

Summary Comments of Freight Advisory Interviews

Iowa Freight Advisory Council (IFAC)

“to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and help the Iowa DOT better understand the complexities associated with freight movements to more effectively guide public investment in the transportation infrastructure.”

The Iowa Freight Advisory Council (IFAC) had its first meeting in August 2012. The impetus for its creation came from two related causes. First, the current Iowa DOT (IDOT) Director thought that stronger private sector understanding and support for transportation was important for the state. Secondly, the perceived importance and priority of freight transportation has risen, triggered by a concern about the continued viability of freight movement on the Mississippi.

The Director’s focus on industry and freight transportation has resulted in a much stronger and widespread emphasis on freight within IDOT. IDOT does not have a freight office but has integrated freight more broadly within the department. The lead staff for working with IFAC are from planning and rail.

IFAC has been established on a relatively informal basis. It is not authorized in state law and does not have detailed bylaws. Membership is at about 30 and there is a Chair and Vice-Chair, but beyond that not an elaborate structure and process. It is thought that a more formal organization might squelch the private sector participation. IFAC membership is limited to the private sector. IDOT and other State agency staff are ex officio members. At meetings the distinction is not sharp as participation is open and free and there is an effort to mix the private and public participants.

The staff to IFAC have successfully used various techniques (electronic voting process, facilitated weighted voting) at meetings to engage the interest and useful participation of members. Through a brainstorming process the IFAC identified 42 issues in 7 clusters focused on regulatory issues, infrastructure, labor (truck driver shortage), intermodal and transload facilities. Seven white papers were prepared, but it was difficult secure active member involvement in their preparation. The issues and trends identified were incorporated in the freight plan and IFAC is connected to the development of the freight plan.

Iowa has not tried to make IFAC into a publicly prominent organization. Meetings are open but attendance by non-members is light. IFAC is viewed as a valuable and successful means for two-way education between government and industry. Staff look for ways of continuing to improve the meetings. In addition to sophisticated meeting tools, they discovered that meeting on Fridays increased attendance and that it was important to lay out the plan—dates and themes—for the quarterly meetings a year at a time.

The IFAC web site has been a well-used and effective means of communication.

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Kansas Freight Advisory Committee (KFAC)

The Kansas Freight Advisory Committee (KFAC) was established in January 2014 to advise and assist the Kansas DOT (KDOT) and the Kansas Turnpike Authority (KTA) on freight matters in general and to advocate for freight transportation. It met four times in 2014. The Chair of KFAC is the Kansas Secretary of Transportation; the Vice-Chair is the Director of the Kansas City SmartPort. Membership is broad and diverse, reflective of the Kansas economy and freight industry, and includes state agencies and members of the legislature. Participation in the first year of operation has been strong, likely explained in part by the newness of KFAC and the high level leadership.

Most important to the KFAC agenda and its success to date is the focus on two major KDOT projects: a transload facility site analysis for potential future locations of transload facilities throughout the state, and; a statewide truck parking analysis to identify current truck parking facilities (public and private), current and potential future truck parking needs. KDOT is serving in an oversight and advisory role for both of these projects which are of great interest and importance to the freight industry. Two KFAC subcommittees have been organized for these projects which include both KFAC members and others.

KFAC is focused on the completion of these projects and its agenda beyond is not yet determined.

Missouri Freight Advisory Committee (MoFAC)

The Missouri Freight Advisory Committee (MoFAC) is in the planning stage, which began in the Spring of 2014. Formal establishment is expected in the Fall of 2015 or, more likely, in the Spring of 2016. The most significant feature of the MoFAC plan is freight advisory committees in each of the seven Missouri DOT (MoDOT) districts. A statewide FAC (MoFAC) will have a representative from each of the districts as well as the standard mix of members from the freight and freight-related interests. This arrangement reflects the highly decentralized organization of MoDOT. All design and maintenance, with the exception of bridges, is handled in the districts. The extent of decentralization is a reflection of the size of the state and diversity among the sub-state regions. It is thought that by having the district FACs MoDOT and MoFAC will have a well-developed network of freight contacts throughout the state.

For at least several districts—St. Louis and Kansas City-- existing RPCs will serve as FACs. There are 18 RPCs in the state.

“Designing with freight in mind” is a message that has gone from headquarters to the districts. Some have integrated freight considerations into their activities more than others—in part because freight is more important in some than others—but the district FACs are expected to bring more attention to freight.

For at least the first year there will be two meetings—a Fall meeting to identify needs for the STIP and a Spring meeting to review the five year plan, both general and specific. MoFAC will produce a report with comments. MoDOT has a small freight enhancement program. MoFAC will make recommendations on project funding. MoFAC is expected to enrich the state freight plan as well.

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Meetings, both statewide and district will also be used to strengthen the understanding of the importance of freight movement and the networks and relationships that are important. They will also help MoDOT to better understand how to manage its activities, e.g. what months to avoid road work given the economic activity underway. A consultant may be retained to assist with meetings.

MoFAC is not likely to have a highly structured organization with detailed bylaws. The message is “let’s come together and problem-solve.” The experience in Missouri has been that, “When you invite people to come to the table and ask them to tell you what they think it has real benefits. You discover needs that you had no idea of. And it is not as scary as you might think.”

The membership of the district FACs is expected to be about 20 with MoFAC being somewhat larger.

Success of MoFAC will be judged by the level of private engagement. “They will come if there is something valuable that is worth their time. If they don’t see results, they will cease coming to the table.” MoDOT staff thinks that an invitation to participate from a high level, possibly the Governor, will be important.

As part of the planning process, MoDOT staff looked at FACS in other states and made a visit to Tennessee which has a decentralized arrangement and uses a consultant for logistics, administration, and data.

Oregon Freight Advisory Committee (OFAC)

The Oregon Freight Advisory Committee (OFAC) began operations in 1998 (the same year as MFAC) and was authorized in state law in 2001. It is generally thought to be of the most successful state freight advisory committees. The law provides a general description of OFAC’s purpose, membership, and operations which is developed in more detail in the OFAC bylaws. Central to OFAC’s agenda and perceived importance is its role in reviewing, ranking, and commenting on projects, both Oregon DOT (ODOT) regular program and ConnectOregon, a multimodal investment program funded by lottery proceeds, and other programs as needed.

In the case of ConnectOregon OFAC ranks all submitted projects and submits its rankings with comments to the Oregon Transportation Commission. OFAC also reviews the State Transportation Investment Plan and provides to ODOT what is effectively a project-specific freight impact assessment covering all projects not just those identified specifically as “freight. The OFAC project reviews are respected and influential. For this reason OFAC serving on OFAC is viewed as important and meetings focused on project review are well-attended.

OFAC submits an annual report to the Oregon Transportation Commission. The annual report is a substantial document that describes OFAC’s history, goals and objectives, activities and profiles new members. It also describes the years review of ConnectOregon projects and, in the 2014 Report summarizes meetings outside of Salem and the Portland area and describes freight sight visits.

The state law authorization and the project review responsibilities of OFAC would appear to be linked, i.e. influence on projects is more likely to require a legal basis for the activities of OFAC than would be the case if the mission was more general in character.