

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

**STATE FREIGHT AND RAIL PLAN**

**RAIL CLUB MEETING NOTES**

**LOCATION OF MEETING:** Copley Plaza Hotel, St James Avenue, Boston, MA

**DATE/TIME OF MEETING:** November 20, 2008 – 2:00 p.m.

**MEETING ATTENDANCE:**

**Public attendees who signed in:**

John Kennedy	Mass Coastal Railroad	Ted Michon	Mass Coastal Railroad
Dan Wahle	Mass Coastal Railroad	John Priscoli	GTU Railroad
Jim Jordie	SJC/BPB	Brian Martin	Lowell
Andrew Reardon	Mass Coastal Railroad	Bill Crawford	Nahant
Bill Kuttner	Central Transportation Planning Staff	Leonard Singer	Boston
Vincent Bertod	Boston	Joe Wanat	Boston
Anne McGahan	Central Transportation Planning Staff	Michael Gleba	Westborough
Clare Conley	Boston	Rudy Husband	Plymouth,PA
Mary Ann Nelson	Sierra Club	Vincent Terrill	Manchester
Linda Cocalis	Sturbridge	Robert Bentley	Mass Central Railroad
Robert Bass	Canaan, CT	Jack Sutton	Belgrade, ME
Don Marson	Bowdoin, ME	Jo Hart	Worcester
Romin Koebel	Boston	Mike Smith	Gilmanon, NH
Ellen Donohue	Boston	George Tutinjian	N Manchester, NH
Chris Papavasiliou	Cambridge	Chop Hardenbergh	Yarmouth, ME
Michael Rennicke	Westfield	Rian Nemeroff	Meadowbrook, PA
Joann Danckert	Mansfield	Melissa Gordon	Mansfield
Bernie Reagan	Needham	Kevin Viveiros	Lincoln, RI
Patrick Moynihan	Tighe Warehousing	Kevin Dooley	Tighe Warehousing
James Sottile	Southbridge	Tom Smithberger	Alexandria, VA
Douglas Glow	Essex	Charles Planch	Boston
Tim Vigue	Cianbro Corp.	Steve Olanoff	Westwood

**Executive Office of Transportation Staff:**

Ned Codd, Office of Transportation Planning, Study Project Manager

Paul Nelson, Office of Transportation Planning

**Consultant Team:**

Ronald O'Blenis, HDR, Project Manager

Daniel Hodge, HDR

Dennis Coffey, HNTB

Scott Hamwey, Planner Collaborative

Jill Barrett, Fitzgerald & Halliday

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. 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](http://www.massfreightandrailplan.com). Mr. O'Brien paused at the end of each topic as 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]*

*How is a move of a container to Ayer by rail from out of state represented in the data?*

It is counted first as an inbound rail movement and then as a truck movement from Ayer to its final destination.

*Would two lumber moves (one on truck and one on rail) be counted twice?"*

Yes. EOT added that the initial data analysis shows that freight moves predominantly on truck. At this point there is an assumption that the study will look at moving some truck freight to rail/water, but they need to determine the market opportunities, benefits, costs and impacts of such a shift.

*What is the source of the commodity flow data?*

We used Global Insight TRANSEARCH data, the Federal Highway Administration's Freight Analysis Framework, and worked with Massport to help reconcile the tonnage for air and maritime.

## **Truck Freight**

*Is the issue of overweight trucks being covered? For example, some containers are shipped to the Port of Boston at over 80,000 pounds which automatically means that a truck carrying that container over the highway will be overweight.*

Yes, we are looking at how overweight trucks factor into costs of shipping and truck routes. The use of overweight trucks has implications regarding the relative shipping costs of using truck compared to other modes.

*Getting an overweight truck permit is not as easy as everyone thinks.*

## **Ports – Maritime and Air**

*The Port of Halifax is not a competitor to Boston. For pulp and paper especially in Maine, the port at Saint John in New Brunswick is a competitor. I agree with no on-dock rail to Conley.*

*Other port issues to consider could include Quonset in Rhode Island in terms of competition to the Autoport.*

*An attendee noted that there is a rail connection at Fall River.*

## **Rail – Freight and Passenger**

*I thought funding was a huge public policy question?*

We are looking at the current policy framework. In parallel, we will be looking at the costs/benefits of changes and how the existing policy framework and other potential policy framework changes fit in with these costs and benefits. And yes, there is a specific task to examine freight and rail funding in terms of existing revenues (public and private), financing issues, and strategies.

*You have to know what the state owns first.*

Correct, we're using the GIS data which is maintained by the state and also working closely with the railroads to find the infrastructure out there and determine its ownership.

*HR 2905 is the recent regulation the President signed for positive train control. There can be regional benefits of carrying a load that can meet that standard.*

This is a recent development. We will take this change into consideration, along with input from the railroads, as we evaluate the potential costs and benefits of new freight technologies as standards in Massachusetts.

*We think we are in a recession—is there a macro look in this study?*

Yes, we are assessing broader economic and trade trends as well as forecasts. The recent economic and financial crisis is certainly a factor for short-term strategies, but this study is also producing a longer-term vision for freight and rail in Massachusetts.

*What is the role of land use in the study?*

We recognize that as a big issue. We are working with the metropolitan planning organizations and other economic development and planning organizations to try to determine how we accommodate those competing issues. We are also exploring the potential for increased preservation and protection of land for freight and industrial purposes with Vermont's agricultural land protections as one possible example to explore.

*Can you create inventories of what does exist or what could be used more broadly than just what's currently there?*

Yes, we are working on this with the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development and attempting to find information on available sites from a listing provided by the Massachusetts Alliance for Economic Development (MAED). Plus, we can use the state's database of rail spurs and sidings.

*Can you quantify the lack of industrial sites?*

There is a limited amount and what is there is essentially what you have to work with. It is unlikely that significant new sites will become available. One opportunity is to try to preserve land along the rail corridors for possible sidings and rail customers, similar to efforts in Vermont.

*It seems like there is an article per week on the extension of rail service to the Port of Fall River.*

We did not emphasize passenger rail to Fall River and New Bedford because of the ongoing South Coast Rail process which is addressing that opportunity in much greater detail.

*We do want to look at freight rail to Fall River.*

We agree that it is important to also consider opportunities for freight rail activity on the proposed corridors to Fall River and New Bedford and will consider what is appropriate and needed for each port.

*Could shorter freight trains fit on MBTA commuter rail lines? Is this a feasible opportunity?*

*Will you be putting these slides on your website?*

The slides are on the website and we encourage you to visit the site.

*Freight rail is shrinking because there are fewer customers using PanAm, which shares rail with MBTA in much of eastern Massachusetts. Beacon Park/Allston Landing is threatened and could shift more rail activity to the west. The Rail Plan should refer to the Urban Ring and Allston Landing studies.*

*New federal legislation (HR 2905) addresses a lot of the issues discussed today.*

*Other states are doing much more to get short lines up to 286,000 than the Commonwealth. For example, states like Virginia, Vermont, Pennsylvania, and New York have more public funding for freight rail.*

*I'd like to see more on what can be done in terms of strategies, policies, and investments.*

There will be more on these issues as we move into the next phase of the study.

*Rail has a miniscule role in freight. How can we increase rail activity east of 495 and closer to Boston (where congestion is highest) if that is financially and socially desirable?*

*Have you looked at the financial incentives that could help us lure some of the distribution centers up here? For example, there is a very large concentration of distribution centers in Allentown, Pennsylvania.*

We have. The Northeast Corridor (NEC) being at 263,000 pounds instead of 286,000 is an example of something that prevents us from filling cars and warehouses south and east of the NEC. We are evaluating strategies to improve the competitiveness of distribution centers in Massachusetts.

*Why not double stack all the way in?*

We're looking at a broad range of options including increased vertical clearances.