

Northern Minnesota and Northwest Wisconsin Regional Freight Study

Scope of Work

(Note: the following text is an abbreviated version of the Scope of Work that will be attached to a Request for Proposal seeking consultant services to be sent out by MnDOT's Freight Office)

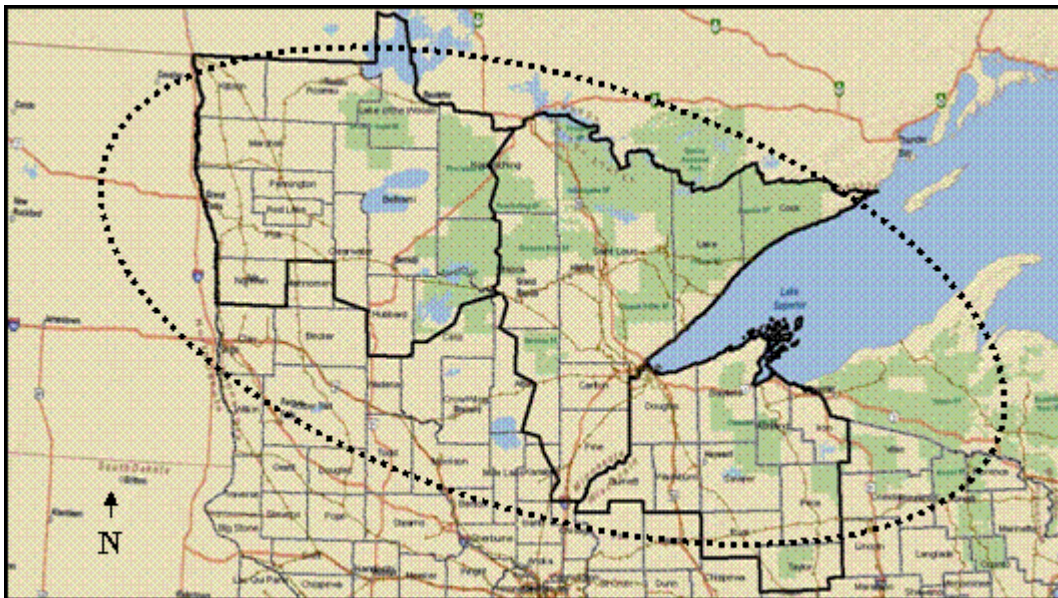
Background

Freight flows throughout northern Minnesota and Wisconsin heavily impact the transportation system. The ability of this system of roads, railroads and waterways to move freight can dictate how competitive our region remains to attract industry and jobs. Given the proposed changes in the natural resource industry and rising energy costs, planning for an efficient freight movement system is critical. The Northern Minnesota/Northwest Wisconsin Regional Freight Study will be a multimodal comprehensive look at freight movement throughout the region. The study will document freight movements, identify industry trends, illustrate key deficiencies, outline opportunities, conduct stakeholder outreach and develop recommendations. It will provide a better understanding of the demands from freight placed on the regional transportation infrastructure and provide a framework to identify necessary improvements that will accommodate economic growth within the region.

Geographic Scope for Planning Work

The base area of this planning work is defined as Northern Minnesota and Northwest Wisconsin. We will be primarily looking at freight issues in MnDOT's Districts 1 and 2 as well as most of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission's planning area (see map below). However, many freight flow origins and destinations extend beyond these boundaries. As such, the plan must consider the linkages to state, national, and international freight systems and markets.

Objectives



Study Focus Area

- **Document current freight movements** to better understand the regional transportation system.
- **Identify deficiencies in the transportation system** as they relate to freight movement.
- **Analyze current freight flows** and identify trends to anticipate future freight movement needs.
- **Assess freight related programs** and explore improved efficiencies and future opportunities.
- **Conduct an outreach program** that is effective in obtaining stakeholder input and providing information to decision makers and the general public.
- **Develop recommendations and implementation strategies** that include infrastructure and operational improvements as well as program development.
- **Develop partnerships** among freight stakeholders and government agencies to work toward freight system improvements that will enhance regional economies and access to global markets.

Tasks

Task 1: Current Freight System Inventory

Collect and create GIS data to include the following:

- Major freight generators, receivers, providers (stakeholders)
- Major freight handling facilities
- Regional Trade Centers (RTCs)
- Port and intermodal facilities
- Airport facilities and carriers
- Active railroads, including class and ownership
- Marine routes and carriers
- Pipelines
- Truck weight and inspection facilities
- Safety rest areas
- Mn/DOT-designated Interregional Corridors (IRCs)
- National Highway System
- Trunk Highway Corridors
- STRAHNET (Strategic Highway Network), STRACNET (Strategic Railroad Network), and waterborne strategic transportation
- Twin Trailer Routes
- State-designated Highway Commercial Freight Network
- Last mile, Intermodal, and other significant freight connections
- Heavy-vehicle routes “ Super routes”

Task 2: Freight Analysis

Identify key deficiencies in the regional freight transportation system such as capacity, infrastructure condition, level of service, access to markets, intermodal needs, cost of service, or other issues related to infrastructure, operations or regulation of the freight system. This task should also highlight strengths from a regional freight perspective.

Task 3: Regional Freight Issues and Trends

Identify region and industry specific issues and trends, and how each impacts freight mobility in the region. The issues and trends will include the following:

- Key industries
- Major industry freight logistics patterns
- Current freight flows
- Modal trends
- Security issues
- Freight system market analysis
- Impact of the freight system on the economic competitiveness of the region in the global marketplace
- Key external markets for the region's economy

Task 4: Program Analysis

Identify the impacts from and opportunities for improvement within existing freight programs such as CVO (Commercial Vehicle Operations), Grade Crossing Safety Improvement Program, MRSI (Minnesota Rail Service Improvement Program), Port Development Assistance Program, air cargo, State Transportation Plan and Policy, and regional, District, MPO, and local programs. Assessment will also determine program impact on present and future freight considerations on transportation policies, planning, and programming within the study area.

Task 5: Outreach

Conduct focused interviews and presentations with public and private partners to validate and identify key regional needs. Incorporate observations and inputs from these stakeholders into the study. Develop strategies for potential improvements to programs and projects, including establishing communications and channels to allow public and private sector groups and individual organizations to participate in ongoing planning or project development. Involve stakeholders including public agencies, chambers, trade groups, industries/shippers/carriers, and interested parties not otherwise participating in steering, technical advisory, research, and interview activities of the study.

Task 6: Recommendations

Develop a list of primary freight needs and recommend improvements. Summarize needs by freight mode/program area. Identify improvements to regional transportation system as well as implementation strategies for achieving those improvements. Package and align implementation strategies to maximize eligibility for funding under SAFETEA and pending transportation legislation. Identify potential public and private partnerships that would improve the freight system. Suggest changes in project planning and programming steps, including prioritization criteria and procedures, so as to better incorporate consideration for freight into federal, state, regional, and local planning processes.