

Minnesota Statewide Freight System Plan

Technical Team Meeting

December 4, 2014

Working Topic #3: Institutionalization of Freight

Issue

What is a “freight project?” Who owns freight? The ability to assess, maintain and improve Minnesota’s freight system will require that resources and responsibility be combined with authority in and between organizations that have the tools necessary to carry out the Freight Action Plan in a coordinated and effective fashion.

Background

The topic of Institutionalizing Freight is critical for the development and implementation of the Freight Action Plan for the following reasons:

- **MAP-21 Transportation Legislation** – MAP-21 includes a number of provisions to improve the condition and performance of the national freight network and support investment in freight-related surface transportation projects. As such, States are encouraged to take larger roles in freight system planning, private sector engagement, project identification, performance measurement, prioritization, and funding; areas of traditional DOT focus, however not traditionally focused on the multimodal freight system.
- **Need to Integrate Freight within MnDOT** – There are several areas where MAP-21 provides explicit direction to integrate freight within State DOTs. For example, in the area of performance measurement, it is anticipated that two new measures related to truck delay and reliability will be required and should be incorporated into MnDOT’s annual performance reporting. In the area of funding, MAP-21 allows an increase Federal share (i.e., 95% for an Interstate System project or 90% for a non-Interstate System project) if the project makes a demonstrable improvement in the efficiency of freight movement and is identified in a State Freight Plan. Each of these (as well as other areas) must be discussed and understood among the offices responsible prior to implementation.
- **Realize the Minnesota GO Vision** – The Minnesota GO Vision explicitly directs MnDOT to consider freight as part of day-to-day activities, as a key part of the vision is related to ensuring the State’s economic competitiveness. The Vision states that the transportation system “enhances and supports Minnesota’s role in a globally competitive economy as well as the international significance and connections of Minnesota’s trade centers.” The MnDOT “family of plans” acknowledges the State Freight Plan outlines actions to contribute to this; currently a standalone document, the State Freight Action Agenda must be thoughtfully integrated into MnDOT’s day-to-day activities to fully realize the Minnesota GO Vision.
- **“Do More With Less”** – Minnesota GO and the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan emphasize the need to apply multimodal solutions that ensure a high return-on-investment,



given constrained resources. A key component of this is building private sector partnerships with the freight industry to understand which projects may provide the biggest benefits. Partnerships are also one way to leverage scarce public transportation dollars and make transportation projects and services more efficient. Another component is to make efficient use of resources to coordinate and prioritize projects that provide benefits to both freight and passenger travelers.

- **Need for Internal and External Agency Education on Freight** – As freight is stepping into the bigger National and Statewide transportation spotlight, both internal (e.g., MnDOT Central and District Offices) and external agency partners need to be educated on the benefits of freight and the importance of including freight considerations throughout the planning and project development cycle, and as part of ongoing system operations and maintenance activities.

Activity

The CS team has organized a Working Group to review and discuss current research and reports relevant to the topic, review data provided by the consultant team and MnDOT, identify data or policy gaps/deficiencies, and develop recommendations for the Advisory Committee/Technical Team and MnDOT for how to use the results of the Working Group. Working Group participants will explore and understand the role of the OFCVO and how its activities are integrated with other Offices and Divisions within MnDOT, identify what works well and areas for improved integration for the benefit of advancing transportation system investment and operations in the State. The Working Group will take into account the most recent freight-related guidance from U.S. DOT as it applies to roles State DOTs should embrace and the current role, duties and interactions of MnDOT's OFCVO to include the existing OFCVO organizational structure, and the overall MnDOT organizational structure. The consideration will be broad and reflect on the current OFCVO role, as well as potential future role in an integrated DOT (e.g., freight as a consideration in planning, programming, design and O&M decisions). Recommendations from the Working Group will be designed to be actionable by the various Working Group members within OFCVO, in Central Office, at the Districts and at other agencies. The Technical Team will receive reports on the activities of the Working Group and provide further discussion and direction.

Topics for Discussion

- What is a "freight project"?
- Are there changes that should be made in the OFCVO to strengthen its role in carrying out the Freight Action Plan?
- What steps should be taken to integrate and strengthen the consideration of freight in core MnDOT functions such as planning, programming, design and O&M?
- What should be done to strengthen the treatment of freight in the districts?
- How should state and local government freight activities be integrated/coordinated?
- How should the private sector, carriers and shippers, including the non-highway modes, be formally integrated into the implementation of the Freight Action Plan?
- What institutional arrangements are needed to coordinate with neighboring states and states farther removed but regionally significant (e.g. Great Northern Corridor)?