

Freight Professional Development Program

21ST CENTURY OPERATIONS USING 21ST CENTURY TECHNOLOGIES

FREIGHT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

The U.S. Department of Transportation recognizes the critical role that the efficient flow of freight plays in our national economy. In recent years, the increase in freight traffic fueled by the globalization of trade and just-in-time manufacturing has strained our transportation network in some regions and exacerbated the struggle of accommodating both freight and passenger traffic. The problems promise to escalate in the future as domestic and international freight volumes are projected to increase by 67 percent and 85 percent, respectively, between 1998 and 2020.

WHY WE ARE CONCERNED

Industry and government are concerned about the capacity of the freight transportation system to handle the steadily increasing volumes of freight. The efficient movement of goods is dependent, in large part, on the people who build, maintain, and operate the system. Educating and training a skilled and a knowledgeable workforce is crucial to improving freight transportation productivity, safety, and security.

States and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) have expressed a strong need for improved skills in addressing freight transportation issues. Several key factors have heightened the need for freight professional development at State and local levels:

- Increased desire and need by State and local transportation agencies to develop freight programs within their agencies



- Inadequate supply of publicly available courses and tools focusing on freight planning and operations for the public sector
- Significant turnover in planning jobs combined with small staff devoted to freight resulting in little or no mentoring
- Limited public-private sector engagement leading to lack of understanding of private business practices by public sector officials and vice versa

WHAT WE'RE DOING

In response to customer needs, the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Office of Operations launched the Freight Professional Development (FPD) Program. This initiative assists State departments of transportation (DOTs) and MPOs in developing the skills and knowledge needed to meet the challenge of growing freight flows on the nation's transportation system.

The goal of the FPD Program is to integrate freight infrastructure and operational improvements in the transportation development process to improve mobility, economic growth, and global connectivity.

The FPD Program objectives are:

- Enhance the freight-related skills and knowledge of transportation planners and other professionals
- Foster intermodal approaches to advancing freight productivity and security
- Engage private sector stakeholders in the project development process
- Improve freight planning and decisionmaking at State and MPO levels

To meet these objectives and respond to our customers' needs effectively, the FPD Program is focusing on:

- Developing flexible, targeted products and services
- Customizing FPD resources based on unique freight needs

- Providing timely products and services
- Utilizing cost-effective, technology-driven delivery methods
- Assessing and improving FPD Program delivery performance

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The FPD Program consists of four key elements: training, education, technical assistance, and a resource library.

Training: The FPD program provides training, including short courses and seminars, on a broad range of freight topics. Two FPD courses are being offered through The National Highway Institute in fiscal year (FY) 2004: Integrating Freight in the Transportation Planning Process and Freight Forecasting.

Education: The FPD Program works with the academic community to promote needed changes in transportation planning and logistics degree programs critical to ensuring the future availability of appropriately trained freight professionals. Many university-based freight and related degree programs are identified on our new FPD Web site at www.ops.fhwa.gov/freight/FPD.

Technical assistance: The FPD Program provides assistance to States and MPOs engaged in transportation and freight planning. The ongoing "Talking Freight" Seminar Series offers a no-cost way for freight transportation professionals to broaden their knowledge and develop new skills. Seminars are held monthly and are open to all interested parties through <http://talkingfreight.webex.com>. The Freight Planning LISTSERV, located at www.fhwa.dot.gov/freightplanning, also provides a forum for peer information exchange.

Resource Library: The FPD Program offers a Web-based one-stop shop for current information and state-of-the-art practices pertaining to freight. The resource library is located on the FPD Web site.

Other FPD Program initiatives include:

- Customer Needs Assessment meetings and proceedings
- The development of training curriculum for FY 2004-2006
- Outreach efforts to transportation and planning professionals in both the public and private sectors

The inclusion of freight professional capacity building in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Act of 2003 (SAFETEA) confirms its importance as a way to improve freight transportation mobility and efficiency. Since education and training are the responsibilities of both the public and private sectors, partnerships between government and business will be key to building freight professional capacity now and in the future.

