

# FREIGHT MOBILITY STRATEGIC INVESTMENT BOARD

## SIX-YEAR INVESTMENT PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

April 21, 2025 • 1:00 – 2:00pm • Microsoft Teams

### Attendance

#### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Johan Hellman, Chair  
Matthew Colvin, Vice Chair  
John McCarthy  
Anne McEnerny-Ogle  
Jon Snyder

*Alternate:*  
Peter Bennett

*Not Present:*  
Cory Wright

Jason Biggs, Ex-Officio  
Jaye Drye, Ex-Officio

#### FMSIB STAFF

Brandy DeLange, Executive Director  
Joy Dopita, Executive Assistant  
Fred Wenhardt, Transportation Planning Specialist

#### GUESTS

Jason Beloso, WSDOT  
Eric ffitich, WPPA  
Chris Herman, WPPA

### Meeting Convenes

*Chair Hellman* convened the first meeting of the Six-Year Investment Program Committee at 1:00 p.m. There were six voting committee members present.

### Six-Year Investment Program Application and Criteria Survey

*Director DeLange* stated the objective of the meeting was to review survey application results and recommend updates and changes to the application, project eligibility, and scoring criteria. The committee recommendations will be rolled out at the June board meeting and ultimately be incorporated into the Six-Year Investment program and updates to FMSIB WACs. Non board members were invited to participate in this committee to provide feedback but cannot vote.

*Mr. Wenhardt* explained that the survey was open for a week and provided to the 35 entities, consisting of cities, counties, ports and tribes, who applied for over 60 projects; 25 responses were received as some entities applied for more than one project. The survey consisted of four sections: Application Accessibility, Process, Funding and Outcome. An overview of the results was provided to the committee with the following key takeaways:

- Most applicants were made aware of the funding opportunity through direct communication from FMSIB. Association outreach was limited to non-existent.

- Scoring criteria and application were skewed more heavily towards trucks and road-based projects. Port and rail-based project applicants did not feel like they had a clear understanding of the application or criteria and how their project could fit in that space.
- Confusion as to which category (asset preservation and safety, improving operations of existing systems, expansion of existing systems and achieving freight systems of the future) of eligibility their project fell under.
- Some applicants were not clear on the requirements to be on a strategic freight corridor and provided feedback that if their project was more rural in nature, in a developing area, or had other safety congestion needs, they didn't compete as well in the metrics of our grant application.

*Chair Hellman* asked where the sense of bias towards trucking and road-based projects versus port and rail projects stemmed from. *Director DeLange* explained that some of the questions were road and truck focused, which resulted in lower rankings for some applicants because they were not eligible for those points. *Mr. Wenhardt* added that the volume question in the current criteria lowered scores for rail-based projects because the points are only applicable to trucking and road-based projects.

*Mr. Herman* shared that he's received feedback from WPPA members regarding the definition around whether you're on or adjacent to a strategic freight corridor.

*Mr. Wenhardt* provided a recap of the original point system and scoring criteria categories consisting of: Statewide Freight Importance, Project Funding, Cost Considerations and Overburdened Communities. In the updated scoring criteria categories, Cost Considerations were removed, and Project Status and Economic Development were added to the original categories with the points total increased from 26 to 35. He then reviewed each category in the recommended updated scoring criteria.

**Statewide Freight Importance** – Recommended to eliminate the volume-based question, since it's solely based on truck volume, and changed it to other strategic benefit. This would allow projects that are rail or port based to possibly earn points, whereas previously those projects were completely excluded if not trucking based.

*Commissioner McCarthy* voiced his concern that tonnage and volume are very significant, and FMSIB should look towards giving more points for mega projects instead of less. There was discussion around nebulous terminology and definitions and whether the committee needed to define terms, such as strategic benefit, or leave open-ended for more flexibility.

**Project Funding** – Recommended streamlining this section by eliminating non-state match points, given the current federal landscape, and to give smaller scale projects the opportunity to be more competitive in the funding scoring. There was discussion regarding the amount of allocatable funds FMSIB had to work with and whether to focus on mega projects or small to midsize projects where FMSIB could have an actual impact.

*Director DeLange* noted that FMSIB was only funded for the first biennium of the Six-Year Investment Program with four more years of that program still needing funding, in addition to rolling projects. Therefore, FMSIB has approximately \$15 million a year to work with, which could grow or shrink depending on the final budget.

**Overburdened Communities** – Added points potential for addressing environmental impacts and safety, which was driven by our statutory requirements to consider overburdened communities and mitigation plans. The legislature is interested in safety projects and trying to reduce the conflict between pedestrians, cyclists and other motorists, so that was broken out as an element of the application. This will allow collection of data which could be presented to the legislature to strengthen FMSIB's case as an agency.

**Project Status** – In this new category, the level of design criteria earns more points for projects further along in the design process while project readiness gives more design focused projects the ability to compete, in terms of scoring points, because they're not receiving points for level of design.

**Economic Development** – This scoring category was added in direct response to the survey feedback received in trying to elevate the importance of what FMSIB is doing from a statewide perspective.

*Director DeLange* concluded that following feedback from committee members, staff will work on refining the scoring system to better emphasize statewide freight importance and define strategic benefits and develop a “stress test” to demonstrate the proposed updates.

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## **Inland Intermodal Feasibility Study**

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*Mr. Wenhardt* has been working to expand each section of the outline of the draft scope of the Inland Intermodal Feasibility Study he presented at the March board meeting.

- FMSIB staff met with Ted Prince, CEO and Founder of Tri-Cities Intermodal, where he detailed his background in the freight industry and defined his business model, which they learned is very site specific.
- Researched what makes facilities outside of Washington successful and looked at the main takeaways of facilities in Savannah, Phoenix, Pocatello and Minot. His next goal is to interview those ports to learn more about the history, demand and continued operation of their facilities.
- Provided examples of potential facilities he researched. The Port of Benton owns over 3,000 acres for this project, however the facility would need to be newly constructed, while the container yard exists and needs renovation. There's some preliminary design done, 16 miles of rail line and a goal, so there is potential. He also met with Commissioner Wright who provided a brief history of the different industries and commodities in Ellensburg, which is big in terms of logistics and distribution and may not necessarily serve as an inland port but has potential to fit as a piece of the puzzle.
- Refined subsections: shipper coordination, volume density, facilities, location, imports and efficiency in the concerns and needs section. Analyzed the Northwest Seaport Alliance and their coordination with facilities in Minot and Pocatello and how that could be replicated.
- Expanded Cost, Direct and Indirect Benefits, Feasibility, Supply Chain Impacts and Permanent Advantages and Disadvantages sections. Will continue to add more sources, review existing studies and conduct interviews.

*Director DeLange* added that staff have met with a few consultants to talk about next steps for a consultant study that would build off of the work that Mr. Wenhardt is putting together. A preliminary scope of that work should be available in a few weeks, and hopefully, shared with the board in June.

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## **Next Six-Year Investment Program Committee Meetings**

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The next Six-Year Investment Program Committee meeting is scheduled for May 5, 2025, from 10:00am to 11:30am. Two additional meetings will be scheduled for the weeks of May 19 and June 2 respectively.

*Meeting was adjourned at 2:00pm*