

U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT)

Draft National Freight Strategic Plan (NFSP)

Informational Summary

Background

- Nation's freight transportation system is a vast, complex network of almost 7 million miles of highways, local roads, railways, navigable waterways, and pipelines linked to each other through thousands of seaports, airports, and intermodal facilities;
- Each day, the system moves 55 million tons of goods, worth more than \$49 billion;
- Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) included freight planning and project delivery provisions and for the first time established a National Freight Policy (NFP);
- NFP specifies goals to increase economic competitiveness, efficiency, and productivity of the network; reduce congestion; enhance the safety, security, and resilience of freight movement; improve the state of good repair and accountability of operations and maintenance; make greater use of advanced technology and innovation; and reduce environmental impacts;
- MAP-21 encouraged the development of State Freight Advisory Committees and State Freight Plans to improve coordination of freight transportation planning. It also mandates that the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) produce a **NFSP**;
- NFSP describes the freight transportation system and future demands on it; identify major corridors and gateways; assess physical, institutional, and financial barriers to improvement; and specify best practices for enhancing the system.

Key Trends and Challenges in Freight Transportation

1. Expected Growth in Freight Tonnage
 - U.S. economy is expected to double in size over the next 30 years;
 - Increase to 389 million people, compared to 321 million in 2015;
 - Freight movements across all modes are expected to grow by roughly 42 percent by the year 2040;
 - Imports and exports transported expected to double and freight is expected to triple
2. Underinvestment in the Freight System.
 - Seldom public-sector funds dedicated to them and they do not compete well with non-freight projects because of the manner in which public investments are evaluated.
3. Difficulty in Planning and Implementing Freight Projects
 - Decentralized approach leads to fragmented decision making.
4. Continued Need to Address Safety, Security, and Resilience
 - Safety improving even as freight is increasing but more can be done.
5. Increased Global Economic Competition
 - From 1995 to 2012, surface trade between the U.S. and Mexico quadrupled from approximately \$100 billion to \$400 billion per year.
6. Application and Deployment of New Technologies
 - Technological revolution is occurring;
 - Worker skillsets needed to maintain and operate new tech;
 - New tech can being deployed faster anticipated.

Strategies

1. Address Infrastructure Bottlenecks - Physical locations (e.g., bridges, border crossing facilities, at-grade railroad crossings, truck gates at ports) that disrupt the free flow of goods:
 - Reduce congestion to improve performance of the freight transportation system;
 - Improve the safety, security, and resilience of the freight transportation system;
 - Facilitate intermodal connectivity;
 - Identify major trade gateways and multimodal national freight networks/corridors;
 - Mitigate impacts of freight projects/movements on communities;
 - Support research and promote adoption of new technologies and best practices.

2. Address Institutional Bottlenecks - Make it difficult to plan, prioritize, implement, and fund freight projects:
 - Streamline project planning, review, permitting, and approvals
 - Creating an Interagency Infrastructure Permitting Improvement Center;
 - Pursuing strategies to reduce fragmentation of metropolitan planning by statutorily preventing the formation of new Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) within metropolitan areas already served by an existing MPO;
 - Creating stronger incentives to encourage effective State freight planning, as proposed in the GROW AMERICA (reauthorization) Act.
 - Facilitate multijurisdictional, multimodal collaboration and solutions;
 - Improve coordination between public and private sectors;
 - Ensure availability of better data and models;
 - Develop the next generation freight transportation workforce.

3. Address Financial Bottlenecks - Establish Federal freight transportation funding that is substantial, continuing, multimodal, reliable, and specifically dedicated to freight transportation projects:
 - Ensure dedicated freight funding;
 - Use existing grant programs to support freight.

Recommended Performance Objectives and Measures

Objectives and measures include:

- Reliability/delay;
- Safety/security/resilience;
- Asset condition;
- Use of advanced technology;
- Cost benefit analysis;
- Project delivery timing;
- Emissions reduction and noise exposure.

Proposed draft Multimodal Freight Network (MFN) map

Includes multiple freight modes, including highest volume freight routes and facilities. A project not on a MFN route may still be eligible for freight funding.

Website for draft Plan: <https://www.transportation.gov/freight/NFSP>