

## Water Profile

### Freight and Goods Movement Study- Phase I

**Exhibit 13: The Cumberland Waterway System**

#### Waterborne Freight

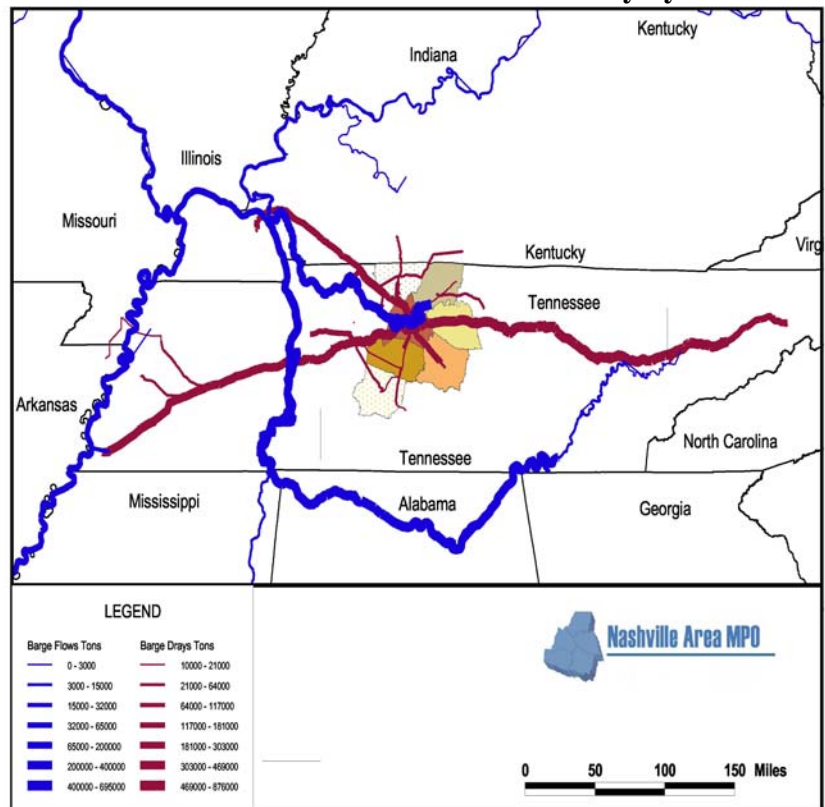
Nashville lies on the banks of the Cumberland River, 180 miles above the point where the Cumberland and the Tennessee join the Ohio River at Paducah, and continue to the Mississippi at Cairo (**Exhibit 13**). The waterway is navigable upriver and east to Celina, then downriver into the American heartland and the Gulf. River barges on the Cumberland carry 7 million tons of freight for the Nashville Area. Ninety percent of it comes inbound, making the river responsible for almost 20% of the inbound commodity tonnage supplied from outside to the Nashville Region.

Coal for electric utilities, aggregates for construction and

other uses, and petroleum and chemical products for industry constitute more than 95% of the volume received from the river. Traffic can be delivered by truck over 100 miles away from the waterside, but most of it terminates within twenty to thirty miles, and some – like large portions of the coal – is brought to consuming facilities on the water. Aggregates like sand and gravel are the chief form of outbound traffic, and primarily originate at locations adjacent to the riverbank. The accompanying map portrays barge traffic moving on the Cumberland and truck drayage on roads to and from its shores, as well as volume elsewhere in the state for the Tennessee River.

There are three public terminals in Nashville loading and unloading freight for Cumberland barges: at Robertson Avenue (mile post 174 on the river), Amy Lynn Drive (milepost 180), and Cowan Street (milepost 190). In addition, there are a variety of private facilities along the river handling proprietary goods. Access from the water is described as adequate, and road routes also are sufficient, in large part because of the multiple interstate highways paralleling, crossing, and radiating from the Cumberland. Steel for automotive plants, for example, is supplied in part by water and trucked south from Nashville; barge lines describe this as a successful operation for demanding clients. Substantial changes in traffic volumes are not anticipated, so current capabilities should remain sufficient.

The inland waterway system is maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, including its lock and dam structures. There are two single-chamber locks affecting Nashville river traffic: Hickory Lock and Dam upstream between the city and Gallatin, and Cheatham Lock and Dam downstream. They are characterized as satisfactory facilities, which are normally taken out of service for maintenance two to three weeks every five years, causing river traffic to be



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suspended. The Corps performs maintenance on these structures at separate times rather than simultaneously, effectively doubling the amount of time the waterway is closed. Barge lines and the industries they serve clearly plan for this, but the effect of closures still is to put some amount of truck traffic on the roads. A single 1,500 ton barge equates to approximately sixty heavily laden trucks, slow moving in traffic and relatively damaging to pavement, so the consequences are not negligible. While the MPO has no authority over the Army (nor do the carriers and industry), it certainly can petition the Corps to consider local interests as well as its own resources, as it schedules maintenance work.

Waterway freight system conditions in short are adequate, and allow the river to continue as a low-cost method of supplying basic and heavy bulk goods to the Nashville Area community and industry. The principle long-term issue, in the view of one waterway participant, is the national issue of sustained support to inland river transportation. Resources and policies affecting it require the active interest of states and congressional delegations. The State of Tennessee, in this view, needs to make itself heard on the importance of the federal responsibility for waterborne transportation. Should the waterway become victim to neglect, the primary goods it supplies to the Nashville Area must continue to move. If they cannot go to the at-capacity rail network, they will add many slow and heavy trucks to the road system, affecting congestion, air quality, and highway maintenance budgets. The role of the MPO, in this respect, is to urge comment by the State and to lend its voice in support.

