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"I think with St. Louis having such a nexus of connectivity, you have this perfect intersection of Class I Railroads, the Mississippi River, and then major highways," Lester said. He also noted that St. Louis is the northernmost ice-free, lock-free port, providing significant opportunities for servicing shippers of ag products and grain byproducts for export markets.

"We really are, logistically speaking, in a great spot for northbound and southbound freight. That will create additional opportunities and economies of scale," said Lester. "We can take products from St. Louis, the Midwest in general, put them into the river system and run a 40-barge tow all the way down to the Gulf. That generates a pretty significant competitive advantage for our customers, our shippers, where they can utilize the efficiency and the economies of the waterways to handle their export products."

Looking to the future, Lester said the return of manufacturing to North America presents additional growth opportunities for Ingram. He said customers, shippers and producers are looking at how to utilize domestic transportation in conjunction with the reshoring of manufacturing into the United States. He thinks it will create a large opportunity for an area like the St. Louis region where there is a good logistics hub and a large number of operators in the area.

The virtual panel session was moderated by Mary Lamie, Executive Vice President of Multimodal Enterprises for Bi-State Development, which operates the St. Louis Regional Freightway.

"It's great to hear that Ingram is already seeing the advantages of operating within the most efficient inland port in the nation and planning additional investments to strengthen its presence here in the St. Louis region," said Lamie.

FreightWeekSTL 2025 continues through June 6. The week-long freight and logistics event is delivered by the St. Louis Regional Freightway. To learn more, register for the remaining virtual panel sessions, or view any of the virtual panel sessions for FreightWeekSTL 2025 as they are released, visit www.freightweekstl.com.

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.