

ST. CLAIR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

RESOLUTION 17-16

SUPPORTING THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW LOCK AT SAULT STE. MARIE, MICHIGAN

WHEREAS, the Soo Locks at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, are of the utmost importance to Michigan and play a critical role in our nation's economy and security. Each year, approximately 10,000 Great Lakes vessels, carrying 80 million tons of iron ore, coal, grain, and other cargo, safely and efficiently traverse the locks. Nearly 80 percent of domestic iron ore—the primary material used to manufacture steel critical to the auto industry, construction, and other industries—travels from mines in Minnesota and Michigan's Upper Peninsula through the Soo Locks; and

WHEREAS, only one of the four Soo Locks is large enough to accommodate the modern vessels that commonly traverse the Great Lakes. Sixty percent of the American and Canadian fleet—carrying 70 percent of the cargo traversing the locks—can only pass through the Poe Lock. The remainder of cargo goes through the smaller MacArthur Lock, with the smallest 100-year-old Davis and Sabin locks rarely used; and

WHEREAS, the reliance on one lock poses a serious risk to national security and the economies of the state of Michigan and the United States. A long-term outage of the Poe Lock due to lock failure or terrorist attack would disrupt steel production in the United States, crippling the economy and plunging the country into recession. Because no viable transportation alternatives exist, the United States Department of Homeland Security estimated nearly 11 million jobs would be lost. Other studies indicate that even a short-term failure of 30 days could result in economic losses of \$160 million; and

WHEREAS, The United States Congress has authorized the construction of a second large, Poe-sized lock at Sault Ste. Marie. The project was originally authorized in 1986. In 2007, Congress authorized the construction at full federal expense. Though the project has been authorized and preliminary work conducted, a lack of federal funding has stalled further work; and

WHEREAS, the economic benefits to Michigan, the Great Lakes region, and the entire country far outweigh the cost of constructing a new lock. A 2017 report to the United States Department of Treasury estimated that the \$626 million investment in a new lock would provide a return of up to four times that amount; and

WHEREAS, the construction of a new lock would be a boon for the northern Michigan economy and create good jobs in a region that continues to suffer from higher than average unemployment rates. At its peak, the project would employ up to 250 workers and require 1.5 million man hours over the ten years of construction; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the St. Clair County, Michigan, Board of Commissioners express support for the construction of a new lock at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, and urge the President and Congress of the United States to fund the project fully;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and the members of the Michigan congressional delegation.

Dated: August 17, 2017

Reviewed and Approved As To Form By

St. Clair County, Michigan
Board of Commissioners



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