



*Minnesota Freight
Advisory Committee*

Minnesota Freight Advisory Committee Strategic Planning

The Minnesota Freight Advisory Committee (MFAC) Strategic Planning was initiated by the MnDOT Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle Operations. The objective was to review MFAC's organization and performance, investigate freight advisory committees in other states, and make recommendations for changing MFAC to increase its value to Minnesota.

MFAC was established 1998 and, by all accounts both in-state and out-of-state, has been successful. The review was undertaken to determine whether or not changes were needed in order to continue MFAC's success.

The 2015 context for MFAC is very different from that in 1998:

- Minnesota's industries are more and more dependent on efficient transportation.
- Minnesota must be connected as seamlessly as possible with the region, the nation, and the world to maintain its economic competitiveness.
- Transportation must adapt to meet the needs of Minnesota's "traditional" industries and develop to support the "emerging" industries.
- The "freight industry" is more complicated, fully developed and sophisticated.
- Safety and environmental issues related to freight transportation have become more prominent.
- The future of Minnesota's economy must be incorporated into today's decisions.

Working in conjunction with the Center for Transportation Studies (CTS) and Leo Penne of Leo Penne Consulting, an ad hoc working group of current MFAC members met three times to discuss ways to improve upon MFAC's current mission and structure. In addition, Leo Penne and CTS conducted four interviews with state freight advisory committees in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Oregon to learn about their committees' structures and activities.

Following these conversations, the ad hoc working group, CTS, and Leo Penne developed recommendations for the development of a new MFAC structure.

Recommended changes to MFAC include:

Mission and Objectives Statement

Advise MnDOT and other public agencies and officials on the performance and importance of Minnesota's freight transportation system to support the state's economic competitiveness.

- *Support the development of the Statewide Freight Plan and other plans, policies and action to improve the performance of the freight transportation system.*
- *Provide a forum for the discussion of freight industry trends, issues, and needs.*
- *Provide input on recommended actions, strategies and resources to improve the state's freight transportation system.*

Leadership

- There should be a Chair and Vice-Chair with terms of two or three years (renewable) with the Vice-Chair succeeding the Chair.
- An “Executive Committee” should be formed to include the Chair, Vice-Chair and three to five additional members to serve as the leadership and communications group for MFAC.

Membership

- Limit **Members** to no more than 30 to be representative of private sector shippers, and carriers; industry associations, academia; and local economic development agencies. The working group felt that limiting membership would increase engagement from those designated as members and confer a sense of obligation to participate in the activities of the Committee.
- Agency participants will be **Ex Officio Members**. Examples of these members include representatives from MnDOT, State Patrol, DEED, Met Council, FHWA, and other public agencies.
- All other individuals interested in the work of MFAC are considered **Friends** and will receive information and communications and are invited to participate in meetings.

Strategies

- Facilitate a dialogue among key stakeholders around freight trends and important issues.
- Monitor and report on the implementation of the Statewide Freight Plan and its Action Agenda, including the development of recommendations for any revisions and updates to the Plan.
- Create an annual report for the MnDOT Commissioner that includes a “state of freight,” an overview of trends and important issues, and reports on the activities of the Freight Advisory Committee from the past year.
- Review significant MnDOT initiatives and activities and provide freight impact and benefits comments.
- Educate the public, elected officials, and other public agencies and organizations on the needs of freight transportation and the importance of investment in transportation infrastructure.
- Identify research initiatives and projects that advance the state of knowledge on freight-related topics.
- Direct the preparation and dissemination of “white papers” on freight transportation issues important to Minnesota’s economy based on need and available resources.

Communication

- Create a MFAC stand-alone website to keep it updated with information about upcoming meetings, agendas, minutes, and other relevant, up-to-date information for both MFAC members and external interested parties using various social and professional networking tools.
- Use the website as a central location for information about other freight-significant organizations, activities, and events.
- Incorporate information about the Statewide Freight Plan into the website and provide information concerning the implementation of the Freight Action Plan.

Details about the implementation of these changes will be forthcoming.