

BHJ Freight Study

Executive Summary

prepared for

Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson Metropolitan Planning Commission

prepared by

Cambridge Systematics, Inc.

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This document was prepared by funding through BHJ member governments, Claude Worthington Foundation, Federal Transit Administration, Ohio Department of Transportation, U.S. Federal Highway Administration, West Virginia Department of Transportation, and West Virginia University Foundation.

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date

January 14, 2011

Foreword

The *BHJ Freight Study* is an up to date profile of issues and opportunities while suggesting actions to maximize freight benefits. Proposed by the Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson Metropolitan Planning Commission (BHJ) and funded through the U.S. Federal Highway Administration and Claude Worthington Foundation, the *BHJ Freight Study* encompasses highway, rail, waterborne and air freight movement.

BHJ is not the first region to evaluate their unique freight profile. While varying geographically, and driven by different economic markets, other entities such as the State of Ohio, the State of West Virginia, Cincinnati, Columbus and Huntington have undertaken recent freight studies. The push to complete these foundation reports is “by the year 2025, U.S. domestic freight tonnage is anticipated to double, while international freight tonnage will nearly triple” (U.S. Department of Transportation’s *Freight Facts and Figures*, 2009).

So, a brave new transportation world is in front of us. In many cases, when appropriately positioned, this world means regional jobs and entrepreneurial investment. Linked by the Ohio River, crossed by a multitude of rail lines, and connected to a globally renowned international airport, the BHJ region is a competitive regional market.

The *BHJ Freight Study* is one very big step toward legitimizing the business practicality of our region.

To our private and public sector partners, we look forward to many cooperative and collaborative freight investments and achievements.

John C. Brown

Executive Director

Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson Metropolitan Planning Commission

Executive Summary

The BHI Freight Study was performed for the Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson Metropolitan Planning Commission (BHI) and its stakeholders to provide an understanding of the nature and critical value of goods traveling to, from, and through the region, and to help them proactively plan for the region's future. In addition, the study identifies the region's economic drivers and the linkages between these drivers and the transportation system, in order to enable the region to take advantage of the existing freight infrastructure to help foster economic growth.

The greater Steubenville-Weirton area encompasses the counties of Brooke and Hancock in West Virginia and Jefferson County in Ohio. As a result of its declining industrial base over the past few decades, the region is now facing game-changing challenges that will influence how transportation investments are made; local governments are experiencing steep declines in tax revenues due to the waning steel industry, traditional transportation dollars are inadequate to address highway capital and maintenance needs, and ever-present environmental and energy regulations continue to tighten. While similar conditions are testing communities across the nation, they present BHI with an opportunity to consider promoting alternative, affordable and environmentally-efficient transportation options that will help guide the region into a prosperous future.

The BHI Freight Study consists of two technical memorandums which document the two distinct phases of the study. The initial technical memorandum, *Inventory and Profile*, defines and articulates freight infrastructure assets and economic conditions in the greater Steubenville-Weirton area. This document is based on the collection and synthesis of data from a variety of available sources covering the following topics:

- Freight infrastructure, which was later assessed in identifying freight transportation system needs and opportunities;
- Economic drivers, including information on the region's demographic and business profile, which "drive" the demand for goods movement in the region;
- Freight flows, providing a current snapshot and future projections of the movement of goods into, out of and through the region; and
- Stakeholder input, which provides the perspective of public and private sector stakeholders regarding freight mobility within the region.

The data collected during the initial phase of the BHI Freight Study and summarized in the *Inventory and Profile* technical memorandum was

subsequently used in the development of the study's second technical memorandum, *Issues, Opportunities, Recommendations and Strategies*. Initially, the inventory and profile data were used to identify the region's freight related issues and opportunities. The study identifies a total of nineteen issues and opportunities, categorized in the areas of infrastructure, land use and policy, related to goods movement in the BHJ region. Table ES.1, below, provides a summary of these issues and opportunities by category.

Table ES.1 Issues and Opportunities

Ref. No.	Description
Highway Infrastructure	
1	Roadway Condition
2	Roadway Capacity
3	East-West Connectivity
4	Truck Parking Areas
Rail Freight Infrastructure	
5	Funding for Railroad Infrastructure Improvements
6	Railroad Abandonments
7	Changing Commodity Mix
8	Additional Rail Service Opportunities
Waterborne Freight Infrastructure	
9	Waterborne Freight Capacity in Study Area
10	Waterborne Freight Commodities
11	Infrastructure Improvements
Air Freight Infrastructure	
12	Proximity of Cargo Airports to Study Area
Land Use	
13	Available Land and Sites for Development
14	Site Selection Factors
Policy	
15	Regional / Bi-State Coordination
16	Funding
17	Economic Development
18	Demographic Issues
19	3-2-1 Jobs Initiative

Taking these nineteen issues and opportunities a step further, the final task of the study identifies sixteen recommendations and implementation strategies (in the form of action items) for enhancing freight mobility and the linkage to economic development. Each recommendation underwent qualitative evaluation to determine low, medium, or high (relative) capital cost. Based on cost and need, each recommendation was prioritized by members of the BHI Freight Study Steering Committee, and then phased as short-term (0-2 years), mid-term (3-5 years) and long-term (greater than 5 years). In order to ensure these projects move forward, this document, based on input from Steering Committee members, assigns a lead agency (or agencies) to each recommendation to follow it through to implementation. In most cases, implementation may fall upon multiple agencies to follow-through on recommended actions; for these cases, this document serves as an organizing point to ensure that the appropriate stakeholders are involved and made part of the implementation process. A summary of recommendations is provided below in Table ES.2.

Table ES.2 Summary of Recommendations

Ref. No.	Description	Cost	Priority	Timeframe	Lead Agency
1	Identify potential locations and funding sources for expanded truck parking / rest areas with appropriate amenities to enable compatibility with surrounding land uses.	Medium	Low	Short-term	BHI, ODOT, WVDOT, Wal-Mart
2	Address the higher wear and tear on freight-impacted road surfaces with increased maintenance efforts.	Low/ Medium	Low	Mid-term	ODOT, WVDOT
3	Develop regional freight planning Geodatabase, including such items as truck restrictions, clearance issues, weight restrictions, parking and rest areas. Disseminate information to trucking companies, trucking associations, etc.	Low	Medium	Short-term	BHI, Economic Dev. Groups
4	Support the development of an additional Ohio River highway crossing, in particular the Wellsburg Bridge that is currently under study.	High	Medium	Short-term	BHI
5	Develop a process for ensuring rail corridor service and right-of-way preservation.	Low	Medium	Mid-term	ORDC, WVSRA, Port Authorities
6	Identify investment options that encourage expanded use of rail mode.	Medium/ High	High	Short-term	Railroads, ORDC, WVSRA
7	Explore opportunities to enhance intermodal connectivity between rail/water and highway/water modes.	Medium/ High	High	Short-term	BHI, ODOT, WVDOT, Port Authorities

Ref. No.	Description	Cost	Priority	Timeframe	Lead Agency
8	Explore development opportunities at Jefferson County Airpark.	Low	Low	Short-term	Progress Alliance, Jefferson Co. Comm., Jefferson Co. Airpark
9	Develop process for identifying freight-related development opportunities within the region, including brownfield re-use and the identification and marketing of designated "logistics corridors" which would encourage the "clustering" of freight-dependent industries.	Low	Medium	Short-term	BHJ, Economic Dev. Groups
10	Develop regional marketing strategy to promote the region's freight-related assets to potential freight-dependent industries.	Low	High	Short- to Mid-term	BHJ, Economic Dev. Groups
11	Include freight-related performance measures in project evaluation process to ensure the consideration of freight enhancing projects in the programming process.	Low	Low	Short-term	BHJ, ODOT, WVDOT, FHWA
12	Identify innovative strategies to better match new and available funds with freight system needs.	Low	High	Short-term	Regional, State and Federal Partners
13	Establish a governance structure, such as a Bi-State Port Authority, to identify issues, guide investments and advocate on behalf of the region through public outreach and education, promoting the BHJ region's economy and protecting the public interest.	Low	High	Mid-term	BHJ, Economic Dev. Groups, Port Authorities
14	Monitor logistics workforce needs and educational supply; work with educational institutions and employers to ensure compatibility.	Low	Low	Short-term	BHJ, Economic Dev. Groups, Community Colleges, DJFS
15	Educate the community (regional stakeholders) regarding the logistics industry.	Low	Medium	Short- to Long-term	BHJ, Unions, Media, Economic Dev. Groups
16	Establish a freight point-of-contact / technical lead for the BHJ region.	Low	Medium	Short-term	BHJ, Weirton Area Port Authority

Acronyms –Brooke-Hancock-Jefferson Metropolitan Planning Commission (BHJ), Department of Job and Family Services (DJFS), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC), West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT), West Virginia State Rail Authority (WVSRA)