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Freight Committee Meeting Minutes

January 6, 2010

Offices of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)
DuPage County Conference Room
233 S. Wacker Drive, Suite 800, Chicago, Illinois

Committee Members: George Billows-Illinois Trucking Association (Co-Chairman), Tom Zapler, UPRR (Co-Chairman), David Chandler-CNT, Gregory Dreyer-Illinois Tollway, Reggie Greenwood – SSMMA Lee Hutchins-AECOM, Kazuya Kawamura-UIC, Jim LaBelle – Chicago Metropolis 2020, Pat Killinger – Will County Highway Department, Dean Mentjes-FHWA, Floyd Miras-USDOT-Maritime Admin, Laurence Rohter-IIT

Absent: David Grewe – CTCO, Jeff Harris - NS/CTCO, Rob Hoffman, Steve Lazarra – Will County Land Use Dept, Libby Ogard – Prime Focus, Earl Wacker – Consultant, Norm West – USEPA, Larry Wilson – IDOT

Staff Present: Claire Bozic, Tom Murtha, Todd Schmidt

Others Present: Chris DiPalma – FHWA, Jim Giblin – TranSystems, Catherine Kannenberg – Metra, Sarah Lutz – McHenry County DOT, Erika Witzke – Cambridge Systematics

1.0 Call to Order

Co-chair George Billows called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

2.0 Introductions

Committee members and other attendees introduced themselves.

3.0 Agenda Changes and Announcements

The agenda order was changed to move the Freight System Planning Recommendations ahead in the agenda. Mr. Billows also announced that the agenda was again full. The committee would go as far through the agenda as possible, but any remaining items would move to the next meeting.

4.0 Approval of Minutes – December 3, 2009

A motion to approve the minutes of the December meeting, with no revisions, was made and seconded. With all in favor, the motion carried.

5.0 Regional Freight System Planning Recommendations

Ms. Witzke began with a followup to items discussed at the December 3 meeting. On December 11, a meeting was held with CREATE Partners to describe the data-driven methodology for arriving at freight system recommendations, review the recommendations, and to discuss operational trends of significance. The meeting resulted in clarification that the projects address intermodal access and proximity, east-west flows, and low-density lines that might present opportunities for accommodating future flows. In addition to the projects identified before the meeting, projects were identified on the CSXT Blue Island Subdivision to Forest Hill Yard, the UP Rockwell Subdivision Improvements, and the IHB from Alsip to LaGrange.

Ms. Witzke also discussed the meeting with additional Freight Committee stakeholders on December 16. Ms. Witzke reported that Committee members had expressed concern that the policies were not presented in an “actionable” format, so would not lead to action. Ms. Witzke presented some ideas for addressing this concern, including policy implementation actions, identifying like actions here or elsewhere, lead agencies, timing, scale, and possible funding.

Ms. Witzke then finished the formal presentation by discussing operational issues and trends by freight mode, and how they will affect the region. She pointed out that operational strategies can help strike a balance between necessary improvements and very high infrastructure costs.

Management and operations (M&O) considerations for trucks included construction zone management, advanced traveler information, delivery restrictions, truck parking, lane restrictions, size and weight restrictions, and highway maintenance. M&O considerations for rail freight included positive train control mandates, technology to allow longer and heavier trains, new routing outside congested areas, and rationalizing terminals for better inter-carrier interchanges. Waterborne freight M&O considerations included preventive maintenance, fleeting areas, and potential lock closures to prevent asian carp migration to Lake Michigan. Operational issues for air freight include O’Hare constraints, tighter belly-freight screening mandates, aging fleets, and high fuel costs.

Discussion continued with additional questions about implementing policy endeavors and operational strategies. Some members were skeptical that the operational issues could be addressed. While it’s important to identify and prioritize needed capital improvements, Mr. Murtha suggested that the policy and operational recommendations would be easier to implement than many of the capital recommendations, given the substantial cost of infrastructure and the severe revenue constraint under which we operate.

6.1 National Highway System Intermodal Freight Connectors – Connector Update

Mr. Murtha introduced a proposal for changes to the NHS intermodal freight connector list. The changes were to address recent changes in freight system operations, such as the opening and closing of terminals. Mr. Murtha noted that rail stakeholders had reviewed the list, but local communities still needed to address it and comment upon it. Mr. Murtha also pointed out that he had sought guidance from federal officials regarding connector identification for terminals under construction or which are planned for closure in the near future. Such developing changes were not addressed on the current list.

Several stakeholders noticed an error on the list. For connector ID 30P, the north limit should have been identified as “122nd Street,” not “103rd Street.” Mr. Murtha said he would correct the error.

6.2 National Highway System Intermodal Freight Connectors – Pavement Conditions

Mr. Murtha announced that Dan Rice had updated the pavement condition information for NHS intermodal freight connectors. Previously, Mr. Rice had reported the International Roughness Index to the Committee. Mr. Rice now prepared a report that showed the condition rating survey information for the roadways. Mr. Murtha pointed out that, while the CRS data is a more comprehensive measure for pavement conditions than the IRI, it is not directly comparable to national data as the IRI is.

Discussion followed on pavement conditions on individual roads. Particular concern was expressed regarding 162nd Street in Harvey, leading to a proposed expansion of the CN terminal. Apparently, though the project was eligible under NHS funding, federal funding is a problem because the roadway is still functionally classified as a local street, thus making it ineligible for any federal funds. Mr. Murtha said CMAP would investigate the functional classification of such roads.

7.0 Regional Transportation Operations Coalition

Mr. Schmidt introduced the concept for the Regional Transportation Operations Coalition (RTOC). Mr. Schmidt explained that RTOC would be a task-oriented group, bringing together people to address transportation issues for passenger vehicles, transit, freight, and non-motorized transportation. Initial projects would include implementation of the CREATE for Trucks program, the regional transportation data archive, and arterial operations. Mr. Murtha pointed out that the advantage for freight issues would be felt strongly for the trucking industry, since RTOC would be a forum where both freight operators highway operators would participate. On a motion by Tom Zapler and George Billows, the Freight Committee voted unanimously to recommend the establishment of the Regional Transportation Operations Coalition.

7.0 Diesel Emissions Reduction Project

Mr. Murtha announced that a meeting had been held with current and former CMAQ diesel emissions reductions program participants. IDOT had requested that a single contract be used by all applicants. Mr. Murtha noted that he hoped all applicants would sign the agreement IDOT had presented them, despite some concerns about the wording of the agreement. Mr. Zapler indicated that he hoped the agreement would work as well, though railroad legal departments would likely have some trouble with the wording.

9.0. Deferral of Agenda

The remainder of the agenda was deferred to the next scheduled meeting.

10.0 Adjournment

At 12:00 p.m., a motion to adjourn was made and approved by acclamation.

Respectfully submitted by Tom Murtha