

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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Meeting Notes

FREIGHT SUBCOMMITTEE

DATE: September 10, 2009

TIME: 1:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, Room 3

CHAIR: Victor Weissberg, Prince George's County, Department of Public Works and Transportation

ATTENDANCE:

Rick Crawford, Norfolk Southern
Sharon Daboin, CSX
Stephen Flippin, CSX
Bill Gouse, Open Roads Consulting
Christine Hoeffner, Virginia Railway Express
Brian Holmes, MD Distribution Council
Nicole Katsikides, Maryland DOT
Valerie Pardo, Virginia DOT
Louis E. Renjel, CSX
Victor Weissberg, Prince George's County
Darrell Wilson, Norfolk Southern

COG/TPB STAFF ATTENDANCE:

Jen Desimone
Karin Foster
Andrew Meese
Wenjing Pu

Welcome, Introductions—Chairman Weissberg welcomed the Freight Subcommittee attendees and asked for introductions. Following introductions, he turned the floor over to the first presenter, Stephen Flippin of CSX Transportation to explain the National Gateway Initiative in the National Capital Region. His presentation was followed by Darrell Wilson of Norfolk Southern to introduce the Crescent Corridor Initiative.

CSX National Gateway—Stephen Flippin gave a brief overview of the National Gateway Initiative and its benefits to freight and passenger service in our National Capital Region. The National Gateway is a project to clear 61 obstructions in 6 states in the Mid-Atlantic and Midwest. Thirteen projects fall within the National Capital Region. In addition to these projects, a new BWI Intermodal facility would be built. The total cost of the Initiative is estimated to be \$842 million. CSX's goal is to contribute 50

percent, and obtain federal and state funds each at 25 percent. CSX would be applying for federal funding through the American Reconstruction and Recovery Act TIGER grant program as well as the upcoming Transportation Authorization. Most jurisdictions involved have prepared official letters of support and committed funds to this project. Mr. Flippin noted several benefits to the region based on a consultant study by Cambridge Systematics. These benefits comprise of gallons of gasoline avoided, shipper cost savings, diverted trucks, pavement maintenance savings, accident cost savings, congestion and emission savings, increased employment, etc. Regarding passenger rail, Mr. Flippin explained that currently the Virginia Avenue Tunnel is a major bottleneck for freight and passenger rail alike (even though passenger rail does not travel this tunnel). This is because freight trains must queue on either end of the single track single stack tunnel impeding the efficient flow of all rail movement in the region. Today, an average of 80-90 trains travel through the CSX DC Corridor daily, the majority of which is shared with MARC, VRE, or Amtrak.

Norfolk Southern Crescent Corridor—Darrell Wilson briefed the Freight Subcommittee on the Norfolk Southern Crescent Corridor Initiative. The Crescent Corridor spans from New Orleans to North Jersey with projects to improve rail efficiencies. Mr. Wilson shared data on highway congestion and truckload productivity. An index of miles per truck per month showed a decline since 2002. This decline is due to congestion, driver home time, falling average length of haul, hours of service rule changes, fuel costs, and EPA engine requirements. The Crescent Corridor region includes 26 percent of the US population, 30 percent of the manufacturing output, and 24 percent of Interstate land miles. Mr. Wilson noted that freight rail market share is presently low for this corridor and there is significant highway congestion with potential for diversion. When comparing rail intermodal versus the truck market share, rail intermodal dominates the Los Angeles-Chicago route, is split equally on the Chicago-New York route, and is dominated by truck on the Birmingham-New York route, with 92 percent of travel estimated to be on truck. It is estimated that with a completed Crescent Corridor, greater than 200,000 trucks would be diverted from Interstate-95 in the National Capital Region. These routings were confirmed by surveys completed by Norfolk Southern at weigh stations on Interstate 95 and Interstate 81. Additional benefits include fuel saved per year, CO₂ reduction per year, annual congestion savings, and cost of accidents avoided.

Following Mr. Wilson's presentation, there was discussion about Norfolk Southern's B-line. Mr. Wilson noted that \$60 million in route improvements have been made to the B-line, this will allow VRE to expand service and improve train speeds.

Another question referred to the trucking industry's reaction to this project. Mr. Wilson described partnerships with trucking companies. Long haulers could put their trailers on trains for more efficient business. Mr. Flippin of CSX also noted that United Parcel Service (UPS), a major trucker, is also CSX's number one customer.

Freight Program Update—Transportation Planning Board (TPB) staff Karin Foster explained that CSX had submitted a letter of request for support of the National Gateway Initiative. She described the process in moving that letter from a request to the TPB to decision. (The letter was ultimately finalized at the September 16th, 2009 TPB meeting.

Ms. Foster also discussed some initial steps taken to develop a National Capital Region Freight Plan. This includes collecting information, identifying publically available data, researching potential privately owned data sources, and analyzing information.

Roundtable Updates—

- Nicole Katsikides of MDOT reminded the group of the September 14, 2009 second annual Freight Summit where the first State Freight Plan would be released.
- Christine Hoeffler of VRE reported the start of NEPA documentation for the B-line extension that runs on Norfolk Southern track to Haymarket-Manassas.

**Next Meeting November 5, 2009
Maryland Food Center Authority TOUR**

Meeting Adjourned