

## **NEXT STEPS**

It is anticipated that there will be a massive growth in Marine Transportation System (MTS) use in the next 20 years. To ensure the nation's future prosperity, there has been a call for leadership from the Federal Government from the users of the MTS. What is envisioned is a participatory process that engages and involves those who have an interest in using, developing and safeguarding our MTS with the Federal Government facilitating, guiding and supporting this process.

To date, seven public Regional Listening Sessions and a National Conference on the Marine Transportation System have been held. The availability of the Proceedings of the National Conference on the MTS will be published in the Federal Register to elicit and solicit comments from the public at-large. In response to a congressional mandate (P.L. 105-383, 3/13/98, 112 Stat. 3411), Secretary Slater is creating a National Task Force to assess the adequacy of the nation's MTS. The input from the Regional Listening Sessions and the National Conference will be an important part of the assessment.

The National Task Force, chaired by Secretary Slater, will examine critical issues and develop strategies, recommendations, and a plan of action for the MTS. The National Task Force will report its findings to Congress by 1 July 1999.

A short-term task force is not sufficient to provide the long term leadership and guidance necessary to prepare for the future. A National MTS Council is envisioned and legislation may be necessary to create it. This National MTS Council will be comprised of high level members of the public and private sectors who will advise the Federal Government and help shape MTS policies.