

## 7.0 Conclusion and Next Steps

### 7.1 CONCLUSION

The Oklahoma freight transportation system serves the people of the state by delivering the necessities of everyday life: food, fuel, clothing, medicine, building materials and the equipment for communication, transportation, sporting and a multitude of other purposes. The system serves the businesses of Oklahoma by ensuring their supply lines, and giving them access to markets near and far, thus contributing to employment for people and prosperity for the state. To residents, these fundamental functions are largely invisible because they perform well, and their vital importance could attract attention only because of disruptive events. Even so, the quality of performance must be sustained at a favorable cost, so that Oklahoma is an affordable place to live and a competitive place for businesses to locate.

Good performance is reliable, productive, safe and secure; it is generated daily through freight operations and longer term through capital investments and policies in the public and private sectors. A high-quality transportation system benefits from multiple modes of transportation, because modal options keep competition sharp, thus influencing lower costs. A variety of modes accommodates a range of shipments whose volume, time commitments, and physical characteristics are quite diverse. The Oklahoma multimodal freight system does all these things. Moreover, it performs these functions for constituents well beyond its borders by means of the great quantities of goods that pass through Oklahoma on the highways, railroads, and waterways of the state.

This is the first comprehensive freight plan ODOT has issued, although ODOT has considered the needs of freight in its transportation plans for many years. This Plan sets forth a vision and goals, strategies and policies to achieve the goals, measures to track achievement, and investments selected because they support the goals. Importantly, ODOT has gone beyond planning for utilizing \$100.2 million in NHFP funds toward freight projects as required by the FAST Act. It has identified a further series of investments for priority multimodal freight projects to be funded by traditional means, and all told has created an \$875 million statewide freight investment program for the next five years. Looking farther ahead, ODOT also has defined a set of significant freight bottlenecks for potential investment in future editions of its 8 Year Construction Work Plan.

These steps represent a commitment to freight transportation that ODOT has institutionalized in several key ways:

- Through performance measures, progress toward freight goals and challenges in meeting them will be tracked regularly.
- Through incorporation of freight elements in the tools for project prioritization, using the process adopted and documented through this Plan, ODOT will ensure that the influence of investments on freight transportation is accounted for, and the 8 Year Construction Work Plan is a vehicle for promoting that investment. This has the effect of *mainstreaming* freight, meaning that freight is treated as an everyday focus in transportation management instead of something unusual or ancillary;
- Through continuing meetings of the Oklahoma FAC, ODOT will a) remain abreast of developments in industry and retain direct input on multimodal concerns; b) report on performance to stakeholders and receive their guidance on how to respond; and c) solicit stakeholder views on freight projects in the annual process of updating the 8 Year Construction Work Plan;

- Through pursuit of federal competitive grants that emphasize freight and are typically opened for annual bids, ODOT may augment its resources for freight investment and cultivate a platform for public-private partnerships.
- Through ongoing coordination with MPOs in their freight planning - particularly in respect to bottlenecks because they tend to concentrate in metropolitan areas.
- Through ongoing coordination with adjoining states, all of whom will have completed multimodal freight plans at the same time, ODOT can align selected investments with neighbors to improve performance contiguously along freight corridors.

In keeping with the FAST Act, ODOT will update its freight plan on a five-year cycle. The methods outlined above enable the next update to be the culmination of continuing efforts instead of a periodic revisiting of freight requirements. In other words, the aforementioned steps represent the institutionalization of the management of freight in the ordinary way that ODOT does business. The stakeholders in freight transportation are the residents and industries it supplies and supports. These people and entities are the ones who will benefit from ODOT's commitment and its steady dedication to the vision and goals articulated in this Plan.

## 7.2 NEXT STEPS

This Plan was developed in concert with the Freight Advisory Committee (FAC). Upon completion, the Oklahoma Transportation Commission reviewed the Plan; and the FAC endorsed it in a public meeting on October 23, 2017, and recommended FHWA approval, in accordance with the FAST Act.

- The Freight Investment Plan will be executed and funds expended according to the indicated schedule.
- The CUFCs and CRFCs defined in this Plan will become part of the NHFN following FHWA verification, and projects on these facilities will be eligible for grant applications under the INFRA program.
- Freight bottlenecks not yet addressed by projects will be evaluated for future editions of the 8 Year Construction Work Plan.
- An implementation plan for freight policies and strategies will be developed and put into effect by ODOT in calendar year 2018, including program designs, responsibilities, inter-departmental coordination, and timelines.
- The institutionalization of freight management at ODOT will proceed as described above.
- This Plan will be posted on the ODOT website and made available to stakeholders around the state and to interested parties elsewhere.