

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

**Summary of the September 9, 2009 Meeting**

The meeting was held in the Conference Rooms 2 and 3 of the State Transportation Building.

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

W. Bonin called the meeting to order at 1:10 PM. Members, guests, visitors, and staff introduced themselves (see the attached attendance list).

**2. Announcements**

Frank DeMasi, of Wellesley, announced a meeting of the Legislature's Joint Committee on Transportation. The meeting begins at 11 AM on September 10 and F. DeMasi plans to testify on several important bills related to freight issues.

Abby Swaine from the Environmental Protection Agency announced the availability of a new round of Clean Diesel grants. The Request for Proposals (RFP) will be released on September 22. The EPA expects to award between \$4 and \$5 million in New England in the coming year. The grants can be used on locomotives, trucks, or ferries.

**3. Approval of the draft July 8, 2009 Meeting Minutes – *Walter Bonin, Chair***

The Minutes were unanimously approved.

**4. Briefing from the Mass Motor Transportation Association – *Anne Lynch, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Motor Transportation Association***

Anne Lynch announced that the Massachusetts Motor Transportation Association (MMTA) is applying to become a voting member of the Regional Transportation Advisory Council. A letter requesting membership was submitted to the Advisory Council Chair.

Lynch also announced a MassHighway design public hearing on September 10 in Everett City Hall regarding of Route 99/Alford Street in Everett. The condition of the road and bridge is restricting the number of trips trucks can make daily to an important fuel farm in Everett. Bike advocates are petitioning MassHighway to include a bike lane in the design.

MMTA is opposed to the bike lane. The road is too small to safely accommodate bikes and large tankers accessing the fuel farm. It's only a two-lane road and it's designated a HAZMAT route. Adding a bike lane is impractical and unsafe. This is a good example of the conflict that can arise between proponents of freight and multi-modal transportation.

**A. Lynch made the following remarks about truck freight:**

- Truck traffic is declining because of the recession. The decline will probably level off by the third quarter of 2010.
- Congestion is a bigger concern to MMTA's members than trip length. Survey results show that members prefer to avoid the cities because of congestion.
- Land use considerations are important to the MMTA. Terminal siting is especially important considering that 92 percent of freight is moved by truck in the state. NIYMBism (Not In My Back Yard) makes it difficult to site terminals and warehouses. The freight overlay district is an innovative and important tool that may help solve these problems.
- Regulations are a patchwork with municipalities enforcing different rules. Many municipalities want truck exclusions. These are often not coordinated between municipalities and harm the ability to efficiently move goods in urban areas. MMTA represents truck freight companies in complaints about truck exclusions.
- The relationship between truck and rail freight carriers is better than perceived.
- The driver shortage is a problem for trucking companies.

**Members had the following comments:**

- General:
  - Awareness of freight issues needs to be elevated.
- Regarding the Regional Transportation Plan:
  - The MPO's Regional Transportation Plan should more specifically address freight planning. There is only one freight project on the draft Plan Amendment.
- Regarding the Route 99/Alford Street Hearing:
  - Route 99/Alford Street in Everett is one of the few connections between Boston and North Shore communities for bicyclists. Bicycles are prohibited on the Sumner/Callahan tunnels, I-93, the Tobin Bridge, and rush hour Blue Line trains. This explains the interest in adding bike lanes to the design.
- Regarding Terminal Siting:
  - Terminal access for both trucks and freight rail is important. Members are concerned about concentrating rail freight in two terminals (Ayer and Worcester) once Beacon Park closes.
  - Many terminal sites close to the urban core are small. Readville is small and it's in a residential area. This presents problems for siting terminals closer to Boston.
  - It would be good to have input from drayage operators about the preferred location of Beacon Park's replacement.
  - Freight overlay districts would make freight rail and terminal siting easier.

**5. Update on the Executive Office of Transportation's (EOT's) Statewide Freight Study – Paul Nelson, EOT**

P. Nelson said EOT expects to finish the study by the end of the year. Presently they are studying the costs and benefits of different infrastructure alternatives.

They will hold meetings in November to discuss some of the findings and recommendations. This series of meetings, which includes one meeting in Boston, will present a document on which the public can comment.

Some of the delays in the schedule can be attributed to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). ARRA consumed a lot of resources for EOT and their consultants.

P. Nelson said he does not know how the CSX/EOT closings are advancing. The work between CSX and EOT is more passenger oriented.

**Members had the following comments:**

- General:
  - It's disappointing that the rail division of the new MassDOT is named "transit."
  - There is not a strong leader on freight issues in Massachusetts.
- Regarding Freight Access to Rail:
  - A third party should manage the rail lines when EOT takes ownership of them. Access to rail properties for all freight carriers, including short line operators, is important. Management of the freight operating rights by a new entity would make freight movements in Eastern Massachusetts more efficient. The new entity would move freight trains into the metropolitan Boston area. The entity would have similar responsibilities to the Massachusetts Bay Commuter Rail, but for freight trains.
- Regarding Public Participation in the Statewide Freight Study:
  - The EOT freight study is taking a long time to complete. Members are concerned that the new MassDOT and a new administration may not embrace the report's recommendations.
  - The public meetings in November should present findings with substance and conclusions.
  - It's helpful to iron out disagreements earlier in the process, rather than waiting until the end. The Freight Committee would like to be more involved during the development stage of future studies.
  - Earlier input in the process might help EOT generate public support for the study in November.

**6. Briefing on Congressional Rail Initiatives – Pamela Mann, GO-21**

GO-21 is a national non-profit organization operating in 35 states to build support for freight rail. Their focus is on national-level policy. They are an advocacy group, not a lobbying organization.

**P. Mann briefed members on the following federal legislation and discussions:**

- Freight Rail Infrastructure Capacity Expansion Act – This bill offers an investment tax incentive. Both parties support it. The bill would allow each dollar spent on freight rail by a private entity to be matched with a 25-cent federal rebate or credit. Representative Michael Capuano is one of 46 cosponsors of the bill. Two versions of the Bill are circulating in the House (272 and 1806). The bills have been slowed by the health care debate and economic concerns. This proposal also could be tied to an infrastructure bill or the climate change bill.

- The Senate Commerce Committee is working on a compromise bill on regulatory issues. Several bills have been proposed over the last few years that would further regulate freight rail. GO-21 is opposed to economic price controls and further regulation. The railroads and other freight rail stakeholders have been at the table working on the compromise.
- Surface Transportation Reauthorization – SAFETEA-LU expires September 30. The Senate passed an 18-month extension of SAFETEA-LU and President Obama wants to spend the extra time working on the new bill. Meanwhile, the House Transportation Transportation and Infrastructure Committee wants to push something before the holiday recess. GO-21 wants the bill to emphasize freight and not just highways, transit, roads, and bridges.

W. Bonin recommended the Freight Committee support GO-21’s “Resolution in Support of Increased Freight Rail Hauling Capacity.” W. Bonin summarized the Resolution for members. The Resolution is attached to the Minutes.

Members of the Freight Committee unanimously voted to support the Resolution.

## **7. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 PM.

### **Attachments:**

Resolution in Support of Increased Freight Rail Hauling Capacity

### **Attendance**

#### **Agencies**

Jim Gallagher, MAPC  
 Chan Rogers, SWAP  
 Abby Swaine, EPA  
 Louis Elisa, Seaport Advisory Council  
 Ed Anthes-Washburn, Seaport Advisory Council

#### **Cities and Towns**

Walter Bonin, Marlborough  
 Frank DeMasi, Wellesley  
 Steve Olanoff, Westwood

#### **Advocacy/Citizens Groups**

Marilyn Wellons – Riverside  
 Neighborhood Association

#### **Guests and Visitors**

Linda Blair  
 Richard Flynn, Eastern Massachusetts  
 Freight Rail Coalition

Charlie Dickey – Framingham  
 Bob Gentile - Framingham  
 Romin Koebel – Fenway CDC  
 Doug Low, Massachusetts Railroad  
 Association & N.G.C.R.  
 Ed Lowney, Malden  
 Anne Lynch, Massachusetts Motor  
 Transportation Association  
 Pamela Mann, GO-21  
 Arnold Pinsley, Natick

#### **MPO Staff**

Mike Callahan