



**LOUISIANA STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE  
ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETINGS – ROUND ONE  
FREIGHT RAIL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING SUMMARY**

*March 21, 2013 • 9:00AM to 12:00PM  
LA DOTD, Baton Rouge, LA*

Last Name	First Name	Affiliation
<b>Advisory Council Members</b>		
Bertel	Richard D.	Rio Grande Pacific Corporation N.O. Gulf Coast Railway
Blackmon (Chair)	Carmack	Louisiana Railroads Association
Gardner	Craig	SJB Group, LLC
Goodell	Dean	LA DOTD
Harris	Jeff A.	Norfolk Southern Corporation
Kobe	David	Rubicon, Inc.
Lobello	Tom	New Orleans Public Belt Railroad
Parsons	Karen	Regional Planning Commission
Tessier	Drew	Union Pacific Railroad
Thompson, III	French	BNSF Railroad
White	Cortney	Port of Greater Baton Rouge
<b>Other Attendees</b>		
Broussard	Dan	LA DOTD
Sholmire	Dawn	LA DOTD
Lawson	Kevin	LA DOTD
Balfour	Sharon	LA DOTD
Jones	Phil	LA DOTD
Fox (Facilitator)	Justin	CDM Smith
Carpenter	Linda	CDM Smith
Babineaux	Butch	CDM Smith
Keller	Kevin	HDR

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of the First Round of Advisory Council meetings was to give the Advisory Councils a briefing on the status of the Plan update and to allow each Council to discuss issues regarding their mode. Attendees also received the Draft Vision, Goals, Objectives and Performance Measures to review and provide feedback, as well as the previous Policy Recommendations to consider for the next round of meetings.

*Note: This meeting summary is a compilation of the input received from the advisory council members and accurately reflects the views expressed.*

**HANDOUTS**

- Agenda
- Opening PowerPoint Presentation

- Freight Rail Advisory Council PowerPoint Presentation
- Freight Rail Presentation given at October 2012 Open House
- Initial Freight Rail Issues
- Draft Vision, Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures
- Freight Rail Policy Recommendations from 2008 Review and Status Report

## MEETING SUMMARY

### Opening Session

In the opening session, the Freight Rail Advisory Council and the Trucking Advisory Council members heard information about the status of the plan and an initial overview of conditions and issues, presented by Don Vary of CDM Smith. Highlights included:

- Plan Status
  - Draft vision, goals, objectives, and performance measures based on input from DOTD leadership interviews, state legislator questionnaire, public telephone survey, and a visioning workshop as well as initial technical analyses of conditions
  - Round One Advisory Council meetings are focusing on issues and a review of the vision, goals, objectives, and performance measures
  - Plan completion scheduled for mid-2014
- Initial Overview of Issues
  - Overall Issues, regardless of mode include:
    - Asset Management: maintaining what exists in good condition
    - Mobility: to support and encourage economic growth and quality of life
    - Governance: more cooperation and collaboration, especially relative to land use and transportation
    - Safety: developing programs and practices that deal with changing times – more elderly, more trucks, etc.
    - Revenue: developing sustainable funding options
  - The individual Advisory Councils will be discussing issues related to their particular mode/topic area

### Freight Rail Advisory Council Meeting

The agenda for the breakout Freight Rail Advisory Council meeting included:

- Introductions/Opening Remarks
- Technical Presentation of Rail Plan Elements
- Freight Rail Issue Discussion
- Review of Vision, Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures
- Handout of Previous Plan Policy Recommendations

A copy of all materials will be posted on the web along with these meeting notes.

### Introductions/Opening Remarks

Justin Fox, CDM Smith Task Leader for the State Rail Plan, introduced the Chair, Carmack Blackmon, and then there were self introductions by all attendees. Mr. Fox reminded the group that there are two plan elements being prepared: 1) a detailed Louisiana State Rail Plan; and 2) a freight rail element of the Statewide Transportation Plan Update, using information developed in the State Rail Plan. Mr. Fox said he would lead off with a brief presentation of the Rail Plan given at a public open house in October 2012.

### Louisiana State Rail Plan Presentation

Mr. Fox went over the “why do a plan” and who is involved. The presentation then moved into issues, and there was much discussion about the problems, one of which is that the some short line railroads are not able to accommodate the 286,000-pound car weights. The remainder of the presentation was more of a discussion on issues which are highlighted below.

### Freight Rail Issue Discussion

An initial list of freight rail issues was developed to guide discussion by the group on key freight rail issues that should be addressed. This initial list included:

- Maximum car weights (286K) capability for the short lines
- Access to ports
- NO Rail Gateway
- New Orleans-Baton Rouge (w local support) and shared-use issues generally
- Crossing improvements

A theme that arose from the freight rail discussion was that there are economic consequences of doing nothing: the state would not only miss future growth but would lose existing business to neighboring states that are investing in both port and rail improvements. Education/awareness of these consequences along with cooperation/collaboration with partners such as LED are important for the successful and productive rail investments to occur.

The following are other key points noted during the group discussion. Note that not all issues were discussed.

- Terminal capacity constraints that could limit growth
  - Major increases in grain, coal and oil shipments are anticipated that require terminal expansion
- 286K short line issues can greatly deter growth
- Other states getting ready for Panama Canal expansion with improved rail access to ports, but Louisiana is not keeping pace
  - Louisiana could have 2nd largest coal activity in US if increases can be accommodated
- A state rail program is needed so state can receive federal funds, especially if there are funds to fix 286k car weight issues
- Partnership/Coalitions

- FRA has money but is reluctant to give it out; maybe wider coalitions can put more pressure on FRA to allocate funds
- Need for education of elected officials
  - Need to illustrate economic impact if the state does not invest
- Freight/Passenger Rail Partnership
  - Need for freight and passenger interests to work together
- Need for multimodal diversity (more options providing greater access to the national rail system) and multimodal integration for moving both people and freight
- Coordination with LED to create rail-supportive development
  - Need incentives and capacity to create rail-user developments
- State rail authority or organization needed to be compliant with PRIIA
- Need DOTD support for federal grant program
- Relocation of rail and intermodal connectors
- Issue of rail-to-rail interchange in New Orleans

#### Draft Vision, Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures

The group was provided with a handout of the draft vision, goals, objectives, and performance measures and asked to review these in terms of freight rail and provide suggestions for changes.

- Mention rail in infrastructure preservation
- In safety spell out objective of safety at rail crossings; also consider measure of number of at-grade rail crossings
- Specify 286K capabilities and transload capacities in economic competitiveness
- In Environmental Stewardship incorporate encouraging rail usage and the measure of tons by rail

The group was told they could email additional comments by April 15 to Dan Broussard (his email was provided).

#### Previous Plan Policy Recommendations

The group was provided with a handout of the recommendations from the previous statewide plan effort and asked to familiarize themselves with it and talk to colleagues about changes that would be needed to address the issues discussed on March 21. The recommendations will be the subject of the next round of Advisory Council meetings in the summer of 2013.

#### **COMMENTS RECEIVED AFTER MEETING**

The following comments were received after the Advisory Council Meeting through April 22, 2013:

- As stated in the draft, vision, goals, objectives and performance measures document; Louisiana will continue to support its extractive and resource industries, a major economic driver in the state. It is important that adequate rail infrastructure is maintained and likely

expanded so that the petrochemical industry is able to continue exporting product to our customers. The petrochemical industry is also a major economic driver in the State of Louisiana and it must be recognized as such. The trade imbalance of extractive minerals and natural resources (such as coal and grain) being transported through the State of Louisiana could absorb all adequate rail capacity utilized to export products from the petrochemical industry. Private investment in rail infrastructure maintenance and development must be encouraged by the State of Louisiana. Public funds for rail terminal development should also be considered. The health and capacity of our rail infrastructure is a concern to industry.

- Intermodal terminal development also needs to be encouraged and supported. Public funds used to expand intermodal terminals would make intermodal shipping viable to more low volume shippers that are not currently being served by the class 1 railroads. All forms of intermodal are important to the Petrochemical Industry: bulk rail tank car to bulk tank truck, intermodal package trailer shipments, TOFC, ROFC as well as adequate capacity to land bridge export shipments to the coasts for export. The cost of over the road transportation continues to rise and will make it even more difficult for the small shipper to compete. State support of small and mid size business will continue to enhance the business climate in the State of Louisiana.
- “Draft Vision” overall reads easy
- “Draft Goals, Objectives and Performance Measures”, “Infrastructure Preservation and Maintenance” Under “Objectives”, point four it is suggested it read: “...for transit, port, rail, and aviation facilities and infrastructure”
- “Safety”, “Under objectives”, point four it is suggested it read: “...transit, port, rail and aviation facilities and infrastructure.”
- “Economic Competitiveness” Add as objectives: Readiness for Panama Canal Expansion – improve terminal and transloading capacity; state participation in securing federal rail funds for both state and private sector, including 286 upgrade;
- “Community Development and Enhancement” Add as objectives: Partnerships/Coalitions for funding; Freight/Passenger Rail Partnership/Coordination with LED to create rail supportive development
- “Environmental Stewardship” Add as objectives: Encourage and support usage of environmental friendly alternate fuels and encourage usage of rail freight as means of reducing emissions
- “Freight Rail Recommendations from 2008 Review and Status Report” R-2 and R-3 should be retained and placed in an ongoing status – a part of this should include providing information on major railroad projects as well as economic development projects needing rail infrastructure. This will allow the Department to determine whether any alterations are needed in the, at grade crossings to be impacted by additional daily trains.
- It is recommended that DOTD consider changing the Freight Rail Advisory Council name to Freight/Passenger Rail Advisory Council or Rail Advisory Council
- It is recommended that DOTD consider establishing either MOUs or interstate compacts with the contiguous states of Texas, Arkansas, and Mississippi and their Departments of

Transportation for long-range feasibility studies and cooperative endeavor agreements for consistency between states for passenger rail.

- It is recommended that the State promote passenger rail as a cost effective alternative to air and highway travel.
- It is recommended that there is a continuing need for freight/passenger rail partnerships to maximize financial considerations, public needs, and environmental concerns. (Note from Mikeila: deleted the word “both” before the word financial)
- It is recommended that the 2014 Update include passenger rail considerations for North Louisiana, particularly the proposed Amtrak Meridian Speedway which would more directly connect the east and west coasts with special emphasis on the Dallas/Atlanta gap in North Louisiana.
- It is recommended that DOTD support passenger rail service for North Louisiana to attract the Dallas/Ft. Worth Metroplex gaming audience to the resort/casinos operated in the Shreveport-Bossier area, similar to the Hartland Flyer Rail Service in the Oklahoma, Tulsa Indian Casino markets.
- It is recommended that DOTD propose passenger rail as an alternative mode – not a competitive mode – to other services.
- It is recommended that DOTD evaluate and support recommendations as to air quality and non-attainment issues in North Louisiana as they relate to passenger vehicle emissions and reduced pollution with passenger rail service.
- It is recommended that DOTD consider the feasibility and other considerations associated with establishing one or more intermodal facilities in North Louisiana, especially in light of completion of the last leg of I-49 in North Louisiana and the eventual construction of I-69 with future plans for double tracking Amtrak, all within the Shreveport-Bossier Metroplex first, then to Meridian, Mississippi.

#### **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS RECEIVED**

The following comments were received between April 23, 2013 and April 30, 2013:

- Under Infrastructure Maintenance and Preservation Goal: Add “freight” to fourth bullet under Objectives; Add to Objectives: “Encourage Public Private Partnerships to leverage funding venues to address infrastructure improvements and resiliency.”
- Under Safety Goal: Add “freight” to fourth bullet under Objectives; Add Performance Measure: “Reductions of at-grade rail/highway crossings.”
- Under Economic Competitiveness Goal: Add Objectives: “Increase infrastructure capacity, reliability and fluidity” and “Encourage multimodal development through intermodal facilities, industrial parks, transload facilities and other economic generating developments”
- Under Community Development & Enhancement Goal: Add Performance Measure: “Appropriate Land Use Planning to encourage appropriate support for industrial, commercial and residential development.”
- Under Environmental Stewardship Goal: Add Objective: “Encourage the use of the most environmentally friendly transportation mode for all users”; Add Performance Measure: “Increased percentage of freight truck diversions to rail or other environmentally friendly modes of transportation”