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Justin L. Lampert  
Director – Midcontinent Office

March 11, 2025

Mr. Jeremy Kinney  
Regulatory Division  
St. Paul District Corps of Engineers  
332 Minnesota Street, Suite E1500  
St. Paul, MN 55101-1323

Re: John A. Blatnik / I-535 Bridge  
Replacement (MVP-2012-00794)

Dear Mr. Kinney:

The American Waterways Operators (AWO) is the tugboat, towboat, and barge industry's advocate, resource, and unified voice for safe, sustainable, and efficient transportation on America's waterways, oceans, and coasts. Our industry is the largest segment of the nation's domestic maritime fleet, supporting over 270,000 jobs and moving 665 million tons of cargo each year safely and efficiently. On behalf of AWO's more than 300 member companies, we thank you for the opportunity to comment on the U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Public Notice for the John A. Blatnik/I-535 Bridge replacement project.

Barge transportation is the safest and most efficient mode of freight transportation, with rail emitting 43% more greenhouse gas emissions compared to barge transportation and trucks emitting over 800% more. Barge transportation also has the best safety record in the transportation industry, with a fatality rate 26 times lower than freight rail and 120 times lower than freight truck transportation. In 2021, 1.9 million tons of freight was moved on Wisconsin's inland waterways alone, contributing almost \$35 billion in annual economic impact in the state<sup>1</sup>. In the same year, Minnesota's inland waterways contributed to almost \$49 billion in economic impact moving 11.1 million tons of freight<sup>2</sup>.

Considering this vital sustainable economic engine, we urge project coordinators in MnDOT, WisDOT, and respective contractors to work with the Coast Guard to minimize negative impacts on waterway traffic and issue effective and timely navigation notices when needed as this project proceeds. Vessel operators rely on Coast Guard navigation notices to ensure proper route planning and operational safety that supports a reliable and efficient supply chain.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. AWO would be pleased to answer any questions or provide further information to assist in the review process.

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<sup>1</sup> [Wisconsin2021.pdf](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Minnesota2021.pdf](#)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Justin Lampert". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Justin Lampert  
Director – Midcontinent Office