

FREIGHT COMMITTEE
of the
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Summary of October 8, 2008 Meeting

This meeting was held in the EOTPW Office of Transportation Planning Conference Room, Suite 4150, at the State Transportation Building.

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM.

1. Introduction – Walter Bonin, *Chair and City of Marlborough*

W. Bonin opened the meeting and asked each participant to introduce him- or herself. He thanked Neil Fitzpatrick, Boston Freight Terminals, for a very informative tour.

Anne Aylward gave a bit of her background as the leader of the National Commission on Intermodal Transportation established by SAFETEA-LU. Limited funding from Congress limited the effectiveness of the Commission, but the group did publish a report.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the September 10, 2008, meeting was made by Domenic D'Eramo, seconded by Frank DeMasi and approved unanimously.

3. Member Announcements

There were no member announcements.

4. Update on Statewide Freight and Rail Plan – *Ned Codd, Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works*

N. Codd, Project Manager, EOTPW, introduced other EOTPW staff working on the project and members of the consultant team from HDR Engineering, who presented progress of the Statewide Freight and Rail Plan.

The Statewide Freight and Rail Plan will gather information on the multi-modal freight network, including infrastructure, operations and policies. It will then produce a stand-alone statewide rail plan that will focus on the whole rail system. It will examine the tradeoffs between freight and passenger service within the context of other, ongoing planning work, such as that of the Massachusetts Mobility Summit/Compact, and will look at how to optimize operations at

existing facilities. Information about all modes will be integrated into the plan. It will communicate the importance of freight mobility.

The project is at the end of the data-gathering phase on the rail system. Any pertinent input from the Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan and other state or regional rail studies will be incorporated.

The public outreach for the Freight Study was conducted over the summer, and included discussions with Port Professionals Group, Massport, the New England Association of Rail Shippers, and other stakeholders and members of the public. All the feedback gathered will be analyzed over the winter and a report on the results will be available in the spring.

Ron O'Blenis, HDR Engineering, then reported on the data collected to this point.

Other work will report on economic and freight sector trends. Globalization is a factor: international trade has been growing at a faster rate than the U.S. economy, but recently it has been negatively affected by rising fuel prices. Systems affected also include the environment, locational chains, and the freight distribution systems. The consultants are looking forward to coordinating with Abby Swaine and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on the environment.

There has been a change in employment by sectors between 1997 and 2007. Manufacturing employment has declined, but the value of manufactured products has increased. Up to 2008, employment numbers in professional, business, education, health and construction sectors have gained.

The group reviewed a slide showing the Massachusetts transportation network – highways, ports, air freight facilities, and intermodal transportation facilities. The mode share for truck freight in Massachusetts is 94%. Trucks dominate and do so particularly in Massachusetts. This presents a challenge for the present and future.

The Port of New Bedford has more freight rail access than Boston, and the State should explore these advantages more. The Port of Fall River has opportunities for mixed-use development related to its freight operations.

R. Blenis showed a slide listing the top 10 commodities for Massachusetts and their origin or destination in the state. Ninety-three percent of these commodities is moved by truck. Much of this is consumables and is moved as secondary freight (e.g. UPS). Showing this information as well as information related to highway bottleneck congestion on a map of the statewide transportation network shows the shipping patterns and opportunities for rail freight to increase its share.

The Statewide Freight and Rail Plan is looking at potential north-south connections with respect to passenger and freight service through the Pioneer Valley's Knowledge Corridor from New York to Montreal. There may also be potential for shared operations on passenger and freight movement.

It is important to save rights of way now before any more land in Eastern Massachusetts is developed. It will only be more difficult to make rail investments in the future. (Clare Conley, ADM Solutions)

Point and Issues Raised During Discussion

What is the status of the Statewide Transportation Plan? This study should be coordinated with the You Move Massachusetts work. (W. Bonin)

It is currently in the midst of its initial public process, which is scheduled to be complete at the end of this year. Then EOTPW will begin doing the Plan. (Paul Nelson)

No one at the You Move Massachusetts session I attended brought up anything related to freight. It wasn't part of any presentation. (Marilyn Wellons)

The timing of this study will integrate well with the Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan process. I will follow up. (N. Codd)

Are you coordinating with the South Coast Rail Project? (F.DeMasi)

Yes. We have met with stakeholders in that region. They want to make sure freight access is preserved and that it will have opportunities to grow. (R. O'Blenis)

Is ethanol rail freight making any inroads in New England? (F. DeMasi)

There is an ethanol terminal in Providence, but most of the region's ethanol is moving here via truck. (R. O'Blenis)

Higher demand for ethanol may create a demand for greater rail freight in New England. Ethanol is inefficiently carried by truck and cannot be piped, so rail is the preferred option. (Dan Hodge, HDR Engineering)

Is short-sea shipping committed to roll-on/roll-off facilities? (F. DeMasi)

The roll-on/roll-off model was discussed at the Short Sea Shipping Symposium in Dartmouth. Industry leaders explained that it is more viable to unload rail freight in the Greater New York region and truck it to Eastern Massachusetts than to ship freight via sea to New England ports. (N. Codd)

If the South Boston Bypass Road is used as a mixed-traffic boulevard to the Hundred Acres development, there will be significant congestion and no rail alternatives to either Conley Terminal or to the Boston Marine Industrial Park. (F. DeMasi)

The Massport Haul Road is open to general traffic whereas the South Boston Bypass Road is reserved exclusively for truck freight. (N. Codd)

This Plan needs a freight champion at the Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works. Without a champion in State leadership to implement it, this Plan risks sitting on a shelf. (Dom D'Eramo, Millis)

The many intricate pieces related to transportation planning – CMAQ, air quality, long-range finances – would benefit from staff to pursue freight issues in the State.

5. Discussion of the Role of the Freight Committee in the MPO Process

D. D'Eramo has arranged a meeting with Tim Brennan, Executive Director of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, to discuss initiating a statewide, inter-MPO freight advisory committee. He will update the Freight Committee at the next meeting.

The Freight Committee exists as a body of the Advisory Council, and its continued existence relies on the continued support of the Advisory Council. (Pam Wolfe, MPO Staff)

Freight is inherently a super-regional issues – it is perhaps best understood at the scale of the Northeast Corridor – but the capacity of the Advisory Council's Freight Committee is responsible only for the Boston Region MPO. To support broader interests such as these expressed by the members of this Freight Committee, these members should pursue perhaps a freight advocacy group beyond the Freight Committee. (Malek Al-Khatib, Advisory Council Chair and Boston Society of Civil Engineers)

The interests of the Advisory Council supersede the interests of its committees. If the Advisory Council's interest is strictly for the geographic boundaries and interests of the Boston Region MPO, the Freight Committee must respect these bounds and interests. If the members of the Freight Committee have an interest with a super-regional perspective, these members would be best served by establishing an independent organization. There must be a concerted strategy between the Advisory Council and its committees. (M. Al-Khatib)

If the Advisory Council Freight Committee wants to meet with statewide officials, the Freight Committee needs to get direction from the Advisory Council. The Advisory Council would need to ask the Freight Committee to carry out these actions. (P. Wolfe)

The Advisory Council should provide more time for its committees to give updates and have dialogue between the Advisory Council and the committees. (W. Bonin)

In the future, committee updates will be transmitted with the agenda and draft minutes to Advisory Council members before the general body meeting. Members should use meeting time to comment on updates, not to read the updates. (M. Al-Khatib)

If a statewide, inter-MPO freight advisory group is formed, this group could ask to be a member of the Advisory Council. (P. Wolfe)

6. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:45 PM.

Attachments:

1. Statewide Freight and Rail Plan Meeting Schedule

Attendance List for October 8, 2008

Agencies

Tim Doherty, Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works
Ned Codd, Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works
Paul Nelson, Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works

Cities and Towns

Walter Bonin, Marlborough
Frank DeMasi, Wellesley

Citizens Groups

Malek Al-Khatib, Boston Society of Civil Engineers
John Businger, Northeast Corridors Initiative
Marilyn Wellons, Riverside Neighborhood Association

Guests and Visitors

Anne Aylward, U.S. Department of Transportation
Clare Conley, APM Solutions
Dan Hodge, HDR Engineering
Ed Lowney
Ron O'Blenis, HDR Engineering
Abby Swaine, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

MPO Staff

Pam Wolfe