

August 2004
Freight Steering and Advisory Committee Meeting
Summary (long)

*This document serves as a supplement to the presentations and other handouts that were available at the meeting.
To request any of these other materials, please contact Travis J. Gordon.*

Meeting Objectives:

1. To share the conclusions and findings of the research team with the stakeholders. Our challenge will be to isolate the conclusions that will be of interest and importance to the stakeholders and to present them in a concise manner.
2. To assist the stakeholders in understanding the findings and assimilating those findings into their own experience and working perspectives. Our goal is to do more than simply “dump” the information that we have collected. It is to make that information a part of the action and implementation plans of our stakeholders. This will require them to discuss those findings with their peers and share their contexts and experiences.
3. To assist the stakeholders in developing a plan for future collaboration on the issue of freight in the Upper Midwest.

Ideal Meeting Outcomes: The ideal outcomes mirror the objectives:

1. An understanding and appreciation of the importance of the freight challenge in our region on the part of all stakeholders leading to the conclusion that some proactive actions are needed across the region.
2. An understanding of the issues within the context of each participant’s work life that will have them take this knowledge back to their workplace to influence future actions.
3. A conceptual plan for future joint regional efforts on freight issues.

Tuesday, August 10, 2004

John Duncan Varda, Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce

- As one of the first presenters of the meeting, he urged the participants to focus on next steps as the meeting progresses.
- He gave an update on the private sector compliment to the efforts, named Central Corridors Freight Committee (<http://www.centralcorridors.com/>). The private sector is ready and willing to build upon the corridor study
- HANDOUT: Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce material regarding recent transportation committee meeting

Travis Gordon, Midwest Regional University Transportation Center

- Presented on general motivations and benefits of regional cooperation. Efficient use of resources—and a larger pool of resources—this will give the Midwest region a competitive advantage. Also gave brief intros to a couple of the case studies.
- Suggestion from participants that having a representative from the I-95 Corridor Coalition would be a good opportunity to pursue.
- A concern from a participant was that with longer term planning, you run into the challenge of maintaining participations with a changing leadership structure and people. How has I-95 dealt with it?, asked Matt Selhorst
- AAR gave anecdotal evidence of more freight focus on rail in our region than the northeast region where passenger issues dominate
- Scott Sigman points out that this whole effort, which closely relates to economic development, is really a more general transportation issue, rather than just freight.

Ernie Wittwer, Midwest Regional University Transportation Center, Performance Measures for Freight Transportation

- There was lengthy discussion on measuring rates versus measuring the actual numbers.
- AAR noted a study on crashes and derailments. More info available through AAR.
- Measures need to be put into perspective, how should they be used in the long term? from Scott Sigman
- Another thought is to really look at measures that can be used to show improvements from particular projects.

Bill Gardner, Minnesota Department of Transportation, Response to presentation on freight transportation performance measures

- Discussed how the measures need to be linked to organizational goals and objectives, which is what is being done in Minnesota.
- Improving transportation is one of the goals of the entire Minnesota State Government. MnDOT then takes that and expands, linking strategies to policies. One measure within MnDOT that deals with freight is providing cost effective transportation options.
- Discussed the sphere of control versus the sphere of influence in performance measures. Need to think about what an agency can actually do to make changes.

Kazuya Kawamura, University of Illinois at Chicago, Freight System Usage Data

- Several participants expressed concern over the Wisconsin truck flows on the slides that show truck AADT and economic establishments. *This has been fixed, it was an error in the mapping.*
- There was discussion how important intraregional shipments are to the system. Some thought that through traffic was more of an issue.
- Others raised concerns over the definition of intermodal. Suggestion to use data from IANA

Jiwan Gupta, University of Toledo, Freight System Capacity Data

- There was confusion in the audience regarding the definition of signal spacing in railroad capacity
- Suggestion to include how weather impacts capacity

At this point of Day 1, the participants discussed the previous two sessions at their table. The participants were arranged so that similar interests were located at the same table. They were instructed to answer the questions: 1) What does this information mean to me? and 2) What actions might be taken in light of this information? The following is a recap of those discussions.

- Overall, the capacity will work as a first cut, but needs more work before the final version. Air cargo needs to be revisited. There was also confusion on the analysis of the railroad network. More capacity data is out there, but it's with the private sector. Not at the point where we can show bottlenecks, but was this an original goal of the study?
- What do we do with the short haul moves? Are they in the data, such as gravel and garbage trucks? Even though they are not on the interstate system, should we care? They affect the roads and cause deterioration.
- One group felt there was no consensus so far on what exactly the corridor in our region really is. They also felt like there were problems with the data that showed through in the presentations. Another group agreed there were some missing elements in the data, but the research team should address that by summarizing what is missing.
- "The power of freight in the region," "Trying to eat the whole elephant," "Profit can motivate the private sector," "Don't tell us the problem, tell us why,"
- Multiple groups stated that the issue was trying to squeeze more and more freight through the existing infrastructure and that may or may not be affecting the economic fortunes of the region.
- The MPO group stated the need for localized data at the project level
- Regional level facilitates competing for regional programs
- There was some discussion of the role of consultants in future work, but agreement on the benefits of using universities in this work.
- Can we make security more of an issue in this work? May help on the Congressional side of things. Are monies for security competing with capacity projects?
- Marketing
 - The correlations between freight statistics and economic indicators were interesting
 - Can we put the problems in an economic sense, such as jobs lost? Do we have data to support this and can we have more robust analysis?
 - Need to show the problems to the people, build up the case that there is a real problem here. Until we're able to show that the region is impacted, it will be hard to get buy in. We have the information, just not framed right now.
 - What if we do nothing?
 - Where do the numbers show we're becoming less competitive?
 - The broad impacts of traffic on certain points of the corridor?
 - Have a concise marketing piece with descriptors
 - Need to use data to educate local officials
 - Need to stand up and demand attention. No one knows of us. Need to get the word out to associations, chambers of commerce, equipment manufacturers, suppliers.

Wednesday, August 11, 2004

Peter Lindquist, University of Toledo, Data Reporting Internet Program

- Suggestion to utilize AAR data for the rail network and Transport Canada figures for Manitoba and Ontario
- Suggestion of FHWA study, led by Michael Onder, looking at interaction of truck and rail
- Expect a grand opening of the site to the public during the week of August 23
- It was also suggested that this site should be critiqued by the various data users of the states
 - Ohio, Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota all indicated they have data groups
- Suggestion to somehow make the data updating task automated? Could it be tied into other systems?

Rob Tardif, Ontario Ministry of Transport, Response to the presentation of the data reporting capabilities

- Overall, very positive to this tool, allows users to look beyond local boundaries and addresses larger and more strategic improvements. Expressed support in continuing the effort
- This tool can build trust among the users, improves dialogues

Craig O'Riley, Iowa Department of Transportation, Response to the presentation of the data reporting capabilities

- Also very positive on the data reporting site, it is a valuable resource that allows decisions to be based on data as opposed to anecdotal information. Plus, benefit of putting vast amounts of data into understandable graphical format.

Teresa Adams, Midwest Regional University Transportation Center, Administrative Impediments to the Efficient Movement of Freight

- Keith Sherman of Illinois DOT shared that his state has a fund to use to upgrade roads to the 80,000 lb. standard. Also made the point that the state tries to work with local authorities that enforce the restrictions to explain the importance of freight and trucking. Example of an intermodal facility that was located on a road with lower restrictions (more restrictive) and the local authorities frequently ticketed trucks coming out of that facility. What other options did the truckers have?

At this point of Day 2, the participants discussed the previous session at their table. The participants were arranged in a mix-match setting, with different perspectives at each table. They were instructed to answer the questions: 1) Are the size and weight inconsistencies problematic for the region? 2) Would adopting uniform size and weight regulations be beneficial or problematic for the region? 3) Would regional collaboration on CVISN planning and deployment be beneficial to the region? 3) What should be done from a regional perspective to improve the administration of highway freight transport? The following is a recap of those discussions.

- Overall, the benefits of solving the size and weight problems do not outweigh the costs (especially political costs) of total standardization. Many groups agreed that there were bigger issues to address for freight in the region.
 - Training of officials, however, may be worthwhile
- There was some discussion on Oversize/Overweight permitting, how it is a complex sets of rules, maybe some opportunities to streamline the process? One stop shopping for all permits?
- Also discussion on speed differentials, what are the impacts?
- Studying a regional approach to CVISN is useful

Travis Gordon, Midwest Regional University Transportation Center, Synthesis of Practices

- John Varda pointed out that we are unique in our academic participation
- Stephanie Hickman informed the meeting that FHWA had reinstated it freight council

Suzann Rhodes, Ohio Department of Transportation, Thoughts on Next Steps

- See handout of seven steps
 - Take actions necessary to get the corridor designated as a Corridor of National Significance
 - Test corridor
 - Provide information on freight friendly provisions in Reauthorization
 - Provide states with specific project information
 - Prepare marketing brochure
 - Regional issues and practice workshops
 - Seek FHWA and AASHTO's support
- Suggested presenting the CAOs in September a MOU to move forward on the corridor designation
- Supports the subcommittee idea, since there are different people for different issues within organizations
- Market the heck out of this thing. Flatter the agencies that need flattering, such as AASHTO and FHWA-Freight

John Duncan Varda, Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, Thoughts on Next Steps

- Agreement with Rhodes on initiatives
- Suggested that we get a new name
- Data shows importance of the region, not just overhead
- Academic involvement has given this effort more creativity in using the data and their resources
- Working as a region can enable us to match up better with large freight transportation organizations and stakeholders
- Take CVISN concept and use it as a way to deal with HOS rules
 - Use our region to experiment with different approaches to this issue
- Get the economic development organizations involved, move beyond the DOTs since the idea of economic development is being addressed in several other areas within each state

Scott Sigman, Ports of Indiana, Thoughts on Next Steps

- Need to have consensus on a mission, each state to be on the same page
- Thought that the research project had met its initial goals, just not as quickly as first envisioned
- Thought that long term, this group needs to coordinate plans, formalize the coalition, and get a name change
- Pointed out that trust has been built up
- Stressed that the work needs to transcend all modes

The final part of the meeting was an open discussion on the next steps, using the above panel to answer questions or respond to comments from the participants. Points from discussion follow:

- Is it an advantage to set an annual meeting? The panel agreed that we're probably not at that point yet, but we should take advantage of existing meetings, such as Mississippi Valley AASHTO
- The crossroads concept
- To get into security dollars, point out that work to make the system more efficient in the Midwest equals security of supply chains. That was suggested by Joe Bryan
- Freight is good for passengers but not necessarily vice versa
- Tony Shallow talked a bit about the distribution of money along border states for infrastructure improvements. But if trade is destined for interior states, such as Indiana or Ohio, but border states are protecting this money
- All are in agreement with the recommendations of pursuing a coalition, but need to answer this question for the states at AASHTO meeting: What is in it for me???
- O'Riley reported that their state rail user group is transitioning to a more general freight group. Should look into having this work presented at their kickoff meeting in the fall.