

MnDOT District 2 Freight Plan

Project Advisory Committee – Meeting 2

Monday, October 14, 2019

1:00 to 3:00 pm

MnDOT District 2 Headquarters, Bemidji

Attendees

- Katie Caskey (HDR)
- Caroline Miller (HDR)
- Dan Haake (HDR)
- Nancy Graham (MnDOT)
- Robert Clarksen (MnDOT)
- Andrew Andrusko (MnDOT)
- JT Anderson (MnDOT)
- Darren Laesch (MnDOT)
- Dan Bernhardson (ACSC)
- Bryan McCoy (HRDC)
- Mark Borseth (City of Thief River Falls)
- Chris Lauer (Digi-Key)
- Mark Schmitke (Digi-Key)
- Arnie Paradis (Paradis)
- Bruce Hasbargen (Beltrami County)
- Lon Aune (Marshall County)
- Hal Halliday (H2WMA)
- Troy Schroeder (NWRDC)
- Mike Scheef (Marvin Windows and Doors)
- Earl Haugen (Grand Forks-East Grand Forks MPO)

Project Background

Andrew (MnDOT) provided project background information – project history, connection to other plans, role of this plan, etc. Dan (HDR) provided an overview of the District 2 freight planning process and lessons learned from the first PAC meeting.

Outreach Next Steps

Katie (HDR) provided an overview of the next steps for project outreach, which will include phone and in-person interviews and an online survey targeted to freight stakeholders in the District 2 region. There was interest in adding UPS – Thief River, FedEx – Bemidji, Fargo, Arctic Cat, and Polaris to the list of interviewees.

Freight System Profile: Economics

Dan (HDR) presented a high-level overview of Minnesota’s economy at a statewide level and specific to District 2 – freight specific industries, overall employment, freight-related jobs, and information about sugar beet production.

Discussion summary:

- Location quotient is not the best metric for understanding needs in region. Data is confusing and misleading. Federal data in general, because of how they group industries, is not ideal for District 2. Need to show and communicate the data differently to be useful for the planning process.
- Check Freight Related Jobs map – what’s in the inlet? What is the intermodal terminal shown at Badger, MN?
- Talk to Crystal Sugar about sugar beet data. Does it match the Federal data?
- Use this data as context and as indicators. The data will help frame the conversation but isn’t specific enough to be used to make decisions.

Freight System Profile: Overview

Caroline (HDR) presented a high-level overview of the freight system in District 2. Information included highway system information such as national truck network, truck parking needs and facilities, freight trip origin and destination data, and safety; rail system information such as rail operators, intermodal terminals, at-grade crossings, and rail safety; and other modal information such as pipelines and airports/aviation.

Discussion summary:

- Border Crossing Comments:
 - ND closed other crossings so more traffic is getting diverted to Pembina border crossing.
 - US Border Patrol recently decreased hours of operation at crossings in District 2, which is moving more traffic to Pembina as well.
 - Run freight to Winnipeg but have to route through Pembina Port of Entry (POE), which is often a circuitous route. Pembina POE has the most modernized equipment. Would be nice to see crossing on Hwy 59/Lancaster upgraded to Pembina standards (and open longer).
 - Border crossing changes area definitely a trend to keep in mind as part of this planning process.
- Truck Parking Comments:
 - EDL regulations may change will impact truck parking needs/demands. Data may likely change related to truck parking needs?
 - Truck parking is more flexible in rural area. Businesses will let you park in their lot. It’s in the bigger cities like Minneapolis or Chicago where it becomes more of an issue. Fortunate that Hwy 59 has a lot of space so if they need to pull off the road, they can
 - Suggestion to add truck parking question to the online survey – issues, needs, safety, etc.
- Origin-Destination Comments:
 - Freight Question about how StreetLight identifies a freight trip. Response is that it’s largely based on type of GPS transponders (ones that are on commercial trucks).
 - Some surprise about freight volume ending on east side of Lake of the Woods.
 - Canada data is not included but estimate that patterns are tied to which crossing are open.

- Safety Comments:
 - Suggestion to look at rate of fatality/serious injury for freight-related crashes compared to rate for all crashes.
 - Traffic Safety Office has data to show that wider shoulders don't improve safety. Interest in knowing whether they make a difference for trucks specifically.
 - Heard from truckers that if the road is rough or perceived as unsafe they will just use a different route. Specifically, Marvin Windows, since windows are fragile.
 - Time of day, time of year, road conditions are all factors truck drivers weigh when choosing their route.
 - Interest in knowing if there is a spike in crashes during harvest season (Aug-Nov)
- Rail Comments:
 - Confirm active rail lines and crossings. Maps show some areas where track has been removed.
 - Rail crossing data shows current inventory from FRA on state and US highways. There is typically a one year delay on data.
 - Rail crossing data doesn't include township roads. Clarify what level of data the map should show. Should it include county and township roads?
 - Private rail crossings aren't necessarily able to be addressed. Limited resources in general to address rail crossings. Freight system safety dollars can be used for rail crossing improvements in significant areas.
- Pipeline Comments:
 - State doesn't have direct influence over pipelines – most are private. However, State can provide assistance through freight funding, if there is a significant need.
- Airport Comments:
 - Always looking for airport improvements. Weather, like ice, can cause major issues and having to reroute to other airports.

Map Exercise

Katie (HDR) introduced a map activity for the group to do. PAC members were asked to provide comments on a large map of the multimodal freight network in District 2. They were asked to provide comments on the facilities show, areas of particular importance and areas of particular concern.

Summary of Map Exercise:

Location/ Related Highway	Comment
Akeley to southern edge of District 2 (MN Hwy 64)	It is a scary road to use
Bagley to Itasca to Bemidji (MN Hwy 92 to MN Hwy 200 to US Hwy 71)	Route to Lake Itasca area has a lot of RV traffic
Nielsville to Perley	This rail line is abandoned
Beltrami to Ada	This rail line is abandoned; No intermodal terminal in Ada
Thief River Falls to Detroit Lakes (US Hwy 59)	Would like to see three lanes on US Hwy 59

Location/ Related Highway	Comment
Thief River Falls	Would like to see assistance for airport
Thief River Falls	Will be building more roundabouts in Thief River Falls
MN Hwy 220 to St. Hilaire (Co Rd 21)	Would like to see MnDOT take over this roadway
Oslo, MN	Spring flooding near the Oslo, MN area
Western part of the district	Would like to see turn lanes added into Crystal Sugar facilities, and ag facilities more broadly
US/Canada border crossing north of Lancaster	Note that crossing closes at 8PM
Roseau to Warroad	This rail line is abandoned
Lake of the Woods County	Would like to see how much timber industry traffic there is
US/Canada border crossing near Baudette	Not that crossing is open 24 hours, 7 days a week, year round

See attachments for more detail.

Next Steps

Dan (HDR) presented the next steps in the planning process. Short term steps include conducting stakeholder outreach. Long term steps include developing major findings and creating the final document.

Attachments

Below are photos of the map exercise comments.



