

MINNESOTA FREIGHT ADVISORY COMMITTEE WINTER MEETING RECAP

The Minnesota Freight Advisory Committee (MFAC) met February 5, 2004, for its Winter quarterly meeting in St. Paul, Minnesota.

MFAC's Action Plan for 2004 calls for the committee to recommend investment needs for the Minnesota Department of Transportation's (Mn/DOT) proposed Fiscal Year '06-'07 budget, to review and recommend priorities for the State Freight Plan and to recommend changes to the Metro Council's freight policy and program selection criteria. Ron Lifson, MFAC Chair, expressed the need for the group to understand the public policy-making process and take advantage of opportunities to provide input.

Carolyn Jones, Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, briefed the committee on the efforts of the Minnesota Transportation Coalition, consisting of 220 members, to define a vision and funding solution for addressing Minnesota's transportation problems. The Chamber is gathering input from businesses around the state and expects to release the results in September 2004. The MFAC will invite Ms. Jones to present the Chamber's vision at its Fall 2004 meeting.

In reviewing the impact MFAC has already had on Mn/DOT priorities, Randy Halvorson, Mn/DOT Program Management Division Director, described the MFAC supported program proposals that were included in Mn/DOT's budget. The department's budget was submitted to the Governor, who made modifications. The budget is presently being considered by the Legislature.

MFAC members provided considerable suggestions as to the freight needs of the State. Dan Beagan, Cambridge Systematics and Ferrol Robinson, SRF Consulting Group, consultants to Mn/DOT developing its first-ever Statewide Freight Plan, presented an overview of the plan tasks and facilitated an MFAC discussion and prioritization of statewide freight needs. The Plan will be completed by the end of the year with opportunity for additional MFAC feedback in the interim.

Requests for involvement in two important planning studies were presented to MFAC. Jim Barton, Metropolitan Council, requested MFAC members to help craft the freight policy for the Council's 2030 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP). Brian Isaacson, Mn/DOT, briefed the committee on where they might help bring a freight perspective to the update of the Mn/DOT Transportation Systems Plan (TSP) for the Twin Cities metro area.

MFAC is a partnership between government and business to exchange ideas and recommend policy and actions that promote safe, productive, and sustainable freight transportation in Minnesota. MFAC, consists of representatives from Minnesota's shipper and carrier communities, as well as a variety of other interested organizations, and provides advice to the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) and the Metropolitan Council regarding freight issues and investments.

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