



# Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

## Freight Committee

### Minutes

November 16, 2015

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

**Members Present:** Joe Alonzo, Mike Burton, Reggie Greenwood, Adrian Guerrero, Kazuya Kawamura, Mike Klemens, Jim LaBelle, Adam Lomasney, Dean Mentjes, Libby Ogard, Phil Resendiz, Adam Rod, Deanna Smith, Randy Thomas

**Staff Present:** Alex Beata, Jesse Elam, Tom Kotarac, Tom Murtha, Todd Schmidt, Elizabeth Schuh,

**Others Present:** Kristen Andersen (Metra), Garland Armstrong (Access Living), Heather Armstrong (Access Living), Max Bosso (Village of Elwood), Elaine Bottomley (Will County Governmental League), Maria Choca Urban (Cook County DOT), Jackie Forbes (Kane/Kendall Council of Mayors), Tomohiko Music (Cook County DOT), Dennis Latto (SSMMAA), Gerald Rawling, Mary Elisabeth Pitz (MEP&A), Erika Witzke (Cambridge Systematics)

#### 1.0 Call to Order

Randy Thomas, co-chair of the Freight Committee, called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

#### 2.0 Approval of Minutes – September 24, 2015

Mr. Rod moved to approve the minutes, with Mr. Burton seconding. The minutes from September 24, 2015 were approved by the committee.

#### 3.0 Agenda Changes and Announcements

There were no agenda changes, but there was one announcement. Mr. Beata informed the Committee of a CMAA's current request for proposals for the O'Hare area truck routing study.

#### 4.0 Key Outcomes of the Regional Freight Plan

Mr. Beata presented a memo on the proposed key outcomes of the regional freight plan. Staff noted that the new plan will build upon GO TO 2040's freight policies, list specific capital projects, provide policy language on local regulations for truck operations, identify locations for future local planning, and include implementation action items. Mr. Beata noted that staff intends to focus the list of prioritized capital projects on highway and public-facing rail projects, due to the availability of data and CMAA's jurisdiction as a metropolitan planning organization.

Numerous Committee members expressed concern with the latter item, noting the role of CMAA as a regional planning agency and the desire for a multimodal freight plan. Mr. Beata responded that CMAA remains committed to the CREATE program and is currently pursuing

new rail data sources, and that CMAP has conducted research into other modes such as air and water; however, staff's ability to identify, evaluate, and prioritize most private rail projects, water projects, and air cargo projects is limited. Noting these difficulties, committee members suggested that some capital projects could be included in a manner analogous to the fiscally unconstrained major capital projects in GO TO 2040. Mr. Beata also clarified that the capital project list is only one component of the overall regional freight plan, and that policy language on all modes is anticipated to be a part of the freight plan.

Several Committee members expressed interest in discussing the impact of innovative technologies in the regional freight plan, noting that substantial technological advancements are possible over the planning horizon, with an unknown but potentially significant impact on the freight system. Finally, Committee members raised specific points on various other topics. For example, Dr. Kawamura noted that best practices for freight-related zoning would be helpful under the local planning topic, and Mr. Thomas noted that the plan could address truck parking issues in the region.

## **5.0 Extent and Use of the Freight System**

Mr. Beata reviewed two recent Policy Updates on rail topics. The first reviews the performance of the freight rail system, both at the national level and within northeastern Illinois, as well as major trends facing the industry and recent initiatives to improve the metropolitan Chicago rail system. The second reviews the recommendations of the Chicago Gateway Blue Ribbon Panel, convened by Amtrak to assess Chicago-area rail congestion. That panel found two CREATE projects, the 765<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor Improvement Project and the Grand Crossing project, to be top priorities for capital improvements, and also suggested that operational improvements via more coordinated dispatching among the railroads could help to improve the efficiency of the regional rail network.

Ms. Choca Urban commented that joint dispatching is an area of potential improvement for the railroads, and suggested that better coordination of operations could improve capacity for the rail system. She also commented that this sort of improvement could be a policy recommendation of the regional freight plan. Mr. Alonzo and Mr. Guerrero replied that dispatching is a topic already being addressed in part through the ongoing work of the CTCO, although current efforts do fall short of universal dispatching. Mr. Guerrero noted that railroads are interested in this topic, but the key challenge is practical implementation. Mr. Lomasney asked whether staff will consider land use topics in its research into extent and use of the region's freight system. Mr. Beata and Ms. Schuh replied that CMAP has done some research into this topic via Policy Updates and plans additional research later this fiscal year. Mr. Beata noted that this research could be brought to the Freight Committee at a future meeting.

## **6.0 Proposed Methodology for Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Analysis**

Mr. Beata presented a memo on a proposed methodology to research highway-rail grade crossings in the region. He described the Illinois Commerce Commission's dataset, which measures average motorist delay, and offered several suggestions by staff to supplement this metric with more information on the context of a crossing – land use, pedestrian and transit interactions, etc. He also noted that staff is interested in taking a more robust approach to measuring delay itself, for example by including the queuing effects of blocked crossings on the highway system.

The Committee was supportive of the proposed methodology. Mr. LaBelle suggested including measures of pedestrian safety and Mr. Alonzo suggested including measures of environmental impacts, namely vehicle emissions. Ms. Ogard suggested including some measure of hazard material movements by rail, although other Committee members noted the sensitivity and protected status of this data. Mr. Guerrero asked if staff has access to an inventory of highway signal interconnection with grade crossings; Mr. Murtha replied that no comprehensive database exists. Mr. Alonzo cited an example of an ITS application at the Morgan Street crossing in Chicago, in which the crossing gate is connected to routing signage in the vicinity of the crossing.

#### **7.0 Federal Updates**

Mr. Beata briefed the Committee on recent federal legislative activity, namely the passage of the Surface Transportation Reform and Reauthorization Act (STRRA) by the U.S. House of Representatives in early November and House-Senate conference committee. He reviewed the key freight provisions of STRRA and compared those provisions to the Senate's DRIVE Act. Mr. LaBelle asked about STRRA's tolling provisions, and Mr. Beata responded with more information about the bill's proposed reforms to an Interstate tolling pilot program. Mr. Resendiz asked whether the bill would allow 33-foot trailers on highways. Mr. Beata responded that such a provision is not included in the bill.

#### **8.0 Anticipated 2016 Meeting Dates**

Mr. Beata informed the Committee of anticipated meeting dates in 2016, based on past practice. Generally, the Freight Committee meets on the fourth Monday of January (owing to the MLK holiday), then on the third Monday of March, May, September, and November.

#### **9.0 Other Business**

There was no other business before the Committee.

#### **10.0 Public Comment**

Mr. Armstrong of Access Living informed the Committee of instances in which freight trains block pedestrian access to Metra trains and also asked the Committee for information on incidents of trucks striking gates at railroad crossings. Ms. Armstrong, also of Access Living, echoed these concerns for specific crossings in Elmwood Park. Mr. Guerrero and Mr. Thomas noted that safety is paramount and provided more information on these topics.

Mr. Bosso thanked the Committee for providing freight-related research and analysis, as well as the opportunity for input. Dr. Kawamura noted that CMAP is widely viewed as a national and international leader in freight planning.

#### **11.0 Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be January 25, 2016.

#### **12.0 Adjournment**

The Task Force adjourned at 11:39 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alex Beata, CMAP Staff