

Freight Stakeholders Reauthorization Agenda Item

National Freight Advisory Committee

Proposal

Establish a Congressionally mandated Freight Advisory Board to the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT).

Background

Since 1991 with the passage of ISTEA, the concept of an integrated freight transportation system has been recognized as integral to US transportation policy. In particular, freight dynamics are fast-paced, multi-faceted, and institutionally challenging. As USDOT transitions into a more significant role with freight transportation planning and infrastructure integration, it will be necessary to have available to USDOT leadership the opportunity to speak with industry leaders on an on-going basis, about building and maintaining an efficient and secure freight system.

Specifics

The Freight Advisory Board should consist of 15 members, representing major freight stakeholders including but not limited to carriers, shippers, ports, and state and local transportation officials, with expertise in international trade and freight transportation. The Secretary of Transportation would appoint standing and rotating members.

This Freight Advisory Board should be empowered to:

- Provide advice and consultation on freight productivity, security, and major trade corridor initiatives, and other issues, as determined by the Secretary;
- Provide timely and factual information about multimodal freight flows and data interchange issues
(also refer to proposal for Freight Cooperative Research Program);
- Create opportunities to share these facts with DOT leadership and other policy makers;
- Educate and advise about the commercial issues and the new security issues facing the freight industry; and,
- Serve as an Ombudsman Board to serve as an unbiased resource to USDOT professionals, and other public sector leaders concerned with complex freight transport issues.

The Freight Advisory Board might be built upon a number of models. For example (ranging from most to least formal):

- Presidential and/or Congressional Appointments resulting from Legislation;
- Appointed by the Department itself;
- Designation by the Department of a "Utilized Board."

The model selected will define how funding and staffing will be addressed.

The Board should meet at least quarterly and be directly engaged with the USDOT/OST.

Benefits

- Allows market based national perspective on productivity and options to balance the state and local perspective.
- A Board that is regularly convened and in regular contact with USDOT leadership will greatly assist progress on planning and programming for freight transportation needs.