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Grain Export Shipping on Upswing in Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Ports

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood today announced a sharp rise in grain exports through the St. Lawrence Seaway in 2010. With an increase of nearly 23 percent through October over 2009 levels, nearly 1.9 million metric tons of U.S. grain have moved through the waterway this year. Overall, St. Lawrence Seaway traffic is up 17 percent in 2010 compared to 2009.

“This significant boom in grain exports is good news for the U.S. economy and emphasizes the value of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway system,” said Secretary LaHood. “The Seaway is an important economic engine, serving as a direct link from our agricultural heartland to U.S. ports and international customers.”

“Vessel traffic this fall is robust in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway System, as ships are busy carrying almost two million tons of U.S. wheat, corn and soybeans to export markets in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa,” added Collister Johnson, Jr., Administrator of the U.S. Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation. “We are encouraged by what we are seeing with heightened grain shipments through the Lakes and the Seaway and have every reason to believe that the remainder of the season will be just as strong.”

This increase is partly attributed to Russia’s ban on grain exports that began in August due to drought conditions. Russia has announced keeping the ban in place through the end of this year. As a result, markets in Europe and North Africa have looked to North American grain farmers to satisfy their demand for grain. Furthermore, the U.S. has produced bumper grain crops this season that have been harvested earlier than in past years.

In particular, the ports of Duluth, Minn., Milwaukee, Wis., and Toledo, Ohio are realizing sizable increases in vessel traffic and tonnage. The grain surge is likely to remain at the forefront of the strong postings for Great Lakes ports for the final months of the Seaway’s shipping season.

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