

## **FREIGHT MOVEMENT TASK FORCE**

June 22, 2023  
10:00 to 11:30 P.M.  
Virtual Meeting

### **SUMMARY**

#### **1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS**

Mr. Tom Madrecki, chair of the Freight Movement Task Force (FMTF), began the meeting by thanking everyone for attending and continuing to provide support for freight initiatives in the Baltimore region.

#### **2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Minutes to the previous FMTF meeting were approved with no comments or changes.

#### **3. HOWARD STREET TUNNEL UPDATE**

Mr. Brad Smith, MDOT Maryland Port Administration provided an update on the Howard Street Tunnel project. Funding comes from a combination of a Federal Rail Administration grant, the State of Maryland, CSX and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The project will eliminate double-stack obstructions between Baltimore City and Philadelphia.

There are 21 other clearance obstructions besides the Howard Street Tunnel that must be addressed. The project is broken into 10 packages to help manage construction. The first package began construction in late 2021. There are currently four packages under construction, all track lowering projects in Pennsylvania. In Maryland, there are five packages of projects. Currently there is one package out for bids. Notice to proceed should be towards the fall of 2023. The completion of the project is anticipated at the end of 2025.

#### **4. CURRENT STATE OF FREIGHT**

Ms. Lori Ann LaRocco, CNBC Business News and Mr. Houston Mason, Canam Steel Corporation presented their views on the impacts of the freight recession to Maryland. Containers don't lie. Orders are already in and we know what will be coming in over the next few weeks or months. Ocean carriers looking for government friendly ports. Is there room for growth? Are you willing to invest in infrastructure? Baltimore is making those investments with

the Howard Street Tunnel, warehousing and distribution centers. Los Angeles and Long Beach are built out.

Peak season will likely be flat or less than last year. The industry may say different because they are typically overly optimistic. West coast trade has been diverted to east coast ports. The Port of New York has kept 70% of those diversions. How much can Baltimore keep? East coast ports have very active unions and that is helping to keep containers on the east coast.

Q: What makes a port more attractive?

A: It's the "sexiness" of the port. The versatility. Look at the port as a series of pipes. If something isn't working at one spot, move it to another. Be creative. Virginia is a great example of investing and building relationships. Develop redundancy plans. It's the sum of all parts including connectivity to those receiving goods.

Q: Are there commonalities with the successful ports?

A: Land is king. Port of Long Beach cannot grow. If you are looking for warehousing there is nowhere to go. Promote the ability to grow warehousing, rail and connections. Have a great relationship with the truckers. Be reliable and credible.

Q: Talk us through the recession dynamics of what you see on the whole landscape.

A: Most ports are looking at bringing in less this year than last, year over year. You should be able to address issues such as turnaround time while cargo is down. Promote what you are doing as good. If you have great turnaround, make sure you let customers or potential customers know it.

Q: What do you find helpful as a Baltimore shipper?

A: Rates are very low right now. Capacity is chasing not as much demand. Amount of revocations by the freight authorities.

Q: What could be done better?

A: Congestion on Interstate roads. Roadways need to keep up with demands.

Q: what are the impacts to the East Coast from what happens on the West Coast?

A: Peak season at the Port is likely going to be flat although it isn't an apples to apples comparison from last peak season. From a trucking standpoint, old stock is being moved as well as new stock. So, there will probably be an uptick in trucking.

Q: Are there other mega rail projects on the horizon after Howard Street Tunnel and North East Corridor?

A: Not aware of any new mega rail projects.

Q: if there is an exodus of talent in California, how do companies on the East Coast make it attractive to move east? What makes Baltimore unique?

A: A bundle of lots of things we talked about. A combination of workforce development, truck parking, middle and last mile, or sustainable and equitable port.

Ms. Parto Mazdeyasni from the MDOT MPA provided some statistics from the Port of Baltimore. During the first quarter of 2023, containers are up 7% compared to the first 3 months of 2022. General cargo is up 8%. Roll on/Roll off (Machinery, farm equipment) is up 42% year over year. Ports America keeps truck turnaround data. Lori Ann suggested that information be put on the MDOT MPA website.

## **5. RESILIENCE 2050 - LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

Mr. Zach Kaufman provided an update to the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Resilience 2050 Adapting to the Challenges of Tomorrow. The LRTP addresses at least a 20-year timeframe beyond the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) and is updated every four years since the Baltimore Region is in a non-attainment air quality area.

The LRTP has established a series of goals and strategies to help guide project selection.

Operating expenses in the current draft LRTP shows a slight growth in operating funds compared to the last three plans. System Preservation funds have also shown a steady increase, while expansion funds have decreased in the last two plans.

There were a total of 98 projects submitted for consideration in Resilience 2050 with 92 ultimately being included. These include 56 Roadway projects and 36 Transit projects. Approximately \$6.9 billion (59%) in Roadway projects and \$4.8 billion (41%) in Transit projects are included in the plan. This shows a much greater emphasis on transit compared to the previous plan which only included 35% of the funding for transit.

The LRTP includes \$280 million in funding set aside from expansion funds to support various strategies intended to improve air quality such as Transportation System Management and Operations, Complete Streets strategies, and other strategies.

There are numerous projects in the LRTP that relate to freight movement in the region. Keith Avenue/Broening Highway improvements as well as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge project are two of the most significant freight projects in the plan.

The public comment period just ended on June 20. There was a series of eight meetings (7 in-person and one virtual) to allow for comments. BRTB received over 100 comments related to the LRTP, TIP and Air Quality Conformity. The BRTB is scheduled to vote on the Resolution to adopt the plan on Tuesday, July 25.

***[PowerPoint: Resilience 2050]***

## **ATTENDANCE**

### ***Members and Guests:***

Dan Blevins, Wilmington Area Planning Council)

Youngmin Choi, MDOT Innovative Programming Division  
Rick Johnson, Baltimore County Department of Economic and Workforce Development  
Nicole Katsikides, Texas Transportation Institute (TTI)  
Robert King, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA)  
Lori Ann LaRocco, CNBC Business News  
Tom Madrecki, Consumer Brands Association  
Houston Mason, Canam Steel Corporation  
Parto Mazdeyasni, MDOT Maryland Port Administration (MDOT MPA)  
Lydia McPherson, Norfolk Southern  
Ed Mihalski, Ecologix Group  
Troy Mix, University of Delaware  
Roxanne Mukai, Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA)  
Amanda Rutherford, U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD)  
Bradley Smith, MDOT Maryland Port Administration (MDOT MPA)  
Kip Snow, Community Colleges of Baltimore County  
John (JT) Thomas, MDOT Capital Planning and Programming  
Reidel Vichot, University of Delaware  
Luisa Fernandez-Willey, Association of American Railroads

***BMC Staff:***

Bala Akundi, BMC  
Blake Fisher, BMC  
Zach Kaufman, BMC  
Keith Kucharek, BMC  
Jacob Took, BMC