

FREIGHT COMMITTEE
of the
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Summary of the January 13, 2010 Meeting

The meeting was held in Conference Room 4 of the State Transportation Building.

1. Introductions and Chair's Report – *Walter Bonin, Co-Chair*

W. Bonin called the meeting to order at 1:10 PM. Members, guests, visitors, and staff introduced themselves (see the attached attendance list).

2. Announcements

- Marilyn Wellons, representing the Riverside Neighborhood Coalition, reported on the Climate Congress held on December 12, 2009, by Cambridge. The group intends to recommend actions to the city on how to reduce carbon emissions, but they overlooked freight distribution. M. Wellons is working on a draft response and would like the Freight Committee to also make a statement about the need to consider freight transportation as the city addresses emissions.
- Mike Callahan, of the MPO staff, announced the MPO's open house on January 20.
- Lynn Vikesland of Massport updated members on port issues and projects. Container imports are down by about six to seven percent. However, container exports continue to grow largely because of waste products (such as scrap metal) and wood products. The cruise terminal is being expanded. About 300,000 passengers per year come into the terminal. The Tobin Bridge is no longer a Massport asset, and while many of those employees have found jobs, the agency is likely to lay off about 24 employees.
- Anne Lynch of the Massachusetts Motor Transportation Association updated members on trucking issues. The ruling on the Boston hazardous materials truck route issue pleases the organization. Boston must reconsider their truck routes and has until May 17 to make changes. Their regulations forced trucks carrying hazardous loads onto Route 128, which many communities along the route were unaware of. Frank DeMasi, co-chair, suggested this should be a topic for a future Advisory Council meeting.

3. Approval of the draft January 13, 2010 Meeting Minutes – *Walter Bonin, Co-Chair*

The minutes were unanimously approved.

4. Freight Rail Access and Economic Development at Devens – *Neil Angus, Environmental Planner for the Devens Enterprise Commission*

The Devens Enterprise Commission was formed in 1996 after Fort Devens closed. The state owns the land, which is about 30 miles northwest of Boston, and the Devens Enterprise Commission is the regulatory authority. 4,500 jobs and 5.4 million square feet of development have been created on the former base. Currently there are approximately 90 businesses, most of which have fewer than 300 employees.

The site is at a major rail junction for New England. It is directly connected to the Fitchburg Commuter Rail line and has access to multiple freight operators. The park also has good access to Interstate 495, which is approximately eight minutes away by roadway.

N. Angus said the Devens Enterprise Commission supports rail use for the following reasons:

- It is one aspect of a sustainable approach to base redevelopment.
- It reduces road congestion and wear and tear.
- It is part of their transportation demand management plan.
- It improves environmental quality.

The portion of the park with freight rail access is zoned for businesses with a reliance on rail (named the rail zoning district). Among the companies located in this district are a corrugated cardboard manufacturer and a recycling facility for construction and demolition debris. The majority of the firms in this district are doing distribution. There is little manufacturing within the base. There are few available parcels remaining in this zone, but there is some potential for expansions within the existing buildings. The Devens Enterprise Commission is also working to make some of the vacant facilities rail accessible. Among the major companies that recently left the zone are Gillette and North American Van Lines. There is no potential to expand the size of the rail zoning district.

Some workers use commuter rail to access the site. It takes approximately five minutes to drive from the Ayer MBTA commuter rail station to the center of the base. Mass Development will create a shuttle bus system once development reaches a certain level, which N. Angus believes is 5,000 jobs. However, the first weekday outbound train from Boston to Fitchburg arrives in Ayer at approximately 9:50 AM. The Devens Enterprise Commission is working to improve service on the Fitchburg line as a member of the Fitchburg Line Working Group.

N. Angus is currently working with Pan-Am Railways to reduce noise and engine idling at the base. The Devens Enterprise Commission has distributed pamphlets making the companies and railroads aware of the state idling laws. They also have partnered with the railroad to apply for an Environmental Protection Agency SmartWays grant. The \$900,000 grant will allow Pan Am Railways to install 18 auxiliary power units (APUs), which allow for a safe shutdown of the locomotive engine during periods of inactivity. They currently have 18 on a fleet of 114 engines. These units reduce nitrogen oxide emissions by 40%, hydrocarbon, carbon monoxide, and particulate matter emissions by 90%. Overall, the 18 APUs will reduce air toxics by 7.24 million tons. Additionally, the railroad saves more than 35,000 gallons of fuel per year and greatly reduces noise pollution.

Member Comments and Questions

In response to members' questions, N. Angus made the following additional comments:

- Approximately 60 to 65% of goods distributed from the base are going to the Interstate 495 corridor.
- The army base employed approximately 2,500 more people than are currently employed by the companies at the former base.
- Most of the base housing was torn down because of environmental contamination issues. Some of the housing built before World War II was preserved. N. Angus recognized that there is a need for more housing because the number of jobs far exceeds the number of housing units on the site.
- No big box stores are built in the development because retail stores can not exceed 20,000 square feet.
- All three surrounding communities must agree on any proposed zoning changes or zone expansions within the Devens Enterprise Commission.
- The taxes collected within the Devens Enterprise Commission go to the state. The surrounding school districts receive assistance for their schools on a per pupil basis. The state police patrol the base, but the Devens Enterprise Commission has its own fire department and public works department.
- Companies pay for their own rail spurs.

5. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 PM

Attendance

Agencies

Lynn Vikesland, Massport
 Anne Lynch, Massachusetts Motor
 Transportation Association
 Louis Elisa, Seaport Advisory Council
 Ed Anthes-Washburn, Seaport Advisory
 Council

Cities and Towns

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

Advocacy/Citizens Groups

John Kane, Access Advisory Committee
 to the MBTA
 Dick Flynn – Eastern Mass. Freight Rail
 Coalition
 Marilyn Wellons, Riverside
 Neighborhood Association

Guests and Visitors

Neil Angus, Devens Enterprise
 Commission
 Bob Gentile, Framingham
 Ed Lowney, Malden
 Arnold Pinsley, Natick
 Doug Low, Rail America
 Linda Blair
 Marilyn McNab

MPO Staff

Mike Callahan