



Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition

Issue Brief – Infrastructure

Background

From the 2015 FAST Act to the WIIN Act which passed in December 2017, our nation has recently advanced measures that are resulting in crucial infrastructure investments in the Great Lakes States. However, our region and nation still need a long-term fix to address the solvency of the highway trust fund and other transportation related trust funds, and our nation remains in need of billions of dollars of additional investment.

As metro chambers of commerce, we acutely feel the need for further investments in public transportation. Our member chambers and the businesses they represent have been clear that public transit is a critical tool to connecting people to jobs and attracting talent. It is an issue of competitiveness for our chambers and cities.

The Coalition's Position

The Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition (GLMCC) supports investing in our economy through comprehensive infrastructure legislation in 2017. We have compiled a list of critical infrastructure projects in the Great Lakes region that we are advocating for inclusion in any infrastructure package.

These projects will enhance the transportation infrastructure in the Great Lakes making commerce and travel easier. Our projects are designed to enhance economic activity, bringing more jobs to the Great Lakes states.

In developing the infrastructure bill, we support continuing and expanding the Department of Transportation's Smart City Challenge - a program which has leveraged hundreds of millions of private dollars as mid-sized cities compete for a federal prize for the best integrated transportation system design.

Additionally, we are calling for policy proposals to address underlying trust fund solvency and revenue shortage issues to ensure that the resources are available to invest in WIIN Act projects, including the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the Upper Ohio River Navigation project while also ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund.



The coalition supports proposals to enable and expand funding for early stage transformative regional projects. Very often, projects do not get off the ground because funding for design or early stage work is simply not available. Design and other early stage funding is essential to the development of most infrastructure projects.

We support expanding transit access and modernizing our nation's transit fleets and infrastructure as well as critical drinking water and sewer infrastructure, which is in need of large-scale investment.





Issue Brief – Trade

Background

The Great Lakes economy is built on a foundation of international trade of our manufactured goods and agriculture. Much of the conversation surrounding the North American Free Trade Agreement centers around the United States' trading relationship with Mexico. Great Lakes states are far more focused on the benefit of trade with Canada. Each of the states in our region count Canada as their number one export market. In 2015, the trading relationship between the Great Lakes States and Canada accounted for \$240.7 billion of the \$662 billion in trade between the U.S. and Canada. Further, Canada often serves the Great Lakes region's gateway to markets in Europe, the Mediterranean and Middle East allowing agricultural producers and manufacturers an alternative to congested domestic seaports on the east coast.

The Coalition's Position

The Coalition supports NAFTA and believes that it should remain a multi-lateral agreement rather than reverting to individual bilateral agreements. The coalition would support cooperative negotiations to modernize the agreement in a fashion that does not inhibit the \$1.3 trillion in trade that NAFTA has allowed.

The Coalition also opposes efforts to unilaterally mandate biometric screening at North American border crossings that will result in congested chokepoints and inhibiting supply chains. The Coalition urges Congress to prioritize investments in border infrastructure that will allow the free flow of trade, lower barriers while maintaining public safety.

The logo features a stylized blue wave graphic on the left, followed by the text "Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition" in a blue serif font.

Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition

Issue Brief – Immigration

Background

Attracting highly-skilled employees and entrepreneurs is critical to economic growth and competitiveness in the Great Lakes region. If these highly recruited immigrants are unable to work in the United States, other nations will benefit from their skills and acumen.

The battle for talent is global. Encouraging legal highly-skilled immigration is a vital step for growth and prosperity. Demographic changes have depleted talent pools and damaged economic competitiveness in many Great Lakes metro areas, resulting in serious workforce shortages in the region's global manufacturing and services industries. As advanced manufacturing in the Great Lakes region helps to restore the American middle class, the region's growing competitiveness will require an influx of talented, highly skill professionals.

The Coalition's Position

The Coalition urges Congress to enact policies that will encourage legal immigration and not exacerbate the workforce challenges with which employers have already been struggling. Specifically, we are concerned with statements that indicate that H-1B visas may be reduced. The Coalition has found the H-1B program to be valuable in attracting talent to the Great Lakes States. We encourage Congress to consider expanding the number of H-1B visas available in stressed urban areas that have experienced considerable de-population. These areas are especially conducive to immigrant re-investment, offering proximity to world class institutions of higher learning, diverse population groups, entrepreneurial assistance programs and compelling commercial and residential real estate opportunities – all of which are attractive to highly-skilled immigrants.

We ask Congress to proactively consider immigration reform that facilitates talent attraction and retention, establishes High Skill Immigration Zones and increases the pool of STEM professionals.





Issue Brief – Energy

Background

The Great Lakes Region is one of the world’s most important economic engines, covering all or parts of twelve states and two Canadian provinces. If our region was a nation, it would be the third largest economy in the world with a combined gross domestic product of more than \$5.7 trillion powered by one of the most dynamic advanced manufacturing sectors in the world. Reliable sources of base load energy and transmission are the foundation of the Great Lakes manufacturing leadership and a prime source of the United States’ competitive advantage in the global economy.

The Coalition’s Position

The Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition (GLMCC) – composed of nearly 40 chambers of commerce in the Great Lakes states – supported efforts to complete an energy bill before the end of the 114th Congress and are now urging lawmakers to pass comprehensive energy bill in the 115th Congress.

Some of the most critical provisions supported by our Coalition include:

- Electric Grid Modernization/Reliability
- Ethane Storage Study
- Energy Workforce Pilot Grant Program
- Establishment of a 21st Century Energy Workforce Advisory Board
- Expedited Liquefied Natural Gas Permitting
- Grid Storage RD&D Program
- Hydropower Permitting Improvements
- Public/Private collaboration on Energy-Water Nexus
- Code Maintenance
- Carbon Capture & Storage
- Fusion & Fission Reactor Prototypes Report
- Next Generation Nuclear Plant Project Reform

The domestic energy renaissance has set the U.S. on the road to energy independence. With the right policies from Washington, the Great Lakes region can further build on U.S. leadership in energy and manufacturing.

Our Ask

We ask that our Great Lakes delegation members work to advance comprehensive energy modernization legislation that includes the aforementioned provisions. We ask that our delegation revisit the 2016 modernization bills and utilize the best elements of both bills to craft a meaningful large-scale energy modernization bill.