

# TDOT Statewide Freight Advisory Committee Meeting

May 2, 2019

10:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

## Meeting Minutes

10:40 – Larry McGoogin, TDOT Long Range Planning (LRP) Division Director, started, welcomed all, gave a brief history of FACs, and conducted introductions. Larry then introduced the next speaker, Toks Omishakin, Deputy Commissioner, Chief of Environment & Planning Bureau.

10:48 – Toks Omishakin started by thanking everyone for coming. He stressed how important it was to include key industry partners and how including them helped TDOT. He then gave an in-house update. Liza Joffrion, former Director of Multimodal, is now with CDM Smith. Dan Pallme, Assistant Chief of Environment & Planning Bureau, Freight & Logistics, is currently serving as the interim Multimodal Director, but mentioned that the job posting just closed and that interviews would begin soon. Toks also congratulated Larry McGoogin for his promotion to TDOT LRP Division Director from his prior role LRP Assistant Director. He also mentioned that several other major positions that impact key areas were open and needed to be filled. Toks was also glad to hear of the interest in transit rail from the audience.

Funding – Toks acknowledged that the IMPROVE Act transportation bill - passed in 2017 - could not have been passed without our partners. Local governments are receiving many of these monies. TDOT needs to continue to deliver more projects. We go through the three-year plan cycle annually, which prioritizes about 200 projects every year. There is a balance between urban and rural funding. Toks also mentioned he had never seen a week like Nashville has had. He mentioned 600,000 people came to Music City and only 10 arrests happened! He pointed out that because of Nashville's growth, we could put all money here, but we want a balance all across TN. TDOT needs to make sure there will be a good distribution of projects.

Policy – Toks mentioned that TDOT changed in the 1970s from a Department of Highways to a DOT. It has been a struggle to represent the entire transportation presence. The federal government has pushed to be more multimodal. We want to keep making good policies that support all these efforts, including freight modes. One future policy change will be truck platooning. Commissioner Bright, along with Dan Pallme, is interested in making sure truck platooning happens in TN.

Before Toks introduced the Commissioner, there was a question about platooning. Dan Pallme answered the question.

Toks next introduced TDOT's new Commissioner, Clay Bright. Toks was quick to mention that Commissioner is soaking up everything in his new role.



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11:03 – Commissioner Bright started by giving his job history. He is a civil engineer, so he understands design, working previously with Brasfield & Gorrie. He saw today's meeting as a grass root effort. He pointed out that we all would get out what we put into the FACs. This is a work in progress. One thing Commissioner did not realize is how important freight and transportation are to the state.

When Commissioner Bright received a call from the Governor to be Commissioner, the Governor stressed how important it was to get the IMPROVE Act projects done as soon as possible. Freight is a huge part of drawing industry to the state.

Innovation is important to Commissioner. He wants TDOT to be on the leading edge. He mentioned we were in Phase 1 of the I-24 Smart Corridor. How can we make that corridor move better for freight? As a result of this particular project's innovation, TDOT will be a leader in moving traffic safer and more efficiently.

Safety is important to Commissioner. From keeping the workers safe, to keeping contractors safe, to having a safety culture, all items are important. TDOT has a Safety Division that looks at all those incidences. Commissioner has learned that everything TDOT does is approached from an engineering point of view, not a political point of view. We can justify projects and safety efforts better because it is from an engineering point of view. Engineers have an open mind on how to get projects done.

Executive Order 1 – Commissioner has met with half of mayors of the 15 Distressed Counties. Lake County is a perfect example of how three modes of freight being improved can help boost the county's economy. The 29 At-Risk Counties will also be helped.

11:13 – Larry next briefly introduced Dan Pallme. Dan started by mentioning Smart Commute Week, which was currently going on. He said that was the way we would survive from now, by using different modes to get around. The freight corridors will have more space as we use more modes for transportation.

Assets of TN – Dan pointed out that 1 in 13 jobs in Tennessee are in the Transportation Sector.

Rail Competitive Grants – Dan mentioned TDOT awarded 8 projects from bid to award in two-month's time! Three of the grants awarded had a multimodal measure.

Dan also mentioned that we need to put the right freight on the right mode at the right time.



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All communities are affected by transportation and freight. FEDEX, 21 short-line railroads, and five of the seven major rail companies call Tennessee home.

Dan mentioned it was great that we had representatives from all modes here today. He ended this segment by pointing out that we will continue with future rail grants.

INFRA Grants – We won an INFRA grant for Lamar Avenue, which is in progress. Economic development is happening there again because of improvements in this vital corridor. This year we submitted two INFRA grants. I-69 in Obion County was submitted and gives another alternative route for freight and a huge opportunity for a rural area with At-Risk and Distressed Counties in Tennessee. The second grant submitted was the I-65 widening. When completed, three lanes will come and go all the way to Kentucky, which already has three lanes for I-65. He pointed out that we need to think of scope. If we have three lanes, middle lane can be used for trucks, platooning, and autonomous vehicles.

BUILD Grants – We are currently considering projects to submit for the BUILD grants program that will potentially help several rural communities.

Dan pointed out in this section that having all these projects in the pipeline is a good thing.

NEP Grant – TDOT submitted and won for Freight Movement Along Freight Alley – The Greater Chattanooga Region, tri-state initiative being led by TDOT, with support from Alabama DOT, Georgia DOT, and the Thrive Regional Partnership in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The grant will look into detail at the freight flows of auto suppliers and flooring industries in the tri-state region, understanding supply chains. In Tennessee, 88 of 95 counties have some type of automotive-related company. Suppliers to Toyota Mazda in Huntsville, Alabama are looking at Tennessee as a possible business location as well.

Dan finished his points by mentioning that we had interviewed for a freight planner opening that we hope will be filled soon.

A question was asked – When will I-65 widening start? Paul Degges, Deputy Commissioner, Chief Engineer, answered that the project is underway. Environmental and surveying are being completed and we will have to have some alternate configurations.



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A question was asked in relation to Murfreesboro Pike – How can we get cars to use alternate state routes? We need to have great state roads for alternate routes. Dan thinks urban freight could help. We may use off-time delivery like NY does. We need to look at all options. Dan believes the best ideas have come internationally. Traditional deliveries are outside the city core, and by e-bike within the city center. Brad Freeze, TDOT Traffic Operations Division Director, spoke up that it would be great to have a TN trucking person on the I-24 Smart Corridor technical advisory committee.

A question was asked – Is there the next place after the next place for future study selections based on all economic development efforts? Larry mentioned the corridor studies and our OCT offices. Is economic development a part of it? Does it enter the priority process? Dan answered that when we did the rail grants, ECD and TVA were there.

A question was asked – What can we do as a body to lead? Dan and Larry mentioned that the FACs could funnel ideas and objectives through the Freight and Systems Planning Office to push that message out. Prior ideas have been developed into research projects or other projects as well. Dan also mentioned the truck parking mapping part of NEP. Larry ended by mentioning a survey going out to FAC members.

11:55 – 12:25 – Networking Lunch

12:26 – TDOT Regional updates - Steve Borden, Region 1 Director, started with Region 1 Updates. He covered all statuses of IMPROVE Act projects and freight projects in his region. He also covered an update on the Alcoa Highway project that is very important to Knoxville and surrounding areas in Region 1.

Joe Deering, Region 2 Director, provided the Region 2 updates after Steve. Joe mentioned that Region 2 has 970 lane miles via interstates. Joe then specifically gave updates on the following projects:

- I-24 and US 27 project in Chattanooga
- Design-Build project at I-75
- ITS project in Cumberland/Putnam County
- US 127 widening in Fentress County.

Paul Degges covered updates for Regions 3 and 4. Paul started by mentioning a question TDOT receives so often - Why doesn't TDOT widen rural interstates? Paul said the estimate to do that would be approximately \$15 billion. Tennessee is not willing to pay for that now. IMPROVE Act leveraged corridor studies and looked at what the needs were. We would like to widen them all, but we're not ready.



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The corridor studies identified the choke points, and TDOT took the information and tweaked them a little bit. Currently, approximately \$6 billion in interstate widening projects in Tennessee are from the IMPROVE Act.

Next, Paul covered the truck parking lanes in Region 3, both East and West of Nashville. With the IMPROVE Act, could we widen all interstate corridors? Paul answered currently that I-65 is a widening project in Region 3 that is part of the IMPROVE Act. Metro Nashville Airport and the interchange is another major project that is part of the IMPROVE Act within Region 3.

Region 4 – Paul covered the status of the I-40 Jackson, TN widening. He also updated the group on Lamar Avenue. It is definitely a freight corridor and will come into I-22 in Mississippi. I-69 has been controversial, but by some it is referred to as the last great American highway. When the interstate shield goes out for I-69, it will be huge for economic development and it will require just \$300 million to get it finished from Dyersburg to the Kentucky state line.

Someone asked Paul about inner loop in Nashville? Paul said it will be a study area over the next six years with the city and MPO. We'll have to do something with all the development.

Another question was asked related to the last transit debate and double decking interstates in Nashville. The issue with Nashville is not only throughput, but also getting vehicles off the interstate. Double decking is maybe just a piece, but not the total solution.

A question was asked – From a safety and autonomous vehicle perspective, how are you guys going to keep up with those items? TDOT tries to be customer-focused. Being able to provide stripes on the road is a big issue. We are now doing six-inch stripes. We use a high-end marking. This relates to the two thoughts on vehicle sensing. Some think we do need striping, and some don't. We still don't know the answer, but right now people need to be able to see the stripe. As far as rumble strips, historically, no one really adopted it. When we started them, the bicycle community had concerns.

Someone asked if there were MPOs throughout the state? Yes.

12:50 - Brad Freeze, TDOT Traffic Operations Division Director, gave a brief update on the I-24 Smart Corridor. He mentioned that this project was very exciting for TDOT. Nationally, studies show that 60% of congestion is caused by non-recurring causes.



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TDOT wants to have reliable travel times in this corridor. This project is implementing Integrated Corridor Management through technology and institutional collaboration. We are working with partners so we're all on the same page operationally.

Phase 1 included technology components and deployment. DSRC benefits include collecting data through Bluetooth and pushing information back out. This phase has operationally added refuge areas, or pull-off areas. These areas give a safe area to pull off and reduce friction. There are also signal upgrades (123) on Phase 1, as well as basic signal timing plans and DMS messaging board applications. Now they are working on Phase 2, which includes active lane management systems, full gantries per lane, signal timing plan improvements, TMC modifications, and software that will be updated. Phase 3 will include ramp metering in TN. This will help increase throughput. Phase 3 also includes the development of a decision support system, which involves trying to predict 5 to 10 minutes in the future, to give the best scenario. This technology is innovative while helping to improve reliability and expectancy of commuters.

1:00 – Larry introduced Amy Kosanovic, Planning Supervisor of the Freight and Systems Planning Office of LRP. Amy brought to everyone's attention that there was an I-55/75/26 Corridor Study going on. She held up comment cards that provided a link where those who interacted with these corridors could provide feedback. Larry closed the meeting asking if there were any other questions. When there were none, the meeting adjourned at about 1:05 p.m.

