



# MA FREIGHT PLAN 23

## PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL MEETING #1 SUMMARY

**Date:** January 12, 2023, 6:00 – 7:00 PM ET

**Location:** Virtual (Zoom)

**MassDOT Attendees:** Makaela Niles (Project Manager)

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

**Public Attendees:** John Kyper, Leonel Rebello, Tom Ready, Joe Davenport, Andrew Jennings, Clete Kus, August Blake, Marcelo Mascarini, Shravanth Gopalan Narayanan, Jacob Koppel, Tony Collins, Joel Barrera, Sara W., Gerry Borovick, Raymond Guarino, Rich Rydant, DJ Cence, Bob Seay, Sky Lloyd, Steve Silveira, Linda Lloyd, Jason Gumpert

## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Makaela Niles, MassDOT Project Manager, welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the first Public Information Meeting for the 2023 Massachusetts Freight Plan. M. Niles reviewed the meeting's agenda which included Welcome & Introductions, Background on 2017 Freight Plan, COVID-19 Freight Study Findings, 2023 Massachusetts Freight Plan, 2023 Plan & Vision Goals, Questions and Answers, and Next Steps. She then introduced the project study team including the members from Cambridge Systematics, City Point Partners, and Toole Design.

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

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M. Niles provided background on the 2017 Freight Plan, including some key actions that have taken place since, explaining that the 2023 Plan builds upon the foundation built with the 2017 Plan. Key actions that have been 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 which feeds 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 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 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. Meeting these deadlines will ensure that Massachusetts continues to receive National Highway Freight Program formula funding from U.S. DOT to finance critical freight projects and priorities in the Commonwealth, as funds are only distributed to states with an active State Freight Plan.

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, IJA includes seven new requirements for state freight plans, many of which were covered by the 2017 freight plan but also included several new topics.

- 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.

K. Kirk explained the role of the Freight Advisory Committee for the 2023 Plan, which is a diverse group of advisors, freight and industry stakeholders, and subject matter experts from both the private and public sectors. Some of the FAC members participated in the development of the 2017 Freight Plan, and were recently engaged as part of the COVID-19 Freight Study. She continued by explaining that the Freight Plan team will work with the FAC to confirm the Plan's vision and goals, discuss local and regional freight-related issues, trends, and needs, and craft recommendations, solutions, and strategies for freight and goods movement in Massachusetts. The Planning Team plans to meet with the FAC up to three times over the next six months at key points in the Freight Planning process.

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. The first FAC meeting was held in January and the next two will follow in February and March. The Study Team will hold one more Public Information Meeting in March. Through March, the Team will complete the scenario planning analysis, 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 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 fifteen responses, most respondents placed each of these goals as a high or medium priority, with *Safety and Resiliency* being ranked by participants as the highest.

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

There were eight responses, covering topics including:

- Emissions reductions for freight transportation, such as zero emissions vehicles and mode shift to lower emissions freight modes.
- Mode shift from highway freight to rail freight movement, with improvements to capacity, velocity, infrastructure, reliability, and competitiveness of freight rail.
- Coordination with other transportation goals including pedestrian and bicyclist infrastructure, safety along freight corridors, and providing freight access in western Massachusetts.
- Planning for and mitigation both of current conditions and planned future buildouts of the freight system, such as changes to warehousing and distribution related to trip generation and increasing e-commerce.

## 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 four questions and/or comments, included with responses from facilitators below.



1. Participant #1 (Tom Ready): Since 2017, there has been significant residential development in the Seaport and Fort Point, as well as adjacent to the existing truck routes that are used from the Conley Terminal in and out of South Boston. These developments should be factored into the Freight Plan from a multimodal safety perspective of all road users, as well as the potential health impacts for people that now live in this part of the City of Boston. Five years ago, people didn't live adjacent to these truck routes. They do now.

K. Kirk: This is an important part of the plan. Given the timeline that we're working toward, the study team will be leveraging many studies recently completed by MassDOT. This includes findings and recommendations from a truck bottleneck study, truck parking study, and COVID-19 freight study. The multimodal safety analysis is a new emphasis area for this Freight Plan also that will consider interactions between freight and residential road users. With respect to environmental considerations, the USDOT now requires strategies to address environmental topics including air quality, impacts of stormwater runoff, and wildlife habitat loss. The MassDOT Freight Plan recommendations and strategies will cover these topics.

2. Participant #2 (Gerry Borovick): Regarding Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) new freight opportunities and requirements, where would I find out more about military freight to be concluded in the 2023 Freight Plan?

K. Kirk: This is an interesting new requirement that broadly requests that states consider military freight. The Freight Plan will discuss networks that the military and the U.S. Department of Defense have designated as being essential to move critical freight for the military: the Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET) and the Strategic Rail Corridor Network (STRACNET). Those two designated networks support key military freight facilities and movement among facilities throughout the country. There is also the Strategic Seaport Program as well. The study team will evaluate how the STRAHNET and STRACNET overlap with the greater Massachusetts freight network.

3. Participant #3 (Jason Gumpert): Is adding new freight-specific infrastructure (such as freight bridges) a part of this Freight Plan? For example, getting heavy truck traffic off older bridges, such as in the Springfield area.

K. Kirk: There's a focus on both asset preservation as well as new investment too. There's a lot of infrastructure throughout the state that requires upgrades, maintenance of the level of service that's needed. New projects would be considered alongside those existing needs as well. This Freight Plan will develop recommendations that will be used for future project development and prioritization.

4. Participant #4 (Sky Lloyd): Are there any plans to move seaport traffic, Boston seaport traffic by rail?

K. Kirk: As part of the Freight Plan, the study team is doing an analysis including evaluating the level of service, performance, and capacity of the highway, rail, port and waterway, and the air cargo networks. The study team will review a number of different data sources, most of which are publicly available, as well as recently completed studies including the truck bottleneck study. We will also augment that with stakeholder outreach, including members of our Freight Advisory Committee meeting who are plugged into mobile shippers and industry-related issues.

## NEXT STEPS

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For the next 30 days following the public meeting, the study team will compile comments from the Freight Advisory Committee meeting (held on January 10, 2023) and public information meeting. 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 Freight Advisory Committee and public information 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>