

**FREIGHT COMMITTEE**  
of the  
**REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**Summary of January 14, 2009 Meeting**

This meeting was held in Conference Room 4 at the State Transportation Building.

The meeting was called to order at 1:10 PM.

- 1. Introductions and Chair's Report** –Walter Bonin, *Chair and City of Marlborough*
- 2. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

The minutes of November 12, 2008, were approved unanimously with speaker's name corrected.

- 3. Member Announcements**

The Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources recently announced a series of alternative vehicle grants. The Plug-In Hybrid Funding Program promotes the commercialization of plug-in hybrid vehicles through funds available for private Massachusetts-based companies to help purchase these vehicles. The CNG Van Funding Program promotes the use of compressed natural gas vehicles through funds available for private Massachusetts-based companies to help purchase CNG commuter vans. The Heavy Duty Hybrid Funding Program promotes the use of heavy-duty hybrid vehicles through funds for Massachusetts based companies and public entities to help purchase these vehicles. The deadline for proposal submission is February 27. More information about these programs is available at the Department's website. (Abby Swaine, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)

The Federal Highway Administration's *Talking Freight* webinar series will continue on February 18 with "Moving Size and Weight Enforcement to the 21st Century". More information about this and archived webinars is available at: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/freightplanning/talking.htm>. (A. Swaine)

EPA's SmartWay Program has added new partners. The program continues to gain popularity among shippers and carriers. (A. Swaine)

The Massachusetts Infrastructure Investment Coalition will soon release a final report on rail freight needs in the state. The Coalition will soon file a bill relative to a State Infrastructure Bank. (Dom D'Eramo, Millis)

A bulk freight facility may remain in Boston at a Massport facility when the State relocates Beacon Park Yards. Harvard is filing Environmental Notification Forms (ENF) piecemeal. Proposals to close and relocate Beacon Park Yards should involve an Environmental Notification

Form to assess the potential for environmental and transportation impacts of this proposal, including congestion in any proposed rail yard site. (Frank DeMasi, Wellesley)

Harvard University's plans for expanding in Allston have so far not considered the potential increase in greenhouse gas emissions. An expansion of this magnitude should require an assessment of anticipated emissions. (F. DeMasi)

This Committee must go through the Advisory Council. Individuals may comment on environmental documents independently, but not as representing the Advisory Council. (D. D'Eramo)

The I-95 Corridor Coalition's Intermodal Committee is looking at strategies to integrate landside and seaside shipping. Kristin Decas, Executive Director of the New Bedford Harbor Development Commission, is participating on the Committee. (F. DeMasi)

The region is losing jobs as a result of Harvard buying up the infrastructure of Beacon Park Yards. There is a machine shop with 365 jobs that will be closed. (F. DeMasi)

The MetroWest Growth Management Committee is concerned that congestion will increase if the State relocates the Beacon Park Yards transloading facility. The Environmental Impact Study considers local issues but does not consider regional issues. The Freight Committee is concerned that the State will make decisions about Beacon Park Yards before the Massachusetts Freight and Rail Plan is completed. The Freight Committee should plan to raise this issue in its February Committee Report to the Advisory Council. (W. Bonin)

The State Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs lays out requirements for the scope of an Environmental Impact Report. An Environmental Impact Statement is a federal document. The Committee might draft a one-page statement discussing our concerns that indirect impacts are not being adequately addressed by the ENF as proposed. If the Advisory Council agrees, this could then be sent on to the MPO Chair. (D. D'Eramo)

The Northeastern States Coalition is concerned that localized traffic at the ports is not being adequately addressed. (A. Swaine)

#### **4. Discussion of Final Freight Committee Charter**

This discussion was tabled. The Freight Committee and the Advisory Council chair will review and discuss the red-lined version of the charter at the February 11 meeting.

#### **5. Discussion of Statewide Freight and Rail Plan**

Although there is a lot of enthusiasm for the progress of the Massachusetts Freight and Rail Plan, there is concern that it will ultimately need greater regional coordination between local authorities and State officials. (W. Bonin)

The work done is excellent. The Plan may lag due to the appointment of a new Secretary of Transportation and Public Works who may want some time to evaluate the work done prior to his taking office. (D. D'Eramo)

The Plan's website offers a good deal of material about the State's recent outreach for this Plan. The Plan's website address is <http://www.massfreightandrailplan.com/>. (F. DeMasi)

The State's transportation priorities should follow from the State's economic development priorities. The State should be primarily concerned with economic growth, and transportation investments should support that growth. (W. Bonin)

The Committee should prepare a paper on our concerns with the current MPO Regional Transportation Plan and the Statewide Freight and Rail Plan. (F. DeMasi)

MetroWest has not commented yet on the Freight and Rail Plan, but is concerned that there is no land use planning in the studies. (W. Bonin)

We need to bring manufacturing back to the United States and to Massachusetts. The replacement of Harvard-area industries at Beacon Park Yards is not in the State's best interest. (W. Bonin)

F. DeMasi presented a video about South Coast Freight Lines and the benefits of short line railroads. The movie exhibited short line's potential for freight movement around New Bedford and Fall River, including the preservation and rehabilitation of freight infrastructure, improved fuel efficiency, lower highway maintenance costs, a lower consumer costs. Short line rail freight focuses on bulk commodities while trucks move freight that is higher cost and time sensitive; Short lines could take trucks off of the highways. The current infrastructure needs maintenance and improvement; the branch lines are currently have 10 mile per hour speed limits, which should be greatly improved to get maximum efficiency. There should also be transloading facilities.

Mass Coastal Railroad is a short line that transfers trash from Cape Cod communities to a SEMASS facility in Rochester. Mass Coastal has added routes to other facilities for transporting more valuable recyclables and wants to move construction and other bulk materials, too. EOTPW has been good to work with; it has committed to making some capital improvements to the lines. We keep our railroad at Class 2; we inspect the lines to Class 1 standards. (Chris Podgurski, Mass Coastal Railroad)

I would like the Advisory Council to provide a friendly reminder to the Massachusetts Freight and Rail Plan that there should be capital investment in rail infrastructure. (F. DeMasi)

Are you suggesting projects for the Economic Stimulus Package? (A. Centore)

*We gave Wendy Stern, EOT, our ideas for freight capital needs.* (F. DeMasi)

*We were asked for a list.* (C. Podgurski, Mass Coastal Railroad)

*The Economic Stimulus projects will be mostly state-managed.* (S. Olanoff)

Legislative and executive initiatives to refine and consolidate the State's transportation system should be coordinated with the Freight and Rail Plan and other existing studies. New initiatives should take advantage of what is already on the ground. (F. DeMasi)

## **6. Discussion of New MEPA Emission and Protocol Policies**

The Freight and Rail Plan should recognize and follow the State's new environmental regulations. The Plan's intentions to encourage transloading in MetroWest runs against these policies. (W. Bonin)

A. Swaine will speak with colleagues at the EPA for guidance on these policies.

## **7. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 2:45 PM.

### **Attachments:**

1. Freight Committee Charter – Red-line Version
2. Freight Committee Charter – Final Version

## **Attendance List for January 14, 2009**

### **Agencies**

#### **Cities and Towns**

Walter Bonin, Marlborough  
Frank DeMasi, Wellesley  
Dom D'Eramo, Millis  
Steve Olanoff, Westwood

#### **Citizens Groups**

Malek Al-Khatib, Boston Society of Civil Engineers  
John Businger, Northeast Corridors Initiative  
Arnold Pinsley, MetroWest Growth Management Committee

#### **Guests and Visitors**

Tony Centore, Medfield  
Sydney Culliford, PanAm Railway  
Chris Podgurski, Mass Coastal Railroad  
Abby Swaine, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

#### **MPO Staff**

John Hersey  
Sean Pfalzer  
Pam Wolfe