

Brown Bag Discussion on Freight Issues in Delaware Tuesday, January 16, 2006

Background:

Nationally truck traffic is forecast to double by 2020¹. What does this mean for Delaware? What does this mean for DelDOT? What data is needed to plan for changes in freight volume and composition? What modal changes do we expect to see? Where are the bottlenecks? Are there research issues that need to be addressed?

Discussion

- Observations – Freight in Delaware - Delaware is a net importer of goods. Coal, cars, chickens and chemicals are important commodities. Apart from I-95 and the Northeast Corridor it is also a “dead end” as there is practically no north-south movements. Carriers and shippers are interested in getting through the state safely and efficiently. In reality the carriers and shippers drive what happens. Small package delivery is likely to have a larger income in the future as the population of southern Delaware grows, the demographics change and online shopping grows.
- Planning studies - Planning always includes trucks but not necessarily freight in general. Carriers/ shippers will optimize, therefore there is very little excess capacity. One possibility is public investment in rail to support shifting traffic from truck to rail. Each year a customer satisfaction survey is undertaken. About 100 carriers are represented. WILMAPCO² is developing a freight study³. This includes mapping bottlenecks, and creating a trucker’s map that includes services and rest areas. WILMAPCO have obtained the Global Insights data⁴. One of the modeling challenges is taking the county-to-county origin destination data (by mode and STCC code) and reconciling with link-level truck count data to better understand **what** is moving **where** and **how**.
- Opportunities - There are many good ideas for improving freight efficiency and reducing the impact on travel. The challenge is for putting them in practice. What can be modeled? Are there pilot programs that can be implemented?
- Grade crossings - Grade crossing are an issue and often get high visibility based on political action. However, DelDOT knows what the issues and where investments can be made.
- Other initiatives - DelDOT is an active participant in the Commercial Vehicle Information System Network (CVISN5). Co-ordination is the key to success in this endeavor. DelDOT also participated in the Mid-Atlantic Rail Operations

¹ http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freight/freight_analysis/state_info/delaware/de2.pdf

² <http://www.wilmapco.org/>

³ <http://www.wilmapco.org/freight/>

⁴ <http://www.globalinsight.com/Highlight/HighlightDetail905.htm>

⁵ <http://cvisn.fmcsa.dot.gov/>

Study67 (MAROps). The study recommended targeted rail investments.

- Port of Wilmington⁸ – The Port of Wilmington is a niche port in the sense of a focus on fruit imports. The real issues are strategic. Can the port handle larger vessels? Where do the ships go? Will fruit continue to come from South American? A 1998 master plan addressed investment issues.
- Data limitations – There are significant limitations in the data on truck traffic in the Highway Performance Monitoring System. The distribution of truck traffic by vehicle type is largely unknown.
- Enforcement – Enforcement is a challenge. Delaware has a limited force and a large area to cover.
- Education – Like most states the general public and politicians do not understand the role that freight plays in the economy. Issues include NIMBY attitudes to truck routes, pavement damage due to overloads, and the role trucks play in delivering commodities.
- Other sources of data – The Transportation Management Center (e.g. the cameras) are a rich data source that has not been tapped. This may serve to supplement the thorough coverage of AADT data collected under contract by Edwards and Kelcey.

Issues - summary:

- State's size and weight enforcement
- What is the right role for the state?
- Do our models know what counts for freight?
- Rest areas and services
- Truck data – collection and management
- Basic capacity analysis
- Map congestion and clearance issues
- Better defined truck routes
- C-Vision – Who's leading? Where do we fit in?

⁶ <http://144.202.240.28/pman/projectmanagement/Upfiles/reports/full112.pdf>

⁷ <http://144.202.240.28/pman/projectmanagement/Upfiles/reports/summary239.pdf>

⁸ http://www.portofwilmingtonde.com/mainframesets/Main_OurPort.htm