



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

WISCONSIN'S TRANSPORTATION NETWORK INFRASTRUCTURE

411 South, State Capitol
Madison, Wisconsin

November 17, 2004
10:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

[The following is a summary of the November 17, 2004 meeting of the Special Committee on Wisconsin's Transportation Network Infrastructure. The file copy of this summary has appended to it a copy of each document prepared for or submitted to the committee during the meeting. A digital recording of the meeting is available on our Web site at <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc/2004studies.htm>.]

Call to Order and Roll Call

Senator Kanavas, Chair, called the meeting to order. The roll was taken and it was determined that a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Sen. Ted Kanavas, Chair; Sens. Joseph Leibham and Fred Risser; Reps. Dan LeMahieu, Jeff Stone, John Townsend, Karl Van Roy, and Josh Zepnick; and Public Members Bob Cook, Geoff Crowley, George Grossardt, John Kreilkamp, Paul Olsen, Jerome Thiele, Peter Thillman, and Tom Walker.

COUNCIL STAFF PRESENT: Dan Schmidt, Senior Analyst.

APPEARANCES: Dean Haen, Director, Port of Green Bay, and President, Wisconsin Commercial Ports Association; Jason Serck, Planning and Port Director, City of Superior; Larry Kirch, Director of Planning, City of LaCrosse; Louis Okey, President, Village of Cassville; and Mark Ormsby, U.S. Coast Guard, Milwaukee.

Approval of the Minutes of the October 20, 2004 Meeting of the Special Committee

The minutes from the October 20, 2004 meeting of the committee were approved by unanimous consent of the members, as moved by Mr. Cook and seconded by Representative Townsend.

Invited Speakers

Dean Haen, Director, Port of Green Bay, and President, Wisconsin Commercial Ports Association, presented a general overview of Wisconsin ports and the issues relating to their operation. Mr. Haen indicated that Wisconsin's ports are primarily utilized for the transportation of bulk commodities. He stated that these ports are responsible for in excess of \$377 million in personal income and wages in Wisconsin. He noted that shipping is the most efficient mode of transport for bulk commodities, has the fewest of accidents of all modes of bulk transportation, and the smallest environmental impact of these modes of transport. Mr. Haen also noted that the ports provide Wisconsin with shipping access to and from various international markets.

Mr. Haen then spoke of the reasons why shipping is not a ubiquitous form of transport in Wisconsin. He stated that the lack of sufficient funding for port infrastructure, competition for use of land on which ports may reside, and difficulty of acquiring additional land for port use have all had negative impacts on the Wisconsin port industry.

Mr. Haen concluded by identifying the three issues he believes are the greatest strategic issues facing Wisconsin ports. These were stated as:

- Increased congestion on the Great Lakes due to increased international trade;
- Trends toward the loss of small ports due to the lack of investment and alternative use; and
- An increase in short sea shipping within the Great Lakes.

Jason Serck, Planning and Port Director, City of Superior, briefed the committee on issues specifically related to the Port of Superior. Mr. Serck explained the results of a recent survey of infrastructure needs and a study on intermodal shipping, both conducted at the Port of Superior. Development considerations facing the port include the following:

- Removal of older, unusable buildings.
- A fumigation yard for grain.
- Docks for wintering ships.
- Facilities for off-loading grain shipments.

Mr. Serck also noted that the Port of Superior is the victim of a unique freshwater corrosion problem that is currently under investigation. Mr. Serck indicated that the corrosion of port infrastructure, which appears to be caused by a volatile combination of elevated oxygen levels and certain pollutants, may result in the replacement of considerable portions of docks and other submerged hardware.

Larry Kirch, Director of Planning, City of LaCrosse, discussed the Port of LaCrosse and its role in shipping and boating on the Upper Mississippi River. Mr. Kirch stated that, in addition to a number of private businesses, the City of LaCrosse operates two facilities on the LaCrosse Harbor. Mr.

Kirch gave a brief history of the Upper Mississippi River and the system of 21 locks and dams that extend from St. Louis, MO, to Minneapolis, MN. Mr. Serck indicated that the aging lock and dam system requires transport barges traveling on the river to disassemble and reassemble in order to fit into the smaller locks. He added that this process is very inefficient and time consuming for Upper Mississippi River shippers.

Mr. Kirch also described the cost savings and environmental advantages related to water transport on the Mississippi River versus rail or highway transport. Mr. Serck concluded by emphasizing that the public receives \$8 in benefit from shipping for every \$1 of federal funding.

Louis Okey, President, Village of Cassville, explained the importance of inland waterway transportation to small towns in addition to the state as a whole. He stated that his presentation is intended to promote the maintenance of the Cassville ferry which allows automobiles to cross the Mississippi River between Wisconsin and Iowa. He indicated that Cassville is located amid the longest stretch on the Upper Mississippi River (72 miles) without a bridge. He stressed that the car ferry is important to economic development in Cassville and indicated that state funding in the amount of \$30,000 would maintain ferry service at its current levels.

Mark Ormsby, Official, U.S. Coast Guard, Milwaukee, discussed the role of the Coast Guard in the security and maintenance of ports and waterways in Wisconsin and the rest of the U.S. He stated that the Coast Guard provides maritime services which include operations for: security, safety, natural resource protection, mobility, and national defense. He indicated that local Coast Guard assets included a number of types of boats and helicopters.

Mr. Ormsby concluded his presentation with a brief summary of the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002 and the Coast Guard's responsibility in enforcing its provisions.

Discussion of Committee Assignment

Legislative Council Staff Analyst Dan Schmidt, briefly described the publication titled "Governor's Airport Financing Committee – Final Report" that was distributed to committee members. Mr. Schmidt also encouraged committee members to contact him with speaker ideas for the next meeting (railroads).

Other Business

There was no other business brought before the committee.

Plans for Future Meetings

Chairperson Kanavas proposed the next meeting of the committee take place on December 8. The committee indicated that this was not a good date for many of the members. Chairperson Kanavas said his office would examine other dates and notify the members of the date of the next meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

DWS:ksm