



May 24, 2011

TO: MPO/RTPO/WSDOT Coordinating Committee

FROM: Barbara Ivanov, WSDOT Freight Systems Division

SUBJECT: Washington State Freight Mobility Plan

Thank you for the invitation to discuss the State Freight Mobility Plan Scope of Work (SOW). I hope that this summary information is helpful to you.

What are the Freight Plan's core deliverables and timeline?

The primary deliverables of the Washington State Freight Mobility Plan will be an improved Freight Benefit/Cost methodology to evaluate state highway and truck intermodal improvement packages, and detailed strategies to support the plan's three objectives:

- Livable urban communities that support jobs and the economy, provide goods delivery to residents and businesses, and provide clean air for all.
- The state and national Export Initiatives through multistate, intermodal freight corridors serving international and interstate commerce.
- Rural economies' farm-to-market, manufacturing and resource industry sectors.

The State Freight Plan will recommend needed improvements/solutions and be completed in 2013. An interim deliverable, the state highway Truck Bottleneck Analysis, was completed in April 2011 and the findings are being used by WSDOT to analyze and scope project proposals to address the worst truck bottlenecks on the highway system.

What is the stakeholder process? How will WSDOT engage with MPOs, RTPOs, Tribes, Ports and freight system users?

WSDOT Freight Systems Division:

- Worked closely with many MPO/RTPOs, ports, freight associations and freight system users, state agencies and other stakeholders to develop the draft Freight Plan SOW between October 2010 and March 2011.
- Sent formal requests for input on the draft State Freight Plan SOW to MPOs and RTPOs, the Freight Mobility State Investment Board (FMSIB), Washington Trucking Assns. (WTA) and Washington Public Ports Assn. (WPPA), the Tribes and each state port.
- Presented the draft Plan SOW to the Puget Sound Regional Council Freight Mobility Roundtable and the Washington State Transportation Commission.

To: MPO/RTPO/WSDOT Coordinating Committee
May 24, 2011
Page 2

- Sent a request to the Tribes to discuss the State Freight Plan at a Washington Indian Transportation Policy Advisory Committee meeting.
- Sent an informational request to MPOs, RTPOs, ports and tribes to begin the first state freight system connectivity analysis.
- Will discuss the draft Plan SOW with the MPO/RTPO/WSDOT Coordinating Committee in May and at individual MPO/RTPO's request at any time.
- Will interview 100+ freight systems shippers and carriers across the state in 2011-12.

Public meetings:

- The first Washington State 'Future of Freight Symposium' was held in March 2011: MPOs/RTPOs, FMSIB, WTA, a Tribe, and many port and freight-dependent industry representatives participated.
- Each of the State Freight Mobility Plan Technical Teams will meet three times from June 2011 to January 2012. These meetings will be hosted by the City of Seattle, the Port of Tacoma, and the Benton-Franklin Council of Governments.
- The Washington State Freight Mobility Plan Advisory group will meet twice in 2012.
- WSDOT would like to partner with the state MPO/RTPOs to host a public workshop in their region in 2012. The meeting would allow regional stakeholders to review and provide input on draft Freight Plan deliverables.

How much time will stakeholders have to put in?

- Each of the Technical Teams will meet three times between June 2011 and January 2012. There will be some read-ahead materials and online work between meetings.
- WSDOT is requesting that a representative of the state MPO/RTPOs join the State Freight Mobility Plan Advisory Group. The Freight Plan Advisory Group will meet twice in 2012.

One of the core Freight Plan deliverables is an improved freight benefit/cost methodology. Does WSDOT have a methodology for prioritizing freight investments? What are you improving?

WSDOT is working to develop measurable strategies to reach the Legislature's sixth transportation policy goal: Economic vitality (Washington State RCW 47.04.280). A core deliverable in the Washington State Freight Mobility Plan will be an improved Freight Benefit/Cost methodology to evaluate truck freight state highway and truck intermodal improvement packages. WSDOT is able to improve the truck freight highway B/C methodology now because we have tools we didn't have in the past, such as the truck bottleneck analysis done within the state Truck Performance Measure program.

To: MPO/RTPO/WSDOT Coordinating Committee
May 24, 2011
Page 3

As we develop the State Freight Plan, we also are reaching out to a strong body of technical experts to develop specific, measurable definitions of ‘freight benefits’ that support jobs and the state’s economy, livable urban communities, the national and state export initiatives, and rural economies. We need precise definitions of freight benefits to develop effective strategies and measure progress towards achieving freight benefits. Just as over time state agencies have developed specific, measurable strategies to meet clear safety goals, the State Freight Plan will begin to develop actionable, measurable strategies to support the Legislature’s freight-related economic vitality policy goal.

Will the State Freight Mobility Plan address all modes?

Several years ago the Legislature directed WSDOT to develop improved benefit/cost (B/C) methodology to evaluate freight rail proposals. The Rail Office completed that work and continues to use the freight rail B/C tools to evaluate proposals for the state’s rail assistance grant and loan programs. The WSDOT Aviation Division is developing improved economic analytic tools to help us quantify the relationship between investments and increased and/or maintained levels of economic output. The state freight mobility plan will incorporate those findings and work on the remaining gap: improving decision support for evaluating truck highway and intermodal project proposals.

The Freight benefit/cost methodology developed in the State Freight Mobility Plan will provide more sophisticated tools that are and will be required by the federal government to support large investment decisions in freight systems (such as the highway program).

When was the last state freight mobility plan done?

In 2005 - 2006, WSDOT Freight Systems Division worked closely with the Washington State Transportation Commission to develop the Freight Report in the 2006 Washington Transportation Plan. We’ve relied on that work as the state freight plan since 2006, updating the freight statistics in 2008.

What policy directives from the Legislature and the Washington State Transportation Commission are driving development of the State Freight Mobility Plan?

The State Freight Plan is primarily aimed at supporting the Legislature’s ‘Economic Vitality’ transportation policy goal; please see the full list of policies on pages 1-2 in the Washington State Freight Mobility Plan Scope of Work. State law requires the Washington State Department of Transportation to develop a state freight mobility plan: “The state-interest component of the statewide multimodal transportation plan shall include a freight mobility plan which shall assess the transportation needs to ensure the safe, reliable, and efficient movement of goods within and through the state and to ensure the state’s economic vitality.” (Washington State RCW 47.06.045).

Why do we need to complete this plan in 2011-13?

The goal of the plan is to make a strong case for funding Washington state freight priority projects and programs in the reauthorization of the federal transportation bill and future state transportation packages. No one knows when reauthorization will pass or if it will have a funded freight program. Our job is to be prepared.

It's important to point out that five years ago very few states had freight plans: Washington, Minnesota, Florida and California. But in the last two years Georgia, Oregon, Maryland and several other states have completed state freight plans – because they are preparing for reauthorization. Those states spent \$1,000,000 to \$2,000,000 on consultants to complete their freight plans. WSDOT is not spending any additional funds. The Freight Systems Division is not only managing the plan, we're doing it with current, reduced resources.

Why does Washington need to improve the way we plan and program truck freight highway and intermodal projects and strategies, now?

Recent federal programs such as the TIGER grant program demanded a sophisticated Benefit/Cost analysis supporting each proposal. We expect reauthorization of the federal transportation bill to require performance-based planning and project programming. Several recent federal bills proposing a federal freight program require a state freight plan. The federal government has prioritized transportation goals: long-term economic output, livability (including air quality), and sustainability. To successfully compete for federal freight funds, Washington State needs to provide a data-driven, defensible basis for freight projects that address their stated criteria and goals.

The state may consider new law funding. Having a set of clearly defined freight benefits and strategies that are developed by a broad group of technical experts, with input from state agencies, labor and freight associations, provides cohesion and is a valuable outcome from the State Freight Plan.

As Washington state moves toward a performance-based transportation system, there will be an increased demand for improved methods to systematically analyze the freight network and recommend projects that offer the greatest state benefits. That's a difficult task, and the State Freight Mobility Plan will take another step in that direction. We will continue to work to improve our methods in years to come.

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Attachment: State Freight Mobility Plan Scope of Work