

C6  
Freight and Logistics

FREIGHT PLANNING IN SMALL AND MEDIUM MPOs: PRACTICAL TOOLS AND LESSONS LEARNED

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There has been an increasing interest in freight planning among MPOs of all sizes. This is driven in part by the recognition of the importance of efficient goods movement to regional economies, which in turn gains the interest of local officials on MPO Boards. Since MAP-21 encourages state freight plans, and future authorizations may require them, there is interest in some states in having regional freight plans form the basis of the State DOT's effort.

This presentation will report on two MPO freight plans in New York. The Elmira Chemung Transportation Council (ECTC) is located in a small metropolitan area in the Southern Tier of New York. The Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) includes a four county area around Albany NY. In both cases, the MPO chose to complete a regional freight plan in the context of the long-range transportation plan update. As such, the goals, objectives, and base data from the LRTP could be imported into the freight plan; and the freight plan recommendations could be accommodated in the LRTP. [Note that RSG was the lead consultant for both plans.]

Elmira is traversed by Interstate 86 and the Norfolk Southern Railroad's Southern Tier line. It has retained a reasonably active manufacturing sector, and attracted warehouse/distribution centers. While much of the truck and rail traffic is through movement, there is also an active rail transload facility that supports natural gas exploration in Pennsylvania's Marcellus shale. As the ECTC Freight Plan proceeded, one of the most beneficial activities was the use of representatives of the local freight industry to "ground truth" the operational data and commodity flow data from FAF3.

The CDTC planning area is more complex, and that is reflected in their Freight and Goods Movement Study. At a juncture of major Interstate highway corridors and Class 1 railroad lines, there are numerous freight generators and two intermodal rail terminals. The Port of Albany is modest, but has a global reach with export traffic. As part of CDTC's New Visions 2040 planning process, this study was crafted to assist the MPO not only in identifying appropriate investments to support goods movement, but also in working with their local governments on land use decisions that would reflect both freight needs and community goals. Of particular interest is the development of a freight supportive land use typology and a multimodal Freight Priority Network (FPN). The typology provides context for local planners who may be addressing a proposed distribution center or terminal, or proactively directing development to a preferred site. The FPN is a tool for CDTC to notify their regional partners about corridors where they will consider freight-related projects or programs.

The presentation will bring together the tools and lessons from the perspective of small and medium sized MPOs with limited resources that want to do a useful freight plan to guide investment strategies.