

Chapter 8: Freight

Introduction

TEA-21 requires MPOs to consider the improvement of accessibility and mobility options available for freight in the transportation planning process. The improvements in freight movement have important economic affects. Lower costs and better service in freight movement have a positive economic effect on all companies engaged in the production, distribution, and retail sale of goods. Reducing the cost of moving goods enables companies to serve wider markets with economic gains from scale efficiencies. The movement of freight within the region takes place mainly over the region's highways via truck. The region has two working railways that contribute to freight movement. These include the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) and the Union Pacific (UP). There are no water port facilities that support shipping within the MPO Area.

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Railroads and trucking are very efficient modes of bulk cargo transportation and are vital for the economic well-being of an area. Because of their size and mass, these facilities need specialized handling and planning to minimize conflict with other modes of transportation and to foster safety and efficiency.

Railroad Goals and Objectives

1. Coordinate railway facilities with other transportation modes and adjoining land uses to encourage desirable development patterns.
2. Promote safe and efficient movement of people and goods and facilitate rail operations.
3. Explore possibilities of intercity passenger rail transportation.

The goals lead to specific policies which are listed below.

Policy 1

Provide grade-separated crossings, with adequate horizontal and vertical clearance, between heavily used rail lines and high-volume streets.

The grade-separated crossings are essential to avoid interference of rail activity with the flow of vehicular traffic. A survey may be conducted to identify locations for grade-separated crossings. The standards for minimum vertical and horizontal clearance should also be adopted.

Policy 2

Provide adequate safety protection at crossing of streets and rail lines where grade separation is not feasible.

Where grade separation is not feasible, special efforts should be made to alert motorists of approaching trains. Depending upon rail and motor traffic, the crossing should be protected by crossing gates, flashing lights, or cross buck signs.

Policy 3

Encourage the development of compatible land uses in areas adjoining rail lines.

Industries and heavy commercial activities are generally the land uses which are most compatible with railroad facilities.

Policy 4

Explore the possibility of intercity passenger rail service.

Walnut Ridge is 23 miles northwest from Jonesboro. The Northeast Arkansas (NEA) elected officials and the citizens are looking into the possibility of developing a regional airport for the region in Walnut Ridge. The NEA officials may explore the possibility of a passenger rail service between Jonesboro and other cities in the United States through Walnut Ridge.

Trucking Goal

Provide for the safe and efficient movements of trucks in the metropolitan area.

Policy 1

Locate truck-generating land uses along major streets to encourage trucks to confine their travel to arterials and expressways.

Control of truck traffic can be exercised through zoning and subdivision regulations. Given proper land use and subdivision, most trucks will tend to use the major arterial system.

Policy 2

Discourage truck travel through residential neighborhoods.

Truck prohibition may be placed on all local and collector streets with residential zoning to eliminate noise, danger, and street maintenance costs.

Policy 3

Provide adequate off-street loading spaces for businesses which receive or distribute goods by truck.

Delivery trucks should be prevented from blocking the flow of vehicular traffic. Businesses should provide off-street loading spaces.

Policy 4

Improve intersections of heavily traveled truck routes streets for ample turning radii for semi-trailer trucks

The MPO should prepare an inventory of all the intersections that would need improvements for the semi-trailer trucks to make safe turn without infringing on the other travel lane or sidewalks.