

## Statewide Freight System Plan nearing completion

By Sue Roe

The Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle Operations is finalizing the [Statewide Freight System Plan](#) in June. The plan will assess freight transportation issues and needs to ensure the state's economic vitality.

A public meeting was held May 25 at Central Office to gather public input about the draft plan.

Interested persons can review the freight plan and provide feedback [online](#). Deadline to submit comments is June 24.



John Tompkins, freight office, talks with Cathy Velasquez Eberhart, Citizens Acting for Rail Safety, during a public hearing May 25 for the Statewide Freight System Plan. The plan will assess freight transportation issues and needs to ensure the state's economic vitality. *Photo by Marcia Lochner*

John Tompkins, project manager, said the freight plan is an update to the 2005 plan.

“After more than 10 years, this plan continues to underscore the importance of a competitive and connected freight transportation system in the state,” said Tompkins.

With increased federal focus on freight through the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century, or [MAP-21](#), and the recently passed Fixing America's Surface Transportation or [FAST Act](#), Tompkins said the updated plan will address today's challenges and prepare Minnesota for the future.

Private companies and other public entities worked with MnDOT to identify industry and economic trends and freight transportation needs and issues. The plan provides a policy framework and strategies for MnDOT and other freight stakeholders to guide improvements to the multimodal freight system, which includes highway, rail, water and air.

The updated plan also includes a freight action agenda, with 30 strategies to preserve and strengthen the condition and performance of the state's freight transportation system. The

action agenda includes an investment plan and dedicated funding for freight projects.

Persons attending Wednesday's meeting had the opportunity to prioritize the 30 strategies so MnDOT can identify freight initiatives and projects.

“The freight system helps drive Minnesota's economy by moving goods within the state and to national and international markets,” said Bill Gardner, director of the Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicles Operations. “Businesses and the communities they operate in rely on a safe, efficient and reliable freight transportation system.”

Between now and 2040, annual freight tonnage in the state is expected to grow significantly and place greater stress on an already-congested system.

The freight plan aligns with the [Statewide Rail Plan](#) and the [Statewide Ports and Waterways Plan](#).

Learn more about [freight in Minnesota](#).