

Freight Transportation Advisory Committee (FTAC)

Position Paper

Many of us living and working in Hampton Roads deal with the area's traffic congestion on a daily basis. Congestion causes inconvenience, frustration, and extra costs. The congestion is due to many factors, including roads and rail lines that are in need of improvement, a growing population, and business growth throughout the region. But these traffic disturbances do not only affect commuters. They also slow down freight movement, which is a vital sector of the region's and Commonwealth's economy that affects everyone from big businesses to local citizens. In fact, many of us are on the roads going to and from jobs that exist because of freight moving throughout the region.

The importance of having efficient freight movement in Hampton Roads cannot be understated. Hampton Roads is a unique region of the Commonwealth of Virginia due to the resources of Hampton Roads' Harbor, which allows The Port of Virginia to import and export millions of containers per year and be positioned as an international gateway for global trade. Freight from this region touches more than 14,000 businesses around the United States. There are also more than a hundred private terminals on the harbor which transport coal, raw materials, and other goods for manufacturers and consumers throughout the nation. Hampton Roads hosts a robust military presence which requires timely movement of goods and supplies. This international trade supports other business activities that use these materials for manufacturing and retail activities.

One of the two Class I railroads on the east coast, "Norfolk Southern," is headquartered in Norfolk, Virginia and the other major Class I "CSX" has substantial operations in the region.

Freight generates a great deal of economic benefits and employment to the region and the Commonwealth. According to a 2008 study conducted by the William and Mary Mason School of Business, freight movement and other transportation support activities created over \$101.7 million in wages. Truck and rail transportation activities generated over \$155.1 million in wages.

Freight predominately moves by four modes—ship, barge, rail, and truck. These varied forms of transportation allow many opportunities for improving the efficiency of freight movement. By streamlining the process that gets goods from the ship to the store, businesses and consumers will benefit. This is because when freight movement is inefficient, a "*hidden tax*," and thus a negative impact to the economy develops. The hidden tax refers to the transportation delays, congestion and access limitations which raise the cost of moving freight. Higher costs for fuel and drivers increased from congestion trickle down and ultimately raise the cost of goods in stores. When these transportation costs are reduced, economic benefits increase, including employment, revenues, and taxes passed to jurisdictions.

In order to develop a more efficient freight movement system and subsequently better the economic vitality of the region, the Freight Transportation Advisory Committee (FTAC) has been formed. As a subcommittee of the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO), FTAC aims to raise the freight community's awareness of issues that impede the flow of freight by educating them on current issues and advocating for projects that will help them. These issues include:

- Access & Mobility
 - Unencumbered access to business locations
 - Uninhibited flow of goods between origins and destinations
 - Access to an additional mode(s)
- Safety
 - Reducing conflicts at intersections and crossings
 - Smooth flow of traffic
 - Enhanced line of sight
- Environmental
 - Change in modes
 - Reduced delay and consumption of fuel
- Economic Vitality
 - Transportation cost reduction reinvested in business and employment expansion
 - Improved access between business partners and to customers

By developing communication pipelines with freight organizations and stakeholders, FTAC will be able to develop positions on freight needs and policies. The committee will then work to identify implementable projects throughout the region that will create a more efficient freight movement system.

Although there are many planned transportation-improvement projects in Hampton Roads that will greatly reduce traffic congestion when they are complete—including the widening of Interstate 164, the Midtown Tunnel/MLK Extension, and the construction of a new Route 460—these large projects are difficult to finance. Their future is uncertain due to lack of funding, which could take decades to secure. FTAC will work to move these major projects along, but will also identify other projects that are more easily funded and implementable.

Implementable projects are ones that although not enormous, expensive undertakings, are designed to make great strides in improving hot spots of inefficiency in the region's freight movement system. These may include projects such as adding turn lanes on roads that carry freight, adding stop lights near businesses with a large amount of truck traffic, and constructing grade separations on rail lines that cause traffic delay. These projects will be designed to improve access and mobility for freight, and while also relieving traffic congestion for commuters.

FTAC is committed to advocating on behalf of the systematic needs for the transport and movement of freight in the region. The committee is an advocate for freight issues and charged with bringing awareness of those issues to the public, key stakeholders, and policy makers.

As part of its effort an initial survey/response form has been developed. The attached form is provided as an easy way to identify transportation deficiencies that hinder freight. Forms submitted to FTAC will be used to help improve freight transport.

We hope you, your business or your organization's membership will take a moment to identify transportation needs that if addressed would remove impediments to moving freight more efficiently.

FTAC Staff

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