PRF. Numerous MIC partners asked that the EPMP be updated, and thus we initiated the process of doing so, with a kick-off meeting in early January, 2020. From the kick-off meeting it was determined that a full rewrite of the EPMP was warranted (rather than a simple update), the rewrite would be primarily a joint partnered effort between the MIC and the Duluth Seaway Port Authority (DSPA), and a EPMP Committee was formed to help guide the EPMP rewrite. Numerous meetings were held and the rewritten plan drafted throughout 2020. While the goal was to complete the EPMP rewrite in 2020, that was not possible. Final drafting and completion of the EPMP, including 2-3 meetings will occur in the first quarter of 2021.

Major Work Activities

- Work with DSPA and other key MIC partners in rewriting the EPMP.
- Facilitate meetings with key MIC partners to assist updating the EPMP.
- Carry out the roles and responsibilities of the MIC for the update of the EPMP, including compiling and finalizing the rewritten EPMP document.

Final Product

A rewritten Erie Pier Management Plan, to be completed the first quarter of 2021.

Budget

A budget allocation specific for the EPMP rewrite existed only in CY 2020.