



# MA FREIGHT PLAN 23

## FREIGHT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #1 SUMMARY

**Date:** January 10, 2023, 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM ET

**Location:** Virtual (Zoom)

**Freight Advisory Committee (FAC) Attendees – Members and Designees:**

Jonathan Gulliver (Chair, MassDOT), Aaron Swanson (Connecticut Department of Transportation), Brooke McKenna (City of Cambridge), Charles Hunter (Genesee & Wyoming Railroad), Chris Atwood (Unistress Corp.), Chris Timmel (Federal Highway Administration), Gary Roux (Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies), Pierre Bernier (Maritime International), Sarah Lee (Massport), Joel Barrera (Massport)

**MassDOT Attendees:** Makaela Niles (Project Manager), Michael Verseckes, Joseph Foti, Neil Boudreau, Chester Osborne, Jacque Goddard, Judith Riley, John Goggin, Nathaniel Kerr

**Project Team Attendees:** Katie Kirk (Cambridge Systematics), Rachel Chiquoine (Cambridge Systematics), Meg Langley (City Point Partners), Xavier Lopez (City Point Partners)

**Public Attendees:** David Rosenberg, Abby Swaine, Karl Allen, Raymond Guarino, Michael Milanoski, Sean Hilton, Michael O'Brien, Shravanthi Gopalan Narayanan, Kevin Concannon, Brian Pigeon, Zane Lumelsky, Jay Flynn, Alasdair Cunningham, Tommy Butler, Neil Angus, Robert Davis, Tony Collins, Rebecca Morgan, Julie Dombroski, Taylor Frizzell-Colomey, Marisa Janeczek, Dennis Coffey, Alan Earls, Jason Cullinane, Gayla Cawley, Gus Block, Aidan Braun, Jessica Boulanger, Gerry Borovick, Charles Myers, Peter Mastrodomenico, Kathy Bell, Andrea Costa, Jason Gumpert

## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

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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 and explained the need for an updated freight plan. An updated Federal Highway approved freight plan is needed to continue to use National Highway Freight funds for current and future projects.

M. Niles reviewed the meeting's agenda which included Welcome & Introductions, Role of the Freight Advisory Committee, Background on 2017 Freight Plan, COVID-19 Freight Study Findings, 2023 Massachusetts Freight Plan, 2023 Plan & Vision Goals, and Next Steps. She then introduced the project study team and asked members of the FAC to introduce themselves.

## OVERVIEW OF THE FREIGHT ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND THE MASSACHUSETTS FREIGHT PLAN

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M. Niles explained the role of the Freight Advisory Committee and encouraged participants to provide feedback on the materials presented in the meeting. She then provided background on the 2017 Freight Plan, including key actions that have taken place since, explaining that the 2023 Plan builds upon the foundation built with the 2017 Plan. Key actions taken since the 2017 Freight Plan include rail upgrades, more than half a dozen National Highway Freight Program-funded projects, a Statewide Truck Parking Improvements Study, and a COVID-19 Freight Study. M. Niles shared findings from the COVID-19 Freight Study, noting that the pandemic highlighted global supply chain vulnerabilities such as labor and supply shortages, business closures, and inflation. The COVID-Freight Study included a literature review, a qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis effort, and developed some immediate considerations that feed into the 2023 Freight Plan.

Katie Kirk, Cambridge Systematics, provided an overview of the 2023 Freight Plan components, schedule, and draft vision and goals. She explained that the Study Team plans to develop a Plan that meets four goals as directed by MassDOT. The Plan will be first and foremost reader-friendly, produced in both PDF and web-based formats that meet 508-compliance accessibility standards. It will focus on policy, trends, and scenario planning, and supported by technical analysis. Third, the Plan will closely tie into other MassDOT plans and programs, including several recent MassDOT studies directly related to freight and goods movement in Massachusetts, such as the COVID-19 Freight Study, as well as a truck bottleneck study, truck parking study, and the Massachusetts Long Range Transportation Plan *Beyond Mobility*. Lastly, the Plan will advance national freight goals as established by the Federal Highway Administration. The Plan will be ready for submittal to the FHWA by mid-April 2023, with the goal of receiving approval by mid-July 2023.

K. Kirk explained the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act requirements for freight plans, stating that when the FAST Act was signed into law in December 2015, it was the first federal law in over a decade to

provide long-term funding for surface transportation infrastructure planning and investment. The FAST Act also required each state to develop a state freight plan to receive annual formula funding under the National Highway Freight Program. There were ten main requirements outlined in the legislation that states were required to address to comprehensively address the state's freight planning activities and investments. After covering a number of special topics and analysis – including freight trends, needs, and issues, policies and strategies, and freight performance measures – state freight plans must include a “fiscally-constrained” freight investment plan with a project list that shows how the state will invest and match its NHFP funds.

K. Kirk continued the presentation by explaining the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), and how it includes new opportunities and requirements. IIJA allocates an estimated \$1.2 trillion in total funding over ten years. Of the \$1.2 trillion in funding, \$550 billion is in new spending that will flow to state and local governments. In FY 2023, Massachusetts is expected to receive more than \$820 million in federal-aid highway program apportionments under IIJA, of which \$21.5 million will be apportioned under the National Highway Freight Program. In addition to the requirements included in the FAST Act, IIJA includes seven new requirements for state freight plans:

- Assessment of commercial motor vehicle parking facilities.
- Description of supply chain cargo flows.
- Inventory of commercial ports.
- Discussion of the impacts of e-commerce on freight infrastructure.
- Consideration of military freight.
- Strategies and goals to decrease the severity of extreme weather and natural disasters on freight mobility, the impacts of freight movement on local air pollution, the impacts of freight movement on flooding and stormwater runoff, and the impacts of freight movement on wildlife habitat loss.
- In carrying out activities under the State freight plan, enhance reliability or redundancy of freight transportation or incorporate the ability to rapidly restore access and reliability with respect to freight transportation.

Next, K. Kirk outlined the timeline to accomplish the goals for the 2023 Massachusetts Freight Plan over the next six months. The project began in December of 2022 and has begun the analysis of existing conditions and trends, as well as the Plan's vision and goals. This FAC meeting was the first in a series of three, with the next meetings occurring in February and March. The Study Team will hold two public informational sessions, one in January and one in March. Through March, the Team will complete the scenario planning analysis and develop recommendations, performance measures, and a Freight Investment Plan and Implementation Plan. A thirty-day public review period will begin with the second Public Meeting in mid-March and the Team will address any feedback and submit a revised Plan for FHWA approval by mid-April. The Team anticipates a sixty-day review period by FHWA and plans to address any feedback for final submittal and approval by mid-July.

M. Niles continued the presentation by providing background on the process for developing the 2023 Freight Plan Vision and Goals. The draft vision and goals for the 2023 Plan will build upon those included in the 2017 Plan. The 2017 Freight Plan vision and guiding principles focused on five areas: safety, security and resiliency; infrastructure condition; economic competitiveness; mobility, efficiency, and reliability; and supporting healthy and sustainable communities. The proposed 2023 Freight Plan Vision aims to “Support safe, resilient, and secure multimodal freight movement in Massachusetts through investing in key freight assets to improve economic

competitiveness, provide efficient and reliable freight mobility, and support healthy and sustainable communities.” This statement was crafted to streamline many of the 2017 Freight Plan vision themes, with the added multimodal emphasis.

M. Niles further explained that the proposed goals for the 2023 Plan align with the vision’s themes within five categories: system condition, safety and resiliency, mobility and reliability, economic competitiveness, and equity and environmental sustainability. Fostering Equity & Collaboration and Building organizational capacity are two proposed guiding principles.

## POLL QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

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The facilitators utilized the Zoom polling feature to ask the FAC members and public attendees the following two questions.

1. **How would you prioritize each of the following goals?** (Rank as high, medium, or low priority)
  - a. System Conditions
  - b. Safety and Resiliency
  - c. Mobility and Reliability
  - d. Economic Competitiveness
  - e. Equity and Environmental Sustainability

Out of thirty-seven respondents, most respondents placed *Safety and Resiliency* as a high priority, followed by *Economic Competitiveness*, *Equity and Environmental Sustainability* and then *Mobility and Reliability* and *System Condition*. All goals were ranked by participants as either high or medium priority.

### 2. **Are there other themes you would like to see incorporated into the 2023 Freight Plan vision or goals?**

There were eleven responses, covering topics including:

- Decarbonization and emissions reduction using multiple zero emissions technologies for commercial vehicles, port equipment, last mile delivery, and other freight infrastructure, along with congestion reduction.
- Intentional alignment and coordination with multimodal transportation goals of cities and regions within Massachusetts, including consideration of spaces shared by freight, transit, and vulnerable road users.
- Combination of freight bottleneck analyses and transportation demand management strategies to address goals such as network reliability and safety for all road users.
- Mode shift between freight modes to leverage freight rail, reduce highway congestion and emissions, and improve supply chain efficiencies.
- Collaboration with key regional freight players on workforce development and regional connectivity.
- Messaging to the general public that emphasizes the importance of freight planning and supply chain resilience and reliability.



## QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD

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There was a Question and Answer period following the presentation and poll questions with a total of eight questions and/or comments, included with responses from facilitators below.

1. Participant #1 (Pierre Bernier): The upgrade between Framingham, New Bedford, and Fall River was highly successful. Last summer with the traffic efficient to New Bedford and Taunton, we were able to divert 1500 trailers up the road just using rail because we increased the weight limit. Are there other parts of the rail system that're going to be upgraded soon?

M. Niles: We are continuing to work with our rail partners on this. Our Rail and Transit Division works very closely, and so those types of updates are certainly being looked at and can certainly be included as part of this process, as well as specific projects are identified.

2. Participant #2 (Abby Swaine): Will the freight plan address the Federal Highway Carbon Reduction Program?

K. Kirk: This is one of the many new programs that was established with the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and is a new formula funding program that Massachusetts will receive funds. Yes, this program will be discussed by the project team. At this time, completing the Freight Plan and identifying some of these strategies to reduce the environmental and community impacts of freight will set the stage for the types of projects that this program could fund. The Freight Plan is a good first step in identifying the best use of those funds.

3. Participant #3 (Tony Collins): Are you going to be doing targeted outreach to freight stakeholders? Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs) and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) working on Metropolitan Transportation Plans (MTPs) are looking for ways to conduct public engagement with freight stakeholders and collaboration with the state would be beneficial.

K. Kirk: The project team has a robust outreach plan that will be implemented in this timeframe. In addition to talking to stakeholders that are involved in the FAC, the team is also conducting targeted outreach activities. We'd like to utilize our connections with the FAC as well as others who are supporting MassDOT through this process to distribute that opportunity. Because one of the focus areas of our outreach is ensuring that we have sufficiently addressed equity, including communities that may be disproportionately impacted by freight who don't always have an opportunity to participate in these kinds of projects and plans. We want to be very intentional and mindful about receiving a representative amount of feedback on the process and what their priorities are. If you have suggestions on how to share that or to distribute the message, we'd be very happy to work with you because it's a big effort and we want to make sure we reach as many folks as possible.

4. Participant #4 (Karl Allen): How was the Committee membership selected? The city of Chelsea, as an Environmental Justice (EJ) community, is heavily impacted by freight and is very interested in having a voice in the process.

M. Niles: The Freight Advisory Committee was established as part of the previous Freight Plan and aimed to have a balance of public and private sector stakeholders with industry expertise. The committee has changed a bit since the last round of the Freight Plan, and we're always looking to communicate and engage with other stakeholders as well.

5. Participant #5 (Jason Cullinane): I'm the district director for State Senator Moran. I was hoping that we could get a copy of the slide deck that you had today.

M. Niles: The meeting presentation and the summary notes will be made available on the plan website.

6. Participant #6 (Abby Swaine): Do you plan to coordinate with the Eastern Transportation Coalition on the potential to provide truck parking?

K. Kirk: MassDOT recently completed a comprehensive truck parking study. The study team is using those findings and recommendations as part of the Freight Plan. I would suggest that our public meetings and other upcoming outreach would be a great opportunity for the Eastern Transportation Coalition (and others) to participate and share views on truck parking.

7. Participant #7 (Chris Atwood): (regarding the need for truck parking) From my point of view, since I started on the Freight Advisory Committee, my priority has been to increase truck parking and accessibility for trucks. Along the I-90 corridor, including 495 and 95 rest areas, it's very cramped at night which causes a lot of safety issues. It seems like the plan that we have coming up for the parking areas is to expand them and possibly put some electronic alerting in there for spots that are available, which are much needed.
8. Participant #8 (Charles Hunter): I'm the president of the Massachusetts Railroad Association. The railroads of Massachusetts have capacity in the system to handle additional freight. Work needs to be done in the yard serving facilities in some of our terminal areas. The project we have in New England Central is nearing completion with the BUILD grant and MassDOT support. But overall, the railroads have the capacity to take on more freight, and we would like to work with the other stakeholders to make that happen.

## NEXT STEPS

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For the next 30 days following the public meeting, the study team will compile comments from the FAC and public information meeting (held on January 12, 2023). The study team will continue drafting Freight Plan chapters covering key industries, recent supply chain developments, and existing conditions and trends. The project team will be preparing for the next FAC and public meetings as well. M. Niles encouraged attendees to visit the freight plan website to sign up for plan updates, and mentioned that meeting materials, including the presentation and summary notes, and plan updates will be made available on the Freight Plan webpage:

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/freight-plan>