

St. Louis Region Remains Home To Nation's Most Efficient Inland Port

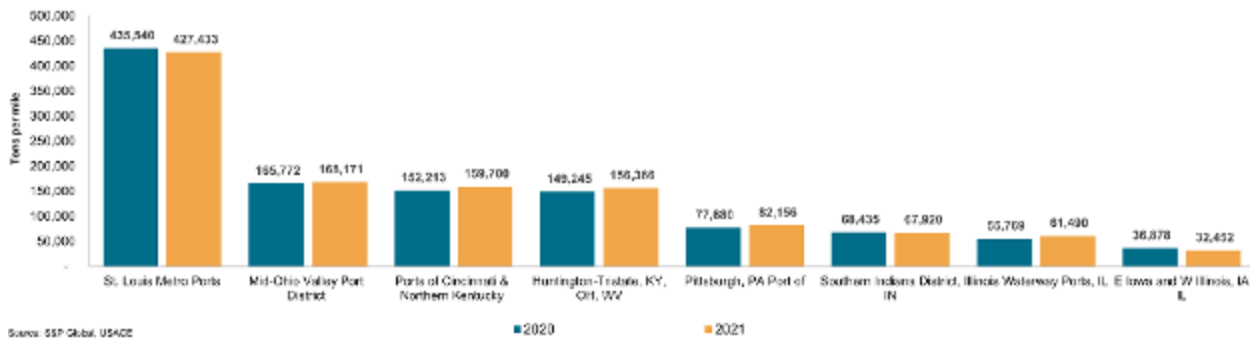
by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
February 1 2024 1:56 PM



ST. LOUIS - The St. Louis metropolitan area still has the most efficient inland port district in the nation, according to the latest data from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

The St. Louis region's barge industry handled over four times the national average tons moved per river mile in 2021 (the most recent year for which data is available). The average number of tons per mile across the other seven inland port districts in the U.S. was 104,014 - the St. Louis region averaged 427,000 tons per mile.

Tons per mile moved by inland ports in 2020 and 2021



“The St. Louis harbor continues to be the most concentrated location on the Inland Waterway for export grain,” said David Jump, CEO of American Milling, LP. “Transportation efficiencies, facilities, and geography combine to result in lower costs for shippers. This results in the St. Louis region’s position as a global freight hub.”

The findings come from an independent report by S&P Global Commodity Insights analyzing USACE data to determine how the St. Louis Metro Ports ranked relative to other inland ports in the nation. St. Louis Metro Ports include the following individual ports, with the first three handling more than 80% of the total tonnage moved in 2021:

- America’s Central Port (IL)
- Southwest Regional Port District (IL)
- St. Louis City Port Authority (MO)
- St. Louis County Port Authority (MO)
- Jefferson County Port Authority (MO)

Collectively serving 70 miles along the Mississippi River, these five ports handled nearly 30 million tons of cargo in 2021, on par with the prior year’s 30.5 million tons. With that tonnage total, the St. Louis Metro Port system also remains one of the highest tonnage inland ports in the U.S., ranking number four nationwide.

To learn more about the success of America's Central Port, check out the recent [Our Daily Show!](#) appearance and interview with Dennis Wilsmeier from America's Central Port at the top of this story or on [Riverbender.com/video](https://riverbender.com/video).

A Leader in the Agriculture Industry

According to the St. Louis Regional Freightway, 50% of all U.S. crops and livestock are currently produced within a 500-mile radius of the St. Louis region, including

approximately 80% of corn and soybean acreage. The S&P Global Commodity Insights report reveals that, from 2017 through 2021, St. Louis Metro Ports handled 25% of all corn and 28% of all soybean shipments through seven key inland ports in the Midwest.

“These are significant volumes supported by more than 200 barge handling terminals in the port district,” said Mary Lamie, Executive Vice President of Multimodal Enterprises for Bi-State Development and head of the St. Louis Regional Freightway.

She added that a 15-mile stretch of St. Louis’ port system, known as the “Ag Coast of America,” is home to 16 barge-transfer facilities that, at total capacity, can handle more than 150 barges a day – the highest level of capacity anywhere along the Mississippi River.



“Because the St. Louis Metro Ports lie in a strategically important position in the Midwest and on the Mississippi River and feature exceptional multimodal capabilities, they are a leader in the movement of agricultural products,” Lamie said.

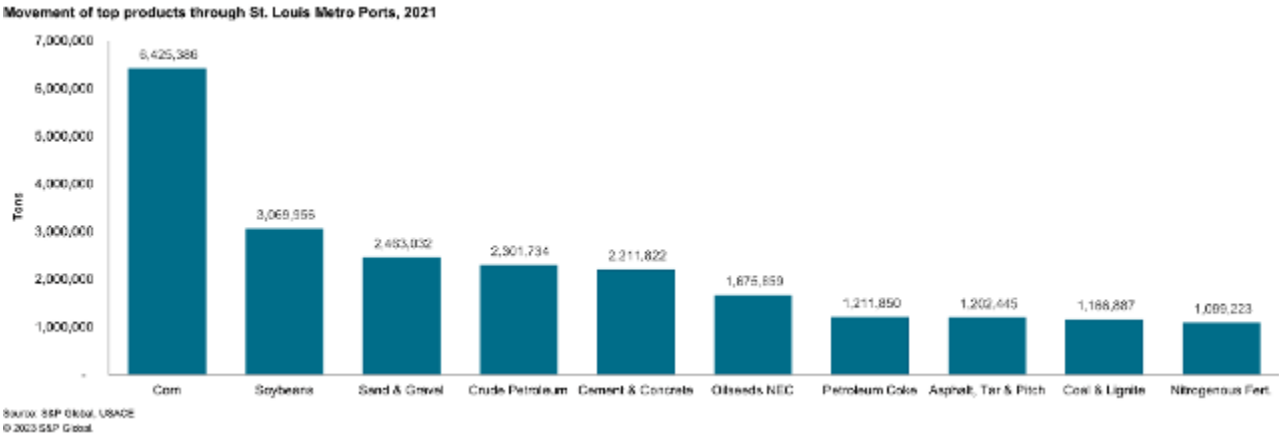
“Given this strategic location providing the northernmost ice-free and lock-free access on the Mississippi River, as well as the proximity to crop and livestock production areas, we believe the report indicates the importance of St. Louis Metro Ports in the movement of agricultural products is likely to endure.”

A Diversified System

Each year from 2019 to 2021, St. Louis Metro Ports were one of the two leading inland ports that move agricultural products. Though Illinois Waterway Ports move a higher volume of agricultural product, St. Louis Metro Ports are more diversified.

Given its location in the Corn Belt, corn comprised nearly 60% of Illinois Waterway Ports agricultural tonnage in 2021. In contrast, corn comprised 44% of St. Louis Metro Ports agricultural tonnage in 2021, and its wheat tonnage is 25 times higher than Illinois Ports. This diversity of agricultural products handled by St. Louis Metro ports lessens the risks of negative supply chain shocks coming from any one commodity - for example, an overdependence on corn - making the ports more resilient.

St. Louis Metro Ports handled 14.45 million tons in inbound and outbound agriculture shipments in 2021, in addition to one million tons each of 10 different products, including agricultural products, sand and gravel, crude petroleum, cement and concrete, petroleum coke, asphalt, tar and pitch, and coal and lignite.



“Continuing public and private investments in the St. Louis region’s ports and river terminals, and the associated freight network that serves them, have created a very competitive shipper and carrier market featuring unmatched efficiencies and lower costs,” Lamie said.

“We are committed to working with the public and private sector to continue to advance the region’s highest priority projects, including improving at-grade rail crossings and increasing efficiency of freight rail interconnectivity with the region’s Class I railroads, as that is key to supporting the barge industry and is critical for maintaining global competitiveness.”

About St. Louis Regional Freightway

A Bi-State Development enterprise, the St. Louis Regional Freightway is a regional freight district and comprehensive authority for freight operations and opportunities within eight counties in southwestern Illinois and eastern Missouri, which comprise the St. Louis metropolitan area. Public sector and private industry businesses are partnering with the St. Louis Regional Freightway to establish the bi-state region as one of the premier multimodal freight hubs and distribution centers in the United States through marketing and advocacy for infrastructure development that supports the movement of freight. To learn more, visit thefreightway.com.