

Upper Midwest Freight Corridor Study
Steering and Advisory Committee Meetings
March 29-30, 2004
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Tuesday, March 30, 2004

On the second day of meetings, the steering committee was joined by members of the advisory committee, which is made up of representatives from metropolitan planning organizations, carriers, shippers, ports, and other interested parties. The format for the meeting was for an area of the study to present to the larger group on their progress and interim results and then have smaller groups discuss and ask questions to the researchers. In doing this, the research team looked to achieve three objectives for this day:

1. To share information on the progress of the study.
2. To discuss and get feedback on the work done to date.
3. To gain from the experience and knowledge of both committees.

Summary

At the end of the day, project director Ernie Wittwer summarized some of the broad issues that were discussed throughout the day. For your convenience, they are listed here at the beginning to give some context to the rest of these notes.

1. *Tonnage vs. Value vs. Ton-miles*, what are the advantages and disadvantages of these flow measures?
2. Bridge traffic (overhead flows in the region) is important to identify in this study
3. More information on Canadian freight is needed
4. More "What's happening?" and looking at the trends behind the data is needed
5. Waterway information and issues should be expanded
6. Who would implement the idea of freight performance measures for the region, including data collection and accountability?
7. Modal trade off, regulation, and safety are issues that cut across all areas of the study
8. Metrics comparison to other regions would be useful to benchmark our own region
9. Researchers' ideas are needed to improve the efficiency and safety of freight movements in our region
10. Other ITS applications could be examined, beyond CVISN
11. Canadian National exists and it will be added
12. Be aware of political impacts of action or inaction
13. Help sell freight to agencies and the public, that should be an outreach goal of our efforts
14. Some key stakeholders not in attendance, but should be
15. Environmental measures, some possible working solutions
 - a. Dwell-time
 - b. Fuel model component fuel/GDP

There was also limited discussion on future funding. Jason Bittner raised the issue of interim funding for the universities. The committees discussed the need for getting the CAOs involved through a very brief summary or presentation of the issues. Work to be done to make presentation at Mississippi Valley AASHTO meeting.

Usage/Capacity Presentations

<http://www.uppermidwestfreight.org/events/files/MKE0304/Usage.pdf>

<http://www.uppermidwestfreight.org/events/files/MKE0304/Capacity-Methods.pdf>

<http://www.uppermidwestfreight.org/events/files/MKE0304/Capacity-Data.pdf>

Comments during the presentations

- 84% of rail freight on Class I railroads - so Capacity study only looking at Class I
- Highway regulatory network - link to NHPN map that Toledo is using

Discussions

Usage

- It is essential to break out short-haul bulk data
 - In many cases, it does not occur on our road network so it is not relevant to regional flows
 - It is not likely to be shipped via other modes
 - It hides the other high values flows, which are more important for our study
- Data in tons is far less useful than either value, ton-miles, or number of vehicles (this was brought up in several groups)
- Knowing commodity type is useful and routes taken so know how much damage is being done by movement, what height clearance is needed
 - Also discussed the differences in commodities when it comes to weight (one coal train=several merchandise trains in weight)
 - Develop ratio/index to show the value vs. weight on freight
- To the best of our ability, we should attempt to estimate overhead freight (freight just passing through the region) so we can focus on freight that has an origin or destination or both in the region
- Flows to and from Canada should not be overlooked
- The usage presentation was good for looking at the big picture, to get to "next level" of planning
 - Tool for communication with general public and decision makers, gives some context to discussions (again emphasized that the presentations should be short and the summaries only one page, use some dramatic data such as costs of delay in Chicago on a certain state)
 - Suggestion was made to show chokepoints & bottlenecks more clearly (the risks to the system)
- Flows important for future discussion on revenue

Capacity

- Discussion on the need to add CN rail routes
- Travel times may be more useful than level of service measures
- There may be a need to show agencies how to use the Capacity map
- For the rail lines, if we are not including terminal delay, we are missing a substantial reason for bottlenecks in the rail system. There may be two levels of response:
 - Information/attributes with respect to a rail terminal (dwell time, etc)
 - Determining the capacity of the terminal
- It is necessary to do link-node capacity analysis for water

General

- In response to the question “how will you use this data?”
 - To help justify capacity issues, including choke-points
 - To understand the regional issues that goes beyond state borders, to look at regional commodity flows
 - As baseline data for future analysis
 - As raw data to provide a broad picture and context for more detailed analysis
 - Group found usefulness in the information to prioritize projects and maintenance
 - Economic development discussion
 - Modal trade-offs discussion
- Analysis and conclusions of data
 - Present to top level administrators on what is needed
 - Keeping data current is a challenge
 - Need to make it easy for CAOs to make a decision (analysis of data)
- Would like to understand the value of the corridor and why it is important
 - Have some data to help advocate for investment in the system and be able to plan for future growth on a regional level
 - More context for the country as a whole in terms of the economic significance of this corridor
- Some concern that the selection of the network is very different from what the states are actually using
 - Iowa uses the concept of major economic centers to drive decisions
- HPMS data only provides order of magnitude estimates for policy guidance
- A useful planning tool would be the ability to overlay rail maps with highway maps so that opportunities for modal shift would become clear
- It is a challenge to predict mode movement, economic development
 - Look at Rochelle - no one predicted/projected it, how to communicate better of how these things happen
 - Help to know what state's priorities for projects are also
- Discussion on project recommendations and whether the study's purpose is only to present facts, or if research team should be presenting ideas and projects to improve freight transportation. The research team came away from this discussion thinking they had the charge of presenting some ideas in the final report.

Questions

- How do you report what this means to the region? This question was one of many directed at the research team, with the idea of giving them issues to think about beyond this meeting and as they continue to work on the study issues. Others included:
 - What is the impact if Chicago becomes a total impasse (shut down)?
 - What is the relationship of freight to other activities (other than manufacturing and warehousing)?
- What are the intended uses for this information?
 - Different states need common basis to act regionally
 - More in-depth look at the traffic flows
 - Where are the flows going to/from?

- How much is pass through freight?
- Can we estimate the deviation of traffic to non-toll roads to avoid the tolls? Can we estimate mode shifts and the impacts of ongoing construction projects?
 - Currently, the data is only there to compare traffic levels of multiple lanes. There is no data to back up how traffic is shifted and why. Current construction projects are known and being dealt with in capacity area of study, but future projects are not being looked at.
- Understanding our ability to do mode substitution is critical to addressing some of our most pressing congestion problems
 - Short sea shipping
 - Truck on rail
 - Capacity issues
- Can we do *what if* analysis either in terms of a change in flows or a capacity upgrade?
 - Answer is no, and understand that we need a significant modeling effort to examine the system wide impacts of such a change, but others noted that researchers should be able to examine the impact on a specific bottleneck. For example, if the I-280 and I-80/90 interchange is a bottleneck, what would happen to the capacity of that bottleneck if the interchange is upgraded? That is much easier to do then to examine the system level impacts, and it may be enough to show them the value of what we have done.)
- Questioned track utilization factor when only looking at Class I's
 - Isn't the extra capacity on the small railroad networks?
 - Do Class I's maximize the utilization of their network already?
 - Should include analysis of Class II & III's in next steps discussion
 - Differences in Class I's corridors
- Why did we have to work so hard to get the different GIS networks to overlay? This question was asked within a small group and did not make it to the researchers during the Q&A time. Refer to research team for discussion on this issue.

Performance Measures/Administrative Issues Presentations

<http://www.uppermidwestfreight.org/events/files/MKE0304/PerfMeasures.pdf>

<http://www.uppermidwestfreight.org/events/files/MKE0304/Administrative.pdf>

Comments during the presentations

- Environmental measures - delivery times, idle, non-productive use of fuels, congestion - idling vehicle emissions - not reliable in modeling
- If maximum size and weight are lowered, will rail freight increase? This was asked by a participant during the presentation. Researchers answered that this is unknown.
- Products: Impacts measures of regulations - link to Performance Measures

Discussions

Performance Measures

- Reliability is the number one issue given the shift in manufacturing processes and rolling warehouses

- Like data, the performance issues need to reflect the big picture/ larger issues. Perhaps providing a quarterly or monthly snapshot would be helpful.
- None of the performance issues reflect intermodal connectors issues
- Also lacking information on how longer segments perform
- It was noted that performance measures can be easily misused - see it as a grade/report card
 - Need to avoid state by state comparisons and be sensitive to this issue
 - Keep it factual
- Cost of data collection and maintenance is an issue. The raw data needs are substantial. Could this be a function of the federal freight office? This will be looked into.
- In one group, there was general agreement that the measures should be regional in scope and that we should focus on two or three key metrics.
 - Level of service, which includes both minimal delays and small variations in travel time
 - Safety: accident frequency and severity
 - Transportation cost efficiency: Identify a set of trips that are typical in the region and measure the cost and time for these trips on a continuing basis.
 - The states may want additional metrics, but that would be their responsibility
- Historical look at measures would be interesting, also good to look at temporal trends
- Look at trends to compare our region to others
 - National indices are important also, should not discard the new "Transportation Index"
- Suggestion to spend some time looking at the goals
 - Set targets for the measures
 - Involve businesses, economic development groups, and transportation agencies
- For some, measures are not an issue
 - Only legislatures, the people who give the money, care about performance measures
- Upfront discussions on what measures are and what can we have control over
 - Feds have measures for things they have no control over
- Ohio uses congestion, mobility, and safety as three important measures
 - Ohio Performance Index
- Iowa uses efficiency, safety, and quality of life as important measures. They also use more tradition measures such as rating pavement.
- Milwaukee area MPO uses congestion, reliability, and safety

Administrative Issues

- Did not see major impacts from administrative issues
 - Carriers and shippers (high value) do not see any admin/regulatory issues
 - The low value bulk commodities see more admin/regulatory issues
- The administrative differences among the highways in the regional network seemed to be small
 - Current administrative impediments for the highway carriers seems to be marginal
- Yet, for these arguments presented at two of the groups, there was another that argued that for operators, the lack of standardization is a big issue and another group that agreed that more standardization would be a good thing. The research team will continue its work in this area.
- Standard/harmonize truck size and weight is a good goal, but political decisions for exceptions in each of the states makes this goal a challenge
- Prepass programs would be useful, as would coordination between ITS and permits
 - Incident management information could also be useful

- CVISN may solve the efficiency problems
- CVISN is still too new to see if valued, but some participants pointed out that it was working in Illinois and Ohio
- Transponders are more valuable to large companies with multiple drivers
- Weigh stations on both sides of border - need to coordinate
- The role of the carriers in streamlining these programs needs to be addressed
- Rather than starting with the technology capabilities, figure out how it can work to fix the regional disconnects
- Identify impediments
 - Researchers will have to lead
 - Soften with best practices
 - Gaps and redundancies
 - Impacts lists are good
- Want to better identify cross modal impacts of safety--if change this, then impact that
- Michigan higher weights were discussed, noted
- Exemptions for very specific reasons
 - Forest industry 98,000 lbs - on roads made of mud or gravel
- No communication between the states on weight changes, how it impacts
- There was limited discussion on regulations and administrative impediments in rail, water, or air. How is this being addressed? Research team has taken note.
- Large and heavy vehicles will not divert freight from rail. Much of the intermodal freight that goes from truck to rail seems to be high value. This freight will still go intermodal regardless of size and weight rules.

General

- Ask shippers and haulers what is important to them
- Need for identical services between states
- Impacts of regulations on river system (Missouri, Mississippi, Illinois) were brought up by a couple of the groups

Questions

Again, the researchers received many questions that were not expected to be answered at that time, but rather should be thought of as the study continues.

- What are safety impacts of regulatory efficiencies?
- What data is gathered through CVISN technologies?
- How can states cooperate with their CVISN programs? Is it feasible?
- What is goal of regulatory decisions and performance measures?
 - Need policy, possible federal role?
- Do the performance issues recognize water and air as options? Do they tell us about competitive options?
- How to capture intermodal service criteria?
- Process for the performance measures is the most relevant (last slide of Wittwer's presentation)
 - How do you facilitate the process of agreeing on measures and implementing them?
 - Who is going to be the keeper of performance measures?
 - No accountability for region, "no regional government"

- Will stakeholders be held accountable?
- What data is available and necessary?
 - Need good data on congestion, reliability, safety, level of service, road conditions, and other quality of life impacts
- What is timeframe and product quality?
 - Not doing long-term performance measures
- Is economic impact something you measure, or is it a goal?
- Measures are important, but do we have an impact on them? If not, then why should we collect data?
 - Even if we do have an impact, is it measurable? The example used to represent this concern was the impact on pollution. Improvements in transportation do have an impact on pollution, but given all of the other factors that impact pollution, can we measure the impact with a reasonable degree of confidence?

Synthesis of Practices Presentations

<http://www.uppermidwestfreight.org/events/files/MKE0304/Synthesis.pdf>

Comments during the presentation

- The overall feeling was that those case studies that do not involve transportation should be ruled out for detailed research
- This area of the study could really be used for professional development in freight

Discussions

Clearinghouse

- Monumental task to upkeep the clearinghouse
- Provide links to other materials only, do not recreate
- Could be made more useful by having a system to notify people when something new is added and have a way to notify the administrator of the site when there is something new to add (list serve?)
- Don't spend too much time collecting items for the clearinghouse, since many DOTs already have libraries that do this type of work
 - Possibly focus on specific info for this study
- There was general agreement that the web site with the clearinghouse was a good idea. Some concern was expressed as to how useful it would be.
 - Will find use in the clearinghouse at least as a reference, could be more useful if we send it on to others
- Do not duplicate the bibliographic element of someone else
 - FHWA-Freight Professional Development
 - CATS-Intermodal Advisory Task Force

Report

- Criteria and Analysis of case studies
 - Be careful not to make this too formula-like
 - Too much weight for international

- Possibly include points for multiple modes of transportation
- Combine the stage and status
- Give more thought to the uniqueness of the case study and how our effort is different or similar
- Looking at failures and why they failed, we often learn as much or more from our failures
- How do you define success
 - Earmarks (not to CAOs)? Private sector involvement?
- Who is the champion (provide contact info)? Who are they? What was their role?
- Funding
 - Private funding?
- Catalyst
 - Private sector (?)
- If we intend to build a coalition of Midwest states there must be both an administrative process and political agreement among the states
- There was some discussion of the fact that the Midwest is the last region to work together on this type of coalition
- One group's suggestions for case studies:
 - CREATE
 - Mid Atlantic Rail Coalition
 - LATTS
 - Reason Foundation study on truck tolls
 - IDOT study
- One group discussed an expanded criteria format, but didn't recommend it
- How to apply the learning was left out; almost called for subcommittees/working groups but need to get explicit buy in from participants
- Very good idea—if it's done properly. Need a template to do the assessment against so they are all comparable. Focus on a half dozen for detail—the rest could be just a paragraph.