

## **Midwest Transportation Coalition Phase Two**

What follows is a proposal for the period from November 1, 2004 to September 1, 2005 to continue the effort began as the Upper Midwest Freight Corridor Study. It is divided into three parts and has a budget of \$173,000, \$140,000 will be provided by the states.

1. **Develop a Regional Freight Agenda:** U.S. national transportation legislation is increasingly moving into the area of freight movement. The alternative reauthorization bills currently under consideration deal with the issue in different ways. This element of phase two efforts would facilitate the development of a regional freight agenda. It is comprised of a number of tasks:
  - a. Research and document national freight programs, as they emerge from reauthorization. A number of programs are currently available that might assist the region in addressing freight issues. Additional programs are being discussed in reauthorization. Each of these programs will be reviewed. A briefing paper will be prepared on each for the information of the states in the region.
  - b. Review and document the impact of participation in those programs on the funding received by states in the region. Minimum returns to donor states and the impact of formula versus discretionary programs versus earmarks make decisions on the benefit of participation in some national programs difficult. The workings of these financial mechanisms will be documented in simple briefing papers for regional decision makers.
  - c. Prepare whitepapers on policy options that the region could consider for freight. Based upon the work completed in phase one, conversations with state freight, planning and federal relations staff, and work done at the national level, white papers will be prepared for regional analysts and decision makers to consider.
  - d. Facilitate a regional dialog. Based on the above materials, facilitate a dialog of designated state representatives (ideally representing planning, freight and federal relations perspectives) to begin defining a regional freight agenda. This dialog will be a combination of electronic and face-to-face.
  - e. Draft a regional freight agenda. Compile the information obtained through the regional dialog into a policy document that might be adopted by the region and used as a statement of the region's collective interests. It can be expected that this document will go through several drafts before it is final.

- f. Prepare outreach materials to explain the importance of freight for the region and the agenda adopted by the region. Materials will be needed for a range of audiences. These materials could include:
    - i. Printed booklets, brochures and briefing papers.
    - ii. Speaker materials such as powerpoint presentations.
    - iii. A website of resource materials.
  - g. Make presentations on regional freight, as requested by the states. Many groups may have an interest in this subject. Staff will be available to speak to those groups as needed.
  - h. Develop and maintain communication links with key national organizations on freight, including TRB, AASHTO, FHWA, FRA, etc.
2. **Facilitate the beginning of a regional approach to deploying commercial vehicle-related intelligent transportation systems.** ITS has the potential for improving the flow of truck freight through the region. Several states are moving ahead with some elements of it, but the region lacks a comprehensive plan of action. This element will have the following tasks:
- a. Prepare a white paper outlining the current state of CVO-related ITS in the region. Based on work already done, this paper would outline what has been done and by whom.
  - b. Prepare white papers outlining the probable benefits of ITS implementation. Drawing upon the research literature and the experience of other states and regions, prepare papers that outline the range and types of benefits that might be derived from ITS implementation.
  - c. Facilitate a dialog within the region on ITS. Using the materials developed under tasks a & b, facilitate a regional discussion of ITS. Ideally this would involve freight and operations people from the states, including those involved in ongoing corridor efforts, such as GCM.
  - d. Draft a conceptual regional deployment plan. This plan is labeled conceptual, since it is anticipated that the states will have difficulty reaching agreement on a detailed technical plan within the time allowed. Even this conceptual plan can be expected to go through several drafts.
3. **Maintain and improve the regional information system on freight.** Phase one of the effort produced a significant resource in cataloged information on freight. This element would improve that resource with the following tasks:
- a. Improve the documentation of the existing information.

- b. Develop inquiry routines to answer frequently asked questions.
- c. Begin a dialog with regional freight analysts on regional freight information needs.
- d. Review and summarize national efforts to improve freight data sources.
- e. Begin a dialog with state information managers to determine what information is available related to freight.