

Framework for Development of a Statewide Freight Advisory Committee in Arizona

The following is a general framework that can be used by stakeholders in Arizona as they continue to explore and refine a concept for a statewide freight advisory committee (FAC) or similar entity to facilitate communication and coordination between regional and local planning organizations, as well as between the public sector and private sector freight interests. The information in this Framework reflects participant inputs from the peer exchange held in Phoenix on February 21, 2008. In some cases the Framework has been supplemented with information that was heard from the peer experts from Colorado and Oregon who attended the peer exchange and discussed the models for their respective FACs.

Purpose

The purpose of the Arizona FAC would be to facilitate strategic information exchange and coordination among Arizona's diverse group of freight stakeholders regarding freight needs and potential solutions to help build a better quality of life in Arizona.

Potential Functions

Peer exchange participants envisioned the functions of a FAC in Arizona could be as follows:

- **Serve as a forum for discussions about freight movement in the state and for providing advice to ADOT about freight issues** – Some participants felt that the FAC should start on an informal basis by serving as a discussion forum to provide ADOT with input regarding freight issues and to educate the public and private sectors about their respective needs¹.
- **Set criteria for selecting projects** – One participant noted that he believes the FAC can play the role of helping to set criteria for selecting projects. The FAC would not necessarily prioritize projects, but would help determine criteria to consider when evaluating projects.
- **Prioritize projects** - Some participants felt that the prioritization role was important, and that without actually being able to make specific changes, the private sector will not be as willing to join the FAC.

Benefits

Establishing a FAC in Arizona could benefit Arizona in the following ways:

- Provide an opportunity to reach consensus among diverse stakeholders on multimodal freight needs, and facilitate successful solutions.
- Serve as a source for developing freight champions, as well as points of contacts for local areas.
- Facilitate successful implementation of project success by raising the level of shared knowledge between public and private sector stakeholders on freight concerns.
- Establish strong partnerships with key private sector economic leaders in the freight industry.

¹ This is consistent with Colorado's model.

- Help promote and maintain a high quality of life in Arizona by ensuring that freight needs are considered and that freight growth is addressed.

Additional benefits from the Colorado and Oregon presentation highlighting benefits to their states, which may also apply to Arizona included:

- Provide the state department of transportation (DOT) with improved access to freight data and data sources, and a more consistent set of data through efficiencies in obtaining needed data (coordinated efforts rather than separate entities in the public sector contacting the many separate entities in the private sector to get the data).
- Raise awareness by all stakeholders of freight issues.
- Provide advice and other information on specific modes represented on the FAC.
- Provide a forum for the discussion of relevant freight transportation security issues.
- Help the public sector target freight investments to where they are most needed.

Participation/Roles

Participants emphasized the need for FAC to be comprised primarily of the private sector executives and complemented, where appropriate, by public sector representatives and others with specialty expertise.

Another participant noted that in Arizona there are economic development organizations that are separate from the Chamber of Commerce. These organizations can be the engines for moving forward with the statewide FAC and can provide suggestions on whom to include in the membership.

A participant questioned the possibility of having a state agency other than the Arizona DOT (ADOT) host the FAC, such as the Arizona Department of Commerce. It was mentioned that the Arizona Department of Commerce has not chosen to take a lead role in the development of the Multimodal Freight Analysis Study currently in progress, but this does not mean that it should not be encouraged to come to the table.

Meeting participants agreed that it was desirable, but not necessary, to have representation from all metropolitan planning organizations (MPO) and councils of government (COG) on the Arizona FAC. In Oregon, COGs and MPOs do not actually have direct seats on the committee. Instead, there are one or two people representing all COGs and MPOs in the state, who then take the information from FAC meetings back to a committee comprised of COG and MPO members.

Meeting Frequency

Because Arizona is still trying to determine how to organize the statewide FAC, the meeting did not touch on how or when FAC meetings would be held. However, Arizona may want to consider the Colorado model of starting out by holding meetings on a quarterly basis. Additional meetings could be held as needs arise, or the frequency could be increased (or decreased) over time if that the members determined this to be necessary.

In Colorado, the first meeting of the year is a members-only meeting where the focus is set for the upcoming year. This is followed by two general meetings, one of which is always a field trip. The Colorado FAC has visited places such as UPS, a concrete company, and a moving and storage company. The fourth meeting is a full day workshop or seminar, held to exchange information rather than to develop recommendations.

The Colorado FAC also holds a series of freight focus meetings to help develop information to feed into the planning process. This doesn't need to be done every year, but could be done on a periodic basis. In 2004 the Colorado FAC held three focus meetings (organized by mode – air freight and intermodal, rail, truck). Members provided input on whom to invite and what questions to ask. Industry members and planners attended the meetings.

Next Steps

A suggestion came out of the discussion to include a recommendation to establish a statewide FAC in the executive summary of the Arizona Multimodal Freight Analysis Study.

Participants agreed that any FAC should begin informally, possibly with a series of discussions and/or conversations with stakeholders. This could take the format of freight focus groups held in all regions throughout Arizona. Since the peer exchange was conducted, freight focus group meetings have been held across the State in conjunction with the ongoing Regional and State Planning Framework effort. The meetings were not well-attended by members of the freight industry.

Another idea was to maintain the technical advisory committee (TAC) that was formed for the development of the Arizona freight plan and use it to initiate and continue these freight-focused discussions. The TAC could almost serve as the foundation for the FAC, although this wouldn't include private sector participants. This is similar to what was done in Colorado, as the Colorado FAC was formed from the freight subgroup that provided inputs to the Colorado Mobility Study.

Participants noted that having legislation at the Federal level requiring FACs could help to clearly spell out what needs to be done and would ensure that development of FACs was brought to the forefront in states. However, this could take several years and it is important that Arizona does not wait for this legislation and instead begins initiation of the statewide FAC sooner rather than later.

In Colorado, FAC members received an invitation letter signed by the Governor. An example of this letter is provided in Appendix C. Arizona may want to consider doing something similar.

A participant suggested that MPOs can start now by addressing freight in their regional plans and sharing with each other how they are going about doing this. MPOs could even go one step further to include freight projects in their Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). As an example, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) in Philadelphia shared their TIP and Long Range Plan (LRP) with the Pennsylvania FAC. DVRPC asked the FAC to comment on how DVRPC's actions were benefiting freight movement in Pennsylvania.

Strengths, Constraints, Opportunities, Risks (SCOR) Analysis

Participants completed a SCOR analysis to determine the internal strengths and constraints and the external opportunities and risks to creating a Statewide FAC. The SCOR analysis seems to confirm that starting off with a less formal, more advisory type model for the FAC makes the most sense. The FAC could start out by simply educating and providing information about freight to both the public and private sectors, and then once momentum builds, the FAC could move toward a more formal committee that might have authority to make recommendations to the project programming process.

INTERNAL	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statewide FAC could serve as a source for “local champions” • General support for concept of FAC among MPOs – concept is yet to be defined • New ADOT Planning Director (could be strength or constraint, depending on level of support) • The implications of participation in the prioritization of projects (also a constraint). 	<p>Constraints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of departmental focus on freight plan – not currently integrated into planning process • Traditional separation of transportation and the economy • Lack of resources to “pull it off” • Uncertain support from management • Concerns about the implications of participation in the prioritization of projects (also a strength) • New ADOT Planning Director (could be strength or constraint, depending on level of support)
EXTERNAL	<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framework process/Building a Quality Arizona – politically driven but has horsepower behind it and could be opportunity to get ears at certain levels in terms of introducing this idea. • Things are already happening (such as the ongoing statewide freight study) – FAC can have/give a voice and help identify needs • Central AZ – explosive growth, need transportation infrastructure, also growth from freight perspective. • Smaller MPOs fear that a FAC will only benefit the larger MPOs (such as Maricopa County). FAC has opportunity to show that freight is a regional issue and recommendations from FAC are meant to improve freight movement across all of Arizona. 	<p>Risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politicization of process and potential loss of objectivity • Concern of adding another layer of bureaucracy – is expensive, can be cumbersome and slow things down.

Implementing MPO-Level Freight Advisory Committees

There was also some discussion as to whether it makes sense to create FACs at the MPO level. Oregon may be one model to look to, as it is comprised of several MPOs, similar to Arizona, and some of these MPOs have their own FACs.

Participants generally thought that having MPO-level FACs was a good idea, but also noted some issues and needs in order to make it happen.

Barriers

Participants noted that smaller MPOs might have a more difficult time creating an FAC because they assume the FAC has to be a fairly large group. This is not true however, as long as the FAC is meeting the region's needs.

Overcoming Barriers

One participant noted that support for the MPO-level FACs has to come from the state level. At the state level everyone needs to take responsibility to help smaller MPOs to show that everyone is important in terms of improving freight transportation in Arizona.

Membership

It will be important to have someone from ADOT included on the MPO FACs to act as a liaison between the MPOs and ADOT. The recommendation from the meeting was that someone be appointed by the new ADOT Planning Director.

In Oregon, Portland has an FAC that is made up of public and private sector representatives and has some of the same members as the statewide FAC. FACs from smaller MPOs include members such as the mayor of the major city belonging to the MPO, the director of the COG, and a member of a corridor coalition, for example.

What is Currently Being Done?

Participants from Pima Association of Governments (PAG) and the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) noted that they are already somewhat doing this. However, for PAG it is not under the PAG umbrella but instead falls under Tucson Regional Economic Opportunities (TREO). PAG is supporting the TREO efforts. The MAG participant noted that MAG already has the national president of Swift trucking on one of the MAG committees and there are other individuals at varying levels on the committees as well. While there is not a specific freight-focused committee, freight is a part of the discussions.

The PAG participant also noted participation in the Southern Arizona Logistics Education Organization (SALEO) SALEO provides networking opportunities between representatives of the transportation and logistics industry and the users of these services. He indicated that SALEO could be used as an outreach forum to advertise a PAG FAC and invite people to join the FAC.