



NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION OF MPOs

FREIGHT WORKING GROUP

January 14, 2021

Webconference

2:00 PM – 3:30 PM

MEETING NOTES

1. Participating

- CDTC – Christian Bauer (Chair)
- ECTC – Mike Perry
- GBNRTC – Rich Guarino
- GTC – Jody Binnix
- NYMTC – Leslie Fordjour
- OCTC – Julie Richmond, Ashlee Long, Zack Coleman
- SMTC – Mike Alexander (Co-Chair)
- WJCTC – Scott Docteur, Al Ricalton, Kris Reff
- NYSDOT – Jim Davis, David Rosenberg
- FHWA –Gautam Mani, John Formosa
- Railroads of New York – Scott Wigger
- T.Y. Lin International (NYSAMPO Staff Support) – Richard Perrin
- Cambridge Systematics (NYSAMPO Staff Support) – Brian Stewart

1. Roll Call

Bauer opened the meeting and conducted the roll call.

2. Railroads of New York Priorities & Issues

Bauer introduced Wigger. Wigger provided background on [Railroads of New York](#) (RONY), which represents the freight railroad industry. This includes four Class I railroads (CSXT, Canadian National, Canadian Pacific, and Norfolk Southern) and 36 regional (Class II) and shortline (Class III) railroads that serve every area of New York State with the exception of the Borough of Manhattan. RONY focuses on advancing legislation that is critical to freight railroads and supporting economic development that drives business opportunities for its members. COVID-19 has impacted the railroad industry. The initial priority was to get designated as an essential business. When that was accomplished, the emphasis shifted to obtaining personal protective equipment to ensure the safety of employees. While still operating, the volumes of goods carried decreased as COVID-19 impacted other industries and RONY is working to help their customers mitigate these impacts and recover as quickly as possible. Investment in rail infrastructure continues to be a priority as well, both state of good repair and additions to the network to reach areas that are unserved or underserved. Going forward, the [New York State Climate Action Council](#) and the mandates and actions

resulting from the [Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act](#) (Climate Act) will be a major factor in decision making. RONY is in a good position to contribute to the goals of the Climate Act by reducing emissions. This is particularly true for long hauls that are made by truck. The construction of new intermodal facilities and zoning codes that consider freight rail in the siting of distribution centers would allow the freight rail and trucking industries to improve the good relationship they currently enjoy.

Bauer asked what the largest freight rail infrastructure need is in New York State since the completion of the [Portageville Bridge](#). Wigger responded that the [Gateway Program](#) is important to not only passenger rail but also freight rail movements as tracks are shared between the two uses in certain locations. Expanding port infrastructure, both seaport and inland, is another major opportunity to increase freight rail activity.

Alexander asked if RONY was aware of any land use regulations that communities have used that could be examples to consider for accommodating large freight-generating facilities. Wigger responded that he's not aware of any specific examples but Amazon and other companies have specific access and other needs that could provide insights on how to address their land use requirements.

Perrin asked what priorities RONY may have for the next federal surface transportation authorizing legislation when the FAST Act extension expires on September 30, 2021. Wigger responded that [FHWA Section 130](#) funding for improving grade crossings, creation of separate facilities (i.e., a double-track) for high-speed rail if it is implemented, and any additional federal regulation of the industry are items that RONY will monitor in the next authorization.

A question was asked via chat if RONY has a position on the proposed CSX acquisition of Pan Am Railways. Wigger responded that RONY represents all railroads and will not take a position on any proposed business decision by an individual member.

3. FHWA Resource Center

Mani reported that the NYSAMPO Freight and Land Use submittal to FHWA for technical assistance has been selected and will be delivered virtually. The [FHWA Resource Center](#) will provide a date to hold an introductory meeting with the Chair, Co-Chair, and staff support consultant to begin discussing and working through logistics for the seminar. Bauer thanked Mani and offered members of the working group the opportunity to participate in the planning of the workshop.

4. Work Plan

Bauer opened the topic by stating that he feels the work plan is still largely applicable and that it could be improved by incorporating the effects of the COVID 19 pandemic into the work plan in both the immediate and longer terms. Perrin asked the working group to provide thoughts and ideas on how best to accomplish the incorporation of COVID 19 into the work plan (e.g., data availability to measure changes; changes to state, national, and international markets; etc.). Additional items to consider include:

- adding electric freight vehicles into the discussion of transformational technologies;
- discussions on implications of the [New York State Thruway Authority's transition to cashless tolling](#) on tandem trailer lots;
- fact sheet for municipalities on siting of larger distribution/fulfillment centers;

- removing in-person meeting for this year with consideration to add back in for State Fiscal Year 2022-2023; and
- use of Transearch data by MPOs in planning activities.

It was requested that working group members provide comments by January 28, 2021. Comments provided would be incorporated into a draft of the work plan for review by Bauer and Alexander.

5. COVID 19 Roundtable

Bauer reported that Albany International Airport (ALB) is prepared to distribute the vaccine. Fordjour informed the working group that PANYNJ has reported handling nearly pre-pandemic levels of freight traffic at the end of 2020 and that freight rail traffic has begun to recover with increased movements over the past few months. Bauer added that the Port of Albany has also indicated that volumes are increasing there as well. GTC and NYMTC confirmed that they are working to incorporate COVID 19 into their upcoming metropolitan transportation plans (MTPs), noting the uncertainty surrounding its long-term effects on transportation (namely, direct deliveries to residences) but that e-commerce was a trend prior to the pandemic.

6. Updates from Stakeholders

Alexander reported that SMTC is continuing to advance an initiative using staff resources to digitize truck routes within the City of Syracuse, including freight-related signage. This is anticipated to be a resource for future analysis and studies. There has been discussion of a potential groundbreaking in 2022 on the I-81 project based on its inclusion in this year's State of the State address by Governor Cuomo.

Perry reported that ECTC has worked with a village in Chemung County on preferred truck routing and on updates to associated maps. ECTC has also identified truck-related signage throughout Chemung County (using both street view in online mapping applications and photos taken during pavement scoring) and is looking to incorporate this into a viewer on the Chemung County website to make the information available to truck operators and the general public.

Fordjour reported that NYMTC is in the process of finalizing a draft freight component for its next MTP (*[Moving Forward, Your Region Connected](#)*) for internal review prior to being released for public comment.

Bauer reported that SUNY AVAIL has developed freight-related congestion metrics using the NPMRDS that have been incorporated into its [performance measurement tool suite](#).

Mani reported that FHWA hosted a virtual freight planning peer exchange with select MPOs and state departments of transportation in September 2020 and provided the [link to the report](#).

7. New Business

Bauer asked if there was any further business to be discussed at this meeting. There was no new business raised.

8. Adjourn

Bauer adjourned the meeting at 2:58 p.m.