

# MINNESOTA FREIGHT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## STRATEGIC PLANNING Ad Hoc Working Group

### MEETING AGENDA

June 2, 2015, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Center for Transportation Studies  
University of Minnesota  
511 Washington Avenue SE, Minneapolis, MN

#### Attendees

Bruce Abbe  
Gina Baas  
Ron Dvorak  
Bill Gardner

Hannah Grune  
Jon Huseby  
Donna Koren  
Leo Penne (via phone)

Laurie Ryan  
Chip Smith  
John Tompkins  
Neal Young

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#### Welcome and Introductions

Gina Baas welcomed attendees to the meeting and thanked them for their willingness to be a part of the MFAC strategic planning effort.

#### Update on Meetings with the Commissioner

Since the last Working Group meeting, Bill Gardner, Jon Huseby, and John Tompkins met with Commissioner Zelle, Tim Henkel, and Mike Barnes to discuss the proposed revisions to MFAC. Bill Gardner provided some highlights from the meeting for the group. He noted that Commissioner Zelle was very supportive and did not have any particular issues with any of the recommendations. He noted that there was some discussion on how to involve some of the C-Level MnDOT staff. Gardner noted that scheduling the quarterly meetings in advance for the year would help with this. They also discussed using MFAC's Executive Committee as a "kitchen cabinet" to explore ad hoc issues or provide the Commissioner with quick answers on freight issues and questions.

Additionally, MFAC Chair Bill Goins met one-on-one with Commissioner Zelle since the last Working Group meeting. They covered topics similar to those in Gardner's meeting and discussed ways to bring in more private sector members to MFAC. Goins noted that tying MFAC closer to the Carlson School of Management and their list of supply chain contacts could help MFAC become more of a voice with the

business community. Finally, Goins reported that he and the Commissioner discussed ways to improve Minnesota's economic vitality.

### **Finalize Proposed Recommendations**

The group then turned toward discussing the recommended changes for MFAC. Some of the highlights from this discussion include:

- Ron Dvorak suggested shortening the Mission & Objectives statement to make it a clearer, direct description of MFAC's activities. He felt the current Mission & Objectives statement was too formal and could turn potential members away. Baas suggested that the current language become part of supporting materials rather than a Mission and Objectives Statement. Gardner agreed, and felt the Statement should become more compelling to show individuals why they should be concerned with freight transportation.
- Dvorak and Huseby suggested not holding meetings in greater Minnesota until the new structure of MFAC was more established.

The group also discussed whether the Committee's role should be "advocating" for transportation needs and resources or "educating" legislators, the public, and other groups on the issues.

- Smith felt that MFAC should serve as a reference, or "fact provider," to help people make decisions and should stay away from the lobbying, advocacy role.
- Huseby noted that stepping away from the lobbyist role would help give MFAC more authority and earn more trust from external groups.
- Abbe felt the group did not need to shy away from the word "advocacy," but noted that MFAC should keep its role as the consultant and interactive committee with MnDOT in mind. He suggested MFAC act as a "blue chip" group that would be MnDOT's resource.
- Baas suggested shifting the language toward "educate" rather than "advocate" to move away from the lobbyist role. Goins and Huseby felt this would be a good option.
- Leo Penne noted that two of the states interviewed for the MFAC Strategic Planning process occupied advocacy roles within their states: the Oregon FAC and the Iowa FAC. He noted that Oregon has a governmental responsibility for commenting on policy, projects, and programs and is asked by the legislature to provide opinions. One of the reasons behind the development of the Iowa FAC was to have knowledgeable and active freight leaders available for input when issues arose. The group felt that MFAC could emulate a similar education and advisory role to Iowa's FAC.
- Dvorak noted that, if properly organized, MFAC could take on a stronger lobbying role, but felt that MFAC should primarily be focused on disseminating information and connections to individual companies so they in turn could initiate change with their own lobbyists.
- Huseby questioned who MFAC would be "advising," and wondered if there could be a stronger way for MFAC to provide information and advice to Minnesota's elected officials. Baas noted that groups like DEED, Met Council, and State Patrol, who would be present during MFAC meetings, could also benefit from this information sharing.

Ultimately, the group agreed that MFAC could be a hub for connections, information, and discussions around emerging freight issues.

Next, the group briefly discussed some of the recommendations that needed more detail and clarification. Baas organized this portion of the agenda around a series of discussion questions.

*What is the relationship of the Freight and Logistics Symposium (FLOG) and the MFAC quarterly meetings?*

- Baas noted that this event has been largely supported by the Center for Transportation Studies to develop the connection between freight-related issues and CTS. MnDOT has also given some financial support for the event, as well, and it has operated as a quarterly MFAC meeting. Baas asked the group if they still saw a connection between FLOG and MFAC. She noted that the University would like to have an education element a role on the agenda at FLOG, but is open to changes in the event.
- Smith suggested carving out some time for a meeting of the executive council/board/members of MFAC to be held in conjunction with FLOG. He felt it was valuable for MFAC to continue to participate in the Symposium to highlight the dialogue it promotes between the public and private sectors.
- Goins noted that he likes the connection of CTS with MFAC for the educational aspect. He also felt that the symposium has been a strong draw for the private sector.
- Gardner felt it would be a good time to rebrand the event, and suggested using the words “Summit” or “Forum” as an alternative to “Symposium.”
- Baas noted that the planning for this year would probably look similar to past years, but could be reworked in the future. She was open to a name change for 2015’s event.

*Should there be a defined limited membership with terms? Do you agree with the proposed membership categories and numbers?*

- Gardner noted that, while he understands the intent of having separate membership categories, he was unsure of the distinction in the role and responsibilities of different categories.
- Smith noted that he felt fully-fledged members would have clearer expectations to attend meetings and respond to requests for information. He noted that it would be important to have broad representation of members from all industries, and suggested having standing membership categories with appointed representation (rail, motor carrier, warehousing, etc.).
- Gardner noted that it would be important to clearly communicate these membership expectations.
- Young felt it might be more important to have defined categories for the MFAC Executive Committee and ensure that the leadership roles rotate.
- The group suggested holding specific meetings – or portions of meetings – with just the core MFAC members to delve into critical issues. Smith suggested that MnDOT provide a roster of issues for members could weigh in on. Tompkins added that Ex Officio members – like district

engineers – could be included in these meetings to weigh in on issues and have a two-way dialogue. Ex Officio members would not have a “vote,” however.

*What will be the function of the Executive Committee?*

- Gardner viewed the Executive Committee as a “kitchen cabinet” for the Commissioner around any freight issues.
- Goins suggested having a Vice-Chair gain experience and rotate into the Chair role. Smith agreed, and suggested convening a nominating committee for the Vice-Chair role, who would be “heir apparent” to the Chair position.

*What is MnDOT’s role moving forward?*

- The group felt that MnDOT should hold a supporting role in MFAC and not be a voting member.
- Gardner noted that there could also be a stronger role for some of MnDOT’s sister agencies within MFAC to have a stronger role.

### **Implementation Steps**

Baas noted that CTS would revise the recommendations again and email them to the group for final comments. CTS will also create an executive summary of the strategic planning to share with the broader MFAC group at the June 19<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Tompkins noted that, after the June 19<sup>th</sup> meeting, there would be a need to convene the new MFAC Executive Committee to iron out the details of the new MFAC structure.

### **Closing Comments**

Gardner and Goins thanked the group for attending and sharing ideas for the future of the Committee.