



Meeting Notes

ATTENDEES: Matt Horan (MWRA), Sean Cordy (MWRA), Patricia Abbate, Frank DeMasi, John Hersey, Tim Doherty, Mike Rennie, Barry Steinberg, Lynn Vikesland, Marilyn Wellons, Anne Mc Gahan

Date: Wednesday, March 12, 2008 **Time:** 1:00 – 2:45 PM

Location: State Transportation Building
Conference Room 4

- **Frank DeMasi opened the meeting** in Walter Bonin's absence and provided Introductions and a brief Chairman's Report as follows:
 - The RTAC freight committee sub-committee including Walter Bonin, Frank DeMasi, Mike Rennie, and Dominic D'Eramo continue to press the freight committee positions on the advantages of rail freight diversion programs and industrial and transportation infrastructure concerns and needs with state legislators and public officials.
 - The sub-committee has used presentations developed by Mike Rennie, general manager of the Pioneer Valley Railroad, and those of Walter, Frank and Dominic to illustrate these needs and to hone this strategy over the past six months of meetings with legislators and discussions at several transportation forums.
 - The Federal Highway Administration and guidelines for multi-modal freight transportation planning as promulgated in SAFE-TEA-LU guidelines for MPO development of Regional Transportation Plans are used to formulate the sub-committee's strategy and materials used.
 - As a result of our feedback from legislators we will pursue drafting legislation to submit to their staff members with the intent of finding their interest in sponsorship of a formal bill for consideration or earmarks in forthcoming Transportation Bond Bills.
- **The attendees approved February Meeting Notes.**
- **Mike Rennie, General Manager Pioneer Valley RR** provided comment on upcoming meetings with legislators and his concerns with public policy regarding Public Private Partnerships and economic development opportunities being lost as a result.
- **Matt Horan (MWRA) provided a comprehensive presentation on Fore River Railroad.**

In summary:

The Massachusetts Water Resources Commission (MWRA) owns 100% of the stock of the Fore River Railroad as part of its purchase of the General Dynamics Shipyard. The railroad was established in 1903 and formally incorporated as a railroad in Massachusetts in 1919. The railroad's current operation is under contract with the Fore River Railroad Corporation (FRRC) by the Fore River Transportation Corporation (FRTC).

The FRTC has the Common Carrier Obligation of the railroad and under its agreement dedicates 41% of gross revenues over \$250,000 to maintenance up to a ceiling of \$65,000 per year. (F.S. DeMasi notes that this arrangement assures a modern, safe, and efficient rail plant and operation and providing existing and new on-line customers excellent service)

The railroad has experienced increasingly profitable operation and has seen continuing capital improvements since its acquisition by the MWRA. The FRRC has eminently qualified for \$3.3 million in EOT state freight rail improvement grant funds. These grant fund expenditures are supported by the railroad's 2007 operations revenue (approximately \$1.7 million) and its well organized strategic planning for continued operational and safety improvements.

Mr. Horan was pleased to present current plans for a new engine house to maintain and shelter the Railroads two locomotives. We were also provided a description of a new 5 year capital improvement plan that assures this smallest of Massachusetts railroads is and will continue to be a very successful and "going concern"....

Our thanks to Matt and his colleague Sean Cordy for an interesting and enlightening presentation.

- **Relationship updates:**

- o Frank DeMasi provided summary of a meeting with State Representative Alice Hanlon Peisch that was held on 3 March. Walter Bonin and Frank DeMasi engaged Rep Peisch at that meeting on our views of the capacity issues on the CSX/MBTA Boston Line (Worcester Commuter Rail) and possible short-term remedies that could be taken by the MBTA to improve operational efficiency and thru-put. Worcester Line Capacity Improvements on the portion owned by our state agencies, Framingham to South Station, are already listed in the MBTA's Capital Improvement Program but not programmed. The CSX railroad had proposed third track additions at its Worcester and Framingham yards that would accommodate commuter rail service expansion to Worcester but the MBTA/EOT have not come to terms on shared cost of funding them or to either partner with CSX or buy the line segments in question out right. A PowerPoint presentation of our position presented to Rep Peisch was provided to the attendees.
- o Mike Rennie and Frank DeMasi outlined planning for a meeting with Senator Petrucelli (Joint Transportation Committee and Chair of the Municipalities and Regional Government committee) on 24 March. We planned to discuss the economic and environmental advantages of rail freight and the impact land use decisions are having on rail infrastructure, warehousing, and industry in Massachusetts. Particularly exclusionary zoning on the part of urban core communities.

- o Planning for meeting with MassDEP 24 March (POC Abby Swaine) to make MassDEP aware of the environmental benefits of rail diversion programs and discuss the Federal SMARTWAY program and possible Massachusetts policy initiatives to be developed within both program's parameters.
- **Freight Study**
Status from EOTPW (No new information available)
- **Discussion of comment letter to Advisory Council on Illustrative Projects**
The Freight Committee supports the addition of illustrative projects to the Regional Transportation Plan. These are projects that have merit but funds are not available to program them in the financially constrained Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). We believe high cost projects such as the Route 126 rail grade crossing/separation project in Framingham and double stack clearances for several strategic rail routes in Massachusetts should be planned and listed as illustrative projects.
- **A discussion on Integration with State Transportation and Economic Development plans was continued from our last meeting.**
We are encouraged to continue our campaign to integrate freight, industrial land use, environmental, and economic development issues in our advocacy.
- **Proposal for Boston to Worcester main rail line improvements**
Discussed freight committee plans to set up a subcommittee to address the MBTA/EOT plans for short-term improvements to the Worcester Commuter Rail Line. We have documented several short term and cost effective improvements to signaling and track (adding cross over and interlocking points), outbound station platforms in Newton, and use of one CSX track through Beacon Park Yard, to improve the lines throughput and efficiency without purchasing the ROW from CSX or needing any land takings.
- **Getting our message out.**
The attendees were asked to suggest people or organizations that could serve as conduits to help us promote benefits of freight rail and multi-modal movement of goods.
Some suggestions included:
 - Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
 - Beacon Hill Institute
 - MassINC
 - Shippers and receivers
 - Industrial property developers

OPEN ACTION ITEM: We need to speak with Tom Cahir EOT, and Joe Cosgrove, MBTA, to develop a counter proposal for Worcester line commuter rail expansion.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:40 PM.

Frank S. DeMasi (for)
Walter Bonin