

## **MnDOT District 3 Freight Plan SWOT Analysis**

### **Background**

A SWOT analysis was conducted for the District 3 Freight Plan with attendees at the Advisory Committee Meeting #2 on December 11, 2019. Attendees discussed each area in small groups and then reported back their findings. The following serves as a record of all feedback that was received. Certain items that were mentioned multiple times by separate individuals are tracked.

### **Strengths**

#### **Road**

- Interstate 94 (*2 comments*)
- Number of major arterial corridors (I-94, TH 23, etc), and the accessibility they provide
- Recent bridge improvements
- Alliance between MnDOT and counties for funding CSAH route improvements – especially for E/W corridors or areas with limited trunk highway access
- High-quality maintenance of major routes (snow plowing, etc.)
- Limited congestion

#### **Rail**

- BNSF rail accessibility, specifically, as well as overall rail accessibility
- High number of active crossings (versus only having passive rail crossings)

#### **Economy/Geography**

- Connectivity to MSP metro and beyond (Fargo, Chicago), as well as other parts of Minnesota (Duluth, St. Cloud, other regional centers) (*2 comments*)
- Regional/national carriers operating in the District
  - o XPO, R&L, Werner, Schneider
- Geographic location for distribution hub and connectivity across Minnesota and impacts building a strong economy (regional centers and growth in specific sectors) – manufacturing, retail, and construction

#### **General**

- 511 system
- Proactive and supportive MnDOT

### **Weaknesses**

#### **Road**

- Congestion along major roadways: I-94, US 10, US 169 (*2 comments*)

- E/W and N/S connectivity in certain areas (*2 comments*)
- Short connectors across natural barriers and connecting key corridors (*2 comments*)
- Bridge restrictions and deficiencies
- Additional river crossing needed between TH 101 and TH 24 connecting US 10 and I-94
- Truck parking capacity

### **Rail (infrastructure & safety)**

- Rail safety – crossing improvements (*4 comments*)
- Access to rail – major lines but limited district-wide access for industry and agriculture

### **Multimodal**

- Lack of multimodal access to reduce usage of road for freight (*2 comments*)
- No navigable waterways exist in District 3 which creates more reliance on truck and rail

### **Technology**

- Limited broadband access

### **Regulation/Road Safety**

- Federal regulations: hours of service, etc.
- Truck weight enforcement
- Lack of single lane dividers and cable median barriers to improve safety
- Deficient highways lacking shoulders and other supportive freight elements

## **Opportunities**

### **Road**

- Increase truck parking capacity – continue to be important even as trucks become autonomous (*3 comments*)

### **Rail (infrastructure & safety)**

- Rail crossing safety improvements (*5 comments*)

### **Air Cargo**

- Expansion of air cargo capacity at Bemidji or St. Cloud (*2 comments*)

### **Multimodal**

- Extend Northstar to St. Cloud in effort to reduce overall congestion and improve truck reliability

### **Road Safety & Maintenance**

- Driver safety and training programs (*2 comments*)
- Advance safety: median cable barriers, markings/signs, etc.

- Bridge improvements
- Overall snow removal as well as a snow fence along I-94 from Sauk Centre to Freeport

### Technology

- Better awareness of 511 as a tool for construction updates and detours (*2 comments*)
- Consider ways to make the system more efficient through technology and design
- Truck platooning improvements
- Retail market changes
- ITS expansion
- Broadband expansion
- Use of MnDOT towers

### Economy/Geography

- Construct an intermodal transfer facility in the District – promote centralized location of D3
- District 3's population and employment are growing quickly – use as an opportunity to plan the future network to support new business and tech advancements
- Focus improvements to business clusters

### Threats

#### Road

- Congestion as the metro expands further in District 3 – especially effecting I-94
- Congestion along major corridors: I-94, US 10, US 169, etc.
- Bridge choke points district-wide (clearance, weight, capacity)
- Driver education and enforcement of driving laws

#### Road Safety

- Crash or weather events effecting mobility
- Lack of controlled access roadways forcing primary use of two-lane roadways

#### Funding/Regulation

- Climate change (flooding, etc.) and need for resiliency planning (*2 comments*)
- Funding for transportation needs – gas tax no longer viable (*2 comments*)
- Lack of freight enforcement (weight enforcement, etc.)

#### Technology

- Broadband in rural areas
- MnDOT cell towers
- Vehicle automation

#### Economy

- Offshoring and automation reducing jobs (*2 comments*)

- Deliveries increasing due to changes in retail
- Education of the trades to next generation (especially manufacturing) – workforce shortages and changing demographics