

FREIGHT COMMITTEE
of the
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Summary of the June 9, 2010 Meeting

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

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

W. Bonin called the meeting to order at 12:50 PM. Members, guests, visitors, and staff introduced themselves (see the attached attendance list). There was no Chair's report.

2. Announcements

Richard Flynn, representative of the Eastern Massachusetts Freight Rail Coalition, announced the Coalition's stakeholders meeting scheduled for June 23.

Frank DeMasi, Co-Chair and representative of Wellesley, discussed recent news articles about the transaction between CSX and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. F. DeMasi said MassDOT should purchase freight rights when they buy a rail property. This would eliminate paper barriers to better freight rail service.

Abby Swaine of the United States Environmental Protection Agency announced that the California Air Resources Board (CARB) is considering changes to its tractor-trailer regulations. A. Swaine encouraged people to watch a CARB webcast on June 28 of a workshop to discuss the proposed changes.

Laura Wiener, Chair of the Regional Transportation Advisory Council and representative of Arlington, announced the Boston Region MPO's support of the "Proposed Transportation Reauthorization Principles for Major Metros." Many other major Metropolitan Planning Organizations have signed on. One of the seven principles supports the development of a national freight policy. The Advisory Council voted in favor of the Boston Region MPO signing on to the initiative.

John Businger, representative of the National Corridors Initiative, announced a rally for green jobs at the State House on June 16 at 10:30 AM.

Jo Hart of Worcester announced that an agreement was reached between the City of Worcester and CSX on the freight company's expansion plans in the city. J. Hart said the expansion plans are the opposite of smart growth. Smart growth means moving freight from trucks to rail.

F. DeMasi announced that he wants the Advisory Council to encourage the environmental review of the freight yard expansion in Worcester to include an analysis of the impacts on Eastern Massachusetts. Several other members agreed with F. DeMasi. Bob Gentile of Framingham said the proposed expansion would improve highway conditions in Western

Massachusetts, but harm conditions in Eastern Massachusetts. This is problematic because the highest traffic volumes are in Eastern Massachusetts.

J. Businger announced that the annual meeting of the Association for Public Transportation is scheduled for June 15.

3. Approval of the draft May 12, 2010 Meeting Minutes – *Walter Bonin, Co- Chair*

The minutes were unanimously approved.

4. Discussion of the Committee's Comments on the Draft Statewide Freight and Rail Plan – *Walter Bonin and Frank DeMasi, Co-Chairs*

F. DeMasi said the completed draft Statewide Freight and Rail Plan has not been released. The Freight Committee is waiting until it's released before submitting a comment letter to the Advisory Council. A discussion of the draft Statewide Freight and Rail Plan ensued. Meeting attendees made several comments organized below into general categories.

- **General Comments**
 - The draft Plan is more of a study. It identifies needs rather than strategies.
 - The state anticipates freight volume will increase 70 percent between 2010 and 2030, but the draft Plan does not address how it will be accommodated. There needs to be a vision to accommodate the increase by all modes.
 - A 70 percent increase in freight guarantees highway gridlock. There must be solutions other than highway expansion.
 - The Freight Committee should recommend that the state study what other states have done to accommodate additional freight traffic. A study of metropolitan areas similar to Boston should be conducted to identify best practices that can be implemented here.
 - Savannah and other southern ports are planning for the expansion of the Panama Canal. Boston should be prepared as well.
 - The Port of New York and New Jersey is more affordable for shippers than the Port of Boston. The reasons for the disparity should be studied.
 - The draft Plan should address the effects of higher energy prices on freight.
 - A stronger freight planning office at MassDOT is necessary.
 - It is important to consider which commodities and goods are being transported in the state to understand the potential for truck to rail diversion.
 - There are too many unanswered questions in the draft Statewide Freight and Rail Plan. The draft Plan needs goals and solutions.
- **Comments on Establishing a Mode Share Goal for Freight Rail**
 - The state should establish a target for the share of freight moved by rail. The Plan should identify projects that will achieve the goal.
 - Perhaps the planners should look at a state like New Jersey to establish a goal for Massachusetts. Both states are densely populated with a large port.
 - The goal should be strong and there should be milestones established so the state can track its progress. Tasks to achieve the goal must be established.
 - Planners should work with freight operators to establish a goal.
 - The Freight Committee can do research and develop a reasonable goal.

- A strong goal for freight rail mode share will organize the state's approach to freight and require planners to look at more strategies than those in the draft Plan. The state's current approach to freight is too reactive.
- In the process of establishing a goal, the Plan needs to examine what is possible for Massachusetts. The rail mode share may not be as high as some states because there is not much through traffic in Massachusetts and Eastern Massachusetts is a largely a destination.
- Once the goal is set, MassDOT needs to build a staff to support the goal.
- **Strategy Comments**
 - The state should consider establishing an Eastern Massachusetts Freight Railroad. It would run on state-owned track and have an interchange at Readville. The railroad could do local distribution.
 - Rail connection to the ports is important to support maritime transportation. The maritime highway is a priority of the United States DOT.
 - The Plan needs to be intermodal and encourage modes other than trucking. The Freight Committee should simply demand an intermodal plan with strong goals, rather than telling MassDOT exactly how to do it.
 - Freight railroad pricing must be considered. Railroad rates are too high in Massachusetts to achieve the goals of diverting freight from trucks to rail. Competition needs to be encouraged.
 - In response to the previous comment, it was said that freight railroads are not going to invest in Massachusetts if their profits are limited. Shareholders will not support investment in Massachusetts if they can make more money in the southern states.
 - The state needs to more aggressively pursue industries.
- **Comments on Communicating the Benefits of Freight Rail**
 - The benefits of freight rail must be communicated to the public and political leadership.
 - A champion for freight rail is needed.
 - The public will understand the importance of freight rail if the problems are more clearly defined. People should understand that a 70 percent freight volume increase will cause gridlock and may require additional highway lanes. How much the additional lanes cost and where the funds will come from must be understood.
 - The public and political leadership should be aware of how other states are adding rail capacity and that Massachusetts is not keeping up.
- **Comments on the Next Steps**
 - The Freight Committee should accept the draft Plan, but firmly state that it needs to include a goal for freight rail mode share and solutions to achieve the goal.
 - There are too many unanswered questions to accept the draft Plan. It needs much more work. The draft Plan anticipates a 70 percent increase in freight traffic with no mitigation. A reasonable freight rail mode share goal should be identified.
 - The Committee needs to focus its recommendations.

5. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 PM

Attendance

Agencies

Ed Anthes-Washburn, Seaport Advisory
Council
Alison Felix, Metropolitan Area
Planning Council

Cities and Towns

Laura Wiener, Arlington
Walter Bonin, Marlborough
Frank DeMasi, Wellesley
Steve Olanoff, Westwood

Advocacy/Citizens Groups

Rick Arena, Association for Public
Transportation
John Businger, National Corridors
Initiative
Richard Flynn, Eastern Mass. Freight
Rail Coalition
Marilyn Wellons, Riverside
Neighborhood Association

Guests and Visitors

Kevin Dooley, Tighe Warehouse
Bob Gentile, Framingham
Jo Hart, Worcester
Ken Patrick, Mashpee
Arnold Pinsley, Natick
Jamie Simchik, ULI Infrastructure
Abby Swaine, U.S. EPA

MPO Staff

Mike Callahan
Sean Pfalzer