

MINNESOTA FREIGHT ADVISORY COMMITTEE SPRING 2006 MEETING

The Minnesota Freight Advisory Committee (MFAC) met June 8, 2006, for its Spring quarterly meeting in Bloomington, Minnesota.

Minnesota Statewide Freight Plan

John Tompkins, Mn/DOT, Manager – Freight Planning & Development, outlined the plan for implementing the recommendations from the Statewide Freight Plan, which was completed in 2005 with significant input from MFAC.

Discussion:

- Recommendation that emphasis be placed on safety issues and concerns, especially in the trucking sector. Some areas for consideration would include: truck crash analysis, such as, identifying higher crash incident locations; downstream system conditions; engineering considerations; etc.
 - Include truck accident evaluations and programs to reduce them in district plans and studies.
 - Several suggestions and informing regarding available methods and technology to address truck accident analysis were offered.
 - Recommendation to tie analyses to freight generators; connectors; and corridors.
 - Advice from lead consultant on Mn/DOT Metro Freight Generators/Clusters Study that numerous industries have and will be consulted and surveyed in the course of the study.
 - Recommendation from Chairman that Mn/DOT consult with MFAC members where possible in the course of the study and other matters tied to truck safety issues.
- (Contact John Tompkins at: john.tompkins@dot.state.mn.us for a copy of the presentation)

Duluth Ports – Minnesota Impacts

Adolph Ojard – Director, Duluth Seaway Port Authority, provided an overview of Duluth Port activities, trends and directions with emphasis on freight services opportunities of possible interest to MFAC shipper members.

Discussion:

- Jones Act constrictions on US port to US port movements cited.
- US ship yards build Naval Vessels but not merchant ships – not competitive with foreign shipbuilders.
- It would be useful to have transit time comparisons when quoting freight service offerings via the port versus alternative modes.
- Roll-on/roll-off ferry service between Thunder Bay and Duluth would relieve truck pressure on US Hwy 61; however, the short haul nature of the move and longer transit times would be difficult to overcome on a competitive basis.
- Consider truck driver hours of service benefits of movement by RO/RO.
- Follow-up study on this topic by Great Lakes Maritime Research Center?

(Contact Bob Gale at: robert.gale@dot.state.mn.us for a copy of the presentation)

Chairman's forum

(Members provide information and express concerns on current and upcoming issues and events in the freight transportation area.)

- Advice provided regarding a statewide videoconference on 6/26/06 being led by Congressman Colin Peterson regarding a proposed north/south truck corridor in western Minnesota.
- Education/training of future freight transportation company operators/professionals was discussed including needs in all modes as well as warehousing and terminal operations. Where should the impetus for this effort come from? Should the state initiate and conduct these efforts? What should the private sector be doing in this area? Can the

state subsidize education efforts? What should the nature and scope be of education and training programs? It was recommended and agreed that the next MFAC meeting include a specific agenda item that would address the whole issue of education and training for freight transportation professionals/operators.

- Further discussion regarding truck safety concerns included citing of Transportation Research Board (TRB) Proceedings #38 on “future truck and bus safety research opportunities” and safety audit results studies. *It was recommended and agreed that this topic area would be further addressed at the next MFAC meeting.*

- Interest was expressed in an in-depth review of the ethanol/bio-diesel industry and programs in Minnesota with special emphasis on the economic benefits; consequences; transportation system impacts and policy/investment issues, etc. The ethanol/biodiesel topic will be considered for inclusion/coverage at the next MFAC meeting.

White Paper on the Upper Midwest Region Transportation & Economy

Jason Bittner – Deputy Director, Midwest Regional Transportation Center presented an overview of the Upper Midwest freight transportation as developed from the Upper Midwest Regional Freight Transportation Corridor Study.

(Contact Bob Gale at: robert.gale@dot.state.mn.us for a copy of the presentation)

2006 Minnesota Legislative Session - Transportation Matters Review

- Betsy Parker – Director, Office of Government Affairs, Mn/DOT, advised regarding the outcome for the proposed Truck Size & Weight legislation which included provisions primarily for heavier trucks. MFAC members were urged to make their opinions on this and other issues impacting freight transportation known to their legislators. Those interested in this kind of follow-up are welcomed to contact Betsy if they wish to become more informed and involved on this issue - contact information: Phone: 651-296-3002/e-mail: betsy.parker@dot.state.mn.us

- Bill Gardner – Director, Office of Freight, Rail and Waterways, Mn/DOT, presented on the outcome for 2006 bonding funding legislative requests for the Minnesota Rail Service Improvement (MRSI) program (\$2 Million) and the Minnesota Port Development Assistance program (\$3 Million). Proposed changes to the MRSI program to allow/include provisions to provide direct grant moneys for rail improvement investments did not survive the session as they were tied to the larger transportation bill that failed to pass. Mn/DOT has initiated a comprehensive review of the MRSI program which will be discussed at a future meeting.

(Contact Bob Gale at: robert.gale@dot.state.mn.us for a copy of the presentation)

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.

For more information, contact Bill Gardner, MN/DOT Office of Freight & Commercial Vehicle Operations at 651-215-9669 or william.gardner@dot.state.mn.us.