

FREIGHT COMMITTEE
of the
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Summary of June 10, 2009 Meeting

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

The meeting was called to order at 1:15 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.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes

The minutes of April 22, 2009, were approved with changes by W. Bonin to page 1.

3. Discussion on Economic Development Related to Freight and Distribution –
Kristina Egan, EOT

K. Egan briefed members on the status of South Coast Rail. The possible rail routes have been reduced from an initial 65 alternatives to a current 3 alternatives, one of which is a dedicated bus alternative. The state plans to select a preferred alternative in September, and then environmental mitigation planning can begin. South Coast Rail seeks to accommodate freight during the off peak periods and EOT is working with CSX to allow additional freight capacity. A Corridor Plan, featuring Smart Growth strategies, will be released in several weeks and will focus on maximizing economic benefits. The plan will review priority freight areas in order to ensure that municipalities are planning ahead for freight. (K. Egan)

The Committee raised the following questions and comments regarding the promotion of freight rail through the South Coast Rail project:

- Has there been an assessment of potential uses for abandoned rail sites?
- Improvements to infrastructure could increase demand for freight rail.

EOT provided the following responses:

- There is a current lack of demand for abandoned rail sites. The state plans to link South Coast Rail to the existing infrastructure by upgrading tracks and providing maintenance.
- The infrastructure improvements can increase demand, but growth will be limited due to the lack of connections to the national rail network.

The Committee raised the following questions, comments, and concerns about how to handle future growth in Massachusetts:

- Expressed concern that the supply chain in Eastern Massachusetts currently experiences congestion that is likely to grow worse in the future as more freight is moved by truck instead of rail.
- Posed questions about the freight needs of Massachusetts in 2025 and stated that the commonwealth must plan toward those projections.
- Considered the possibility of using the Commonwealth of Virginia as a case study for how to plan for future freight rail needs.
- Wondered if part of the state's agenda is to increase freight rail. Cited members' view that EOT and freight advocates need to engage in outreach with municipalities to address the needs of freight and also to bridge the education gap between the preconceptions about freight and the benefits of freight; proposed bringing rail shippers to public meetings to educate the public about freight rail's ability to decrease local taxes.
- Agreed that freight rail must coordinate with housing, transportation, and economic development to advance the state policy recommendations.

EOT provided the following responses:

- EOT aims to maximize economic development and reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs).
- Massachusetts's municipalities have recently focused more on attracting higher wage jobs, such as the biotech industries, which are not as dependent on freight rail.

For more information on South Coast Rail, please visit www.southcoastrail.com.

4. Update on the Executive Office of Transportation's (EOT's) Statewide Freight Study – Paul Nelson, EOT

The State Freight Plan has undergone a comprehensive evaluation and there will be four outreach meetings this summer. The plan will attempt to quantify the needs, issues, and opportunities of freight rail to better guide future investment and discussion.

The Committee raised the following views and concerns about the importance of land use policy in regard to freight rail:

- It's important to maintain freight rail in the urban core in order to maintain freight rail's role in the intermodal system. Rail yards in the urban core, with high property values, must be protected from development to avoid having freight facilities moved westward.
- The closure of Beacon Park will push freight westward, which will promote industrial sprawl between Albany, NY and Worcester, MA.
- Neglecting freight needs may increase the cost of doing business in Massachusetts and could cause industries to leave the state.

The Committee raised the following questions and suggested the following strategies for improving freight rail in Massachusetts:

- How can companies grow without relying on trucks?
- How can the competition of rail be increased?

- Short lines in Eastern Massachusetts are needed to increase the utilization of freight rail, but the support of the state is necessary in order to allow Class One Railroads to leave the branch lines.
- A State Infrastructure Bank would allow a public/private partnering of funds to pay for infrastructure improvements and the House bill coming up for a hearing would establish a revolving fund.
- The EPA website has a shipper model calculator to help analyze the environmental benefits of rail compared to truck.

EOT provided the following responses:

- An important step would be to identify the stakeholders to champion freight rail.
- The Statewide Freight Plan will identify economic, environmental, and other costs associated with shipping by truck compared to other modes in order to establish a better balance of modes.

5. Announcements

John Businger, National Corridors Initiative, announced that he would be hosting the radio segment “Transportation Thursday” on 1510 AM at 10:15am and encouraged the Committee to tune in.

6. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:45 PM.

Attachments: South Coast Rail Brochure (11/08)

Massachusetts Infrastructure Investment Coalition – Status Report (12/08)

Association of American Railroads Documents

CMAQ and Intermodal Freight Transportation

“Facing a Raging Storm Together” by Roy Blanchard

Interchange (Fall 2008)

Attendance

Agencies

Tim Doherty, EOT

Kristina Egan, EOT

Alison Felix, MAPC

Paul Nelson, EOT

Abby Swaine, EPA NE

Lynn Vikesland, Massport

Matt Whitehead, EPA NE

Cities and Towns

Walter Bonin, Marlborough

Tony Centore, Medfield

Frank DeMasi, Wellesley

Steve Olanoff, Westwood

Arnold Pinsley, Natick

Citizens Groups

John Businger, National Corridors Initiative

Romin Koebel, FCDC

Guests and Visitors

Bob Barren

Richard Flynn, NorthEast Logistics Systems, LLC

Lance Hill, VHB

Ed Lowney

Marilyn MacNab

Mike McArdle, VHB

Mike Rennie, PVRR

John Schmitter, KEP LLC

MPO Staff
Mike Callahan
Anne McGahan
Sean Pfalzer