

8 Implementation and Next Steps

The OKI Regional Freight Plan provides a snapshot of the region's freight transportation system, a forecast of future freight demand and recommendations to address regional freight deficiencies. The utility of the plan will relate directly to the extent to which it is implemented—this chapter suggests actions for OKI to take in regard to implementation and maintaining momentum for freight planning in the region.

8.1 OKI Freight Planning Capacity

OKI has demonstrated leadership and strong capabilities in regional freight planning. From a leadership standpoint, OKI has taken the initiative to contact railroad company executives and meet with them in their local offices and headquarters, which has established relationships and built goodwill between the parties. OKI staff has developed strong knowledge of freight transportation from both a carrier and shipper standpoint. To maintain its proficiency in freight planning, OKI should consider the following actions:

- OKI should continue periodic outreach to railroad companies, with expanded outreach to barge lines, trucking industries and air cargo carriers to build similar relationships with those modes of freight transportation.
- Travel Demand Model staff should stay current on developments in freight data, such as FAF3. Also, OKI should consider partnering with the states of Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana, and other metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) in those states, to purchase and maintain a license for TRANSEARCH data and updates.
- As an enhancement to its Congestion Management System, OKI could consider accessing the American Transportation Research Institute's Freight Performance Measures website (FPMweb) to establish a baseline of commercial vehicle mobility through the region. FPMweb is new, so trend information is not available. Through a cyclical planning process, OKI could provide a report card on regional freight mobility and its changes over time, as part of congestion management. Also, OKI could use FPMweb to perform comparative analyses with other regions and promote the freight mobility of the region.
- OKI's freight planning staff stays current on many carrier and logistics developments which are happening on a regional, national and international basis. However, there is no formal way to share this "freight news" among OKI freight stakeholders and local governments. To promote the agency's profile in freight planning as well as serve its freight constituents, OKI could use its freight webpage to update stakeholders on freight transportation developments such as new truck weight regulations, changes in supply chains, or significant changes in the cargo services offered by railroad and ocean carriers. Other online communication methods may also be utilized for outreach and education.

8.2 Implementing Partnership Strategies

A number of freight plan recommendations call for maintaining public-private forums to address certain freight issues and drive toward implementing solutions. Examples from the preceding chapter include:

- Regional Public/Private Freight Rail Partnership
- Regional Truck Size and Weight Regulation

Through its Freight Working Group, it is appropriate for OKI to maintain a leadership role in organizing the forums and partnerships necessary to address complex freight infrastructure issues. Developing the Regional Freight Plan has demonstrated that private freight carriers will participate in the MPO planning process and the freight plan itself can represent the beginning of a more cooperative public-private relationship that results in actions to address freight deficiencies.

8.3 Engaging in Freight Planning and Project Development

Another example of partnership includes engaging in project planning where OKI is not the lead agency. A prime example includes highway-rail grade crossing safety projects, where at-grade crossings are ranked by the state DOT, which in turn implements improvements with the railroad and local public agencies. By participating in these types of planning efforts, OKI could bring forth a deeper understanding of freight issues within the regional context and even participate in project funding if appropriate.

In a similar vein, there are other freight planning activities which are not led by OKI but where OKI has an interest. Examples include statewide freight plans in Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana, as well as more concentrated studies such as the CVG master plan and any future planning for Ohio River facilities. OKI can both contribute to these planning efforts, and draw on their outcomes in order to update its regional freight plan.

8.4 Freight Plan in Context with other OKI Planning Products

Development of the OKI Regional Freight Plan illustrates the differences between freight planning and the more conventional metropolitan planning process. Namely, that regional freight planning requires an understanding of supply chain trends, underlying freight data, and the formation of partnerships with private sector freight carriers which are not traditional MPO stakeholders. OKI has demonstrated its understanding in these areas.

The next major planning effort for OKI is developing its regional transportation plan update. As part of that update, freight system needs and strategies can be incorporated into the regional plan context, with freight goals articulated as part of the overall plan.

On a regional basis, the OKI Board of Directors will also consider the menu of high priority freight projects which were identified in this plan. Projects will require initiation by local jurisdictions as public sponsors to solicit possible funding opportunities at the regional, state and federal levels.

8.5 Freight Plan Updates

It is typical for MPO and DOT transportation plans to have a 30-year horizon. In contrast, shippers and carriers rarely have business plans that exceed 24 months. OKI recognizes this fact and is mindful of the speed at which business decisions move.

Updating the freight plan will require OKI to be agile, as well. It is recommended that OKI monitor freight transportation trends and provide a four-year update of the major changes affecting the region in terms of freight. Such updates can precede the four-year update of the regional transportation plan and be posted on the OKI freight website.

Similarly, OKI can monitor major infrastructure developments through a database and/or GIS platform and track changes such as river terminal or railroad capacity expansions, new services like the NS double stack to Sharonville, and other freight investments that may come in the future.

Finally, OKI should establish a program to monitor freight mobility on local roads in the region, including truck safety and mobility. Through a combination of truck traffic counts and road congestion monitoring, OKI can identify future truck congestion issues and work with local governments to develop truck access improvement projects. Such a systematic, regional assessment will eliminate the intensive outreach and interview effort that went into this plan.

By conducting the freight activities above, OKI will maintain a dynamic freight planning process that reflects changes in the supply chain as well as carrier initiatives. Most importantly, OKI will be able to keep its freight plan current and avoid extensive updates on a recurrent basis.