



# Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

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## Freight Committee Meeting Minutes September 17, 2018

Offices of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAA)  
DuPage County Conference Room  
233 S. Wacker Drive, Suite 800  
Chicago, Illinois 60606

**Members Present:** Joe Alonzo (CDOT), Elaine Bottomley (Council of Mayors), David Chandler (CNT), Maria Choca Urban (Cook County DOT), Colin Duesing (Will County), Michael Kowalczyk (FHWA), Jim LaBelle (UIC UTC), Aimee Lee (ISTHA), John Loper (DuPage DOT), Adam Rod (CDA)

**Staff Present:** Austen Edwards, Jesse Elam, Erin Kenney, Stephanie Levine, Tom Murtha, Jeff Schnobrich, Liz Schuh, Simone Weil

**Others Present:** Garland Armstrong (Access Living), Heather Armstrong (Access Living), Alex Beata (Cook County DOT), Beth Davis (Cook County DOT), Cecilia Diaz (Cook County DOT), Scott Figved (Metra ADA Advisory Board), Benet Haller (Cook County DOT), Mary Lupa (WSP), Ryan Peterson (KKCOM), Sam Wright (Cook County DOT)

### 1.0 Call to Order and Introductions

Mr. Rod, acting chair of the Freight Committee, called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. and asked those present to introduce themselves.

### 2.0 Agenda Changes and Announcements

Jeff Schnobrich announced that committee co-chair Adrian Guerrero has taken on a new role with Union Pacific and is no longer located in Chicago. Schnobrich also announced that FHWA had hosted a Chicago workshop on automation in the freight industry. Part of the "National Dialogue on Automation," the workshop was intended to gather input from stakeholders regarding opportunities and challenges for highway operations as automated trucks become more prevalent, in areas such as traffic operations, policy, and planning. FHWA continues to collect input at their [website](http://www.fhwa.gov) or [HighwayAutomation@dot.gov](mailto:HighwayAutomation@dot.gov).

### **3.0 Approval of Minutes – May 21, 2018**

The minutes from the May 21, 2018 meeting were approved by the Committee.

### **4.0 SPR Project Updates**

Jeff Schnobrich provided an update on two CMAP-led freight-related planning efforts that were awarded Statewide Planning and Research (SPR) funds. As discussed at the Committee's May meeting, CMAP is conducting an LTA-funded project to produce a Planning Priorities Report for the Illinois International Port District. CMAP was awarded SPR funds to expand the scope of that effort to include a master plan for the Port. Work on the Planning Priorities Report is expected to conclude in Winter 2018/2019, with initiation of the consultant-led master plan in March 2019.

Maria Choca Urban noted that Cook County has been leading reconstruction of Butler Drive on Port property. The \$14 million project is supported by Cook County, the IDOT Economic Development Program, the IDOT Competitive Freight Program, and City of Chicago TIF funds. In response to a question regarding coordination, Schnobrich stated that CMAP staff is working closely with the Port on this planning effort.

The other project receiving SPR funds is CMAP's Truck Routing and Community Studies. These studies will examine truck routing, permitting, delivery management, and community impacts in three subregions. Preliminary data collection and the hiring process for a staff person to oversee the studies is underway. The Will County study is expected to begin in early 2019, with the City of Chicago Southwest Side study following in spring 2019 and the South Suburban Cook County study in summer 2019.

Maria Choca Urban noted that Cook County also received SPR funds to conduct a trucking study in Southwest Cook. In response to a question regarding whether CMAP had considered extending the South Cook study area further south into Will County, Schnobrich noted that the study has not yet been finalized. In identifying the preliminary study areas, CMAP weighed covering the freight cluster broadly with the need keep the number of communities and stakeholders in the study area manageable.

### **5.0 ON TO 2050**

Liz Schuh discussed public engagement efforts for ON TO 2050 and public comments received. The largest number of comments were on regionally significant projects, with the rest of the Mobility chapter also a major source. Changes were made throughout the plan in response to comments, with overarching changes related to planning for residents with disabilities, emphasizing the historic roots of today's racial inequities, better connecting recommendations and plan indicators, and highlighting more local examples and best practices. Other notable changes involved recommendations addressing tax policy, economic development, and a vehicle miles traveled fee. A number of public comments addressed the impact of trucks on local communities. Changes were made to emphasize that freight developments, particularly in fast-growing areas and economically disconnected areas, can have negative impacts on

residents. Language was also added stating that planning for freight should make efforts to include quality of life issues, address safety, and coordinate with planning for other key topics like open space preservation.

## **6.0 Cook County Freight Plan**

Alex Beata, Freight Transportation Manager for the Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways, presented the Cook County Freight Plan (CCFP). The freight plan, to be finalized in the near future, builds on Connecting Cook County, the county's 2016 long range transportation plan. After discussing the economic impact of freight in Cook County, Beata covered areas of performance concern included in the plan: truck congestion, vertical clearances, pavement conditions, safety, at-grade rail crossings, and land use challenges. The CCFP identifies four focus areas for the County: leadership actions, support for truck infrastructure, rail improvements, and coordinated community and economic development.

In response to question about fiscal aspects of the plan, Beata noted that Invest in Cook is a major implementation vehicle and the County continues to actively pursue other sources of funding for projects in the plan. Maria Choca Urban added that the plan positions the county to take advantage of both funding and other opportunities, such as contributions to a site selection process. Other committee members complimented Cook County on the plan and noted the importance of monitoring the post-construction status of projects to ensure that standards are maintained, for example, after utility work.

## **7.0 Rail Inventory Update**

Tom Murtha discussed a project to revise maps showing freight train volumes in the region. The data is complex and compiled from multiple sources. The resulting maps are useful for calculating motorist delay at grade crossings, conflicts with passenger trains, and environmental impacts of the freight rail industry. Murtha stated that CMAP is sharing draft data for review by partners and requests feedback.

In response to a question, Murtha stated that a distinction between intermodal trains and carload trains was not possible. Committee members discussed the direction of train flows indicated on the map. In response to a question regarding work on CMAP's freight model, Murtha noted that development continues and the committee will be updated at a future meeting. In response to a question regarding volume categories on the legend, Murtha stated that they are largely based on information originally obtained from the National Transportation Atlas Database and that keeping categories the same allows comparison with prior versions. A map inconsistency was noted that will be addressed.

## **8.0 Freight Funding Update**

Jeff Schnobrich discussed two federal freight funding programs and their impacts on northeastern Illinois. In June 2018, major project funding announcements were made for the Nationally Highway Freight Program and INFRA program. Schnobrich discussed

the history of the programs and provided an overview of the specific projects that were awarded funds. He also recapped ON TO 2050's freight funding recommendations and strategies.

In response to a question about the region's track record in the INFRA program, Schnobrich and another committee member noted that needs are great across the country and the 75<sup>th</sup> CIP award was nearly 10 percent of this round's total funding. In response to a statement about federal revenue sources being a key issue, Schnobrich noted that other sections of ON TO 2050 contain revenue recommendations, including that Congress raise the motor fuel tax, index it to inflation, and eventually replace it with a per-mile road usage charge.

A committee member noted that integration of freight funding sources with other sources – such as EPA brownfield investments or EDA infrastructure investments – could help achieve broader goals. Another member noted that INFRA, more so than its predecessor FASTLANE, prioritizes projects that can move to construction quickly. Members stated the importance of highlighting the economic development justification of projects.

In response to a question about caps on the amount of program funds that can go to freight rail / intermodal projects, Schnobrich noted that some argue for the caps since the source of funding is predominantly federal highway user fees. He also noted that large general fund transfers to the Highway Trust Fund in recent years have limited the user fee nexus. Committee members discussed arguments that could be made in favor of removing the caps, noting that trucking companies involved in intermodal transfers are highway users that benefit from intermodal improvements. On the issue of coordination and prioritization, a member noted that the Metro Metal Consortium TIGER application prioritization process could serve as a model.

#### **9.0 Other Business**

There was no other business presented.

#### **10.0 Public Comment**

Ms. Armstrong inquired about a proposal related to the gubernatorial campaign. Mr. Armstrong commented on the impact of blocked crossings near Metra stops in Berwyn as well as accessibility issues at the Elmhurst Metra station.

David Chandler announced that the Center for Neighborhood Technology along with UIC and the Chicago Southland Economic Development Corporation was awarded a grant to do a business plan for a Center for Smart Logistics research program. The Center would study innovations in freight technology, including electrification of trucks and automation. Chandler noted that some individuals in attendance may be asked to serve on the advisory committee for the project.

Scott Figved commented on a June 2018 incident in Barrington, IL in which a stalled freight train blocked four grade crossings and delayed first responders transporting crash victims to a hospital. He stated that videos are available online that show the issue and urged that better communication processes and systems be put in place. Figved also encouraged better markings and warning systems at grade crossings where pedestrian visibility is limited; a committee member noted that a request can be made of the Illinois Commerce Commission to do a safety inspection of a crossing.

**11.0 Next Meeting** – December 3, 2018

The next meeting will be held on Monday, December 3, 2018.

**12.0 Adjournment**

The Committee adjourned at 11:59 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Schnobrich, Committee liaison

*Approved as presented, by unanimous vote, December 3, 2018*