February 2023

MA FREIGHT PLAN 23

FREIGHT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #2 SUMMARY

Date: February 23, 2023, 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM ET

Location: Virtual (Zoom)

Freight Advisory Committee (FAC) Attendees: Jonathan Gulliver (Chair, MassDOT), Chris Atwood (Unistress Corp.), Gordon Carr (Executive Director, New Bedford Port Authority), Joseph Morris (Massport), Aaron Swanson (Connecticut Department of Transportation), Charles Hunter (Genesee & Wyoming Railroad), Joel Barrera (Massport), Gary Roux (Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies)

MassDOT Attendees: Makaela Niles (Project Manager), Derek Krevat, Neil Boudreau, Chester Osborne, Joseph Foti, Nathan Peyton, J Goddard, John Goggin

Project Team Attendees: Katie Kirk (Cambridge Systematics), Rachel Chiquoine (Cambridge Systematics), Ece Smith (City Point Partners)

Public Attendees: David Rosenberg, Abby Swaine, Alan Butler, Alan Manoian, Bob Seay, Brad Harris, Chris Henchey, Clete Kus, John Kyper, Timothy Johnston, Jeremy Januskiewicz, Dan Van Schalkwyk, Dan Seedah, Michael Oden, Shravanthi Gopalan Narayanan, Jake Forgione, Rich Rydant, Michael MacInnis, Karl Allen, Gerry Borovick, David Kruschwitz, Ray Guarino, Nathan Cote, Leonard Singer, Stella Jordan, Maurice O'Connell, George Snow, Jamie Fay, Stephen Silveira, Kris Erickson, Erin Butts, Heather Bellow, Elizabeth Roche, Julie Pagano, Myra MacLeod, Charles Myers, Sandy Christiansen, Laurel Rafferty, Ellen Fleming, Chris Lisinski, Andrea Costa, James Eisenberg, Paul Nelson, F Martin

2023 MA FREIGHT PLAN

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Makaela Niles, MassDOT Project Manager, thanked everyone for attending the FAC meeting. She introduced Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver, Chair of the FAC, who began the meeting with opening remarks. M. Niles reviewed the meeting agenda which included welcome remarks, *Beyond Mobility* statewide long-range transportation plan, recap of the first FAC meeting, scenario planning for the future of freight in Massachusetts, recommendations framework and discussion, freight performance measures, and next steps.

ABOUT BEYOND MOBILITY

Derek Krevat (MassDOT) described *Beyond Mobility*, MassDOT's 2050 Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan, which will document the most pressing transportation priorities for the state between now and 2050. He reviewed the plan's six priority areas: safety, connectivity and access, travel experience, reliability, decarbonization and car-free travel, and resiliency. D. Krevat added that the *Beyond Mobility* project team seeks the freight community's input and encouraged meeting attendees to complete an online form to provide input.

RECAP OF THE FIRST FAC MEETING

M. Niles explained that the first FAC meeting, held in January 2023, discussed the role of the Freight Advisory Committee, provided background on efforts completed since 2017 Freight Plan, reviewed state freight plan requirements, outlined plan goals and vision, and held a Question-and-Answer session.

SCENARIO PLANNING

Katie Kirk, Cambridge Systematics, described the project team's progress since the last FAC meeting working on the scenario planning process. Scenario planning is a tool to bring awareness of uncertainty and risk into decision-making, rather than assuming a static prediction for a future. Scenario planning for the Freight Plan draws on scenarios used in *Beyond Mobility* and findings of the *COVID-19 Freight Study*. The project team considers five key trends:

- **Climate change.** Massachusetts is expected to experience extreme weather events. For freight, this could mean damage to systems, facilities, and infrastructure, and impacts to the wellbeing of the freight workforce. It may also limit future development patterns and land values, and impact where both people and businesses choose to locate. The effects of climate change could also influence supply and demand patterns at a macroeconomic level.

- **Technology.** The movement of freight may be influenced by automation, e-commerce, renewable energy sourcing, autonomous vehicles, and more. Existing, emerging, and future technologies could lead to more congestion and wear-and-tear on roadway infrastructure. For example, consumer patterns show a growing demand for e-commerce, resulting in increased truck trips. Additionally, different types of vehicles have different energy usages, sizes, and weights, which impact safety and permits.

- **People and Places.** Over time, the development and demographics of Massachusetts communities will depend on where residents and workers choose to live and work. Changing demographics has the potential to increase commercial and residential land use conflict. Joel Barrera (Massport) added that the Metropolitan Area Planning Council recently released a report on industrial land use in metropolitan Boston, and how the decrease in industrial land use was driving inequitable outcomes and disconnecting people from freight jobs.

- **Prosperity.** The growth or decline of Massachusetts' knowledge economy will influence the racial wealth gap and innovation. This is a multifaceted issue considering freight, the transportation system, and quality of life for Massachusetts residents. Impacts over time may not be uniform across industries, and slow wage growth may burden workers in freight industries.

- **Future of Work.** While the COVID-19 pandemic influenced how, where, and when many employees work, these changes do not apply to many freight-intensive industries and essential workers. For freight, this could mean continued labor shortages in freight sectors, the need to broaden labor pool recruitment, and a need to address barriers to job access which may include childcare, affordable housing, transit and transportation, and workforce readiness.

Aligning with *Beyond Mobility*¸ the 2023 Freight Plan uses three scenarios to represent possible pathways of freight trends throughout Massachusetts.

The first scenario, **Hybrid and Diverse**, addresses economic trends including increased automation, telework, and flexible scheduling. This scenario assumes that employment and commerce shift in response to climate change. This could both relieve congestion and complicate freight movement and access to freight intensive jobs. There may be more capacity available on the roads near industrial hubs, though these locations are not all equally accessible by highway or rail. This scenario would also need investments in intelligent transportation systems to manage automated freight movement.

The second scenario, **Ahead as Before**, maintains the current growth trajectory. A strong knowledge economy is challenged by high cost-of-living and a racial wealth and income gap in the Greater Boston Area, while new opportunities arise in manufacturing and energy in other regions of Massachusetts. This scenario considers overall increased need for truck parking, freight workforce development, asset management, and congestion management and bottleneck improvement.

The third scenario, **Close and Connected,** reflects what might happen if current trends begin to revert. For example, employment largely resumes in-person with less relying on telework and automation. In addition, substantial growth in manufacturing and a weakened information sector could spread housing demands and employment locations across the state more evenly.

POLLING QUESTIONS ABOUT SCENARIOS

K. Kirk utilized Mentimeter to ask the FAC members and public attendees the following questions. Participant responses are included verbatim below.

1. **What are some other freight-related impacts that you envision in the *Hybrid and Diverse* scenario?**

- Residents will do more errands in the personal vehicles at times of the day outside rush hour, which may influence how freight moves over shared roads.
- Competition between delivery zones and short-term parking for pick up will increase.
- In addition to the need for parking, there is the need for proper amenities for these parking areas – power, safety, lighting.
- Many communities may not be prepared for potential new distribution centers.
- Safety-related issues with hazardous cargo like vinyl chloride, especially in the light of the catastrophic derailment at East Palestine, Ohio, and the resulting fire.
- Lack of proper loading/unloading areas in urban areas.
- Despite the change in the workplace the need to continue to focus on freight mobility is more important than ever. We must start by reducing bottleneck locations.
- Curb space management, for all types of users including the increasing share of expedited delivery, is a thorny puzzle. Delivery vehicles making quick stops block bike lanes, handicapped parking, etc.
- Semi-tractor trailer operations involving platooning and driverless trucks would likely negatively impact freight railroad shipping and increase highway congestion and maintenance costs.

2. **What are some other freight-related impacts that you envision in the *Ahead as Before* scenario?**

- Will there be a stronger need for cold warehousing?
- Bottlenecks will get worse on major arterials as development along these arterials in suburbs continue.
- Not sure where this fits in your scenarios but one of the biggest changes will be reduction in petroleum shipments as we transition to carbon free energy.

3. **What are some other freight-related impacts that you envision in the *Close and Connected* scenario?**

- The need to build housing for freight workers near their workplaces.
- Traffic will snarl if people don't revert to transit.
- Continued conflict with other modes – bike, pedals, etc. and loss of dedicated freight/truck roads.
- A type of solution? Multi-Family Zoning Requirement for MBTA communities: https://www.mass.gov/info-details/multi-family-zoning-requirement-for-mbta-communities
- We have 21st century trucks on road networks laid out in the 19th and 20th century roads. Rail constraints and low bridge constraints remain a problem for truck routes in cities.
- Cold food warehouses can be built with access to freight rail, allowing long haul freight rail and local deliveries vs. long haul truck dependency.

RECOMMENDATIONS FRAMEWORK AND DISCUSSION

K. Kirk stated that the draft 2023 Freight Plan will be available for public review in about one month. The Freight Plan recommendations are sourced from research and technical analyses, MassDOT priorities documented in prior studies such as *Beyond Mobility* and the *COVID-19 Freight Study*, priorities from other Massachusetts-based groups such as Massport and local municipalities, focus groups and interviews, and federal best practices.

There are five types of strategies in the recommendations framework:

- **Immediate Strategies** address a current or near-term need.
- **Robust Strategies** address issues that are expected to arise in the next five years.
- **Hedging Strategies** consider possible long-term challenges that may or may not need to be addressed, but if so, we need to start implementing these strategies now.
- **Shaping Strategies** address policy-oriented issues and influence future trends.
- **Deferred Strategies** are additional resources that may not be necessary but are available if needed in the future.

The types of recommendations include infrastructure improvements such as freight projects and investments, operational innovations such as planning and engineering, and freight-related programming, policies, and initiatives.

POLLING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RECOMMENDATIONS FRAMEWORK

1. **What do you think are some *immediate strategies* for freight in Massachusetts?**

   - More long-term freight parking areas.
   - Bicycle truck guard requirements.
   - There are important investments that are needed in South Boston related to the MTT and Summer to the Bypass Road.
   - More parking along the interstates to get the trucks off the roadside oversight.
   - Financial incentives for companies to ship FTL or use electric vehicles.
   - Greater overall awareness of the importance of freight movements. Prioritize, don't constrain.
   - Consider the impact of shift to carbon free economy and reduction in petroleum movements.
   - Is there a way to encourage multi-tenant DCs and warehouses, rather than company specific standalone facilities?
   - Better advance warning systems for low clearance structures.

2. **What do you think are some *robust strategies* for freight in Massachusetts?**

   - Preparing for electric cars and other alternative fuels.
   - Understanding opportunities for trucking and transit priority to co-exist.
   - Look to get details about congestion and work zones out to truck drivers so they can plan their route, or change based on what is happening.
   - Make sure MassDOT is familiar with the practical work of NACFE: https://nacfe.org/research/electric-trucks/
   - Eliminating rail corridors as inundation pathways.
   - More advanced warning systems for low clearance structures.

3. **What do you think are some *hedging/shaping strategies* for freight in Massachusetts?**

   - Protecting and enhancing the ability to move freight by water.
   - Because new TRUs are hybrid by default, revise state building standards to require that new refrigerated warehouses and retail facilities build in "shore power" at loading docks.
   - Agree East-West Mobility is a challenge.

4. **What do you think are some *deferred strategies* for freight in Massachusetts?**

    - Congestion pricing to discourage optional private vehicle trips, as opposed to mass transit and freight. Would like it near-term but should be somewhere on the menu.

FREIGHT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Freight performance measures are a federal requirement being considered for the 2023 Freight Plan. Performance measures monitor the performance of the transportation system and help ensure that objectives and goals are met. The 2023 Freight Plan will incorporate relevant metrics already tracked by MassDOT. The project team is working to identify measures across five goal areas: system conditions, safety and resiliency, mobility and reliability, economic competitiveness, and equity and environmental sustainability.

QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD

There was a Question-and-Answer period following the presentation and survey questions with a total of two questions, included with responses from facilitators below.

1. Question #1 (Abby Swaine): Does MassDOT speak to neighboring state DOTs to coordinate on freight issues?

    M. Niles: We coordinate with other state DOTs in the region on freight related issues, including truck parking. One forum for collaboration is the Eastern Transportation Coalition, of which MassDOT is a member and participates in the Truck Parking Working Group.

2. Question #2 (John Kyper & Bob Seay): What precautions are being done about derailments and hazardous cargo, especially after what happened in Ohio?

    M. Niles: MassDOT continues to work with its federal partners in making sure that goods move safely to the Commonwealth. MassDOT ensures safety is enhanced throughout our roadways and our railways. MassDOT continues to look for funding opportunities as well to support the improvement and investment in our assets.
    K. Kirk: Many hazardous materials are constantly being transported via all freight modes because they are involved in many consumer goods. Rail transportation specifically has seen a lot of safety advancements in the recent years and generally is a very safe mode of transportation, especially compared to highway transportation.

NEXT STEPS

M. Niles described the next steps and schedule for the coming months. There will be another FAC meeting next month as the project team continues to gather stakeholder and public perspectives. The project team is also compiling findings from surveys as well as hosting small focus groups to discuss various topics. The team will continue drafting the Freight Plan, preparing for the next round of meetings, and finalizing the draft Freight Plan for a 30-day public comment period. M. Niles encouraged attendees to visit the freight plan website to sign up for plan updates, and mentioned that meeting materials will be made available on the Freight Plan webpage: https://www.mass.gov/service-details/freight-plan