



MEMORANDUM

TO: Transportation Planning Board
FROM: Jon Schermann, TPB Transportation Planner
SUBJECT: Visualize 2045: National Capital Region Freight Forum and Livability
DATE: April 18, 2018

This memorandum provides an update to the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) on the recently held National Capital Region Freight Forum, including its relevance to Visualize 2045.

THE FREIGHT ELEMENT OF VISUALIZE 2045

Freight planning is a collaborative and education-oriented process. Federal regulations require metropolitan planning organizations like the TPB to guide their overall transportation planning process according to a series of “planning factors” which include the “enhancement of the efficient movement of freight.” The TPB is currently in the process of developing “Visualize 2045”, the region’s latest long-range transportation plan. Visualize 2045 will include the region’s freight plan, emphasize the importance of goods movement to the region’s economy, and highlight important emerging freight-related issues and trends including the growth of e-commerce.

The TPB also addresses the federal requirement to consider freight within the metropolitan transportation planning process through regular meetings of the TPB freight subcommittee. The freight subcommittee provides a venue in which both public- and private-sector representatives share information and provide freight-related input to the regional transportation planning process. Other key activities of the subcommittee include fostering coordination on freight transportation issues and disseminating research findings to member jurisdictions and other public- and private-sector stakeholders. Additionally, a comprehensive National Capital Region Freight Plan is produced (or updated) roughly every four years. The most recent update to this plan was approved in 2016 and includes a set of freight policies developed and approved by TPB members during that fiscal year.

OVERVIEW OF FREIGHT IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

In the National Capital Region, as in many other vibrant metropolitan areas of the world, urbanization combined with the continuing growth of e-commerce is increasing the number of trucks on the road and exacerbating the competition for curbside space, especially in the region’s more densely developed places. This issue was explored in depth during the recent National Capital Region Freight Forum.

Metropolitan Washington’s service-based economy, with its growing employment, population, and wealth, generates a significant demand for freight. Analysis of federal data reveal that the region receives about 2 ½ times more inbound freight than it produces outbound freight. Efficient delivery of goods is vital to the region’s economy, supports businesses of all types, and allows residents of

the region to enjoy a high quality of life. However, the benefits of freight movement cannot be realized without also attending to its challenges, such as unwanted noise, emissions, and vibrations from freight vehicles operating in dense, urban areas.

By plan, the majority of the region's future growth will be accommodated within 141 regionally-defined Activity Centers. The continuing densification of these activity centers combined with the growth of e-commerce will increase competition for the limited supply of urban curb space. Freight vehicles compete with pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and automobiles for the curb space required to deliver goods to businesses and residents. The factors that make a community more livable for residents (e.g., access to a dense and diverse array of goods, services, and other people) also increase the community's demand for freight. Paradoxically, while dense and livable urban communities increase the demand for freight deliveries, they also tend to develop in ways that often limit freight access, e.g., through street design that supports pedestrian and bicyclist movements.

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION FREIGHT FORUM

On October 31, 2017, the TPB hosted the National Capital Region Freight Forum (freight forum) in the Walter A. Scheiber Board Room. TPB staff partnered with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) to plan for and host the event as part of their larger "Downtown Delivery Symposia" initiative. These Symposia aim to improve first- and last-mile freight movements and deliveries in downtown/urban areas by fostering collaboration between freight and logistics industry stakeholders and freight transportation professionals in the public sector.

Freight Forum Purpose and Overview

The freight forum is a good example of how the TPB offers local and regional freight stakeholders an opportunity to interact with and learn from one another about ways to identify, plan for, and implement solutions to urban freight delivery challenges. While the freight forum provided information that is relevant to every community in the region, a special focus was placed on three urban neighborhoods; Chinatown in Washington, DC; downtown Frederick, Maryland; and the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor in Arlington County, Virginia. Participant discussions focused on the theme of **freight as an enabler of livability** (as opposed to an inhibitor), examined delivery challenges within each of the three neighborhoods, and reviewed research-supported strategies for their mitigation and resolution.

The forum was attended by over 50 people from a variety of agencies and representing city and county governments, research institutions, industry associations, private firms, and advocacy groups. The forum was organized into five sessions where participants:

- Identified congestion, truck parking, and community impacts as some of the region's key freight mobility challenges;
- Discussed how to accommodate freight traffic within and around Chinatown, Downtown Frederick, and the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor;
- Learned about planning, engineering, and management strategies for improving freight system performance in urban communities; and
- Identified short-term next steps to stay involved with regional freight planning effort.

Highlights of Event Discussions

Participants discussed a wide range of challenges and potential solutions. The following observations were drawn from presentations and discussions at the event:

- The growth of e-commerce and the desire by many people to live in dense, amenity-rich neighborhoods are increasing urban freight deliveries and placing greater demands on the limited supply of roadway and curbside space.
- Research-supported initiatives to improve urban goods delivery are published and readily available.
- It is important to involve all relevant stakeholders, including planners, bicyclists and pedestrians, business owners, and policy makers, from the beginning of any project or initiative.
- It is often difficult for private-sector delivery companies to share data with public-sector agencies due to privacy and business competitiveness concerns. One approach that may facilitate data sharing is for the public-sector agency to define a specific purpose for the requested data, particularly if the purpose is one that benefits the firm being asked to share the data in addition to the public.

After learning about key freight challenges and livability considerations in the National Capital Region, participants engaged in a brief overview of the Transportation Research Board's (TRB) National Cooperative Freight Research Program (NCFRP) Report 33, *Improving Freight System Performance in Metropolitan Areas: A Planning Guide*¹. Using Report 33 as a framework, participants identified strategies with the potential to mitigate freight challenges and ease constraints in each of the three focus neighborhoods.

Examples of initiatives discussed during the forum² include the following:

- **To mitigate congestion:** implement flexible loading zones and parking performance pricing in addition to possibly developing an urban consolidation center. Encourage community discussions about the issue and potential initiatives to address it.
- **To address competition for curb space:** consider strategies to discourage on-street parking, encourage time-slotting of deliveries, and investigate the addition of new - or relocation of existing - loading zones.
- **To better accommodate the needs of freight service providers as well as community residents:** facilitate charrettes with downtown and neighborhood stakeholders to enable residents to develop a broad understanding of freight's role in supporting community needs and to gain insight from residents about how to address the challenges related to freight deliveries.

Follow Up Actions

- In March 2018, TPB staff provided an overview of the freight forum, including a summary of the challenges and potential solutions that were discussed, to the TPB Technical Committee.

¹ The free NCFRP Report can be accessed here: <http://www.trb.org/Publications/Blurbs/172487.aspx>

² Links to the presentations made at the freight forum can be accessed here: <https://www.mwcog.org/events/2017/10/31/national-capital-region-freight-forum/>

- TPB staff is delivering a similar overview to the TPB in at their April 2018 meeting.
- The City of Frederick, MD; Arlington County, VA; and the District Department of Transportation will be invited to future TPB freight subcommittee meetings to discuss initiatives taken or planned as a result of the freight forum.
- TPB staff will review follow-up activity among the jurisdictions and provide opportunities for them to share successes and lessons learned via presentations to relevant TPB committees.
- TPB staff will consider periodically hosting future freight forums on relevant freight challenges within the National Capital Region.
- TPB staff will incorporate the issues discussed at the freight forum into Visualize 2045 and include them within ongoing regional freight transportation planning efforts and activities.