

**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF TRANSPORTATION – OFFICE OF TRANSPORTATION
PLANNING**

STATE FREIGHT AND RAIL PLAN

NORTHEAST REGION MEETING NOTES

LOCATION OF MEETING: State Transportation Bldg, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA

DATE/TIME OF MEETING: October 28, 2008 – 6:30 p.m.

MEETING ATTENDANCE:

Public attendees who signed in:

Mike Collins	Town of Wakefield	Karen Winger	Old Colony Planning Council
D.G. Low	NECR	Simon Van Leewen	Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Will Brownsberger	Belmont	Nick Puleo	Boston
Lou Gitto	Stoughton	Bob D'Amico	Boston
Barbara Lucas	Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Anthony Komornick	Merrimack Valley Planning Commission
Michael Paster	Medford	Ralph Walton	Boston
Chris Papavisioliou	Cambridge	Joe Higgins	Needham
Frank DeMasi	Wellesley	Brad Craig	Boston
Bill Kuttner	Central Transportation Planning Staff	Anne McGahan	Central Transportation Planning Staff
Justin Howard	No. Middlesex Coun. of Govt.	Steve Olanoff	Westwood
Kevin Dooley	Tighe Warehousing		
Barry Steinberg	Quincy	Jody Ray	MBTA
Gloria Craven	Boston	Promise Otaluka	Federal Highway Admin.
Marilyn Wellons	Cambridge	Brian Kane	Boston
Tad Read	Boston Redevel. Authority	Dick Garver	Boston Redevel. Authority

Executive Office of Transportation Staff:

Ned Codd, Office of Transportation Planning, Study Project Manager

Paul Nelson, Office of Transportation Planning

Steve Pepin, Office of Transportation Planning

Consultant Team:

Ronald O'Blenis, HDR, Project Manager

Daniel Hodge, HDR

Marissa Witkowski, HDR

Scott Hamwey, Planner Collaborative

Jim Stoetzel, Transit Safety Management

HANDOUTS: Summary of purpose of Massachusetts State Freight and Rail Plan

PURPOSE/SUBJECT: This was one of five regional public stakeholder meetings that were held in October and November 2008 to provide information on the Massachusetts Freight and Rail Plans being developed, and to receive input from stakeholders about needs and priorities.

BACKGROUND: The Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation has begun a comprehensive evaluation of the Commonwealth's freight and rail transportation systems, their operations, and effect on economic development and quality of life. The evaluation will conclude with the publication of two separate documents. The first is a State Freight Plan that will be multi-modal (includes air, rail, truck and maritime transport) and intermodal (transportation by more than one mode, e.g. truck and rail) in its scope, analysis, and recommendations. The second is a comprehensive State Rail Plan that will include a detailed analysis of all rail infrastructure and operations, both freight and passenger. The study began in the spring of 2008 and will conclude in the summer of 2009. To date the study team has researched existing conditions, interviewed numerous stakeholders including shippers, receivers, transportation managers and operators of all transportation modes and intermodal facilities, regional planning agencies, economic development officials and freight trade representatives.

Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Ned Codd, Project Manager for EOT, thanked everyone for attending the meeting and reviewed the purpose of the Massachusetts Freight and Rail Plan. Mr. Codd also expressed gratitude to the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Old Colony Planning Council, the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, and the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments for their assistance with planning and outreach for the meeting. He said Mr. Ronald O'Brien, Project Manager for the HDR consultant team, would make a presentation that would cover the topics of freight movement and trends, truck freight, maritime ports, airports, freight rail and passenger rail. He noted a copy of each regional presentation would be posted on the study website: www.massfreightandrailplan.com. Mr. O'Brien paused at the end of each topic and asked attendees to comment on issues and ask questions. He encouraged people to let the study team know if the information presented on trends, freight characteristics and movements reflected their views on freight in their region and to provide local information they would like the consultant team to consider. Meeting attendees provided input throughout the meeting.

Summary of Public Comment and Questions

Freight Movement and Trends

[Please note questions or comments made by members of the public are in italics]

What is the denominator for modal share in the modal share slides?

It is tonnage.

Why is municipal waste not included in the slides?

The consultant team agrees municipal waste is a big issue, and that waste is a commodity and issue that will be covered as part of the freight and rail plan.

What is a non-metallic mineral?

It includes commodities such as salt, gravel, water, fertilizer, and broken stone.

I like the northeast Massachusetts infrastructure map—would there be a slide showing the expectations of where things are headed?

Those expectations are part of the next steps, and the team is currently focused on existing conditions and issues. EOT added that the timing of the study is fortuitous for a couple of reasons: the Pan Am/Southern Patriot Corridor venture between Pan Am Railways and Norfolk Southern, and the Commonwealth's framework of a deal with CSX for the purchase of a number of railroad properties. The consultant team is also developing forecasts of commodity flows.

The discussion was setting the stage for the importance of the question of what savings and benefits can be expected from moving freight off of trucks.

Truck Freight

What is different today compared to where things were five years ago and how has the game changed?

The question was answered by showing the slide of the map of roadway congestion comparing the current situation with past years.

Could the map capture the multimodal nature of freight?

Multimodal trips are currently treated as multiple different movements in the data. For example, if a freight container travels by rail to an intermodal facility and then is transported by truck to a distribution center, that is counted as both an inbound rail trip and a truck trip. The consultant team is trying to reach out to shippers to learn more about those trips. EOT said they are looking at the general trends and the next step will be to see what opportunities there are to shift truck traffic to rail and/or water and what the benefits of that shift are.

What about weight limits around ports such as the Port of Boston?

There are restrictions on some bridges and highways. The Plan will examine the roadway weight restrictions and their impacts on freight facilities such as the Port of Boston.

An attendee noted the importance of truck rest stops and the relative lack of truck rest stop facilities in Massachusetts.

An attendee noted the highway freight tons graphic saying it demonstrated that the volume of freight trucks and its contribution to congestion on the I-95 corridor was a myth (i.e., overstated).

An attendee noted that trucks only account for 5% of VMT in the Boston metropolitan area even though they transport 93.7% of freight.

Is the study looking at truck stops and layover facilities?

Yes, the consultant team is looking at it.

Hours of service regulations are a big issue for trucks.

Ports – Maritime and Air

Is there a distinction between “coastal shipping” and “short sea shipping?”

R. O'Brien said the latter is the current descriptor. An attendee followed-up by requesting that if a difference exists, that it be included in the Plan's glossary.

If 95% of the highway volume is in cars, it might be good to compare where truck traffic is in relation to overall highway congestion. Another attendee agreed it is important to be realistic about the share that trucks represent.

An attendee noted Halifax has two intermodal centers and both are less than 70 acres in size.

What is the capacity of the distribution centers?

A lot of distribution centers and warehousing facilities have moved out of Boston to more suburban and exurban areas, notably with South Boston as an example of a part of the city with reduced freight-related activity. The largest Target and Walmart distribution facilities are not located in Massachusetts.

Readville yard is a possible consideration as a freight opportunity, as well as Boston Autoport, Widett Circle and Newmarket Square. These were viewed as underutilized assets by the attendee. EOT said some of these issues will be addressed in the upcoming rail discussion and that they still need to learn more about how freight moves by rail in the region.

Are you looking at a post-Panamax role for the port?

Yes.

Are you looking at the role of the Gloucester port's freezer access?

Yes.

If you broke down freight flows by material, would the different flows tell you something about beefing up certain modes?

This analysis is being done to assess volumes and opportunities by major routes and facilities as part of the Plan.

Would the Plan address hazardous materials movement?

The consultant team will look at it, for example as a potential constraint for truck routes.

Why is Newark not shown on the slide showing the airports used for international exports from Massachusetts by air?

JFK handles most of the international freight from Massachusetts that uses the New York airports, Newark, meanwhile is a major player for domestic air cargo.

Rail – Freight and Passenger

What is the interaction of federal policy and DMUs; and what about crew rest and hours of service regulations?

The consultant team said that this would be covered in the report. A representative from the MBTA added that federal regulations were just released in the last two weeks on rail. No one is sure what they mean yet, but the FRA Administrator is working on how they will be provided. Another team member said positive train control could result in DMU usage increasing because crash worthiness is no longer as important an issue.

Passenger trains will still be below the 286,000 pound requirement. Crews have to sleep over in Leominster after a Framingham to Leominster run because of hours of service rules and the slow speed on that line.

An attendee noted that freight rail tends to move very slowly in much of eastern Massachusetts with speeds often approximately 10 mph.

How many more trains could go on the Northeast Corridor for passenger rail service?

The plan is evaluating the volume and capacity of passenger and freight rail for major corridors and will provide information related to this question.

MBTA is considering offering zone express service for commuter rail that would result in faster speeds and shorter travel time (though by-passing some stations).

An attendee said he found it hard to believe there was no slide on freight rail choke points.

Maps and analysis of freight rail chokepoints and infrastructure conditions is part of the study and maps are being developed to highlight weight on rail and vertical clearance capacity on Massachusetts rail lines. For example, the presentation from the November 20th meeting includes such maps (posted on the project web site).