



NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION OF MPOs FREIGHT WORKING GROUP

October 28, 2021
Webconference
2:00 PM – 3:30 PM

MEETING NOTES

1. Participating

- BMTS – Leigh McCullen
- CDTC – Chris Bauer (Chair)
- DCTC – Mark Debald
- GBNRTC – Richard Guarino
- GTC – Jody Binnix
- NYMTC – Leslie Fordjour, Yevgeniy Galinski
- OCTC – Alan Sorensen, Ashlee Long, Lauren Bennett, Zack Coleman
- SMTC – Mike Alexander (Co-Chair)
- UCTC – Brian Slack, David Staas
- WJCTC – Kris Reff, Barb Cadwell
- NYSDOT – David Rosenberg
- FHWA – Gautam Mani, John Formosa
- T.Y. Lin International (NYSAMPO Staff Support) – Richard Perrin

1. Roll Call

Bauer opened the meeting and conducted the roll call.

2. FHWA MPO Freight Program Assessment

Mani thanked the MPOs for providing their input into the quadrennial MPO freight assessment, which was submitted by the October 18, 2021 deadline. The assessment captures not only current freight plans but also other activities such as freight profiles, analyses for development proposals, and freight components of multimodal plans. One suggestion by the MPOs is to produce a compilation of FHWA freight resources that MPO staff could consult if they are assigned freight planning responsibilities. This compilation could be modeled after a similar internal FHWA initiative for its staff. Opportunities and techniques to engage environmental justice communities was a topic that was raised by multiple MPOs. Another area of interest is establishing and enhancing relationships with Class I railroads.

Galinski asked for more detail on plans to improve relationships with Class I railroads. Mani responded that there is not a specific proposal to accomplish this currently, but there is a recognition that improving these relationships would be beneficial. Bauer asked if it was possible to discern the frequency with which MPOs update their freight plans. Mani responded that there was no specific pattern in MPO updates to their freight plans.

3. FHWA Resource Center Freight & Land Use Seminar Next Steps/Fact Sheet

Perrin reviewed the objectives of the four sessions that comprised the seminar, which was held remotely in May 2021:

Session 1 - Kick-off and Overview of Freight and Land Use Fundamentals

Session 2 - Managing and Balancing Freight Needs

Session 3 - Response Strategies to Freight and Land Use Needs

Session 4 - Develop a Roadmap for Action for New York MPOs

He requested any final comments on the action plan summary that was produced based on the fourth session, adding that MPO initiatives to advance the actions could be topics for presentation to and discussion by the group. Perrin discussed potential topics from the seminar that could be included in the fact sheet. Bauer reminded meeting participants that the fact sheet is an item from the group's work plan for this state fiscal year (SFY) and asked for thoughts on content. Perrin asked participants to provide their input and any examples from New York State that they would like included in the fact sheet.

4. Buffalo-Niagara Regional Freight Plan

Guarino reviewed the components of the [GBNRTC's update to the freight plan for the Buffalo-Niagara Region](#) (see attached presentation)

Binnix informed the group that GTC staff are hopeful that funding for an update to the freight plan for the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region will be included in the GTC UPWP for next SFY. She asked for insights on how GBNRTC determined the scope, deliverables, and budget for its freight plan update. Guarino responded that cost was a factor and, based on available budget, GBNRTC put an emphasis on the identification and assessment of projects as opposed to updating all of the analysis contained in the previous plan. He offered to share the scope of work that GBNRTC used for its update with GTC and any other MPOs that are interested in reviewing it. Binnix noted that GBNRTC's location on an international border and that there are a number of established freight-related groups in the region. She asked how GBNRTC engaged the private sector as this will be a major emphasis for GTC in its update. Guarino responded that the Buffalo Niagara Partnership (BNP) had a freight and logistics committee when the plan update started. GBNRTC was able to obtain their contact list as well as that of the International Trade Gateway Organization (ITGO).

Slack reported that a freight planning process for the Mid-Hudson Transportation Management Area (DCTC, OCTC, and UCTC) is beginning. It is being conducted by the MPO staffs at this point and they are initiating the development of their approach to stakeholder outreach. He asked if Guarino could discuss the GBNRTC stakeholder outreach approach. Guarino responded the list from the previous freight plan was the starting point and it was updated with the contact lists from the BNP and ITGO. The lead consultant also had contacts within the region and stakeholders were added as the project progressed. The first meeting of stakeholders was a roundtable, reviewing the previous study and the scope of the update. After the initial roundtable, stakeholders were assigned to smaller groups based on their activities/expertise to provide better opportunities for all voices to be heard. Surveys and interviews were also conducted.

Binnix asked if GBNRTC worked with Railroads of New York or specific shortline railroads. Guarino responded that the shortline railroads were contacted as part of the update. Most of the input came from railroads that Erie County has a role in.

Bauer commented that the freight flow maps underscored the importance of coordinating with other regions. He asked what data sources were used for the projections. Guarino responded that [Freight Analysis Framework](#) and [Transearch](#) were used. Bauer stated that CDTC, like GBNRTC on its previous plan, had focused on data to make the case for why freight is important but that he liked the GBNRTC approach of emphasizing projects in its update.

5. Effects of COVID-19 on Freight Discussion

The amount of cargo (volume and value) currently awaiting berths at West Coast ports and associated responses by the ports was reviewed. Bauer noted that this situation is negatively impacting revenues of numerous large companies and comes on the heels of the blockage of the Suez Canal, which is increasing public awareness of the importance of goods movement among the general public. Guarino discussed the Jones Act as a limiting factor in the use of marine vessels for freight in trade between the Buffalo-Niagara Region and Canada. Bauer reported that CDTC is conducting traffic counts, including classification counts, to determine what the change may be between pre- and post-COVID-19 travel patterns. Binnix reported that GTC evaluated, to the extent it could, post-COVID trends in the recently adopted [GTC long range transportation plan](#). Bauer stated that the Albany International Airport has reported that freight cargo is up 45 percent over pre-pandemic levels and that belly freight, which is not reported, has also increased. Fordjour reported that in the New York City area, passenger airplanes are being repurposed to transport freight.

6. Updates from Stakeholders

Bauer asked if any of the MPOs have applied for freight-related assistance from the FHWA Resource Center in this year's call for assistance. Mani responded that he is not aware of any freight-related requests and encouraged MPOs to make requests if and when topics of interest arise.

Fordjour reported that NYMTC is undertaking two studies: 1) [Clean Freight Corridors Study](#) for which a workshop was held October 7, 2021 that attracted industry leaders and other MPOs. Their input will be incorporated into the study, which is expected to be finalized in April 2022 and 2) [Regional Freight Land Use Study](#) for which a steering committee and technical advisory committee have been formed to advance the project. NYMTC also recently adopted its new long range transportation plan, including a [freight element](#).

Binnix reported that GTC recently completed a strategic plan for the [Ontario Midland Railroad](#) which can serve as a foundation when applying for funding opportunities. Bauer responded that CDTC has good relationships with the shortline railroads in the Capital District who can provide insights on current trends and issues affecting the Class I railroads.

7. New Business

Bauer asked if there was any further business to be discussed at this meeting. Formosa informed the group that in monitoring the status of the Port of New York and New Jersey, it is clear that the various interests at the facilities are working collaboratively during this difficult time.

Formosa introduced and Rosenberg discussed the FHWA [re-designation of the Primary Highway Freight System](#) (PHFS) for which the [deadline for comments has been extended](#) to December 15, 2021. There are three options listed in the *Federal Register* notice: 1) an equal allocation of 18 additional miles to each State; 2) an equal allocation of 53 additional miles of PHFS to the 18 high-mileage States of which New York State is one; and 3) applying the additional miles to newly constructed interstates. Rosenberg added that the

PHFS is fragmented in New York State with approximately 500 miles of interstate not included in it. A change in federal legislation would be needed to raise the mileage cap to allow for the PHFS to better represent the actual network. Bauer asked if NYSDOT would consider de-designating sections of interstate where a National Highway Freight Program (NHFP)-funded project has been completed and use that mileage to designate other sections of interstate to program NHFP funds for improvements. Rosenberg responded that no decisions have been made to do that as the state has the ability to designate Critical Urban Freight Corridors and Critical Rural Freight Corridors to utilize NHFP funding.

Guarino asked if it would be possible to get an update from the [United States Maritime Administration \(MARAD\)](#). Guarino and Formosa provided potential contacts at MARAD to be contacted for a future meeting of the group.

8. Adjourn

Bauer adjourned the meeting at 3:27 p.m.