In the US the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is an independent Federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident across the United States and significant accidents in other modes of transportation – railroad, highway, marine and pipeline.

To achieve this the NTSB determines the probable cause of the accidents and issues safety recommendations aimed at preventing future accidents. In addition, the NTSB carries out special studies concerning transportation safety and coordinates the resources of the Federal Government and other organizations to provide assistance to victims and their family members impacted by major transportation disasters.

US Vessel Traffic Services
A safety study released on 13 September by the NTSB details 14 conclusions and 21 recommendations aimed at further reducing the risk of collisions, allisions, and groundings involving vessels operating within US Coast Guard Vessel Traffic Service areas.

The study, An Assessment of the Effectiveness of the U.S. Coast Guard Vessel Traffic Service System (NTSB/SS-16/01), focused on the performance of the Coast Guard’s VTS system, currently comprised of 12 VTS centres.

The need for the study was driven by the investigation of six major commercial vessel accidents since the Coast Guard’s 2009 implementation of its Vessel Traffic Service National Standard Operating Procedures Manual.

$69 million in damage reported
Information provided by the Coast Guard indicates collisions, allisions and groundings within VTS areas between 2010 and 2014 resulted in two fatalities, 179 injuries and more than $69 million in damage to vessels, facilities, infrastructure and the environment.

In the words of NTSB Chairman Christopher Hart: ‘Variance within a single safety system is itself a potential hazard and mariners traveling from one VTS to another must be able to rely on consistent Coast Guard services. The recommendations contained in our safety study, if acted upon, will improve the effectiveness of the VTS system throughout America’s waterways. I note with appreciation the Coast Guard’s openness and transparency with our
investigators and the service’s treatment of our study as a thorough and independent effort to improve Coast Guard operations.’

The NTSB issued 17 of its 21 recommendations to the US Coast Guard, one to the American Pilots’ Association, two to the American Waterways’ Operators and one recommendation was issued to the Radio Technical Commission for Maritime Services.

**The abstract**

It is understood that the full report is expected to be published within several weeks.