

Overview of Ongoing Freight Groups

The transportation policy community has paid increasing attention to freight in recent years. Freight industry stakeholders have increased their organization and advocacy on the national policy stage, and new research efforts have emphasized the importance of freight to state, regional, and local economies. In part reflecting this increased awareness, the recently-enacted federal reauthorization law, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), does more to [recognize](#) freight needs than the law's antecedents.

Several advisory groups have been established over the past year to discuss freight policy at the federal, state, and regional levels. Several of these efforts flow directly from MAP-21 and its requirements, while others reflect an increased civic commitment to improve the freight system. The following discussion provides a brief overview of four such freight groups, helping to situate CMAP's Regional Freight Leadership Task Force among other ongoing efforts.

U.S. DOT, Freight Policy Council (internal)

On August 23, 2012, the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) [announced](#) formation of the Freight Policy Council to develop a National Freight Strategic Plan as called for in MAP-21. That plan will identify some 27,000 miles of Primary Freight Network, as well as other roads comprising rural freight routes. MAP-21 also calls on the states to plan for supporting freight uses along those corridors by developing state plans. In the announcement, former Secretary Ray LaHood emphasized that the Council will consider all freight modes in its work.

Deputy Transportation Secretary John Porcari chairs the Freight Policy Council, which consists of U.S. DOT leadership from its highway, rail, maritime, and aviation administrations, as well as economic and policy experts from across the Administration. Freight and logistics providers will be invited to be part of a stakeholders' group in addition to consumers.

A copy of the Freight Policy Council's charter is available [online](#).

U.S. DOT, National Freight Advisory Committee (external)

In February 2013, U.S. DOT [announced](#) the formation of the National Freight Advisory Committee, a group of external stakeholders and freight experts, to advise the Department on freight issues, particularly the implementation of MAP-21. The Department solicited membership nominations, and [announced](#) the Committee's 47 members in May 2013. The Committee is chaired by Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) Secretary Ann Schneider.

According to the National Freight Advisory Council's [website](#), the Council will provide recommendations to the Department on the following topics:

- Implementation of the freight transportation requirements in MAP-21, including the establishment of the National Freight Network and development of a National Freight Strategic Plan;
- Development of strategies to help States implement MAP-21 provisions (State Freight Advisory Committees and State Freight Plans);
- Development of freight performance measures, including data and planning tools; and
- Freight-related legislation.

The National Freight Advisory Council held an [inaugural meeting](#) on June 25, 2013. The [agenda](#) and [minutes](#) of that meeting are available online.

IDOT, Illinois State Freight Advisory Council

On September 16, 2013, IDOT [announced](#) the formation of the Illinois State Freight Advisory Council. Modeled after the National Freight Advisory Council, the state council is expected to include members from a mix of public, private, academic, and professional organizations reflecting all freight modes and major freight users. Nominations for membership on the state council were due October 15.

According to its [website](#), the state council is intended to act as a standing forum to better coordinate freight planning in Illinois. More specifically, the Illinois State Freight Advisory Council is [expected](#) to:

- Advise the State on freight-related issues;
- Coordinate between the public and private sectors to share regional priorities and information;
- Promote the State's freight system, seeking to sustain its function as a national hub,
- Collaborate with the Illinois Export Advisory Council on freight issues;
- Gather and review existing research, and suggest research topics for IDOT; and
- Encourage the use of innovative technologies and best practices within the freight transportation sector.

World Business Chicago, Transportation and Logistics Strategy Team

World Business Chicago, a non-profit economic development organization, issued its [Plan for Economic Growth and Prosperity](#) in March 2012. The plan provides goals and strategies to support the long-term development of the regional economy, and features "Become More Competitive as a Leading Transportation and Logistics Hub" as one of the ten strategies.

To help implement the plan, World Business Chicago has organized teams of business and civic partners around the various strategies. The Transportation and Logistics Strategy Team has discussed various policy topics, including the concept of a Transportation and Logistics "Center

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of Excellence". Potentially based in a university or as a standalone institute, the Center would promote and commercialize research, and could also support innovative start-up businesses in the transportation and logistics field. The Strategy Team has also discussed the formation of a business-led "Metro Chicago Inland Port Council" to provide marketing and advocacy for the region's freight industry.