

Minnesota Statewide Freight System Plan

Technical Team Meeting

December 4, 2014

Working Topic #2: Minnesota's Strategic Freight Network

Issue

Making decisions to improve freight movement requires focusing on important freight, moving on specific routes, by particular modes, between specific origins and destinations. How can this comprehensive picture of Minnesota freight movement be reflected in designation of a Strategic Freight Network and employed effectively?

Background

The topic of "Minnesota's Strategic Freight Network" is central to the development of the Minnesota Freight System Plan for several reasons:

- **MAP-21 Transportation Legislation** - MAP-21 required the U.S. DOT to designate a highway Primary Freight Network (PFN) consisting of up to 27,000 miles on existing interstate and other roadways, with a possible addition of 3,000 miles in the future. One role of the U.S. DOT PFN is to help states strategically direct resources toward improving freight movement; however, the network designated in Minnesota is not a holistic representation of the State's priority system.
- **Need to knit together MnDOT "freight" networks** – MnDOT has formally and informally designated several networks that have potential overlap with what this project will define as "Minnesota's Strategic Freight Network (SFN)." There is the Interregional Corridor designation for freight, the Twin-Trailer Network, the 10-ton network, and an over-dimensional freight network under development. Each of these have complementary roles and should be utilized and clarified as they relate to the Minnesota SFN.
- **Need for a multimodal system** – The U.S. DOT's PFN is centered on the highway system, the traditional focus of state transportation planning and programming. However, Minnesota's freight system is multimodal and in order for supply chains to work efficiently, each component is critical. Key modal components including the highway system, intermodal hubs and connections to ports/airports, among others should be acknowledged in the Minnesota SFN.



Activity

As part of the development of the Minnesota Statewide Freight System Plan the CS team has organized a Working Group to explore and understand the designations of existing freight-related networks in Minnesota and, complemented by information and data collected during Plan development, articulate the multimodal components of Minnesota's SFN. This task will not determine how the SFN will be used within MnDOT, but may suggest future directions.

While the SFN will be multimodal in nature, the focus initially will be on the highway networks designated at both the Federal and State levels. Participants will discuss the purposes of each of these networks, their overlapping principles, their connectivity across jurisdictions and to regional points of significance, and their applicability to the designation of the SFN. Gaps (in principle) between existing networks and the SFN will also be explored. Then, attention will be centered on the non-highway components of the SFN. While much data is available to determine which highway, rail, or port components are "strategic," the discussion will explore what makes regional hubs or facilities strategic and the level to which (and how) these components are included in the SFN designation.

The output of the Working Group will be reported to the Technical Team for further direction and discussion.

Discussion Topics

- How should measures of freight volume and value be incorporated into the Strategic Freight Network designation?
- What are the challenges to blending statewide, sub-state and local factors into the Strategic Freight Network?
- What criteria should be used to incorporate non-highway freight elements into the Strategic Freight Network?
- How should "traditional" and "emerging" industries be balanced in the development of the "Strategic" Freight Network?
- What private sector data is needed for the development of the Strategic Freight Network and how can it be obtained?
- Are there changes that should be made in state funding to support the Strategic Freight Network?
- There are freight routes, and facilities outside of Minnesota that are important for Minnesota companies, e.g. locks and dams on the Mississippi and rail in Chicago and North Dakota. Should these be incorporated in the Strategic Freight Network and, if so, how?