

--- -- **Draft** --- --

FREIGHT COMMITTEE
of the
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Summary of April 22, 2009 Meeting

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

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 PM.

1. Introductions and Chair's Report –Walter Bonin, *Chair and City of Marlborough*
W. Bonin had no reports and asked if there were any member announcements.

Steve Olanoff, Town of Westwood, announced that the United Planning Work Program (UPWP) Committee met and is accepting study proposals. S. Olanoff requested that the Freight Committee recommend to the Regional Transportation Advisory Council (RTAC) that they submit a freight study proposal to advance the recommendations of the Executive Office of Transportation's (EOT's) Statewide Freight and Rail Plans, expected to be completed by the Fall of 2009.

Frank Demasi, Vice Chair and Town of Wellesley, expressed concern that the recently proposed federal Transportation Infrastructure Bill is not as comprehensive as an earlier bill. F. Demasi supports the development of a Transportation Infrastructure Fund that allows highway monies to be flexed to freight investment.

Members reviewed the previous month's discussion with Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) officials and discussed the importance of getting involved in the public comment process for environmental reviews. Members agreed to stay updated on further MEPA reviews of Beacon Yard and on drafts of the Statewide Freight and Rail Plans (in order to be prepared to ask that any resulting environmental reviews address displaced traffic and regional impact concerns that could result from right-of-way closure at Beacon Yard).

Members expressed interest in receiving an update on the Statewide Freight and Rail Plan from EOT officials at an upcoming meeting and asked staff to make arrangements.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes

The minutes of March 25, 2009 were approved unanimously.

3. Discussion of "Benefits of Freight Rail" Presentation to the Advisory Council

Walter Bonin provided a handout of Massachusetts's 1989 freight goals and noted that none of the goals were met over the past 20 years. He emphasized the importance of following through with the recommendations of the upcoming Statewide Freight and Rail Plan to ensure that such efforts do not go underutilized again. Members suggested the following challenges and obstacles of meeting freight needs in the Boston Region:

- *There is no rate structure in the Boston Region and it is unlikely that one will be created since CSX is the sole owner of freight railroads in the greater Boston area.*
- *Commuter needs continue to expand, which further limits the opportunities for freight*

F. Demasi presented members with his powerpoint, “Benefits of Freight Rail,” that noted the environmental and economic advantages of freight movement by rail over truck.

Members recommended the following strategies to enhance freight in the Boston Region:

- Short line railroads to enhance rail’s capabilities in the short haul market
- Corridor developments (“linear city”) to increase development surrounding rail lines; requires proper zoning in communities along corridor
- Joint use of rails by passenger and freight services to improve freight rail utilization and efficiency

Members discussed the need to enhance support of more rail use and stated the following approaches and concerns:

- Increase public financing by flexing American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) highway funds to public and private rail investment
- There are no freight project proposals currently in the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), though proposals from CSX and other private rail lines are eligible for consideration
- Additional signaling improvements, and crossoverswitch and interlocking points are needed to allow trains to change tracks more effectively to increase the efficiency of the rail networks at relatively lower costs than acquisition of ROW to control dispatching trains

Members discussed additional study proposals for the UPWP, including a short line feasibility study and a truck to rail diversion study. Members believe these studies will support both the increase of freight movement by rail and the overall efficiency of freight movement. The Committee agreed to ask staff to draft the study proposals.

7. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM.

Attachments: Freight Rail Resolution

Massachusetts Guidelines for a State Infrastructure Bank (SIB)

Attendance

Agencies

Lynn Vikesland, Massport

Cities and Towns

Walter Bonin, Marlborough

Frank DeMasi, Wellesley

Steve Olanoff, Westwood

Tony Centore, Medfield

Citizens Groups

Guests and Visitors

Ed Lowney

Richard Flynn, NorthEast Logistics Systems, LLC

MPO Staff

Anne McGahan

Sean Pfalzer

Pam Wolfe

Massachusetts Guidelines for a State Infrastructure Bank

Section 1602 of the Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) of **2005** established a new State Infrastructure Bank (SIB) program under which **all States** are authorized to enter into cooperative agreements with the Secretary to establish infrastructure revolving funds eligible to be capitalized with Federal transportation funds authorized for fiscal years 2005-2009.

States that have adopted an SIB program have had success in funding their transportation needs. Some of the original ten pilot states have seen their transportation dollars grow over the 12 years of investment and reinvestment. For instance, as of September 2005 Ohio had over \$135M invested in fifty-seven transportation improvements across the state.

Freight and Leveraging

Along with a Highway Account and a Transit Account, SAFETEA-LU has added the fourth account for Rail projects. This allows certain federal funds to be used for freight expansion where, for instance, railroad companies or rail entities could use SIB funds for freight expansion or improvements or dual use of MBTA rail lines. Rail connections between our marine ports and regional trucking facilities could be funded. Repayments to the bank using revenues or shipping fees collected would essentially be leveraging private investments. As paybacks these private investments would also be available for funding future projects.

The Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) and the Massachusetts Association of Chambers of Commerce Executives (MACCE) have both expressed interest in supporting a Massachusetts State Infrastructure Bank

Preliminary measures to be added to any SIB legislation

A few preliminary measures in preparation for a possible Massachusetts SIB include.

1. **A Draft Guidebook.** Other states have implemented guidebooks for the application process and the disbursement process of their SIB. The proposed Massachusetts Guidebook would take only the best examples from other states and include them in a simple, easy to read draft that outlines the proposed application process and the disbursement and payback options.

2. **A Draft Cooperative Agreement.** As required by SAFETEA-LU, work with the Patrick Administration and the Secretary of the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction will be needed to prepare a draft cooperative agreement between the Commonwealth and the U.S. Secretary of Transportation. This draft agreement will insure the willingness of the executive branch to participate and will be necessary for consideration of this legislation.

Adapted from the Massachusetts Infrastructure Investment Coalition by Frank Demasi