

**Duluth-Superior
Metropolitan Interstate Council
HARBOR PLANNING 2025 WORK PROGRAM
January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025**



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

2025 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. MIC staff routinely report HTAC activities to the bi-state MIC Policy Board. The funding to implement this work will come from the MIC's 2025 Unified Transportation Planning Work Program and Budget, as well as potential funding from HTAC member organizations.

Work Program Funding

The budget for the 2025 Harbor Planning Work Program is \$63,371, which includes an estimated 775 staff hours. The MIC has committed to this amount in its approval of the 2025-2026 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 as needed, the HTAC Chair will work with MIC staff to contact HTAC member organizations.

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

HTAC 2025 Work Program

Coordination, Information Exchange, and Group Facilitation	<u>\$25,348</u>
Subcommittee Facilitation and Coordination	<u>\$25,348</u>
Program Development / Other Activities	<u>\$12,675</u>
2025 Total HTAC Work Program Funding	<u>\$63,371</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

The HTAC is an established forum for discussing transportation, environmental, and recreational issues within the Duluth-Superior Harbor. It is comprised of representatives from state and federal agencies, local units of government, a variety of maritime interests and businesses, and environmental organizations and facilitated by the MIC. As an advisory committee of the MIC, the HTAC will have the opportunity to forward policy-related motions for the MIC’s Policy Board consideration. The MIC has identified the following tasks for the 2025 work program:

- A. Organize and facilitate quarterly HTAC meetings to: 1) develop an agenda with the input of members; 2) report progress on the work plan activities outlined in this document; and 3) 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. The agreement was established in 1996, and last updated in 2010, 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 within the St. Louis River estuary. 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 navigation and safety, port security, and maritime infrastructure needs.

Coordination, Information Exchange and Group Facilitation **\$25,348**

2. Subcommittee Facilitation and Coordination

The HTAC has established a subcommittee process in which subsets of the HTAC membership and interested parties convene 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 Dredging and Navigation & Safety. Additional goals for 2025 are to update the status of implementing the Duluth-Superior Port Land Use Plan, consider updating the Duluth-Superior Port Land Use Plan, and forming a new Coastal, Harbor, and Estuary Resiliency Subcommittee. MIC staff will continue to participate in and assist the subcommittees, as needed and as able.

Active HTAC Subcommittees

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 coordinating and facilitating meetings.

Other efforts related to dredge material management include participating in efforts to determine allocation and use of annual dredged material, working with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Detroit District regarding updates to the Dredged Material Management Plan for the Duluth-Superior harbor, providing subcommittee input on harbor remediation and restoration projects, assisting in implementing the recommendations of the Erie Pier Management Plan, 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 the plan was completed 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. For two-three years members of the Subcommittee provided short

updates at HTAC meetings to demonstrate how aspects of the plan were being implemented. A status of how the plan is being implemented is needed. There has also been interest and a request from a significant HTAC partner to update the Plan.

Navigation & Safety

The purpose of the Navigation & Safety Subcommittee is to bring port stakeholders together 1 to 2 times a year (or more on an “as-needed” basis) to discuss navigation and 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 in 2018 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. This workgroup will continue to meet on a periodic basis or as needed.

A second workgroup of this Subcommittee was formed late in 2024 to address three often mentioned concerns related to movements through the Duluth Ship Canal (beneath the Lift Bridge). The work of the Duluth Ship Canal Concerns Work Group is scheduled to end in 2025.

Non-Active HTAC Subcommittees

Bylaws & Membership

This committee was active in 2019 and 2020 to update the HTAC Bylaws and eligible HTAC voting membership list. It was called upon to assist in finalizing the new HTAC voting member list, which was completed in 2021. This Subcommittee will be reformed as the need arises.

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. An Environmental Windows Subcommittee may be formed in the future to address a wider variety of similar issues facing those seeking to conduct state and federal in-water permitted work.

Subcommittee Facilitation and Coordination

\$25,348

3. Program Development/Other Activities

Program Development Activities

MIC staff will assist HTAC stakeholders, as appropriate and as time allows, as they consider and pursue resolution of issues of concern 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. Stay abreast of what lands Section 10 of the River and Harbors Act of 1899 apply to, including disseminating this information to port stakeholders.
- C. Stay abreast of and provide input on the current St. Louis River Area of Concern Remedial Action Plan and Implementation Framework.
- D. Assist HTAC partners in establishing data-based, comprehensive environmental windows for use in waterway permit decisions and conditions. This effort has stalled since 2018 but remains an issue. This could lead to the formation of a distinct Subcommittee in the future.
- E. Promoting completion of the construction of the new and reconfigured Soo Locks 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 and update statewide freight and port planning initiatives.
- H. Assist the Duluth Seaway Port Authority in developing/redeveloping port properties.
- I. Participate with port stakeholders in supporting development of research activities to promote and improve maritime transportation technologies.
- J. Bring relevant Blatnik Bridge reconstruction topics to HTAC stakeholders.
- K. Engage federal elected officials to support continuation of GLRI funding.
- L. Promote HTAC as a port planning model for other Great Lakes ports to replicate.

Program Development / Other Activities

\$12,675