



International Commerce & Mobility Forum

January 15, 2025

ICM Forum #8 Meeting Minutes

Date:

Format: Hybrid (in-person and virtual)

Purpose of the Meeting: To discuss regional transportation and supply chain solutions, including updates on Expo 2031, the Great Lakes Trade Route, air and freight optimization initiatives.

Key Discussion Points:

- **Expo 2031 Minnesota Update:** Progress on the application, partnerships, and site development.
- **Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Trade Route:** Potential for increased export-import opportunities via Duluth to Liverpool.
- **Freight Optimization Tool:** Updates on user feedback and data improvements.
- **Metropolitan Airports Commission Freight Study:** Addressing air cargo demand and MSP airport's potential for freight services.
- **Strategic Insights on Urban Megatrends:** Presentation of future urbanization trends and transportation implications.

Notable Contributions:

- **Bill Goins (ICM Organizer):** Kicked off the event and facilitated discussions on trade and freight studies, emphasizing ICM's ongoing efforts to enhance transportation networks.
- **Wendy Meadley (Expo 2031 CEO):** Highlighted the global impact of Expo 2031 and the importance of public-private partnerships in its planning and execution.
- **David Loehr (Expo 2031 CSO):** Stressed the scale of Expo 2031, likening it to an event larger in scope than the Olympics, with a focus on inclusivity and horticultural innovation.
- **Jan Bauer (UK Consul):** Detailed the opportunities of the Duluth-Liverpool trade route and the importance of identifying first-adopter exporters.
- **Andrew Andrusko (MnDOT):** Shared insights into the Freight Optimization Tool, emphasizing collaboration with key groups to enhance economic impact.
- **Brian Peters (MAC):** Provided data on air cargo demand at MSP and discussed challenges with infrastructure and fragmented med-tech markets.
- **John Pournoor (Government Analytica):** Presented 12 urban megatrends, outlining their long-term effects on city infrastructure and transportation.

Next:

1. Future studies on Great Lakes Trade Route funding and London export event planning
2. More info forthcoming on Freight Optimization Tool
3. Exploration of MSP airport's feasibility for expanded freight services continues

Next Steps:

- Wendy Meadley and David Loehr to provide a detailed update on the selected site for Expo 2031.



- Jan Bauer to organize a London event for exporters, securing potential participants and funding.
- Further development and testing of the Freight Optimization Tool with university and industry support.
- MAC to explore business cases for international freighter services at MSP.
- Publish John Pournoor's megatrends data on the ICM website for participants to review.

Next Meeting Details:

Date: April 3, 2025

Time: 2-3 PM Networking & 3-5 PM Forum #9 (all Central Time)

Location: SRF Consulting Headquarters and Zoom

Closing Notes:

Bill Goins acknowledged the contributions of all attendees and the ICM Steering Committee for organizing the forum. He emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing regional and global transportation challenges. Special thanks were given to Curt Johnson for documenting the minutes and to SRF for hosting the event.

Detailed Minutes

Bill Goins, as the key organizer of the ICM Forums, kicked off the event with remarks. Jim Hovland, who was scheduled in this role, is on his way from the Transportation Advisory Board meeting.

Justin Scott of SRF provided some brief strategic thoughts, plus, as our ICM Forum host, gave a few housekeeping pieces of information. Thanks again to the great SRF team for providing a tremendous facility for these Forums! A general round of introductions was next, of those in the room and many on Zoom.

Expo 2031 Minnesota, USA Update

Wendy Meadley (CEO) and David Loehr (CSO)

The Commerce Department has sent the application to the White House for approval. WM described the vital data, which included the specific dates of a May-October six month run in 2031. Expo is meant to be global in its impact and participation. The planning and development of Expo 2031 is ongoing. DL said this was, in many aspects, bigger than the Olympics, which Los Angeles is hosting in 2028, as it will last a lot longer. DL also mentioned that they now have a Horticultural Advisory Board, from which they hope to get a definition, and world-wide applications. Indigenous people will be prominent. WM added some remarks about the long application process, which includes the requirement that it be a public-private partnership. It is a national application, and the result will be a United States event. The site question, raised by Kristin Guild, is itself a complex matter, said DL. WM and DL will say more about the selected site in the near future.

Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Trade Route

Jan Bauer (Consul, UK Government Office-Minnesota),

This has to do with the route planned originating in Duluth and going all the way to Liverpool, England, using the St. Lawrence Seaway along the way. Benton Harbor and Detroit will be adding to the ports involved in the future. The ports are all in, and with them the companies with an interest in export and import. This route gives consumers an edge that they do not enjoy today (even the potential for port



strikes does not deter this project). We are looking at “first shipper adopters”. We are soliciting a few exporters who have right products that would support this container supply chain. Mark Berndt, who was joining virtually, mentioned the data is becoming more robust; and a lot is happening because of improvements in data collection. Berndt said that the data may be misleading, in that some shippers claim, for example, Chicago as the base when it belongs to some other parts of the country. Goins called on Charles Edwards, who was in the group via Zoom and Charles said that sometimes you need (typically a private company) to serve a market that does not have service normally. The challenge is of course to raise the funding and data on who can support getting this trade route up and running. Bauer then invited thoughts and funding for a special event in London, especially for exporters who are already shipping to the UK and said there were freighters on the Great Lakes today that could do more, if they had the opportunities.

Mayor’s Corner

Jim Hovland - Mayor of Edina and chair of the board of Global Wellness Connections, us at this time. Hovland complimented the work of ICM. It supplements the work that some of us are doing, locally, regionally and nationally. Hovland is also the chair of the Transportation Committee of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and they are looking at a possible new challenge with new administration, specifically transportation funding. Mayors from around the country are very concerned about what they presently have to maintain, including public transportation systems, plus the growth of new infrastructure.

Update on the Freight Optimization Tool

Andrew Andrusko, MnDOT, and Ben Zietlow, Quetica

Andrew started by saying anything that improves data and our economy is a good thing. We started by identifying key groups that might want to use the tool and ask them what they needed. Berndt mentioned the “secret sauce” that is implied. We need patience from all of you. The promise will be worth it. The University will help with our findings. BZ said AA covered the topic very well and said it was important that people involved in the survey found the tool useful. Goins said this optimization tool development was overdue but now it’s happening and it is important. Lee Munnich said he was involved in making the case for this work with our Legislature many years ago and it was high time that we studied this and acted on it.

Metropolitan Airports Commission Freight Study

Brian Peters (MAC), Rex Edwards and Doug Banez, (Study consultants)

Goins said that ICM began with one question: How much volume goes by truck to Chicago for international distribution? And are there other options? The funding of this study by the MAC, has moved us closer to the answer and possible improved supply chain option.

BP had slides to present and mentioned the baseline study that the MAC had done a few years back, has led to this Air Cargo Demand study. Doug Banez narrated the slides. He pointed out that the economic conditions and changes in the industry led to a downturn in markets for cargo. But secondary airports are a new factor and non-traditional gateways are emerging, especially among foreign flagged airlines and aircraft belly cargo. MN, which ranks #2 in med-tech revenues, has opportunities with over 1000 med-tech companies involved in distribution and R&D operations, (though it is highly fragmented). RE pointed out that quantitative demand looked good for MSP and



there is “leakage” to Chicago. The catchment area is all the states that surround the State of Minnesota, however, MSP already has linkages to many world regions with belly cargo, just not freighter aircraft, like Chicago. Some high-valued commodities, and there are a lot of them, require faster delivery to control overall inventory costs. Leakage applies to 10-15 trucks to Chicago every day, although this number led to some speculation and conversation. That would be the target for change and further analysis, as it is an estimate. The bottom line is that moving more freight by air would require support from a major freight forwarder(s) and it is constrained by facilities and ground handling. For many, ORD is a logical solution.

Facilities for air cargo expansion could be a major problem, with focus on the 19 acres left at MSP for development. Amazon and others are not looking for more space, at this time. The demand is there, with the state having many med-tech facilities, but the market is highly fragmented. Nevertheless, several forwarders expressed interest in using MSP to directly deliver to consumers. MSP has many advantages as a smaller and less congested airport than ORD, so, growth is possible. Recommendations from the consultants include further exploration of the business case for international freighter services.

Mark Berndt asked whether there was any adjustment in the census data for the tendency for shippers to name ORD as the point of origin, even if it was from another airport. The answer was mixed from both RE and DB. MB said he was in conversation with US Census contacts and they are working on the problem. He further asked whether there was any savings financially to shippers using air rather than trucks. We need a price point that shippers are willing to pay and a real number for cost. This led into a discussion if the real number includes the damage to communities from pollution or the road repairs needed because of trucks.

A Deep Dive Strategic Topic

John Pournoor, Government Analytica

Many things are weighing on the minds of public officials. John was provided with an opportunity to share his megatrends for the future with regional mayors. Some 83 percent of people in the U.S. live in cities, even though urban land is only 3 percent. Over time, these megatrends have an impact on what happens. John’s data on his 12 megatrends will be provided on the ICM webpage for the participants to review.

Government Analytica link to the Regional Council of Mayors presentation »» [LINK](#)

As the Forum was concluding, Bill Goins pointed out that John Pournoor has also done a white paper that shows that small studies can have big impacts on developing transportation/supply chain solutions.

In addition, Goins complimented the ICM Steering Committee members that put together the agenda. BG also complimented Curt Johnson for taking minutes of our Forum and providing a summary for review.

BG then turned to Gina Bass who announced that freight would be the priority for the Center for Transportation Studies during 2025.