



North/West Passage

Project 7.5: North/West Passage Freight Industry Webinar

May 8, 2013 Webinar Summary

Background

The [North/West Passage Pooled Fund Study](#) is a group of eight state Department of Transportation's (DOT's) along the I-90/I-94 corridor from Washington to Wisconsin that focus on developing effective methods for sharing, coordinating, and integrating traveler information and operational activities across state and provincial borders. I-90 and I-94 function as major routes for commercial and recreational travel. Extreme winter weather conditions, prevalent in the northern states within this corridor, pose significant operational and travel-related challenges.

The freight community is an important stakeholder to the North/West Passage corridor. USDOT labels portions of the I-90/I-94 corridor in Washington, Minnesota and Wisconsin as [major for freight movement](#). By 2040, USDOT predicts most of the corridor will be a [major truck route \(≥8,500 AADTT\) on the National Highway System](#). Further illustrating the significance of freight movement in the states, Washington recently issued a report, "[The Impact of Truck Congestion on Washington State's Economy](#)," that analyzes answers from freight-dependent businesses regarding what a 20 percent increase in congestion would do to their economic well-being. According to the results, this congestion would cost the state more than 27,500 jobs and \$3.3 billion in economic output.

The North/West Passage program has completed a number of traveler information projects that could benefit the freight industry within the I-90/I-94 corridor. The program held a webinar on May 8, 2013 to discuss how it might expand its connection to the freight industry.

Webinar

The webinar provided the opportunity for open dialogue to share efforts of the North/West Passage program and individual state efforts and to continue to learn about the needs of the freight industry.

Thirty-five individuals participated in the webinar that included representatives from trucking associations, trucking companies, American Transportation Research Institute (ATRI), state DOTs and police, FHWA, and AASHTO.

The following North/West Passage freight related efforts were highlighted.

- [Corridor-wide traveler information website](#). Website provides live camera images and weather conditions, links to each state's detailed traveler information website, commercial vehicle restriction information, truck stop information (via TruckStopInfoPlus.com) and rest area locations and information.
- [Traveler Information Dissemination to Commercial Vehicle Operators](#). This effort researched among the DOTs and recommended options to enhance traveler information systems along I-90/I-94.

- [CVO Outreach Survey](#). North/West Passage conducted a survey in 2012 to identify enhancements to www.i90i94travelinfo.com, learn what traveler information tools are used by the trucking industry and what gaps exist, and develop a communication and outreach plan for www.i90i94travelinfo.com.
- [Regional Permitting](#). The ultimate goal of this ongoing effort has been uniformity in permitting; however, input from the trucking industry shifted focus to harmonization of rules and identifying recommended corridor standards for signing, escorts, warning lights, and hours of operation.

As part of the webinar agenda each state also briefly highlighted state DOT freight related traveler information tools and freight focused I-90/I-94 efforts.

Freight Industry Feedback

Following the presentation of information about North/West Passage projects and state DOT freight activities, webinar participants were asked to respond to questions about their challenges traveling I-90/I-94, unique travel needs and thoughts about future collaboration. Highlights from the feedback received during the webinar and following the webinar via a brief online survey include:

- Technologies are needed (e.g. voice recognition) to provide real-time information in the cab without pressing more than one button to receive the information.
- Push notifications offered by DOTs and predictive information (e.g. forecasted road conditions) are also very helpful.
- Truck parking availability will be further impacted by a revised FMSCSA policy that will require drivers to start their rest between 1:00-5:00 AM.
- Variations between states (e.g. rules, hours of travel) present the need to park overnight at state borders and finding parking at those points can be challenging.
- Corridor has spot weather conditions such as high winds in Wyoming and mountain pass closures in several of the states which can be challenging for long distance travel.
- Closures of any length are especially challenging for transporting perishable goods.
- FHWA is conducting a National Truck Parking Capacity Analysis and the USDOT is developing a national performance measures database that will include freight and corridor measures.
- There are a number of opportunities for continuing to coordinate efforts, including North Dakota Oil Field Trucking Convention, Minnesota Freight Advisory Committee, Mid America Association of State Transportation Officials (MAASTO), AASHTO Subcommittee on Highway Transport, state trucking associations, American Trucking Association, and TRB freight committees.

Next Steps

The feedback received from webinar was presented to the North/West Passage steering committee. Based on this feedback and additional program evaluation, the steering committee decided to establish a Freight Task Force to assess the value of an ongoing, dedicated group focused on North/West Passage freight related activities and projects. The webinar feedback will be further presented to the task force after it is formed in summer of 2013. The task force will be asked to consider this feedback as freight related projects and outreach continue along the I-90 and I-94 corridor.