

MnDOT District 4 Freight Plan

Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda

October 19, 2021 – 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM (2 hours)

Zoom Meeting Call Details:

URL: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84104503320?pwd=UXRKZFI5Z3k2TjRqdTJuc0cyNUN4QT09>

Meeting ID: 841 0450 3320

Passcode: 872 377

Phone Number: 1-312-626-6799

- 9:00 AM Welcome & Introduction**
Share your name, organization, and an investment of time or money that MnDOT could make to improve freight transportation in District 4.
- 9:05 AM Review the Work Plan**
- 9:10 AM Review and Discussion of SWOT Assessment Results**
Questions/Comments:
- Which SWOT elements are most important to your work?
 - Do any of these SWOT considerations stand out as less important?
 - Did we miss any SWOT considerations that will be critical going forward?
- 10:00 AM 5 Minute Break**
- 10:05 AM Preliminary Recommendation Discussion**
Questions/Comments:
- Which recommendations are most helpful for your work?
 - Are there additional recommendations that we should investigate?
 - Are there any funding programs that are relevant for your work, or you believe are particularly helpful?
- 10:45 AM Review of Approach to Project Feasibility**
- 10:55 AM Next Steps**
- 11:00 AM Adjourn**

MnDOT District 4 Freight Plan

Advisory Committee Meeting 3 Discussion Questions and Background Information

Questions for Discussion

A summary of some of Working Paper 4’s major findings is provided below, and Working Paper 4 will be distributed to the Advisory Committee following the meeting. In advance of the meeting, please review the summary below and come prepared to discuss these three questions:

- What is an investment of time or money that MnDOT could make to improve freight transportation in District 4?
- Did we miss any SWOT considerations that will be critical moving forward?
- Are there additional recommendations we should investigate?

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Findings

Working Paper 4 contains a summary of SWOT factors that was created by reviewing stakeholder feedback as well as findings from data analysis. The SWOT factors were aligned with the major goal topics of the *Minnesota Statewide Freight System Plan*. The tables below summarize some of the major SWOT findings associated with each freight plan goal:

Support Minnesota’s Economy

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A long-standing agricultural and manufacturing sector • Well-connected road and rail freight assets • Ample room for future growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industries vulnerable to economic forces outside of District and Minnesota • Aging population, with low population growth
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth for freight-related industries around Moorhead and Fargo area • MnDOT can be proactive in working with the private sector to identify improvements and mitigate the impacts of construction projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty finding and retaining workforce, including qualified truck drivers • Maintenance and upgrades to freight transportation assets to adequately serve industry needs • Growth in e-commerce traffic

Improve Minnesota’s Mobility

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very little traffic congestion • Good snow and ice removal on trunk highways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential lack of truck-rail transloading facilities • Licensing and permitting challenges • Local seasonal traffic (agriculture and tourism)
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spot mobility improvements during programmed maintenance (addition of turning lanes, passing lanes, traffic signals) • Improve 1st/last-mile connections to the Trunk Highway system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Single-Use” plans for infrastructure, such as bike-friendly city plans • Congestion in the Twin Cities affects trucking operations in the District • Current and worsening truck driver shortage

Preserve Minnesota's Infrastructure

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively well-maintained trunk highways and bridges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor condition of county and local roads and bridges
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to identify freight projects that can help improve other aspects of the system and leverage non-freight funds to make improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trunk highway condition is expected to decline in the absence of additional funding • Short line rail track upgrade and improvements

Safeguard Minnesotans

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low road crash rate compared to other districts • Average at-grade crossing incidents rate compared to other districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher volume and higher-speed rail lines such as lines around the Moorhead area are potential areas for greater crash risk
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety improvements can provide freight benefits • Investment in rail quiet zones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited funding available for safety improvements

Protect Minnesota's Environment and Communities

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively little conflict between land uses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snow and ice control methods have a negative impact on water quality (not freight-specific) • Truck routing through downtowns
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to balance freight movement with other modes (pedestrians, bicycles) for livable communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased e-commerce related deliveries • Greater freeze-thaw cycles degrade pavement and bridges faster • Truck routing through downtowns

Preliminary Recommendations

Working Paper 4 provides a set of preliminary recommendations that can help address needs and issues, and unlock opportunities in District 4. The major preliminary recommendations for MnDOT include:

Policy Recommendations

- Use this plan's information to incorporate freight considerations into existing planning processes.
- Prioritize maintenance of existing assets over the construction of new assets.
- Collect information on potential impacts of weight limit changes.
- Ensure freight transportation needs are considered in complete streets projects.
- Continue participation in ongoing research on electric, autonomous, and connected vehicles.

Partnership Recommendations

- Continue outreach and information sharing for state and federal legislators.
- Continue outreach to freight stakeholders.
- Explore additional opportunities to support the utilization of short line railroads.
- Continue engagement with North Dakota DOT, South Dakota DOT, and Fargo-Moorhead MPO.
- Offer freight information resources or planning assistance to county and local governments.
- Partner with local educational institutions to support truck driver training programs.

