

FREIGHT COMMITTEE
of the
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Summary of March 25, 2009 Meeting

This meeting was held in Conference Room 7 at the State Transportation Building.

The meeting was called to order at 1:10 PM.

1. Introductions and Chair's Report –Walter Bonin, *Chair and City of Marlborough*
W. Bonin presented a revised draft of the Freight Committee Charter to members with their suggested recommendations included. The Committee's mission is to advocate for an effective freight management architecture and system for all freight modes within the Boston MPO to the Advisory Council and they strive to develop and maintain an extensive freight knowledge base in order to provide recommendations. (see attached Powerpoint presentation)

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes

The minutes of February 25, 2009 were approved unanimously.

3. Discussion of Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Process – *Rich Bourre, Assistant Director, MEPA & Holly Johnson, Environmental Analyst, MEPA*

Members raised the following questions for MEPA Officials:

- What are MEPA's guidelines and what is its process for reviewing projects? (W. Bonin)*
- How does the public get involved in the MEPA review process? (Abby Swaine, U.S. EPA)*
- Are freight concerns addressed in MEPA's review of Harvard's 20-year plan or the Urban Ring? (Frank Demasi, Vice-Chair and City of Wellesley)*

R. Bourre and H. Johnson provided the following information about MEPA:

MEPA traditionally has a narrow focus since they work on a project-to-project basis, all generated by state issued reviews. Projects can be public or private, but MEPA rarely handles freight projects. MEPA's review process is separate from the federal review process. MEPA does not have the authority to approve or disprove projects, but the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) can take action during the MEPA review. After an Environmental Notification form has been submitted, there is a 30-day public comment period in which MEPA accepts written comments. MEPA encourages all parties to participate in the public comment period, which will be on the web in the future to enhance transparency. Upon review, MEPA quantifies environmental impacts in terms of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and identifies mitigation strategies. MEPA's review is submitted to the entity, but there is currently no deadline to implement MEPA's recommendations.

In regards to Beacon Yard, the plans of Harvard, Boston University (BU), and the Urban Ring all have impacts on the future of freight at Beacon Yard, yet MEPA can only analyze those projects if a review is issued. Although public comments of Harvard's 20-year plan requested that transportation impacts of the plan be considered, it is a minor concern in the MEPA report.

Members made additional questions and comments about the future of Beacon Yard:

- The phase out of Beacon Yard would have regional impacts in terms of increased highway maintenance, air quality concerns, and logistical inefficiency due to more trucks on the road. A gradual phase-out would mask the total impacts. (F. Demasi)
- There is still much uncertainty about the future of Beacon Yard due to the numerous parties involved and plans proposed. Though some services may be cut, phase out is unlikely. (Timothy Doherty, EOTPW)
- Environmental review is required with the closure of a right of way, therefore a MEPA review would be issued if freight were discontinued at Beacon Yard. (A. Bourre)
- The market drives the supply chain and therefore it should be up to the state to conduct alternative freight analyses to weight the costs and benefits and implement policy accordingly. (Richard Flynn, NorthEast Logistics Systems, LLC)
- Can the Worcester MPO or others handle the freight issues if Beacon Yard is relocated? (Arnold Pinsley, MetroWest Growth)

Members raised the following questions and comments about rail issues statewide:

- The state should have a role in the location and relocation of freight. (John Schmitter, KEP LLC)
- The Commonwealth seems undecided on their stance on freight, but coordination between industry and state is vital. (R. Flynn)
- Rail has a difficult time competing with trucks over businesses. A state commitment is needed between businesses and the state to guarantee the long-term investments necessary for freight use. Coordination challenges with the MBTA deters many businesses from utilizing freight. (Taber Keally, MAPC)
- How do we integrate self-interest with the state's objectives so that investment works? (W. Bonin)
- Suggested the use of Cargo-Oriented-Development (COD) to increase concentration of rail supply. (F. Demasi)
- Rail supply is limited, and if commuter services increase, then freight services suffer. New legislation is being developed to increase freight requirements, which will decrease the incentive to use rail and increase the number of trucks on the road. (R. Flynn)
- Shippers can compute cost of shipping routes with the EPA's "Smart Ways" calculator. (A. Swaine)
- Weight determines the classification of cargo. (Lynn Vikesland, Massport)
- More "dual use" rail with commuter and freight capabilities must be made accessible. (F. Demasi)

7. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM.

Attachments: Draft Final Charter

Agencies

Tim Doherty, EOTPW

Lynn Vikesland, Massport

Abby Swaine, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Arnold Pinsley, MetroWest Growth

Rich Bourre, MEPA

Holly Johnson, MEPA

Alison Felix, MAPC

Taber Keally, TRIC/MAPC

Cities and Towns

Walter Bonin, Marlborough

Frank DeMasi, Wellesley

Steve Olanoff, Westwood

Citizens Groups

Guests and Visitors

Linda Blair

Ed Lowney

Marilyn MacNab

Richard Flynn, NorthEast Logistics Systems, LLC

John Schmitter, KEP LLC

MPO Staff

Anne McGahan

Sean Pfalzer