

**FREIGHT COMMITTEE**  
of the  
**REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**Summary of July 8, 2009 Meeting**

The meeting was held in the Conference Room 4 of the State Transportation Building.

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 PM.

**1. Introductions and Chair's Report** –Walter Bonin, *Chair and City of Marlborough*

W. Bonin had no reports.

**2. Announcements**

Frank DeMasi, Vice Chair, is attending the New England Governor's Conference on August 2. Former Governor Dukakis will serve as the chairman for the rail summit.

Arnold Pinsley, of Natick, expressed concern about how the closing of Beacon Yards may increase truck traffic in the region. He wondered if troubles with Harvard's endowment might delay development at the site. Steve Olanoff, of Westwood, asked if it's appropriate to write a letter to Harvard asking them to reconsider their plans. Richard Flynn of Northeast Logistics and W. Bonin agreed that writing a letter to Harvard would be a good idea.

F. Demasi introduced Louis Elisa of the Seaport Advisory Council. L. Elisa said his committee is studying the effects of increased ocean shipping to East Cost ports.

S. Olanoff gave the committee a briefing on the draft federal fiscal year (FFY) 2010 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). He said that the freight study was included in the draft UPWP released for public comment. The study was not included in the staff recommendation, but S. Olanoff made a motion to include it at a UPWP Subcommittee meeting. The scope will be partially determined by what comes out of the statewide freight study.

R. Flynn said that the scope should also study the effects of diverting freight from rail to truck. This will emphasize the negative effects of the continuation of this pattern.

**3. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

The Minutes of the June 10, 2009 meeting were unanimously approved.

**4. Presentation on the Economic Development Role of Rail Freight** – *W. Bonin*

W. Bonin gave a presentation about his views on the economic development benefits of rail freight. He first talked about the state's current fiscal situation. Three ways to correct

the situation are to encourage economic development, reduce expenses, and raise taxes. Encouraging rail freight can facilitate economic development and reduce expenses.

W. Bonin said rail freight could facilitate economic development by displacing 12,000 trucks per day in the state. This reduces roadway congestion and makes travel easier for individuals, which can help attract new industries. He also said that rail freight can reduce expenses by reducing fuel consumption and road damage caused by heavy trucks.

W. Bonin expressed his concern that freight is moving into fast growing suburbs. These communities are not very supportive of rail freight and so the legislators are not supportive of efforts to improve rail freight. The administrative branch of state government needs to take a holistic view of the state's freight needs because legislators are not.

**Members had the following comments:**

- While economic development is a long-term approach to the problem that will improve the economy and reduce costs for the state, revenue is needed now.
- Legacy freight rights suppress the free market and preclude the development of a comprehensive network approach to the freight rail system.
- Diverting truck freight to rail requires consideration of land use policies and support for short line railroads.
- States and Metropolitan Planning Organizations need to broaden their horizons and consider rail freight.
- Passenger rail is emphasized over freight rail in the region.
- Education of freight rail benefits needs to improve so current policy makers and university students have proper information to inform their decision-making.

**5. Briefing on MetroFuture and its treatment of freight – W. Bonin**

W. Bonin talked about MetroFuture – the smart growth plan for the region developed by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) – and its emphasis of freight rail issues. He summarized the freight rail components of MetroFuture for members. W. Bonin said that MAPC is a potential ally in the educational component discussed during the previous agenda item.

**Members had the following comments:**

- MAPC is actively promoting transportation finance reform and should be aware that not addressing freight now may create more financial problems in the future.
- MetroWest will be affected by increased truck traffic due to the closure of Beacon Yards. Planners in the western communities need to consider the impacts of this action.
- The environmental angle of diverting rail freight to trucks should be used to promote rail freight.
- Reduction of the rail freight network makes the economy vulnerable by eliminating redundant systems and increasing dependence on trucks.
- A State Infrastructure Bank is also an important component of supporting freight rail.

## **6. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 2:45 PM.

**Attachments:** “Transportation and the Mass Economy” presentation

### **Attendance**

#### **Agencies**

Lynn Vikesland, Massport

Louis Elisa, Seaport Advisory Council

#### **Cities and Towns**

Walter Bonin, Marlborough

Richard Canale, Lexington

Frank DeMasi, Wellesley

Steve Olanoff, Westwood

Arnold Pinsley, Natick

#### **Citizens Groups**

Romin Koebel, FCDC

#### **Guests and Visitors**

Richard Flynn, NorthEast Logistics  
Systems, LLC

Doug Low, Massachusetts Railroad  
Association & N.G.C.R.

Ed Lowney

Marilyn MacNab

#### **MPO Staff**

Mike Callahan

Sean Pfalzer