

2011 -2012 Freight Coalition Program
Approved by the Executive Committee
July 8, 2010
Mississippi Valley Freight Coalition
2011-2012 Program

Background

At our annual meeting in April, staff from the member agencies and several MPOs discussed the future of the Mississippi Valley Freight Coalition. Several factors that they considered in their discussions included:

- The Oberstar Blueprint, which is the best indication we have of the direction the federal authorization is likely to head, contains provisions to recognize and fund corridor coalitions.
- That draft also contains a significant new freight program, which seems likely to favor well-developed coalitions with well-defined plans.
- Over the past four years, the Coalition has done a number of projects that can serve as building blocks for future work.

Summary Recommendations

With these points in mind, the members recommended the following actions:

1. Continue the Coalition at the same funding levels as have existed in the past.
2. Modify the Coalition’s governance structure to better address emerging issues.
3. Involve MPOs in the Coalition’s processes in a more regular and meaningful manner.
4. Develop training on commercial vehicle operations for design staffs in the departments.
5. Develop training for planning staff on the application of cost-benefit analysis for freight and cross modal projects.
6. Develop a regional freight plan.
7. Continue and expand the past practices in support of the states.

Recommended Actions

The seven points outlined above are presented with more detail below:

1. **Funding:** The recommended funding levels are shown in the following chart:

Year	Each State	Total State	CFIRE	Total
2011	\$25,000	\$250,000	\$125,000	\$375,000
2012	\$25,000	\$250,000	\$125,000	\$375,000
Total	\$50,000	\$500,000	\$250,000	\$750,000

With this funding level of \$750,000 over two years, the partner institutions in CFIRE will provide staff support for the coalition and carry out the projects agreed upon.

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- 2. Governance:** The coalition charter provides for three committees. To date, it has operated with four committees, or sub-committees:
- a. The Executive Committee, which is made up of the agency heads, and has met only as part of the regular annual MVC Board meeting.
 - b. The Technical Committee, which is made up of freight experts in each agency and meets electronically quarterly and in person once per year.
 - c. The Operations Sub-Committee of the Technical Committee, which is made up of traffic engineering people from the states and has been somewhat dormant over the past year.
 - d. A Customer Committee, which is made up of private sector people and has not met except for those who participate in the Coalition's annual meetings.

None of these committees has had any officers. CFIRE staff have chaired meetings for most and written minutes.

It is recommended that the following structure be adopted:

- Expand the technical committee to include one MPO representative from each state. Each MPO representative is to be selected by the MPOs of the state. This will move us closer to the Blueprint outline.
- Sunset the formal Operations Sub-Committee and Customer Committee. Instead, continue to draw on staff in the agencies as needed and an ongoing dialog with private sector people through newsletters and other correspondence.
- Elect a chair of the Technical Committee. Invite the chair of the Technical committee to sit with the executive committee when it meets.

These recommendations will better involve the MPOs of the region, recognize the reality of where the coalition is moving topically, and more greatly involve staff and leaders from the agencies.

- 3. Commercial Vehicle Operations Training:** Commercial vehicles, especially oversized commercial vehicles, perform differently from other vehicles on our roadways. They must be specifically considered as roads are designed and operated. This training will be developed as a distance learning experience to maximize the opportunity for participation from the states. It will deal with a range of operational issues that designers should be aware of. The course will be developed and offered through the University of Wisconsin Engineering Professional Development program. Up to three staff members from each member agency (thirty in total) will have free access to the course. It will also be offered for a fee to other agencies and companies.

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We estimate that it will include six hours of web-based training that can be taken at any time. Course participants will also have electronic access to an instructor to discuss issues and ask follow-up questions. **Budget:** \$50,000.

- 4. Economic Analysis Training:** Federal programs will likely have more programs modeled on the TIGER program. They will rely heavily on benefit-cost analysis in their project selection processes. The USDOT is already developing some training on this topic. We will partner with them and adapt the materials to a distance education format. The course will be available to all state and MPO staff in the region. It will be offered annually and will probably be comprised of both archived materials that can be accessed at any time and discussions based on assigned problems. It will probably be comprised of six to twelve hours. A student handbook will be provided for reference. **Budget:** \$75,000.
- 5. Develop a Regional Freight Plan:** using existing data and the work of past projects, this effort will:
- a.** Develop an inventory of freight significant transportation infrastructure and freight generators in the region.
 - b.** Define a network of transportation facilities that are of regional significance.
 - c.** Identify regional bottlenecks.
 - d.** Forecast demands on the regional network.
 - e.** Define common or conflicting policies and strategies among the state freight plans.
 - f.** Identify and prioritize regionally significant freight projects.
 - g.** Identify focus corridors within the region.

Budget: \$500,000

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6. **Continue and Expand Support Efforts:** CFIRE staff have provided a range of support to the coalition:
- a. A website dedicate to the activities of the coalition.
 - b. Quarterly newsletters.
 - c. An annual meeting including the travel support for three people from each state.
 - d. Speakers at planning and other meetings.
 - e. To this list we will add quarterly webinars on topics of interest and periodic updates on studies of interest including the several ongoing studies of the Panama Canal impacts.

Budget: \$125,000

Budget Summary:

Project	Budget
Commercial Vehicle Operations Training	\$50,000
Economic Analysis Training	\$75,000
A Regional Freight Plan	\$500,000
Member Services	\$125,000
Total	\$750,000