



Input to Long-Range Transportation Plan for the Boston MPO

As part of the public outreach process, the Eastern Massachusetts Freight Rail Coalition (EMFRC) has identified the following list of “needs” for inclusion in the upcoming Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) “Paths to a Sustainable Region” currently under development and scheduled for completion in April 2011.

➤ **Comprehensive Transportation Planning.**

- **Boston MPO Freight Traffic Study.** This is an initiative specific to the region but clear about the interface with external freight (and passenger) movements. It should be coordinated with the state Freight and Rail Plans and regional passenger rail improvement plans to anticipate and effectively integrate future freight and passenger needs.
- **Cost Benefit Analysis:** The Boston MPO freight study should:
 - Identify truck *vehicle miles traveled* (VMT), routes, origins, and destinations, within the Boston MPO and each MPO sub-region, analyze increased truck size weight limits. Estimate the VMTs’ and greater weight limits’ impact on maintenance costs to highways and bridges, on costs to the environment and public health, and their ultimate impact on taxes or user fees to pay for the higher costs.
 - Prepare a truck-to-rail freight diversion plan. This would not only identify and protect the existing rail infrastructure, including inactive rail rights-of-way (ROW), against residential or commercial development and adverse zoning to preserve rail’s current potential. This plan would also identify specific areas with current or potential carload rail freight.

➤ **Integrated needs of ports and waterways.**

Boston’s ports are integral to its freight network. The Boston MPO freight study accordingly must integrate the needs of ports and waterways within the Region. Such integration requires analysis of:

- Destinations/origins of maritime freight in and out of the Boston MPO, and current and potential market growth.
- Barriers preventing or discouraging increased use of rail from the ports.
- Feasibility of on-dock-rail to ease highway constraints.
- The impact of a Seaport District build-out on port access and future maritime growth.

➤ **Collaborative Planning.**

Lack of coordination among state and local entities' plans may not only miss, but can itself create barriers to investment for growth. A comprehensive economic survey of Massachusetts economic entities' growth plans, as part of the LRTP, would identify potential conflicts and possible syntheses among such plans. With collaborative planning, the Boston MPO would then be able to address problems and work to resolve them.

➤ **Develop Rail Infrastructure and Coordination with Land Use Policies.**

To remove barriers to investment for economic development, the State needs to:

- Protect rail freight as a land use consistent with the state's long-term economic development goals. The legislature can do so under Chapter 43D, Priority Development Sites, as a Qualifying use under Growth District Initiative or, under Chapter 40L, analogous to the preservation of agricultural land.
- Review market realities with commercial rail carriers, then direct public investment and policies that remove barriers to private rail freight carriers' reasonable assurance of profitability. This will help ensure effective rail service. If public policy stacks the deck against an appropriate return, existing operators will likely withdraw, and others will be reluctant to enter. Roads will take up the slack, with attendant costs to the public.
- Develop incentives for private investments to site rail intermodal and bulk freight transload/logistics facilities, so as to attract new and retain existing industries within Route 128 (I-95) and I-495 that sustain profitable freight rail branch line operations.

To these ends, the Commonwealth should:

- Enact enabling legislation for IRAP, the Industrial Rail Access Program, which provides financial assistance for investment in rail or rail-related infrastructure located on, within, or adjacent to the general railroad system. IRAP's specific purpose is (1) to stimulate economic and employment growth through generation of new or expanded rail service; (2) to preserve essential rail service where economically viable; (3) to enhance intermodal transportation; and (4) to preserve rail corridors for future transportation uses.

➤ **MassDOT/MBTA policies to support and encourage expansion of freight rail services on its rail network.**

To meet the economic development goal of increasing rail's mode share and to offset the costs of expanding highway capacity—thus sustaining the region's economic activity and improving its competitiveness—Mass DOT needs to:

- Establish State-wide standards for 286k track capacity on MBTA commuter rails and bridges; require the necessary freight lane capacity and clearances in all MBTA rehabilitation and expansion projects.

- Facilitate switch and siding agreements advantageous to both freight and commuter rail; provide adequate ROW for industrial/terminal switching, coordinated infrastructure, maintenance of way, and equipment planning.
- Establish organizational reform to ensure that MBTA policy and future tenancy contracts for freight rail operations seeks to increase rail freight's modal share.
- Establish incentives for existing holders of freight rights to expand freight volume.
- Secure freight rights when the State acquires additional rail lines.

➤ **Promote Public/Private Partnerships (PPPs).**

To achieve the level of investment required for sustainable economic development, the state needs to:

- Establish Public-Private Partnerships with rail carriers through an IRAP/Infrastructure Bank.
- Working with the Commonwealth's rail carriers, explore increased use of branch lines and funding required to rehabilitate such lines.
- Encourage innovative new rail services that would increase all the benefits of freight rail's increased modal share.

➤ **Advancement of Government Agency Programs.**

For effective coordination and execution of state efforts to strengthen state and regional transportation, both freight and passenger, Massachusetts needs to:

- Establish within Mass DOT a Freight Rail/Intermodal and Logistics Division with an executive-level Director of Operations.
- Establish within the Office of Economic Development an Intermodal Transportation and Logistics Liaison executive.
- At the Governor's level, push for a regional commitment by the NY, Conn, RI, MA, DOTs to finalize plans for an enhanced, intensified, and funded program to bring the New England Corridor (NEC) up to capacity, to build the North-South Rail Link, and to expand commuter/regional rail in the NEC while adequately providing for local freight access.

➤ **Preserve and Rehabilitate Rail Assets**

Existing rail assets, industrial property and port access must be preserved simply to maintain rail service in the Boston MPO area.

Properties in jeopardy include: include Track 61- South Boston; Mystic Warf Branch – Charlestown Central Mass Line (Dormant I-495 to Rte 128); Readville Yards; rationalized Beacon Park Yard; Old Colony Line - Fitchburg to Framingham – Mansfield - Taunton.

Potential rehabilitation projects include:

- A third track on NEC in Massachusetts to accommodate increased commuter and regional rail and to add clearance and weight capacity for rail freight connecting to or traversing the NEC.
- A reengineered Track 61 into the Boston Marine Industrial Park and North Jetty and a reactivated First Street Yard. These would support a trans-load facility in South Boston.
- A rehabilitated Merrimack River Bridge in Haverhill, to eliminate freight and passenger conflicts and to provide for 286K pounds and unrestricted speed.
- Establish, near Boston ports, a new expanded intermodal transfer and freight village/logistics park near Boston ports and the Route 128/I-95 Corridor, with efficient highway access.

Why is Freight Rail Important to the Boston MPO's Region?

Preserving, modernizing, and expanding the remaining rail freight and distribution facilities within the Boston MPO area, and designating land for new facilities, are critical to alleviating the road congestion that cripples economic growth. Removing barriers to public and private investment will be pivotal to maintaining a competitive freight rail presence, regardless of whether the infrastructure is publicly or privately owned. Similarly, highway and rail capacity must be planned in unison, with more attention to reducing the length of the “last mile” truck delivery and the number of such trips.

Recent industrial land acquisitions will present long-term impacts on the movement of goods and people within the Boston MPO area. Gentrification of industrial and distribution enterprises in the Allston/Beacon Park Rail Yard area will remove the last remaining urban freight rail terminal from metro Boston's distribution chain.

As a result, freight distribution activities will shift significantly in Eastern Massachusetts, particularly in the Boston - Metro-West - Worcester Corridor and along the Route 128/I-95 and I-495 corridors. Further, the Commonwealth's Freight Plan anticipates a regressive long-term, continuing diversion of freight from rail to truck as overall freight volume continues to increase. Each freight car removed from the rails adds three to five round-trip trucks to the Boston MPO's road network. Together these shifts portend increased costs in congestion, travel times, road maintenance, and public health.

Eastern Massachusetts Freight Rail Coalition's Vision Statement.

We anticipate a future when:

- 1. Planned development of transportation infrastructure, particularly of underutilized rail and industrial properties, stimulates economic development and job growth.*
- 2. Programs and policies in the LRTP provide the mobility, access and infrastructure needed to diversify the Commonwealth's economy so as to increase higher wage industrial jobs and to attract new businesses. These policies and programs preserve current infrastructure and access while protecting existing rail-served industrial companies and their employees.*
- 3. State-wide zoning reforms encourage corridor development, with passenger and freight transportation as integral components. Local, regional, and state-wide planners work in concert to integrate economic development with transportation.*
- 4. The transportation infrastructure, including rail assets and maritime and aviation facilities, benefits both freight and passenger service.*
- 5. Massachusetts exploits its underutilized rail and maritime infrastructure to alleviate long-term congestion and to ease the Commonwealth's dependency on trucks and highways.*
- 6. It adopts formal Public/Private Partnerships to encourage private investment by new businesses, class 1 and short line railroads, maritime operators and motor carriers.*
- 7. The Commonwealth reexamines its transportation reform activities, particularly as they affect the adequacy and level of freight transportation policies and planning, in order to manage the costs of both rail and truck freight more effectively.*
- 8. The Commonwealth demonstrates active leadership and vision in the development and execution of freight programs through establishment of an office specifically devoted to this issue.*