

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

STATE FREIGHT AND RAIL PLAN

WESTERN REGION MEETING NOTES

LOCATION OF MEETING: Kasparian Center, 60 Alton Street, Springfield, MA

DATE/TIME OF MEETING: October 30, 2008 – 3 p.m.

MEETING ATTENDANCE:

Public attendees who signed in:

Curt Hansen	CSW	Pieter Lips	Berkshire Scenic Rail
Robert Bentley	Mass Central Railroad	Mark Shapp	Berkshire Scenic Rail
Colin Pease	Concord	Peter Rentz	Berkshire Scenic Rail
Herb Singleton	Springfield	John Nektipoulos	AC Motor Freight
Bernie Kubiak	Town of Deerfield	Natalie Blais	Office of Congressman
Laurily Epstein	Green Berkshires	Maureen Mullaney	Franklin Region Council of Govern.
Eleanor Tillinghast	Green Berkshires	David Elvin	Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
David Swirk	Pioneer Valley Rail.	Dana Roscoe	Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
A.J. Belliveau	Central NE Railroad	Alison Church	Berkshire Regional Plan. Commission
Timothy Brennan	Chair, Massachusetts	Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA)	

Executive Office of Transportation Staff:

Ned Codd, Office of Transportation Planning, Study Project Manager
Paul Nelson, Office of Transportation Planning
Timothy Doherty, Office of Transportation Planning, Director Rail

Consultant Team:

Ronald O’Blenis, HDR, Project Manager
Daniel Hodge, HDR
Jonathan Lee, HDR
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 effects 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 Berkshire, Franklin and Pioneer Valley Regional Planning Commissions for their assistance with planning and outreach for the meeting. He introduced Mr. Ronald O’Blenis, Project Manager for the HDR consultant team, who then made a presentation that covered 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’Blenis paused at the end of each topic and asked attendees for their comments on issues and 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]

Do you have length-of-haul information and data presented as shipments?

Yes, we have data on average haul length by commodity and based on origins and destinations. Next steps will be to map freight flows geographically. It will allow us to better understand the shipping patterns by commodity and mode, and thus better determine if there is potential for shifting some truck traffic to other modes. In addition, we can convert tonnage data to number of trucks based on average loads by commodity, as well as checking against published truck count data.

Will you look at interconnectivity – how we are moving goods from origin to destination (shipper to receiver)?

Yes, and that analysis is enhanced through input from trucking, rail and shipping companies.

The state should be looking to help small businesses.

A key component of the Plan is consideration of economic development and related job creation across the state.

Will you capture the content of loads and how far the goods travel? There is a big difference between a truck of lettuce and a truck of heavy materials.

Yes, see response above.

We would want you to identify opportunities to set up rail links.

There is a need for distribution centers but there are two major obstacles to setting them up:

- 1. Other states provide money for infrastructure. For example, some states will fund 45% of the cost of putting in rail sidings. Massachusetts will not contribute to private sidings. If the state would provide financial help with sidings, it could market to new businesses (rail customers) to locate in Massachusetts. For example, if the rail siding is long, then it might be too expensive for the private sector to do alone, but would make sense if the costs were shared.*
- 2. The state needs to provide a program to target property owners to land bank properties for future rail/industrial use. This includes help with permitting and environmental impacts.*

A program in Maine, Industrial Rail Access Program, IRAP is an example of what Massachusetts should do. The Maine program has had fantastic results in a period of 2-3 years. This program pays up to 50% of project costs developed by the private sector. One railroad representative said, "If we all share the costs of infrastructure, maybe we can [have good results]" and thought that Maine was getting significant return for modest investment.

The state has a constitutional provision against investing in private industry.

There is a need to identify who would oppose public investment in the private sector and the cost/benefits for investing in infrastructure should be made known. Investing in rail will take trucks off the road. The study is considering where there could be opportunities to increase the rail modal share. Included in the study are market forces that affect modal choice.

Truck Freight

As long as we keep building infrastructure for trucks we won't get rail.

There should be a moratorium on truck weights. Our bridges won't last if weights are allowed to increase.

Two areas of truck traffic were specifically cited regarding bottlenecks in Western Massachusetts.

- 1. I-90 Exit 2 (Route 20) in Lee. The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission is doing a study of the area and found 83 trucks drive through the center of Lee (Route 20) each hour and it's expected to increase. This study seems to be heading towards road widening, and has implications for Rt. 7 which leads north to Pittsfield.*
- 2. I-90 Exit Exit 6 (I-291) in Chicopee. This area is a bottleneck in peak periods.*

A lot of the truck related congestion is a result of bad weather and rollovers though they are not as frequent as they have been in past.

The state should look at collaborative economic development with other communities, even if out of state, such as partnerships between Hartford and Springfield.

Tonnage in and out of the region should be examined. There is far less wholesale business in-state than when our company began hauling 30 years ago. In that era, our main hauls were between Boston and Springfield. Now we have to go out of our region to find enough business. We find that all states want to tax us on the same goods we're hauling between the states. By the time we're done paying taxes, there is little or no profit left. The example provided was that the taxation could happen at the origin (MA), the destination (NJ) and the pass-through state (CT).

We need to change our perspective and improve connectivity to make the freight system more efficient. Example provided was for an inland port concept in West Springfield that serves CT and western MA.

Labor shortages in the trucking industry should be added as an issue.

Ports – Maritime and Air

The idea that a “port” has to be on water should change. We need to think more globally.

Why don't we see Bradley Airport (located in Connecticut) on the map? It's “our” airport [in the western region]. FedEx, UPS and Yankee Candle use it as a base.

The map we are showing only indicates international freight. We will note the role of Bradley in the region in our report, and data on domestic air cargo supports the idea of Bradley as a key airport facility.

Please note we have air freight out of Westover.

Rail - Freight

How much of the weight problems (restrictions) are due to poor maintenance? A lot of improvement in the bridges are needed, especially the superstructure.

The state should remove taxation of products sitting in a warehouse waiting to be picked up by trucks for delivery. This could apply only to goods shipped to the warehouse via rail to lower costs and thus provide an incentive to ship goods by rail. A “free trade zone” similar to one in Chicopee is perhaps an example of how it would work.

Can the Hoosic Tunnel be altered to allow full clearance double-stack trains?

That is not an element of the currently proposed PanAm Southern agreement for the Patriot Corridor.

Have you given any thought to separating grade crossings?

This study will not address specific grade crossings in detail but can raise it as an issue or constraint and consider programs to remove crossings along major freight and passenger routes.

What about supporting road railers – a truck trailer that can be placed on rail?

The industry is moving away from this but there is a resurgence of putting trailers on low, flat rail cars.

Please look at small feeder lines. They can't compete with long haul trains but they do have the potential to make the rail system better.

Rail - Passenger

The Connecticut Department of Transportation intends to expand Metro North commuter rail service north of Danbury to New Milford. There is now talk of taking the line to Pittsfield and a study is examining that potential extension. Public/private partnerships are going to be important to make that work. This potential extension ought to be part of this study.

The rail plan will compile a status report of current/planned passenger rail projects, so we welcome information and input on this potential project.

There is opportunity for rail on the Great Barrington Line. People in the Berkshires need to be able to go east/west. For example, one train a day to Boston is not enough. Even better service between Springfield and Boston would help.

Regional traffic in the Berkshires is largely north-south, and thus there is some interest in long-term rail prospects to benefit the economy, reduce traffic and help the environment.

The problem is there are not enough “old people” around that remember active rail lines. The idea of passenger and freight not being able to share track is just not true.

The railroad companies and freight planners got us to think that way. In some areas of the country, newer passenger rail is now being operated by freight railroads.

It's great to share rail line but if a lot of passengers have to wait for freight, then they'll drive.

We look at the money the Turnpike had to pay for the Big Dig, does the government look at how it could serve the Berkshires better. Improved rail service is a big issue. There will be a huge fight over widening roads to better accommodate trucks. Tourism is the big industry for the Berkshires and stakeholders will make their concerns known about projects that support or inhibit tourism.