

From:

**Stephen J Pepper, President  
Humboldt Maritime Logistics**

(707)616-5244

PO Box 3153

Eureka, CA 95502

[www.humboldtlogistics.com](http://www.humboldtlogistics.com)

**1) Is there the potential for a Marine Highway Program in the United States?**

The Marine Highway Program that is being written under the US DOT's Maritime Administration is certainly providing the framework to engage public and private stakeholders. This is proving beneficial by helping people envision the socioeconomic and environmental endgame of collaborative efforts. It's tough to market successfully and it's even tougher to have to educate the public prior to marketing, but that is what is happening here. It's a process that there is no way around. People have to understand what they're being asked to support or be involved in, whether they're a private carrying partner or a supportive legislator.

Can SSS be implemented on a contiguous national scale? The answer is unquestionably -- yes. It's a matter of when and how. With the current stimulus funds and coming T-Bill, never before has there been a more favorable and supportive public climate. The national emphasis on rebuilding infrastructure and increasing environmentally focused goods movement & multi-modal connectivity is increasing this positive climate. It's this kind of public incentive that will be needed in this strapped economic climate to entice industry to keep an eye towards SSS as a transportation solution as global fuel competition drives up fuel prices. Of course, the "how" needs to be answered as well. The structure of business development platforms is where creativity comes into play.

Individual regional Marine Highway Programs are also increasingly making public and private sense. Some MH projects aim to by-pass congested metropolitan routes. Others aim to plug isolated or rural areas into networks that would offer greater market access and these are being seen as economic development strategies. This is helping these types to gain audiences outside transportation circles which is garnering additional support. Enough of these individual regional programs could grow a

bottom-up approach to SSS expansion that would augment a top-down national policy.

**2) What are some of the barriers to making MH a reality on a larger scale?**

If shippers are given a cost competitive or service-advantageous intermodal freight option, such as intermodal rail -- and if carriers are interested in carrying, as is the case with SSS -- then possibly what's missing is recognition by the port-side drayage, stevedoring, labor and port authority interests that Marine Highways constitute a new market, revenue and job creating mechanism. That's an over simplification, but it comes back to understanding, consensus and the pursuit of a program that meets the needs of all the players. The HMT isn't helping either. There are several other freight program challenges, such as vessel, speed, frequency, and door-to-door integration -- but these challenges aren't insurmountable.

**3) Is MH a part of a National Transportation System?**

I would say no, not officially, but it seems to be getting close. Marine Highway interests at least have the benefit of being able to point and say, "See, look: We've been doing this in some regions for decades. We just want to open this mode up and do it in a consolidated fashion that provides access to all kinds of different shippers on a vessel and all at the same time. This isn't a new mode, just a new way of using it in the contiguous states." With increased understanding comes increased support and increased consensus. With that, it'll become a part of the National Transportation System.

**Stephen's Bio:**

Stephen is a USCG 200 GT MTV NC Captain that has sailed in the towing industry coastwise along the West Coast, on San Francisco Bay and on Humboldt Bay from the deck to the wheelhouse. Stephen brings maritime insight, tug & barge operational experience, program coordination and business development to Humboldt Maritime Logistics, a company he founded in order to establish a West Coast Marine Highway network.