

# Transportation Go! Recap

*March 12-13, 2025  
Minneapolis, Minnesota*



# Transportation Go! moves the conversation



Circumventing the transportation industry isn't for the faint of heart. Just ask Neal Page in "Planes, Trains and Automobiles."

Fortunately for the soybean and grain transportation industry, the Specialty Soya and Grains Alliance (SSGA) isn't afraid to tackle transportation and trade issues affecting the Midwest – which is exactly what happened during Transportation Go! March 12-13 in Minneapolis.

"We all understand that transportation is essential to our industry," said SSGA Chair Bryan Severs, an Illinois corn and soybean farmer. "It's the crucial link that connects our fields to end users worldwide. We also know that this vital component faces its share of challenges and complexities. That's why Transportation Go! addresses these issues head-on."

The event brought together the industry's top stakeholders, from

boots-on-the-ground commodity growers and organizations to traders and shippers of specialty crops. With in-depth discussions on the global supply chain and how it affects the vital movement of agricultural products domestically and around the world, Transportation Go! attendees interacted and networked with key industry players.

"You don't realize how strong you are as a group or how many people listen to you as a group," said Surface Transportation Board Member Robert Primus, who gave a national freight rail network update.

## **Growing together**

The event's agenda was stacked with distinguished guests offering their expertise and advice on an array of transportation topics. Kicking off with Hapag-Lloyd Senior Vice President Hardy Pearson and Paul Lesnefsky,

senior account executive for Ocean Network Express, the collaborative atmosphere meant that speakers gained insight along with attendees.

“As we grow, we want to grow with you all,” said Lesnefsky, who highlighted opportunities for ocean carriers alongside Pearson.

An emphasis on revitalizing trade on the Great Lakes via the St. Lawrence Seaway resounded throughout the two-day event, with updates from the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation, Port Milwaukee, Ports of Indiana and the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation.

“This conference brings together all elements of the agricultural transportation chain – growers, shippers, exporters, port authorities, logistics and shipping lines – to talk about the state of transportation in

the U.S. and globally to get different perspectives,” said SSGA Executive Director Randy Duckworth. “It’s important to hear from officials at the St. Lawrence Seaway about what’s happening in government and transportation.”

Unsurprisingly, trade policy was one of the burning issues addressed during the conference. Luckily, attendees had plenty of opportunities to ask Daniel Maffei with the Federal Maritime Commission and Robert Primus with the Surface Transportation Board the questions they’d been itching to ask. Furthermore, they were able to talk amongst themselves and learn how other key industry players are navigating the rough waters.

“It was interactive, and the questions were robust,” said SSGA Director of Transportation and Regulatory Affairs Gary Williams. “That’s one of the unique things that I think is important with Transportation Go! – the accessibility and the minds and the influencers that we bring into the room.”

By the end of the conference, attendees may not have solved all the issues plaguing the transportation industry. But Rome wasn’t built in a day, and SSGA is in the transportation game for the long haul. The conversations nurtured at Transportation Go! lay the foundation for a strong future.

“Transportation Go! is about more than just presentations,” Severs said. “It’s about fostering collaboration, sharing knowledge and building a stronger, more efficient supply chain. We have to work together to navigate the challenges, seize the opportunities and ensure the continued success of agriculture.”



**Join us in Chicago April 2026 for  
Transportation Go!, the premier  
conference for soybean and grain  
transportation and trade issues  
in the Midwest!**

**Keep an eye out for conference  
updates at  
[www.transportationgo.com](http://www.transportationgo.com).**

# Session Takeaways

## Charting new courses: Opportunities for ocean carriers Hardy Pearson, Hapag-Lloyd and Paul Lesnefsky, ONE



The Gemini Hub & Spoke model with Hapag Lloyd and Maersk is presented to make the joint network more reliable and resilient, with fast and flexible connectivity.

ONE is committed to the liner business and plans to invest more than \$20 billion by 2030 to sustain a best-in-class supply chain for its customers and meet its future decarbonization targets.

The U.S. is undertaking initiatives to revitalize its maritime industry in response to China's growing dominance in global shipping. The main goals are to enhance national security, economic competitiveness and global trade leadership.

## Remarks from the Northwest Seaport Alliance John Wolfe, Northwest Seaport Alliance



With significant growth opportunities, the Northwest Seaport Alliance can respond quickly to market changes, giving shipping lines, importers and exporters more options.

The Northwest Seaport Alliance's inland rail hub strategy supports export volume growth through expanded capacity and leverages inland hubs to increase import volume and two-way rail service.

The transportation industry can't afford to have legislative policies drive freight out of the U.S. The U.S. needs vessel activity; imports are needed to support exports.

## What's going on with shipping? Dr. Sal Mercogliano, Campbell University



Geopolitics is playing an ever-increasing role in transportation lanes and policies.

A significant factor today in transportation playing out is the major U.S. bipartisan maritime legislation being proposed.

Though it's difficult to invest in inland waterways because of price competition, the current Trump administration has stated an emphasis on improving inland waterways.

## A word from WIMOs – Women in Maritime Operations April-Hope Wareham



Established in 2017, WIMOs caters to women in maritime operations, supporting and propelling women in their maritime careers through education, engagement and elevation.

With women representing less than 30% of the maritime workforce, WIMOs has a vision for every member to obtain the confidence and necessary resources to thrive in the industry regardless of gender

WIMOs has 13 formal and seed chapters, and its more than 1,000 members can be found across 30 U.S. states and three countries.

# Session Takeaways

## Update from the St. Lawrence Seaway

**Anthony Fisher, Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corp.**



Utilizing the St. Lawrence Seaway gives companies a significant alternative to create redundancy and resiliency to import and export programs by diversifying routing, reduces emission penalties shipping from and into certain countries, and can be a mode that presents lower costs.

The St. Lawrence Seaway can create time and cost savings by moving a container across the Lake between U.S. and Canada rather than around a Great Lake using rail as sometimes now happens.

Moving containers through the Seaway can provide a savings in cost and time moving to an inland port such as Duluth, rather than to the East Coast and inland by rail in Canada or the U.S.

### Panel: Revitalizing trade on the Great Lakes

**Sten Könst, Spliethoff Transport; Maria Cartier, Port of Milwaukee; Ian Hirt, Ports of Indiana; and Ken Carey, Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corp.**



Because Chicago is the largest container market, surpassing both Los Angeles and Long Beach in TEUs handled, Burns Harbor is poised to expand world trade and will be the first all-water route to Chicago, increasing competition and reducing costs.

Established as a regular trade route between the United Kingdom and U.S. utilizing the Great Lakes Seaway, a Green Trade Route will reduce carbon, enhance the flow of goods, increase opportunities for trade and create jobs.

Committed to raising awareness of the St. Lawrence Seaway's untapped potential, Highway H2O offers answers to current and future transportation challenges in an economically sound and environmentally responsible manner.

## St. Lawrence Seaway: A bridge to Uzbekistan

**Joe Smentek, Minnesota Soybean Growers Association**



To diversify export markets for Minnesota soybeans, Uzbekistan was identified as a potential market because of its government's interest in building trade with the U.S., its higher value use of land, and a significant consumptive demand for oil.

Demand for ships, not containers, must be built up to further nurture the trade relationship.

Because Uzbekistan is a landlocked country, port improvements in Poti, Georgia and other infrastructure are needed to build a dependable trade route.

## SSGA: Keeping shipping competitive

**Tina Lyons, Bob Sinner**



Close coordination and collaboration with like-minded and parallel purposes to SSGA amplifies issues and opportunities in the competitive shipping world.

Through face-to-face meetings with FMC, DOT and others, SSGA educates, expresses, and extricates action or attention around shipping issues that its members face on a daily basis.

Key entities such as USDA rely on SSGA to provide critical live time information ahead of and during disruptive events.

# Session Takeaways

## Real-time rail intelligence & tariff impacts: Optimizing agriculture supply chains Adam Nori, RailState



Limited insights into network and local performance embody costs and risks. RailState allows users to make informed decisions with real-time rail network intelligence.

RailState's sensor network uses artificial intelligence to give actionable insights on rail volume, condition-based alerts, transit times and commodity flows.

RailState will work with their client to add sensors where needed for their business before their subscription begins, ensuring comprehensive insight.

## Port of Los Angeles: Supply chain in focus David Libitique, Port of Los Angeles



The political landscape will have greatly heightened impact on the near term of exports, imports and trade.

Adaptability and resiliency is a prioritization for the Port of Los Angeles.

The Port of LA is extending a hand with stakeholders in the supply chain to assist with removing barriers, working to find solutions and pursuing opportunities in increasing trade.

## Remarks from the Federal Maritime Commission and the Surface Transportation Board Daniel Maffei, Federal Maritime Commission and Robert Primus, Surface Transportation Board



The Overseas Shipping Reform Act requires participation by shippers to inform the FMC of issues they're experiencing in refusal to deal, detention and demurrage determination and unfair billing for the act to have necessary effect.

Though separate regulators, FMC and STB shared how they cross-communicate as there is overlap and an inter-reliance on surface transportation and maritime transportation, such as the container movement from ship to shore to inland ramp and/or distribution center in some cases.

Interruptions in surface transportation and/or maritime transportation decisions can greatly affect the fluidity and viability of the other.

## Biofuels status update Joe Jobe, SABB



Indirect land use change (ILUC) modeling is a dated theory and needs to be rethought; evidence-based research is inconclusive or contradictory regarding indirect effects of bioenergy.

ILUC modeling has become even more important since California passed a policy that applies ILUC penalties to crop-based fuels.

Models predicted that there would be land conversion in the use of crop-based fuels. Now, with 15 years of actual data, the land use change that was predicted did not happen.

# Session Takeaways

**Transportation in the next era – shifts, innovation and adoption**

**Ralph Asher, Data Driven Supply Chain LLC; Brent Bois, Calhoun Truck Lines; and Eunice Sun, BNSF Railway**

Supply chain network design, manufacturing optimization and inventory optimization can improve supply chain decision making.

Though adoption of technology in drayage can often be slow, Calhoun Truck Lines is focusing on what it can control and can readily be adapted, such as customized client reporting, driver recruiting platforms, and implementing safety features.

Rail provides flexibility in reaching carbon sequestration sites and utilization markets, along with increases options to ship from origins beyond pipeline limits.



## Top Takeaways

**Under a sky filled with increasing instability and uncertainty of geopolitical, international transportation policies and impacts and trade policies, Transportation Go! kicked off with far more questions on the minds of participants gathered in Minneapolis than any conference prior.**

**Panels of presenters gave insights and opinions on current and pending legislation, polices and actions in a highly interactive format that gave participants access to ask their own questions of high-level regulatory and governmental agencies and departments, container shipping lines, port authorities, crop production and shippers/exporters.**

**In the face of ever-changing disruptive events and the uncertainty that persists today, dynamic discussions were robust throughout the two-day conference and during the networking reception.**

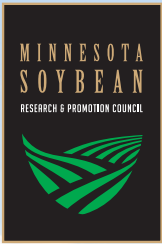
**Understanding what changes and shifts can mean, and what can be or is being affected in supply channels is critical information collection to better assure that adaptable strategic and tactical planning is in place for all stakeholders. The timing of the conference couldn't have landed better, considering the past year's navigation through longshoremen and rail strike possibilities, continued Red Sea security concerns, changes in government entities and policy proposals leading up to the conference.**

# Companies in Attendance

Ag Management Solutions	Northwest Seaport Alliance
BE PACK	Ocean Network Express (ONE)
BNSF Railway	PenceAg
British American Shipping Company	POET
Bushel	Poet Nutrition, LLC
Chippewa Valley Bean	Port Milwaukee
CHS Inc	Port of Los Angeles
Conveyco, Inc.	Ports of Indiana
Data Driven Supply Chain LLC	Prime Focus LLC
DOT/Maritime Administration (MARAD)	Professional Export Services
Double River Forwarding	Puris
Duluth Seaway Port Authority	RailState LLC
Federal Maritime Commission	Richland IFC
Friederichs Seed Inc	Saskatchewan Pulse Growers Association
Globe Runners INC	SB&B Foods, LLC
Grain Millers	Schrader Grain Partnership
Grover Farm Trucking LLC	Scoular
Hapag Lloyd	South Dakota Soybean Checkoff
HC International, Inc.	Soy Canada
Illinois Soybean Association	Specialty Soya and Grains Alliance
Knewton Soy Products	Splithoff
MacMillan-Piper	St. Lawrence Seaway
Melford Atlantic Gateway Inc.	Summit Rail Advisors
Michigan Agricultural Commodities	Surface Transportation Board
Minnesota Department of Agriculture	Sustainable Advanced Biofuel Refiners (SABR)
Minnesota Soybean Growers Association	Northwest Seaport Alliance
Minnesota Soybean Research &	Tri-Cities Intermodal
Promotion Council	U.S. Soybean Export Council
Minnesota State University, Mankato	US Nisshin Shokai
Nexyst	Valley Express
North Dakota Corn Council	Vinturas
North Dakota Soybean Council	Women in Maritime Operations (WIMOs)
North Star Container LLC; NW Grains	Wisconsin Soybean Marketing Board
Northern Crops Institute	Yamada Consulting Group
Northern Pulse Growers Association	Zeeland Farm Services, Inc.



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