



# Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

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## Freight Committee

Minutes

June 15, 2015

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

**Members Present:** Joe Alonzo, Ben Brockschmidt, Mike Burton, Kevin Donahue, Adrian Guerrero, Lee Hutchins, Mike Klemens, Jim LaBelle, Dean Mentjes, Floyd Miras, Libby Ogard, Herbert Smith (by phone), John Yonan

**Staff Present:** Alex Beata, Tom Kotarac, DJ Mason, Jacki Murdock, Tom Murtha, Elizabeth Schuh, Simone Weil

**Others Present:** Kristen Andersen (Metra), Garland Armstrong (Access Living), Heather Armstrong (Access Living), Jennifer Becker (Kane/Kendall Council of Mayors), Max Bosso (Elwood International Port District), Carlee Clymer (Parsons Brinckerhoff), Stephen Kuhr (Parsons Brinckerhoff), Elaine McKenzie (Cambridge Systematics), Mary Elisabeth Pitz (MEP&A), Barbara Zubek (Southwest Council of Mayors)

### 1.0 Call to Order

Adrian Guerrero, co-chair of the Freight Committee, called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

### 2.0 Approval of Minutes – March 16, 2015

The minutes from March 16, 2015 were approved by the committee.

### 3.0 Agenda Changes and Announcements

There were no agenda changes, but there was one announcement. Mr. Beata noted that the CMAP Board had recently approved Joseph C. Szabo as the next CMAP executive director; Mr. Szabo's first day was June 15.

### 4.0 Extent and Use of the Freight System

Mr. Beata briefed the committee on recent staff activities in collecting data on the trucking, rail, and air and water freight systems. CMAP recently purchased a trucking dataset from ATRI, which provides speed and location data for Class 7 and 8 trucks. Mr. Murtha described the dataset in more detail and answered questions from the committee on its coverage and other specifications.

On rail data, Mr. Guerrero asked about staff's progress in securing data from the Clear Path system. Mr. Beata responded that the Clear Path system is not available for commercial purchase, and that staff is pursuing publicly available data sources. Staff intends to overlay that information with data on passenger rail on-time performance, including freight-related passenger delay, to develop a more complete understanding of the regional rail system. Mr. Guerrero offered to assist in pursuing the availability of Clear Path data with the Association of American Railroads.

## **5.0 Intermodalism Policy Update**

Ms. Weil introduced CMAP's Regional Economic Indicators website, which tracks several metrics describing the region's macroeconomic trends, workforce, industry clusters, and innovation. One of the metrics, intermodal lifts, is directly related to the performance of the freight system, and staff recently published a Policy Update to explore the topic of intermodalism in more detail. Staff found that the Chicago region touched about half of the nation's intermodal movements, and that the intermodal system allows Chicago-area firms to access a wide array of markets across North America relatively quickly and efficiently. Further, the freight transportation arrangement industry is a relative strength of the Chicago regional economy and an important contributor to the region's workforce.

Ms. Weil noted that the region's growth rate in intermodal has lagged the nation growth rate in recent years. However, staff believes that this trend reflects the building out of the national intermodal system; rather than representing a disadvantage for the Chicago region, the development of intermodal facilities in other key locations across the country expands the market area for northeast Illinois businesses. Mr. LaBelle asked if staff looked into the growth of intermodal facilities in other cities and whether there is an ideal number of intermodal facilities for the country. Ms. Weil noted that staff had not looked into that question, but that it generally considered the development of new intermodal facilities to be complementary to the region's freight system.

The committee discussed the regional economy in general terms. Some members asked if CMAP staff considered the broader, tristate regional economy in its metrics. Staff responded that the majority of data sources are provided at the metropolitan statistical area, which also includes counties in Wisconsin and Indiana. However, the counties lying outside the seven-county CMAP region represent a relatively small share of economic activity. Staff cited a recent analysis of cross-border business movements as an example. Overall, CMAP is focused on the core drivers of economic growth, rather than the location decisions of individual firms.

## **6.0 Federal Updates**

Mr. Beata provided a review of recent federal activity related to freight, including proposed legislation and rulemaking. He profiled a number of topics, including positive train control, crude-by-rail, Amtrak reauthorization, and a legislative proposal to further develop national freight policy and establish a freight funding program. Mr. Kotarac briefed the committee on a recent letter signed by the chairmen of the seven counties in northeastern Illinois, the CDOT commissioner, and the CMAP Board chairman, supporting CMAP's federal freight principles. Mr. Kotarac also provided context on the

larger surface transportation reauthorization process, including several upcoming hearings in various congressional committees.

Committee members discussed the federal updates, particularly the positive train control and crude-by-rail topics. Mr. LaBelle asked if positive train control could improve the efficiency of rail operations by allowing tighter sequencing of trains. He also noted that positive train control is expensive to implement and would not affect many causes of rail incidents.

On the topic of crude-by-rail, Mr. Klemens noted that municipalities in Will County are concerned with the definition of “urbanized area” in the recent federal rulemaking. “High threat urban areas” are defined as a city and a ten-mile buffer zone extending from its borders. Because Chicago is the only city in Illinois designated as a high threat urban area, many Will County communities would not be included in the new rulemaking.

Messrs. Guerrero and Smith provided the railroad industry perspective on the implementation of positive train control, as well as recent actions to improve emergency preparedness. One example is the launch of the “Ask Rail” app to improve communication with local emergency personnel. Mr. Smith noted that the recently proposed federal regulations could reduce the efficiency of rail operations.

#### **7.0 Proposed Approach for Gathering Technical Feedback**

Mr. Beata discussed staff’s proposed approach for gathering technical feedback in the development of the regional freight plan. He began by reminding the committee of the overall plan development timeline, and that the next year will be largely devoted to data collection and analysis. Staff sees the need for technical feedback to assist this process, and believes that the existing committee structure at CMAP will be sufficient to provide this feedback. The Freight Committee will be the primary point of contact, the Regional Transportation Operations Coalition will provide input on the identification of system chokepoints and deficiencies, the Land Use Committee will provide input on freight-related land uses, and the Economic Development Committee will provide input on research related to freight and the regional economy. Mr. Beata also noted that staff will reach out one-on-one to Freight Committee members as needed, and noted that Mr. Miras and Mr. Rod have already been helpful in providing data on water and air cargo in the region. The Freight Committee did not provide additional comments on the proposed approach for gathering technical feedback.

#### **8.0 FY2016 Anticipated Meeting Dates**

Mr. Beata noted the anticipated meeting dates for the next fiscal year, following the Freight Committee’s tradition of meeting on the fourth Monday of January and the third Monday of March, May, September, and November. Mr. Burton noted an error in the anticipated meeting date for January 2016 – the Freight Committee is expected to meet on January 25, 2016, not January 26, 2016 as written in the agenda.

#### **9.0 Other Business**

Mr. Miras informed the committee of the recent meeting of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers Leadership Conference in Quebec City, Quebec. At

the conference, the group announced a series of actions aimed at growing the Great Lakes regional economy and protecting the environment. Some of these initiatives will promote maritime commerce. Dr. Hutchins expressed an interest in inviting a speaker from the Great Lakes group to discuss these initiatives and how they may impact the Chicago region.

Mr. Brockschmidt noted that MPC is working on the Great Rivers Chicago initiative, which will survey the economic, environmental, and community impacts of the city's riverfront to provide a coordinated vision for the future of the riverfront. Mr. Brockschmidt expressed an interest in inviting a speaker or series of speakers to the committee to discuss the river system.

#### **10.0 Public Comment**

There was a public comment from Mr. Garland Armstrong regarding construction on the 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue grade separation project in Melrose Park. Mr. Guerrero noted that the project is underway and expected to be completed in November 2015, and that the 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue project is a component of the CREATE rail program (GS25).

Mr. Armstrong also noted that he sometimes hears train horns sounding overnight in Elmwood Park. Mr. Guerrero noted that federal regulations allow a train engineer to use his or her discretion in sounding a horn for safety reasons, such as construction. These regulations would supersede the federal Quiet Zone Rule that might otherwise be in place in Elmwood Park.

#### **11.0 Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be September 24, 2015.

#### **12.0 Adjournment**

The Task Force adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alex Beata, CMAP Staff