

Maritime

FIVE- YEAR ACTION PLAN

GREAT LAKES
ST. LAWRENCE
GOVERNORS
& PREMIERS





The Conference of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers (GSGP) unites the chief executives from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Ontario, Pennsylvania, Québec, and Wisconsin.

The Governors and Premiers work as equal partners to grow the region's \$9.3 trillion (US) economy and protect the world's largest system of surface fresh water. In 2013, the Governors and Premiers launched the Regional Maritime Initiative to increase the efficiency and competitiveness of the Great Lakes St. Lawrence maritime transportation system – a backbone of the regional economy and a key to continuing prosperity. The Maritime Initiative's work is guided by the 2016 [Strategy for the Great Lakes St. Lawrence River Maritime Transportation System](#).

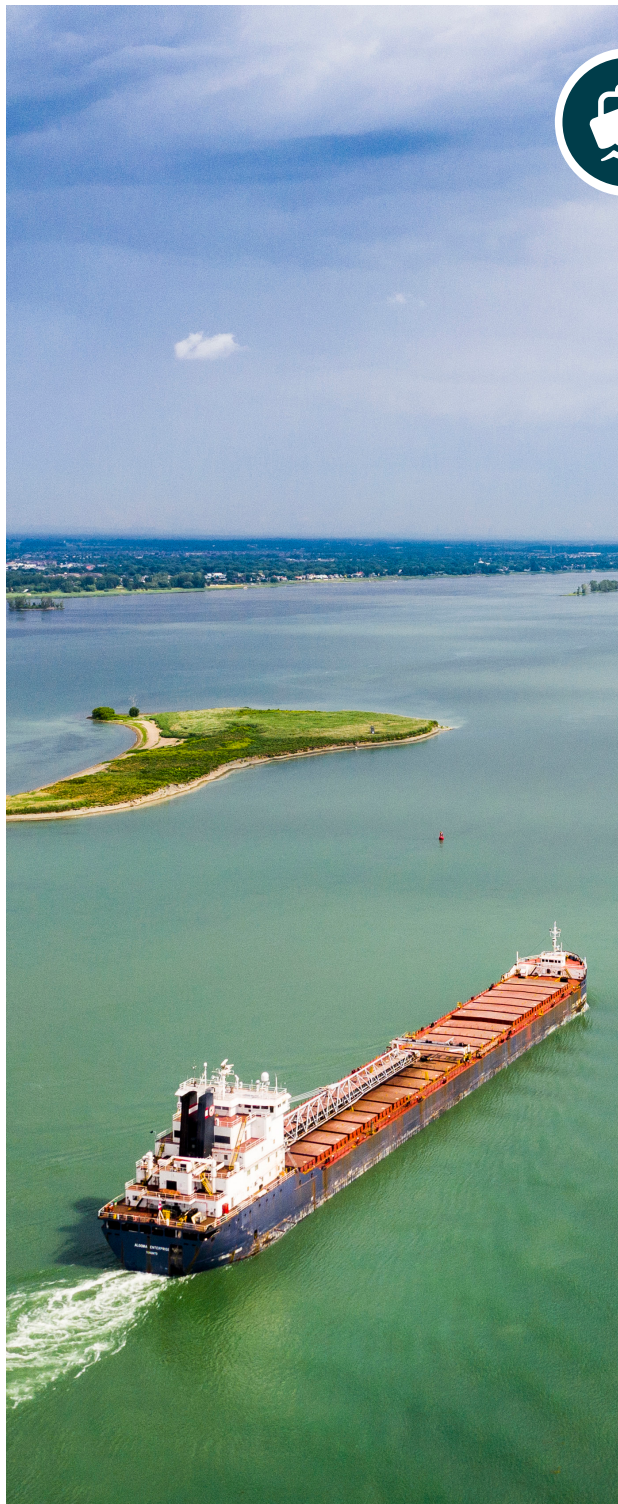
Since 2016, the Great Lakes St. Lawrence River System (GLSLS) has experienced significant progress including:

- State and Provincial investments of more than \$1 billion (US) in the system
- 125% growth in Great Lakes cruise passengers, with a regional economic impact of over \$300m (US) in 2026
- The funding and start of construction of a new lock at Sault Ste. Marie, a critical regional infrastructure asset
- A coordinated multi-port push to develop new intermodal container shipping options

However, many challenges remain. The maritime system is still underused and some traditional cargoes are experiencing structural declines. In this context of long-standing challenges and new opportunities, the 2026-2031 Maritime Initiative Five-Year Action Plan seeks to build on the momentum created in recent years while focusing on ways to improve the reliability, safety, and cost-competitiveness of the GLSLS.



BUILDING NEW MARKETS



Cruise Tourism Development

The prior Five-Year Action Plan identified cruise tourism as a major area for system development. Since 2021, regional cruise activity has grown substantially. GSGP's cruise development strategy is now managed by the *Cruise the Great Lakes* program which GSGP administers.

The 2016 Maritime Strategy set ambitious goals of doubling maritime trade, reducing the environmental impact of the region's transportation system, and supporting the region's industrial core, and the top theme of the 2026-2031 Five-Year Plan is *Building New Markets*. GSGP will collaborate with partners in the region to lead and/or contribute to business development efforts to attract new cargo, support maritime-related economic development, and improve the competitiveness and reliability of the maritime system by taking the following actions:

Identify and develop new markets

- Conduct and contribute to studies that identify growth potential for the maritime system, including baseline studies of commodities moving on the region's transportation network
- Participate in and support regional maritime system marketing
- Build upon strategic partnerships with top trading partner ports such as the Port of Antwerp-Bruges and other European ports to identify international trade development opportunities and facilitate maritime business development trade missions
- Support education within State and Provincial governments so that economic development staff understand the capacity and value of the maritime system for regional development

Improve the system's competitiveness

- Initiate or support regional studies to improve the understanding of GLSLS shipping costs and the factors driving cost increases
- Continue to explore and support opportunities for extension and optimization of the navigation season
- Support regional investment initiatives to improve system reliability such as additional Coast Guard icebreakers and deployment of the [Voyage Information System](#)

Support and leverage the regional shipbuilding industry

- Develop and execute a regional shipbuilding strategy to support the shipbuilding industry and leverage this industry for regional economic growth



HELPING TO EMPOWER STATES AND PROVINCES



Representatives from each State and Province steer GSGP's Maritime Initiative. The Maritime Initiative will invest time and resources to provide tailored assistance to the States and Provinces to collaborate and build their own capacity to work on maritime issues by taking the following actions:

Build a GLSLS community of practice

- Provide technical support to create and update State and Provincial maritime strategies and plans
- Identify regional priorities and action items by (1) cross-walking strategies and recommendations from State and Provincial plans; and, (2) convening quarterly meetings with the Maritime Steering Committee
- Conduct ongoing research for States and Provinces on regional topics of interest
- Profile and elevate State and Provincial investments in their maritime systems

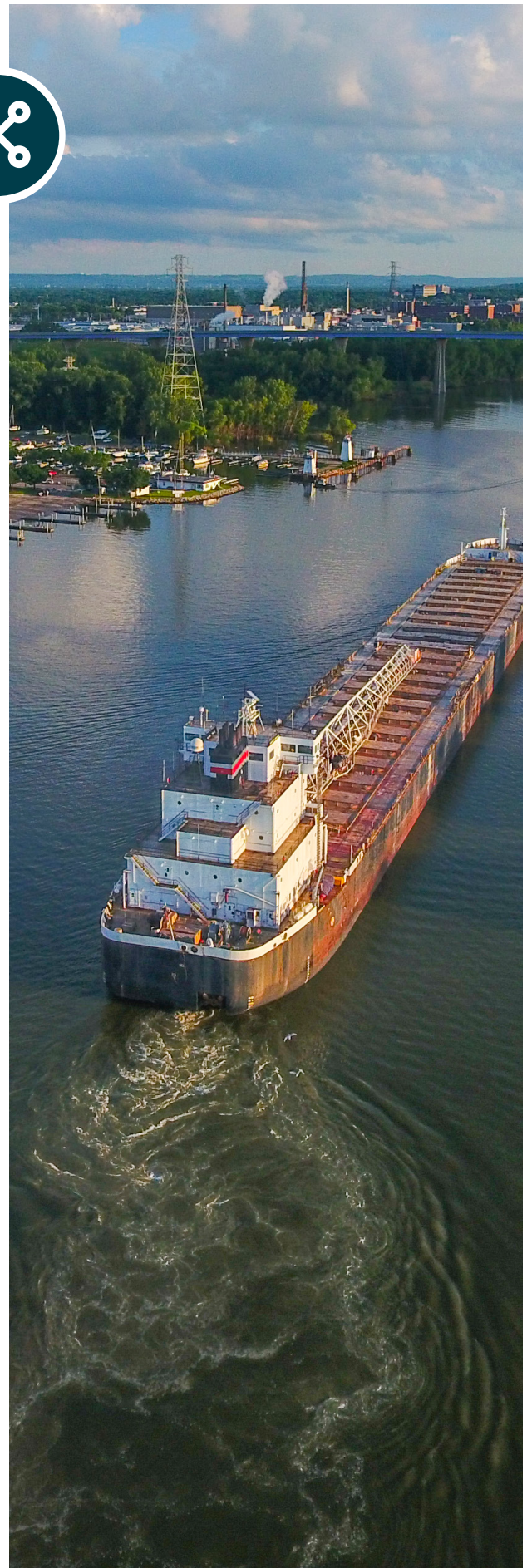
Data support

- Support the harmonization and integration of regional maritime data sources to provide a consistent information base for systemwide decision making

Maritime Initiative Work Groups

GSGP's Maritime Initiative work is guided by two groups of partners and stakeholders:

1. The Maritime Steering Committee, which is made up of State and Provincial representatives and provides in-depth guidance for Maritime Initiative work.
2. The Maritime Advisory Group, which is made up of national government and industry stakeholders, and provides "big picture" expert guidance for the Maritime Initiative.





PRIORITIES



Maritime Workforce Considerations

Partners and stakeholders across the region and across all sectors of industry have shared concerns about a lack of available workforce for the regional maritime industry and shipbuilding industry. The States and Provinces have determined that workforce development will not be a near-term emphasis area for Maritime Initiative work, but the Maritime Initiative will seek to support other organizations' workforce development efforts when relevant.

A strength of the GSGP Maritime Initiative is its unified voice on topics of regional importance. GSGP will continue its participation in regional maritime events such as Great Lakes Day in Washington DC, and Marine Day on the Hill in Ottawa and issue resolutions on topics of shared regional interest.

Engage on issues with regional consensus

GSGP will continue to engage on regionally relevant maritime topics where the States, or the States and Provinces, are in consensus. Examples of longstanding regional priorities include completion of the new Soo Lock, and increased icebreaking support.

Convene and support joint public-private sector discussions on maritime needs

- Host and/or contribute to national Great Lakes St. Lawrence maritime events
- Host and/or contribute to State and Provincial maritime days

Coordinate with regional associations with complementary scopes of work to identify harmonization opportunities

Likely partners for future work include:

- Industry associations such as: American Great Lakes Ports Association, Chamber of Marine Commerce, Lake Carriers' Association, Association of Canadian Port Authorities, and others
- The Great Lakes Commission which manages a maritime portfolio that is complementary to the Maritime Initiative including regional work on dredging and workforce development



FOSTERING INNOVATION



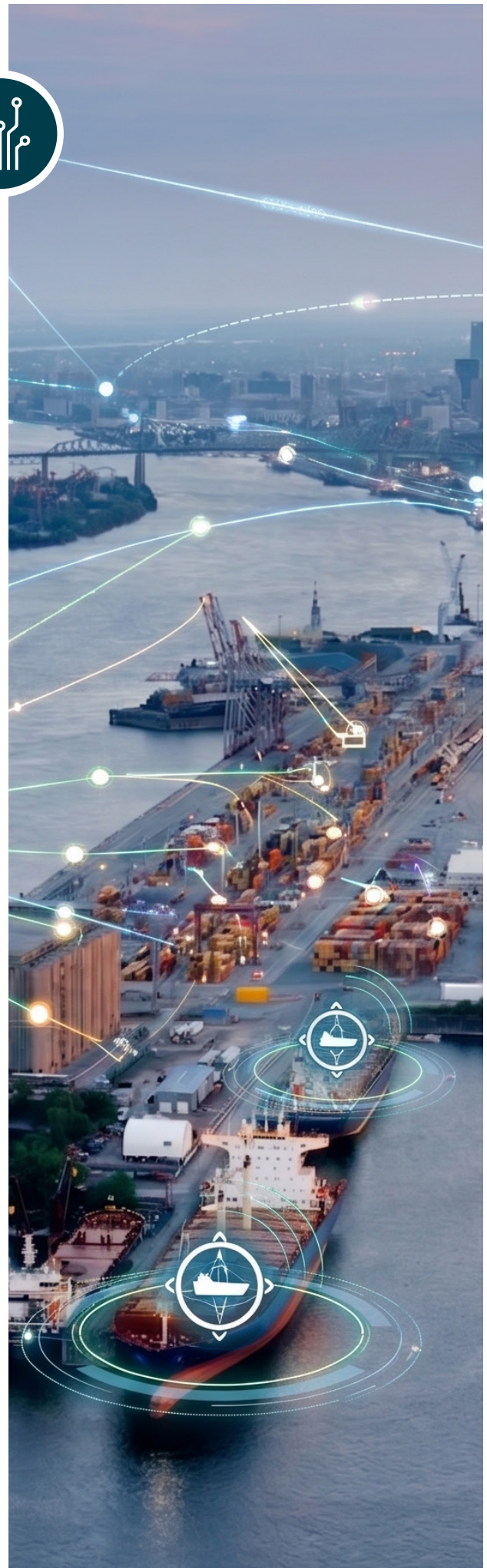
The global maritime industry continues to evolve, particularly in areas related to smart and autonomous shipping technology and new fuels. In recognition of these changes and opportunities, GSGP will continue to mindfully invest resources supporting the research, development, and implementation of new maritime technologies in the region.

Smart Ships Coalition

- Continue support for the regional development and testing of autonomous and smart maritime technologies

Support regional green shipping

- Identify how global shipping industry fuel trends will impact the GLSLS
- Identify and assess the commercial viability of fuel and energy technologies relevant to the system



WHAT IS THE GSGP MARITIME INITIATIVE?

The Maritime Initiative is our program of work to advance toward the three major goals of our Maritime Transportation System Strategy:



Double maritime trade



Reduce the environmental impact from transportation



Support the region's industrial core

For more information, please visit us at
gsgp.org/projects/maritime

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