

University Freight Think Tank Meeting - April 4, 2013

Attending: Toks Omishakin (TDOT)
Tanisha Hall (TDOT)
Liza Joffrion (TDOT)
Brenda Bernards (TDOT)
Martin Lipinski (University of Memphis)
Mark Abkowitz (Vanderbilt University)
Sean Ellis (University of Memphis)
James Dobbins (Vanderbilt University)
Mark Burton (University of Tennessee)
Robert Rock (TDOT)

The session began with a discussion of Freight Advisory Committees (FAC). A list of possible members was distributed to the group, with a question as to who else might be added. It was immediately pointed out that a FAC this large would be difficult to assemble. It was suggested that regional groups might be better, with an Executive Committee (12 members?). The regional groups could be made up of MPOs, RPOs, and members of the private sector from that region, with the chairman of the group having a seat on the Executive Board.

It was suggested that real responsibilities for the FAC were vital in order to capture and retain interest. These responsibilities might include: prioritization of freight projects, assisting with the freight survey process, reviewing policies that affect more than freight (State LRTP, Complete Street Plans, etc.), a forum for important new freight issues, and raising the status of freight planning with State government. Toks responded to a question about the FAC by saying he wanted the FAC to be a real resource with real responsibilities, not something just for show.

A suggestion was made that the Universities could help host and facilitate the regional freight committee meetings. The Universities could help set up the meetings, agendas, and get the word out to members.

The Executive Committee would meet 4 times a year, with the regional meetings schedule to be discussed later. Chairmanship for the committee (and for regional committees?) would be for 2(?) years and would rotate.

A State Freight Survey was discussed briefly. It was suggested that we need to figure out what data is needed and by whom before proceeding much further. It was suggested that the FAC might help define what was needed and what is available.

Tanisha thanked the group for their help, and asked if they were comfortable giving up their time and traveling to participate in the group. Everyone responded in the affirmative, but it was suggested that some future meetings might coincide with FAC meetings.