

2022 Iowa State Freight Plan Implementation strategies for Freight Advisory Council review

- 1. Explore additional sustainable funding sources to increase investment in the freight transportation system.** Growing demands, deteriorating conditions, and diminishing buying power are impacting the efficiency and reliability of freight movement. Exploring other funding mechanisms, or even creating new ones, would be advantageous to the state of Iowa. Options include, but are not limited to, strategically targeting funding to freight projects, using public-private partnerships to expedite investment, or allowing more flexibility in current funding mechanisms to make multimodal freight improvements.
- 2. Target investment to address mobility issues that impact freight movements.** Investments that target the elimination or reduction of freight mobility issues are a key element to Iowa's freight improvement strategy. This includes addressing operational and capacity needs, as well as increasing connectivity of modes through intermodal facilities. Additionally, congestion in surrounding areas outside of the state's borders may have an impact on Iowa freight movement. Collaboration with other states and exploration of regional solutions is needed to maximize the effectiveness of investments made within the state.
- 3. Target investment in the Iowa Multimodal Freight Network at a level that reflects the importance of this system for moving freight.** The IMFN consists of priority airports, highways (including Interstate, U.S., and Iowa routes), railroads, and waterways representing the most critical freight corridors in the state. Operational and physical improvements that increase the safety, efficiency, reliability, and resilience of this network, as well as associated first/last mile connections, should be prioritized.
- 4. Rightsize the highway system and apply cost-effective solutions to locations with existing and anticipated issues.** Rightsizing of the system is the application of cost-effective solutions (e.g., Super-2 improvements) to address existing and anticipated issues. This will require significant investment in stewardship, some focused capacity expansion as resources allow, and perhaps even some contraction of the system. Applied correctly, such solutions will balance mobility needs with revenue limitations and the need to rightsize the system, while also having more favorable long-term asset management implications.
- 5. Advance a 21st century Farm-to-Market System that moves products seamlessly across road, rail, and water to global marketplaces.** Per Iowa Code, the "Farm-to-Market System" means intra- and intercounty roadways under county jurisdiction that serve principal traffic generating areas and connect them to other farm-to-market, city street, and primary roads. Given the rapidly changing agricultural landscape and the diminishing buying power of existing transportation resources, the size and operation of the Farm-to-Market System should be re-examined. All potential alternatives to improve efficiency should be examined with stakeholders, including road abandonments, vacations, service conversions, and links to other transportation modes.
- 6. Improve freight transportation system resiliency.** A resilient freight transportation system is responsive. It is able to provide reliable service when small disruptions occur and return to

service quickly after large disruptions. Reducing the vulnerability of highway infrastructure and working with partners to do the same for other modes and supply chains should be a priority. Operational improvements to address small disruptions can also be made by leveraging real-time information from users of the system to support advanced decision-making, incidence avoidance, and faster response times, as well as by providing real-time information on system conditions to support the movement of freight.

- 7. Support opportunities to develop new intermodal freight facilities in the state.** Intermodal facilities are critical connections between freight modes that allow shippers to take advantage of the cost, speed, and capabilities of more than one mode. Development of these facilities, including truck cross-docking operations, rail intermodal facilities, transload facilities, barge terminals, and logistics parks, will improve the efficiency of the overall freight transportation system.
- 8. Optimize the availability and use of freight shipping containers, including exploring other options for repositioning empty containers.** A significant imbalance exists in the use of in- and outbound shipping containers. This is a problem that is inherent to many intermodal facilities in major metropolitan areas. Cost effective opportunities may exist to utilize different transportation modes to relocate some of these empty containers to locations in Iowa for reloading. With significant volumes of production, Iowa is well-positioned to provide potential loads for outbound movements of these containers, which could prevent them from being shipped back to international markets such as Asia without back-loads.
- 9. Enhance planning and asset management practices for the Iowa Multimodal Freight Network by utilizing designs and treatments that are compatible with significant freight movements.** Investments targeted for facilities that handle significant freight traffic, including oversize/overweight vehicles, should incorporate designs compatible with these types of freight movements, and avoid improvements that unintentionally create new obstructions to freight movement such as restrictive roundabouts, overhead structures, and turn radii. Particular emphasis should be placed on the highway portion of the IMFN. In addition, future routing and access control decisions and processes should consider those facilities that are most compatible with freight movement.
- 10. Work with partners to address increasing truck parking demand.** Continued implementation of initiatives to address truck parking needs to remain an emphasis, including for oversize/overweight trucks. These initiatives include the Iowa Rest Area Management Plan, which provides a strategy to reallocate existing truck parking spaces and strategically add new spaces along high-demand corridors, and the Truck Parking Information and Management System (TPIMS), which is a regionwide system that helps truck drivers find available truck parking spaces.
- 11. Advocate for the funding and improvement of the inland waterway system and explore ways to expand Iowa's role.** The M-35 (Mississippi River) and M-29 (Missouri River) marine highways support the economic competitiveness of the nation, relieve landside congestion on highways and railroads, reduce air emissions, and increase the efficiency of other transportation modes. The state of Iowa continues to work with other regional states to promote the value of these rivers, advocate for infrastructure investments, facilitate regional dialogue, market current

services, and seek out new tools. Opportunities to invest in and improve the system should continue to be explored, such as the recent partnership between the Iowa DOT and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to build a mooring cell on the Upper Mississippi River.

- 12. Collaborate with railroad operators to provide Iowa companies with increased access and capacity to accommodate additional Iowa freight shipments.** Iowa's railroad network provides significant opportunities for reducing transportation costs for shippers. Implementation of strategies and initiatives from the Iowa State Freight Plan and the Iowa State Rail Plan will help to further enhance railroad capacity and access points, which are essential for Iowa shippers to convert additional truck freight to rail.
- 13. Partner with freight stakeholders to find innovative ways to address labor shortages across industry sectors.** Truck driver shortages and labor shortages across supply chains continue to plague freight and transportation industries for a variety of reasons. Public and private stakeholders should partner to find innovative solutions to these shortages and improve recruiting, training, and retention.
- 14. Streamline and align freight-related regulations and minimize unintended consequences.** The regulatory environment can encourage or deter business in a state, and not all state and federal regulations have a positive impact on freight mobility. State departments should partner to analyze negative impacts, coordinate with stakeholders, and attempt to minimize any unintended consequences of regulations that may hinder freight movement and/or discourage businesses from investing in the state. Additionally, since freight movements are often multistate in nature, there is a need for improved reciprocity between states regarding issues not standardized at the federal level.
- 15. Mitigate the impacts of freight transportation on the environment and communities.** Potential negative impacts of freight transportation include emissions, noise pollution, congestion, and accelerated deterioration of local infrastructure. State and local partnerships should continue to work to mitigate negative impacts to citizens.
- 16. Partner with law enforcement and the trucking industry to combat human trafficking.** Human trafficking has been reported in all 50 states, and the number of victims in the United States is estimated to be in the hundreds of thousands. Traffickers typically target professions deemed "transient in nature" as consumers and they regularly travel across multiple states to places such as oil and gas fields, truck stops, hotels along highways, etc. The trucking industry is critical in helping to spot these types of activities. Law enforcement, government agencies, and the freight industry should continue to work together to facilitate the investigation of human trafficking and combat this crime.
- 17. Support the development and adoption of emerging freight technologies to increase safety and efficiency.** Emerging technologies such as automation, autonomous vehicles, UAS/drones, blockchain, and others have the potential to be transformative to freight industries by increasing safety and efficiencies, altering supply chains, and disrupting business models. These types of opportunities should be explored and supported so industries can address issues such as consumer expectations, increased competition, rising labor costs, and labor availability.

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- 18. Explore opportunities for increasing value-added production within the state.** Iowa is a major producer of agricultural commodities. Efforts should be made to identify economic development opportunities related to value-added production of agricultural goods. This could provide an opportunity for the state to consider investments that would allow for such value-added processes to occur in-state, prior to these products being exported.
- 19. Continually monitor international trade deals and negotiations.** New and ongoing trade negotiations will have impacts on Iowa's commodity markets and associated supply chains. These should be monitored to better understand the implications to freight transportation in Iowa, and strategies should be developed to mitigate negative consequences and take advantage of economic opportunities.

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