



Corridors, Collaboration, Connections

At the 2012 MAFC Annual Meeting, the CFIRE research team unveiled a new theme for the MAFC Regional Freight Study: Corridors, Collaboration, and Connections. This theme underpins the entire Regional Freight Study effort and highlights the most important aspects of freight transportation in the Mid-America Freight Coalition states.

With this new theme comes a new brand and a logo for the Regional Freight Study.

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CORRIDORS COLLABORATION CONNECTIONS

You can look forward to seeing this logo on the products of the study as they are published on the MAFC website and in print. This logo is also available for use by MAFC members for coalition-related documents and presentations. Contact cfire@engr.wisc.edu for more information.



2012 ANNUAL MEETING



APRIL 18-20, 2012
HILTON MINNEAPOLIS HOTEL
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA



Spring Greetings from Wisconsin

Ernie Perry, MAFC Facilitator



Spring greetings from Wisconsin!

For this MAFC update I want to talk about what we heard and experienced at the 2012 MAFC Annual Meeting, held April 18-20 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The interaction between the states and our guests, along with the panel sessions and discussions, have opened up some new areas for consideration, and have

solidified the importance of freight and transportation as a cornerstone to our regional and the national economies. It was apparent at the conference that as states and a region we do have similar values and agendas for freight and economic development. It was also clear that all of us feel strongly about how important it is for us to actively support and advocate for freight transportation.

The annual meeting agenda, handouts, photos, videos, and presentations have been posted on the MAFC website (see midamericafreight.org/events/2012am/). There are some great presentations and materials—feel free to use this information to spread the message about the importance of freight.

We'd like to thank the people who put a huge effort into planning and executing the annual meeting: John Tompkins and Bill Gardner from the Minnesota DOT, Cheryl Ball from the Missouri DOT, Walt Raith from the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, and Teresa Adams from CFIRE. The team did a wonderful job of planning this event. Next year, we will again request participation and leadership from the MAFC state technical contacts to plan the annual meeting. If you have ideas about speakers or topics, please consider volunteering to help plan the meeting.

We'd also like to extend a special thanks to MnDOT's Gary Ruud, who provided excellent audiovisual support for the entire annual meeting.

This year's annual meeting was hosted by the Minnesota DOT, which is clearly a national leader in freight development. We can all learn from MnDOT, whether it be from their work with and support of the Minnesota

Freight Advisory Committee (MFAC), their creative program initiatives, or their exceptional personnel. The participation of MFAC provided a unique opportunity for meeting attendees. MFAC's Ron Have served as an excellent moderator for a combined MAFC/MFAC meeting. And who knew that MnDOT's Bill Gardner could have a second career as a standup comedian? Thank you to both MnDOT and MFAC for helping make this year's annual meeting a valuable learning experience.

At the conclusion of this year's meeting, I jotted down some of my thoughts, and as I was preparing to write this, it struck me that many of our issues and ideas have some dramatic links to several "big picture" freight issues. What follows are my thoughts about the conference and what our discussions mean in terms of advancing a regional freight agenda as well as championing freight in our own organizations. Whether national policy development, state and local planning, or infrastructure project and economic development, we need to be at the table and ready to talk about how our states are part of a freight and economic region that is part of the national system, which is in turn connected to the rest of the world.

Sharing best practices

With MnDOT as the host and MFAC in attendance and even leading our final sessions, this was an excellent example of agency and industry partnerships and a great way to share best practices across our regional freight community. The MnDOT-MFAC relationship is a prime example of a best practice, and further realizing we have leaders in various freight areas with a range of best practices across all ten of the states, the group came to the conclusion that we need to do more to share what we know across our states. As such, one suggested future MAFC project would provide a catalogue of state freight programs, contacts, policies, organizations, relationships, data, and analysis tools used. Then, for example, if one state was charged with creating a short-line rail program, they could take a look at what the Kansas DOT has created to work with the industry. No need to completely reinvent the wheel.

Freight advisory teams

The freight advisory committee session and the panel with Conexus Indiana, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, and MFAC was exceptional. The participants provided insights into the strategies they use to involve

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the business community and how and what these groups add to the DOT's transportation development efforts. The session also demonstrated the wide range of organizational relationships that address the need for industry input on freight and economic development. When starting a freight advisory team, Keith Bucklew of the Indiana DOT put it best: "use existing resources and teams, it does not have to be a DOT driven team. InDOT coordination with Conexus is an example. However you do it: create, co-opt or join an advisory team, you need to be involved." This session was another great example of information sharing and elevating a successful best practice to a whole new level of awareness.

From barge loads to personal deliveries

Most of us think trucks, containers, barge loads, and rail cars when we think freight. FedEx and Medtronic provided a presentation that did an outstanding job of highlighting a behind-the-scenes, time-sensitive logistics that are truly real-time and lifesaving. Considering our freight system's issues with congestion, delay, and reliability, delivering medical products is a life-or-death example of no-excuses logistics. They get the product there, and that matters when you are shipping life-saving devices like pacemakers and heart valves. Freight is that important.

The importance of neighbors and trade

Oh Canada—what a neighbor to have! Martin Loken, Canadian Consul General in Minneapolis, provided an inspiring look at US-Canadian trade. He also provided examples of Canadian corridor initiatives to increase the efficiencies of freight movement. Of interest to several of our members were the relationships the transportation agencies in Canada have forged with logistics companies and carriers to ensure they have reliable data on freight trips, road capacities, and conditions.

This session also hammered home the importance of our border crossings, our neighbors, and our best trading partner. The border connections are of prime importance to all of our MAFC states, yet we tend to plan and invest only within our state borders. Sessions like these help us remember and act as champions for projects like the Ambassador Bridge, which is a tremendous border issue for all of our states. Similarly, the maintenance of our inland lakes and waterways and the lower Mississippi is both a regional and international issue. Freight goes beyond our

individual state borders and even beyond our national borders.

Globalization...invasive species?

I know we have all heard...and even said it ourselves, "oh that climate change, or globalization, or invasive species probably won't affect me!" Well, it does. And our Mississippi River tour and discussions at the meeting should get us thinking in broader terms, if not globally. Consider our freight tour on the upper reaches of the Mississippi River. As a strategy to delay the invasion of non-native carp further upstream on the river at Minneapolis, our freight tour on the river was re-directed to avoid using the locking system. With hopes of slowing the progression of this invasive species, usage of the locks was limited to the freight tows, assuming that their enormous propeller wash will prevent any life-loving carp from entering the lock with the tow. We see this same issue in a more advanced stage at Chicago with the possibility of invasive carp entering the Great Lakes. Invasive carp are a relatively new environmental issue, but one that we will be wrestling with on inland waters.

Another global impact we discussed at our conference reflects the growing global economy and increased competition for resources and fuels. We heard from the MFAC that a major chain of truck stops is installing compressed natural gas as an alternate fuel for trucks. With diesel fuel growing more expensive and the massive populations of India (1.2 billion) and China (1.34 billion) working at increasing their standard of living—including their energy consumption—while they compete against the United States (313 million), issues of globalization, fuel costs, and environmental sustainability will only continue to grow.

A national freight policy

The session presented by representatives from FHWA and AASHTO should get us all thinking—and have us all concerned for the future. We already work to support a national freight policy with national freight corridors, as well as a truly multimodal freight system. But the problem in 2012 is the same as it's been in past years: lots of good ideas and plenty of infrastructure that needs improvement coupled with dwindling or non-existent funding—even though the US economy is out there running on the highway, through the locks, on the rails, and in the air.

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There are at least two big things to take away from the possibility of a national freight policy and program. First, the MAFC states comprise about 22 percent of the proposed national freight highway corridor system and the region contains almost all of the inland freight waterways. The MAFC region is also home to the top three rail hubs and provides a crucial link between the all three coasts. We also have several top-tier air cargo facilities in our region. Second, the MAFC region is a major source of natural resources, agriculture commodities, and manufacturing. Freight is not just an issue for the more densely eastern populated areas; it is important to every one of the MAFC states. As such, we will need to direct national policy to recognize our needs and relevance within this larger freight system. This increases the relevance of the MAFC Regional Freight Study and the efforts to identify how the region fits into the national freight system, as well as its international connections and regional links. We need to be at the table and ready to talk about how our states are part of a region that is part of the national system, which is in turn connected to the rest of the world.

So what lies ahead?

We will not find many people who would argue that the coordination, planning, and execution that built the Interstate system was a major accomplishment that changed the United States and even the rest of the world. And we can read the reports of the tremendous hurdles that were overcome to create and build the Interstate system. I would argue that we are in a similar situation today. We have ideas and plans for a national multimodal system that will revolutionize the economy and provide for greater environmental



Tom Sorel



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Ernie Perry



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Mark Berndt



David Holt



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Keith Bucklew



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John Tompkins

and economic sustainability—but we cannot agree on the approach, cannot find the funding to get it done, and cannot understand as a nation the crucial importance of freight. We are not the first to sing this song about transportation investments. In 1961, Rex Whitton of FHWA championed the Interstate highway system under what appears to be near similar duress:

Whitton's first speech as Federal Highway Administrator was to a meeting of the American Road Builders Association (ARBA) in Atlantic City, NJ, in March 1961. The Interstate System, he said, "can and must be completed by 1972" as scheduled. He saw three challenges. The first was the funding problem, and the second was the "scandals" that were undermining public support. The third was "public apathy, or at least a lack of full appreciation of the urgent need for the highway program and the benefits it is bringing." Increased public education was essential in the face of the negative publicity, he said. "There is no instant panacea for the trouble besetting the highway program..."

Thankfully our predecessors had the foresight and initiative to take care of the Interstate system. But now we are to the point where the economy, our daily lives, and our future livelihood are riding on a transportation system that needs immediate attention and funding. So while discussions on funding transportation continue and innovative policies and programs wait in the wings, we need to continue to champion freight and economic development. As individual states and a region we need to create and implement a compelling vision for a national, multimodal freight system

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that serves the economies of our states, the region, and the nation a whole.

We will continue work on the MAFC Regional Freight Study so that we are prepared to prove the importance of our state and regional freight systems to the national system and the economy. This information will provide the states and the region with the tools to help them capture program dollars and any progressive exploratory projects for freight development.

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MN Transportation Tours

As part of the 2012 Mid-America Freight Coalition Annual Meeting, representatives from the Minnesota Department of Transportation arranged tours of several of the transportation facilities in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.

This half-day of tours began with a short bus trip to Target Field, where attendees examined the complex interplay of transportation modes that meet at or near Target Field. Highways, transit, commuter rail, regional passenger rail, freight rail, surface roads, and bicycle/pedestrian paths all intersect at Target Field, serving both for baseball games and the daily transportation needs of thousands of vehicles. In the process, attendees learned about the challenges of building (and continuing to expand) this multimodal connection point in the middle of a dense urban area. Attendees were also treated to a tour of Target Field itself, provided by the Minnesota Twins organization.

After touring Target field and its related transportation services, attendees spent the rest of the morning aboard the Paradise Lady, touring a stretch of the Mississippi River.

While concerns about Asian carp prevented the tour boat from using the locking system, attendees viewed the freight activity from St. Anthony Falls to the head of navigation on the river, which included a sand and gravel operation, bridge construction work, and a scrap metal recycling operation.

We'd like to thank the Minnesota DOT for arranging these tours and CDM Smith for providing financial support to help make them possible.



Ed Strocko



Marc-Andre Roy

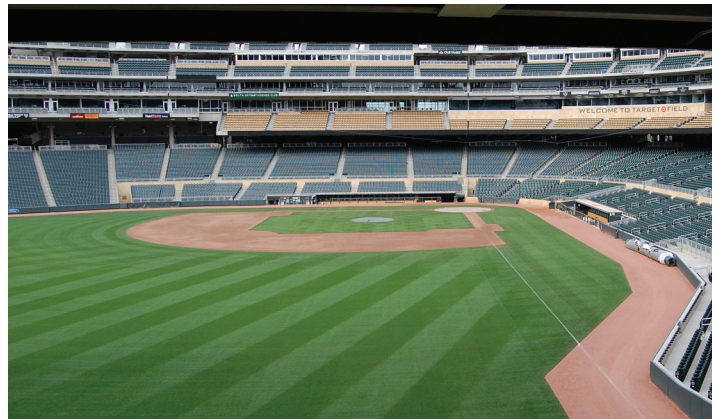
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Conference

July 9-12, 2012

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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Content for this edition of the MAFC *Freight Notes* was contributed by Ernie Perry, Steve Wagner, and the attendees of the 2012 Mid-America Freight Coalition Annual Meeting.



The Mid-America Freight Coalition (MAFC) is a regional organization that cooperates in the planning, operation, preservation, and improvement of transportation infrastructure in the Midwest. The ten states of the AASHTO Mid-America Association of State Transportation Officials (MAASTO) share key interstate corridors, inland waterways, and the Great Lakes. The MAFC is funded by the National Center for Freight & Infrastructure Research & Education and the DOTs of the ten member states.