



PEER REGION REVIEW AND BEST PRACTICES SUMMARY

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METROCOG

FARGO-MOORHEAD METROPOLITAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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I. INTRODUCTION

Plan Overview

In 2016, the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments (Metro COG) undertook its first regional freight plan to better understand and inform regional leaders about transportation service and infrastructure needs in the Fargo-Moorhead MSA. This plan examined freight infrastructure and freight service demands across all modes in the regional transportation network. It also provided an assessment of how goods move to, from, and within the Fargo-Moorhead MSA, and included infrastructure, policy, and operational improvements to support freight-dependent industries and regional economic growth.

Eight years after the completion of this plan, Metro COG is updating to its initial freight planning efforts. The new Metro COG Regional Freight Plan will address a number of logistical, infrastructure, land use, and economic impact issues that have been created due to the area's significant population and industry growth over the past two decades. These include:

- Assessing the current state of air, truck, and rail freight system operations and identifying ways to effectively prioritize and address future freight congestion issues, key regional bottlenecks (if any), infrastructure deficiencies, potential technologies to increase flow and safety, and land use requirements and policies;
- Identifying links that connect mobility of air, truck, and rail freight modalities to regional economic development goals and addressing key opportunities, gaps, and barriers to improve and promote economic development and job growth within the region's logistics and manufacturing industries as it relates to transportation and/or transportation planning; and
- Aligning recommendations and action steps for regional partners based on the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), North Dakota Department of Transportation, and Minnesota Department of Transportation requirements, including qualitative performance measurement strategies that are responsive to federal and state freight mobility and efficiency goals.

The objective of this comprehensive regional plan is to provide project partners (public and private) with a series of short-term and long-term strategies and guidance for strategic processes and policies to guide future investments to facilitate the mobility of truck and rail freight movements within and through the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Statistical Area.

Document Purpose

The purpose of this document is to identify and review metropolitan regions similar to the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area. In identifying these peer areas, key selection factors included population and recent population growth trends as well as industry makeup and freight employment trends. The following section includes a summary of each region, including notes on their freight infrastructure and freight planning environment. Most importantly, the section includes a summary of freight planning priorities and a list of best practices. The document concludes with a tabular summary of these best practices for consideration by Metro COG.

II. PEER REGION OVERVIEWS

As the Metro COG region continues to experience population growth, economic expansion, and increasing freight demand, the efficient movement of goods has become increasingly important to the area's long-term prosperity and competitiveness. Metro COG is responsible for coordinating regional transportation planning efforts and developing key planning documents, including the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (Metro 2050) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which guide investments across the multimodal transportation system.

Freight transportation is a critical component of the Fargo-Moorhead economy. The region serves as a major agricultural, manufacturing, healthcare, retail, and logistics center for eastern North Dakota, northwestern Minnesota, and surrounding portions of the Upper Midwest. Its strategic location along Interstate 94, Interstate 29, major rail corridors, and regional air transportation facilities positions Fargo-Moorhead as a key hub for the movement of agricultural commodities, consumer goods, energy products, construction materials, and industrial freight. As supply chains evolve and freight activity continues to grow, understanding how peer metropolitan regions are planning for and investing in freight transportation can provide valuable insights for the development of Metro COG's Freight Plan.

To support this effort, a peer region scan was conducted to examine freight transportation systems, planning practices, and investment strategies employed by comparable MPOs across the Midwest and Northern Plains. The selected peer regions include the Sioux Falls MPO (South Dakota), Missoula MPO (Montana), and Mankato/North Mankato Area Planning Organization (Minnesota). These regions were selected because they share several characteristics with Fargo-Moorhead, including their role as regional economic centers, dependence on freight-intensive industries, multimodal transportation networks, and responsibility for coordinating transportation planning across multiple jurisdictions.

The peer scan evaluates how these MPOs address key freight planning topics, including freight corridor management, truck mobility, rail freight connectivity, air cargo services, industrial access, economic development, safety, and long-range transportation planning. Particular attention is given to how freight considerations are incorporated into Metropolitan Transportation Plans, corridor studies, capital improvement programs, and regional economic development initiatives. The scan also highlights emerging trends and best practices that may be applicable to the Fargo-Moorhead region as it plans for future freight growth and infrastructure needs.

The findings presented in this peer region scan are intended to inform the Metro COG Freight Plan and provide a broader understanding of how similarly situated MPOs are addressing freight-related opportunities and challenges. By identifying successful approaches, innovative strategies, and common planning priorities, this assessment provides a foundation for developing recommendations that enhance freight mobility, improve system reliability, support economic competitiveness, and advance the long-term transportation goals of the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan region.

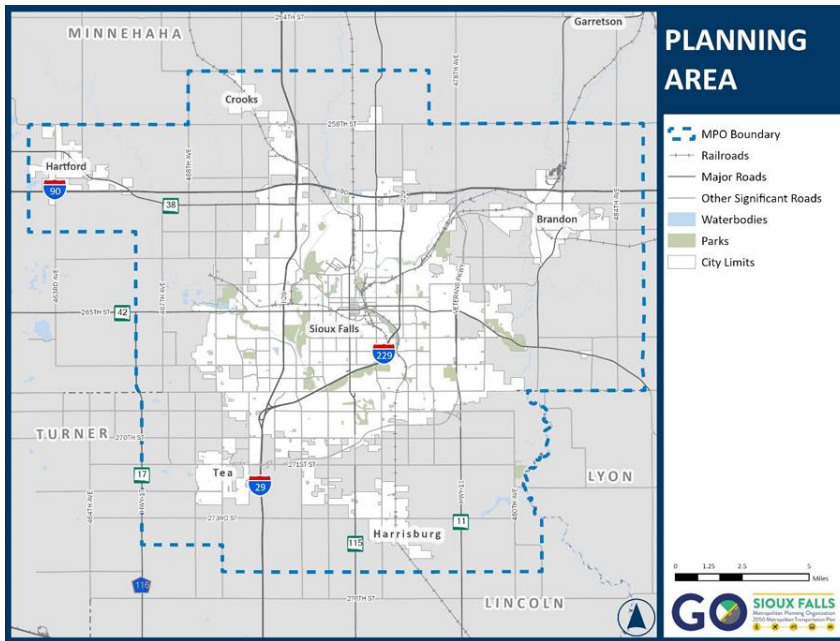
A summary of the peer regions identified for this review and a summary of their characteristics is included in Table 1. While each region maintains some similarity with the Fargo-Moorhead region, the peer region that is most similar is Sioux Falls, SD. It is the only region with a similarly high population growth rate and approximately equivalent current population size. Additionally, it has had strong freight employment growth including recent expansions of Amazon distribution hubs and strong employment in trucking, warehousing, and food related manufacturing.

Table 1: Peer Region Overview

Metro Area	Population (2024)	Pop. Growth (2020-2024)	Major Employment Industries	Freight-Related Employment Trends
Metro COG	267,793	7.0% (high)	Healthcare, education, technology, manufacturing, agribusiness	Very Strong. Distribution/logistics, ag tech, manufacturing, agricultural processing, Amazon fulfillment centers, wholesale distribution.
Cedar Rapids, IA	278,677	0.7% (slow)	Manufacturing, healthcare, retail, education, professional services	Very Strong. Key growing freight industries include food processing, aerospace manufacturing, trucking, warehousing and distribution.
Chippewa-Eau Claire, WI	176,153	2.3% (mod.)	Healthcare, education, manufacturing, retail, professional services	Moderate-Strong. Manufacturing and regional distribution support a sizable trucking and warehousing sector.
La Crosse, WI	170,763	0.2% (slow)	Healthcare, education, retail, manufacturing	Moderate. Freight activity tied to river, rail, trucking, and food/agriculture industries.
Lincoln, NE	350,626	2.9% (mod.)	Government, education, healthcare, professional services, manufacturing	Moderate. Transportation/logistics sector is significant but secondary to government and education. Freight activity tied to agriculture and manufacturing supply chains.
Mankato, MN	104,907	1.3% (slow)	Healthcare, education, retail, manufacturing, agribusiness	Moderate. Regional agricultural service center with food processing and trucking activity.
Missoula, MT	127,741	3.9% (mod.)	Healthcare, education, government, tourism, professional services	Limited-Moderate. Freight activity primarily trucking, construction materials, and regional distribution rather than large-scale manufacturing.
Sioux Falls, SD	308,266	7.3% (high)	Healthcare, finance/banking, retail, government, manufacturing	Strong. Regional distribution/logistics hub with Amazon, food processing, trucking, warehousing, and manufacturing.

Sioux Falls Metropolitan Planning Organization (South Dakota)

The Sioux Falls Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) serves as the federally designated transportation planning agency for the Sioux Falls metropolitan area, which includes Sioux Falls and surrounding communities in Minnehaha and Lincoln Counties. Freight transportation plays a particularly important role because Sioux Falls functions as the primary economic and logistics hub for eastern South Dakota and serves regional markets across the Upper Midwest.



Source: Sioux Falls MPO

The region is experiencing sustained population and employment growth, creating increasing demand for efficient goods movement. The MPO's long-range planning process recognizes that freight mobility is essential to supporting industrial development, manufacturing, agricultural processing, warehousing, retail distribution, and e-commerce activities. Freight considerations are therefore integrated into the MPO's Go Sioux Falls 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP).

Highway Freight Network

Trucking is the dominant freight mode in the Sioux Falls region. The metropolitan area occupies a strategic location at the intersection of Interstate 29 and Interstate 90, making it one of the most important freight crossroads in the northern Great Plains. Interstate 29 provides north-south connectivity between Canada, the Dakotas, Iowa, Kansas City, and the Gulf Coast, while Interstate 90 serves as a major east-west route linking the Pacific Northwest, South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Chicago markets.

These interstate corridors support the movement of agricultural commodities, food products, consumer goods, construction materials, and industrial freight. Their intersection in Sioux Falls creates significant advantages for distribution facilities and regional warehouses seeking access to both national and

regional markets. The city's industrial parks and commercial centers rely heavily on these routes for truck access and freight distribution.

Beyond the interstate system, key arterial routes provide critical "last-mile" freight connections between industrial areas, distribution centers, and the regional highway network. As the metropolitan area continues to expand outward, freight planning increasingly focuses on balancing truck mobility with community livability, safety, and land-use compatibility.

Rail Freight System

Rail freight is an important component of the Sioux Falls freight transportation system, particularly for bulk commodities and industrial shipments. Rail service in the region supports agricultural producers, grain handlers, manufacturers, and other freight-dependent industries throughout the region.

Although trucking carries the majority of freight throughout the metropolitan area, rail provides a cost-effective alternative for longer-distance movement of bulk products. Continued access to rail infrastructure helps maintain economic competitiveness and supports freight diversification across modes.

Air Cargo

Within the Sioux Falls MPO metropolitan planning area, there is essentially one airport with significant air cargo activity—Sioux Falls Regional Airport (FSD) / Joe Foss Field. The airport's Air Cargo Master Plan identifies FSD as the region's principal air cargo gateway and evaluates future cargo growth, infrastructure needs, and competition with larger regional cargo airports such as Omaha, Des Moines, and Fargo. The master plan examined E-commerce-driven cargo growth, alternative cargo airport competition, market capture opportunities, and future air cargo infrastructure requirements at FSD.

Freight Planning Priorities

The Sioux Falls MPO incorporates freight needs into its long-range transportation planning process through collaboration with local governments, transportation agencies, businesses, and stakeholders. The MTP evaluates future transportation needs related to congestion, access, connectivity, safety, and economic growth. Freight movement is closely tied to each of these factors because reliable transportation networks directly affect business productivity and regional competitiveness.

Several freight-related priorities are evident in the MPO's planning framework:

- Maintaining efficient interstate and arterial freight corridors.
- Supporting industrial and commercial development through transportation investments.
- Preserving multimodal freight options, including rail and air cargo.
- Improving connectivity between freight-generating land uses and major transportation facilities.
- Accommodating long-term growth in truck traffic associated with population and employment expansion.
- Balancing freight mobility with safety and quality-of-life objectives.

The MTP reflects the need to proactively address future transportation demand, changing travel patterns, and continued regional growth. Freight transportation is an important element of this effort because of its direct connection to economic development and regional prosperity.

Best Practices

The Sioux Falls MPO has several noteworthy initiatives that stand out, particularly for a fast-growing mid-sized region.

Scenario-Based Regional Transportation Planning (Go Sioux Falls 2050)

The MPO's MTP explicitly addresses rapid population growth, changing travel behavior, and emerging transportation technologies. Rather than simply forecasting future traffic volumes, the process evaluates long-term growth patterns, multimodal investments, and the impacts of technological change across the region. The plan provides recommendations based on multiple future growth scenarios while considering emerging mobility technologies and integrating automobile, bicycle, pedestrian, transit, freight, rail, and air transportation into a single regional strategy.

Market Research-Driven Transportation Planning

Unlike many MPOs that rely heavily on traditional public meetings, Sioux Falls conducts a comprehensive transportation market research study during development of its metropolitan transportation plan. The results are used to help establish transportation priorities and investment strategies. This method uses statistically based public opinion data rather than solely stakeholder comments. This helps to create a stronger data-driven link between public sentiment and project prioritization.

Air Cargo and E-Commerce Logistics

Sioux Falls Regional Airport (FSD) has developed significant cargo activity around FedEx and express freight operations. Private-sector freight firms increasingly use Sioux Falls as a regional overnight distribution hub serving eastern South Dakota, western Minnesota, northwest Iowa, and portions of Nebraska. The airport's Air Cargo Master Plan specifically identifies growing opportunities related to e-commerce distribution and regional logistics operations.

Technology Implementation

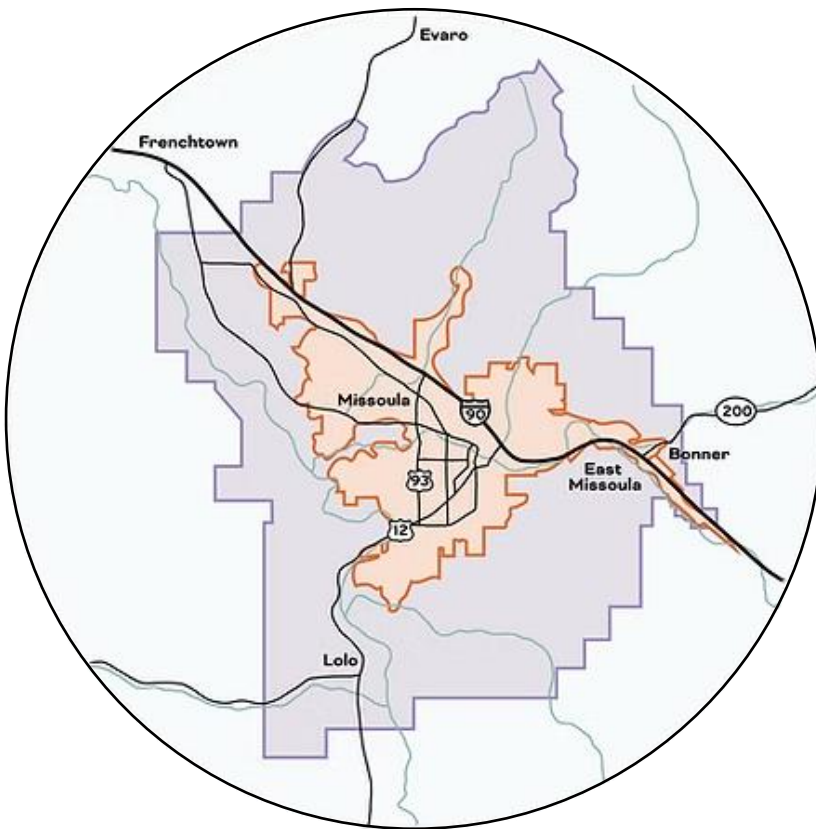
Current projects show Sioux Falls is primarily investing in the foundational ITS elements: signal modernization, corridor coordination, traffic detection, cameras, and adaptive traffic management, especially along Veterans Parkway, I-229 access routes, and key freight arterials.

Conclusion

Compared to peer MPOs of similar size, Sioux Falls is notable less for cutting-edge technology deployments and more for its proactive growth planning, multimodal integration, and structured public-engagement process. Those practices have become increasingly important as the region continues to grow at a pace uncommon for many Midwestern MPOs.

Missoula MPO (MT)

The Missoula Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) serves as the regional transportation planning agency for the Missoula urban area, including the City of Missoula and adjacent portions of Missoula County. The MPO's mission is to plan and program a safe, efficient, and multimodal transportation system that supports mobility, accessibility, and economic vitality throughout the region. Freight transportation is an important component of this mission because Missoula serves as western Montana's primary commercial, logistics, and service center, connecting communities throughout Montana, Idaho, Washington, and the broader Pacific Northwest.



Source: Missoula MPO

Missoula's freight transportation system is characterized by a combination of trucking, rail service, and air cargo facilities. The region's location at the convergence of major interstate highways and transcontinental rail corridors makes it a critical gateway for freight movement across western Montana. The MPO incorporates freight considerations into its long-range transportation planning through the Missoula Connect 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and coordination with the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), freight carriers, and local governments.

Highway Freight Network

The backbone of Missoula's freight transportation system is the highway network. Interstate 90 serves as the region's most important freight corridor, providing east-west connectivity across Montana and linking Missoula to Spokane, Seattle, Billings, and national freight markets. The interstate carries substantial volumes of long-haul truck traffic, consumer goods, industrial products, construction materials, and agricultural commodities.

In addition to I-90, U.S. Highway 93 and Montana Highway 200 function as major freight routes serving north-south and regional freight movements. These facilities connect Missoula with resource-based industries, agricultural producers, forest products operations, and rural communities throughout western Montana. The convergence of these corridors allows Missoula to function as a distribution and warehousing center for a large geographic region.

Freight planning efforts frequently focus on improving safety, intersection performance, congestion management, and access along these corridors because they serve both regional truck traffic and local travelers.

Rail Freight System

The city is located along BNSF Railway's northern transcontinental corridor, which supports the movement of bulk commodities, forest products, construction materials, agricultural products, and interregional freight shipments. The MPO recognizes rail as an important transportation mode and references Montana's State Freight Plan as part of its planning framework.

Air Cargo

The Missoula Montana Airport supports air cargo operations for time-sensitive and high-value shipments. Express delivery companies, medical suppliers, manufacturers, and retail distribution networks rely on air cargo service to connect Missoula with national markets. The MPO incorporates airport planning into its broader multimodal transportation framework through coordination with the Missoula Montana Airport Master Plan.

Freight Planning Priorities

Missoula faces several freight transportation challenges that influence MPO planning efforts. Population growth, commercial development, and increasing travel demand place pressure on major freight corridors, particularly where trucks share roadway capacity with local traffic. Congestion on key urban streets can affect freight reliability, travel times, and safety. As a result, the MPO's long-range planning process seeks to balance economic development needs with community goals related to livability, environmental quality, and multimodal mobility.

The Missoula Connect 2050 plan emphasizes a comprehensive approach to transportation planning that considers all modes of travel while supporting regional economic activity. Freight-related priorities include:

- Maintaining efficient freight movement on Interstate 90 and other key corridors.

- Improving access to industrial and commercial employment centers.
- Enhancing safety along truck-intensive routes.
- Preserving multimodal freight options through rail and airport facilities.
- Coordinating transportation investments with future land-use and economic development patterns.
- Increasing system resilience and maintaining reliable freight access during periods of growth and changing transportation demand.

Best Practices

Missoula is not typically viewed as a freight-planning innovator on the scale of Denver, Kansas City, or Columbus, but it has several noteworthy practices that are particularly relevant for a small-to-medium MPO serving a mountain corridor economy.

Integrating Freight into Their 2050 Plan

The recently adopted Missoula Connect 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan explicitly integrates freight movement with transit, roadway, bicycle, pedestrian, and land-use planning rather than treating freight as a standalone topic. The plan emphasizes maintaining connectivity across all transportation modes while supporting regional economic activity and access.

This process evaluates freight alongside broader mobility outcomes, considers cumulative network benefits as part of project prioritization rather than roadway capacity alone, and intentionally links land use with transportation planning. For MPOs experiencing growth pressures, this integrated approach can help balance truck mobility with community livability.

Corridor-Based Planning on Critical Freight Routes

Missoula has developed several corridor-specific studies that serve both local traffic and freight movements. Rather than pursuing regionwide truck studies alone, Missoula focuses on corridor-level planning that addresses freight bottlenecks, safety, access management, and multimodal conflicts simultaneously.

Wye Infrastructure Planning

The Wye area west of Missoula is one of western Montana's most significant freight and industrial locations because it sits at the intersection of I-90, US 93, rail facilities, industrial land, and warehousing activity. The MPO includes the Wye Infrastructure Plan among its major planning efforts. Similar to freight village or logistics-cluster planning seen in larger metropolitan regions, this plan addresses the concentration of freight-supportive land uses, coordination of transportation investments with industrial development, and preserving long-term freight mobility in a rapidly developing area.

Linking Freight, Safety, and Complete Streets

A challenge in Missoula is that major freight routes often pass through urbanized areas with heavy pedestrian and bicycle activity. The MPO's planning framework incorporates freight movements as part of Vision Zero principles, Complete Streets policies, Community Transportation Safety Planning, and roadway investments. Instead of viewing truck movement and multimodal safety as competing objectives, Missoula increasingly evaluates them together, particularly on corridors with heavy truck volumes.

Extensive Public-Facing GIS and Story Mapping

One of the more progressive aspects of Missoula's planning program is its use of public-facing online tools such as interactive project maps, story maps, public engagement platforms, and transportation data tools. For freight planning, these tools help stakeholders visualize industrial areas, truck corridors, future transportation investments, and economic development connections simultaneously. These tools are uncommon in an MPO of Missoula's size.

Transportation-Land Use Coordination

Perhaps the most transferable innovation is Missoula's effort to connect transportation and growth management. The MPO specifically notes that the LRTP is intended to support both the City of Missoula Land Use Plan and Missoula County Growth Policy. The plan sets out to protect industrial land from encroachment, maintain truck access to employment centers, plan for future logistics activity before congestion becomes severe, and reduce conflicts between residential growth and freight operations.

Technology Implementation

Like the Sioux Falls area, the Missoula region is currently focused on foundational transportation technology investments such as modern traffic signals, corridor monitoring, traffic analytics, transportation data systems, and long-range planning tools.

Conclusion

For an MPO the size of Missoula, the standout innovation is less about freight technology and more about integrating freight needs into community, land-use, safety, and multimodal planning frameworks, which is increasingly considered a best practice in modern metropolitan transportation planning.

Mankato/North Mankato Area Planning Organization (Minnesota)

The Mankato/North Mankato Area Planning Organization (MAPO) is the federally designated MPO for the Greater Mankato region in south-central Minnesota. MAPO coordinates long-range transportation planning across the cities of Mankato, North Mankato, Eagle Lake, and surrounding townships and counties. Freight transportation is an important component of the region's economy because Greater Mankato serves as a major commercial, manufacturing, agricultural, healthcare, and educational hub for southern Minnesota.

Freight movement supports an economic base that includes agricultural processing, food manufacturing, construction, wholesale trade, healthcare distribution, and retail supply chains. The agency's Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) establishes a framework to guide transportation investments through 2050 while supporting future growth in freight demand.

Highway Freight Network

Key freight corridors include U.S. 14, U.S. 169, State Highway 22, and State Highway 60. These routes connect the region to Minneapolis-St. Paul, Rochester, Sioux Falls, rural agricultural markets, and national freight networks.

U.S. Highway 14 is one of the region's most significant freight corridors, serving east-west truck movements across southern Minnesota. Highway 169 provides major north-south connectivity linking Mankato with the Twin Cities metropolitan area and points south. Together these corridors support substantial movement of agricultural products, food products, building materials, consumer goods, and industrial freight. Local truck traffic is concentrated on corridors serving industrial parks, commercial districts, and logistics facilities.

Rail Freight System

The dominant freight rail carrier in the Mankato region is Union Pacific Railroad (UP) which interchanges with the Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern (DM&E) system, which is part of Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC). Its Mankato Subdivision runs through the metropolitan area and provides the region's primary connection to national freight rail markets. Southern Minnesota's economy continues to depend on rail service for moving agricultural commodities, food products, fertilizer, industrial goods, and bulk materials. The freight rail network supports the region's agricultural processors and manufacturers that require access to national markets. Minnesota's freight planning framework identifies rail infrastructure as a critical component of the state's multimodal freight system, and Mankato benefits from this broader network.

Air Cargo

The Mankato Regional Airport has limited cargo-related activity. The Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport handles the majority of large-scale air cargo serving southern Minnesota, with the Mankato airport providing regional connectivity.

Freight Planning Priorities

Agricultural products remain particularly important to freight activity because the region serves as a collection, processing, and distribution center for a large rural hinterland. As the region grows, MAPO

faces several freight-related planning challenges. Increased population, expanding commercial development, and rising traffic volumes can create congestion and operational issues on key freight corridors. Freight planning therefore focuses on maintaining system reliability while supporting broader community goals related to safety, mobility, and quality of life.

MAPO's transportation planning framework identifies several freight-related priorities:

- Preserving the efficiency of key freight highways.
- Improving access to industrial, commercial, and employment centers.
- Enhancing safety and operational performance on major freight corridors.
- Supporting multimodal freight movement through rail and aviation assets.
- Coordinating transportation investments with future economic development and land-use growth.
- Maintaining resilient infrastructure capable of supporting long-term freight growth.

Best Practices

MAPO is a relatively small MPO, so its freight innovations are less about cutting-edge technology and more about integrating freight, economic development, corridor planning, and multimodal transportation into a regional planning framework.

Freight as Part of a Fully Multimodal MPO Program

Unlike many smaller MPOs that focus primarily on highways, MAPO explicitly includes rail, aviation, roadway, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian transportation within its planning responsibilities. Freight mobility is evaluated alongside accessibility, economic vitality, connectivity, and system preservation creating opportunities for more integrated investment decisions.

Corridor-Based Freight Planning

MAPO has increasingly conducted corridor studies, that include those that serve many of the region's industrial and agricultural freight generators. Rather than preparing a standalone freight plan, freight needs are embedded into corridor studies addressing truck access, safety, capacity, economic development, access management, and future growth patterns. This approach is becoming a best practice among smaller MPOs with limited resources.

Rail Freight Preservation

The region benefits from direct Union Pacific freight service and interchange access with CPKC/DM&E rail lines. Maintaining rail access to industrial properties is increasingly important as development pressures grow. The MPO has made a concerted effort to preserve rail-served industrial land, protect rail corridors, support multimodal freight opportunities, and coordinate land-use and transportation decisions around freight infrastructure. For a metropolitan area of Mankato's size, preserving freight rail capability can often provide a larger long-term economic benefit than constructing additional roadway capacity.

Integration with State Freight Planning Tools

Minnesota DOT has developed sophisticated freight planning resources, including freight facility databases, the Freight Network Optimization Tool (FNOT), freight network mapping systems, and a rail

crossing inventory systems. MAPO uses these statewide freight-planning tools, leveraging MnDOT's statewide freight tools to increase their efficiency and remain consistent with larger statewide efforts and goals.

Freight-Sensitive Highway-Rail Crossing Planning

One of the more significant freight issues in Mankato is the interaction between urban traffic and the Union Pacific rail line running through developed portions of the region. As such, the MPO developing a framework for better decision-making through grade-crossing improvement prioritization, emergency response analyses, truck routing assessments and improved railroad coordination during roadway projects. These operational considerations are often as important as capacity expansion in a small urban area such as Mankato.

Enhanced Public Engagement Through StoryMaps

The MAPO 2050 MTP update uses an interactive StoryMap format that allows stakeholders to explore transportation conditions, priorities, and future investments. While not freight-specific, this is an innovative planning procedure because it helps industry stakeholders understand freight-related investments and improves transparency regarding future transportation projects.

Technology Implementation

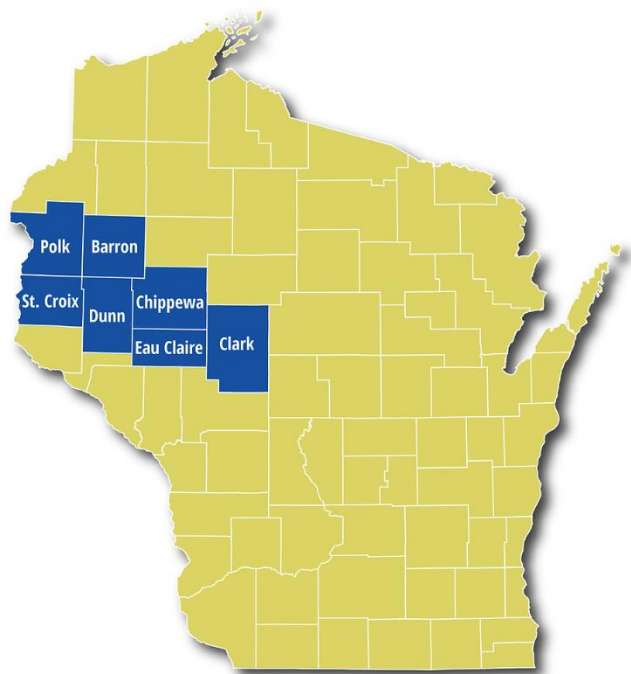
Currently, the Mankato region's freight technology strategy is centered on traffic operations, corridor modernization, intersection control improvements, and data-driven transportation planning.

Conclusion

For a region the size of Mankato, the most notable best practice is its practical integration of freight, rail, truck corridors, and economic development within the MPO planning process, rather than pursuing large standalone freight initiatives.

Chippewa-Eau Claire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) (Wisconsin)

The Chippewa-Eau Claire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) serves the Eau Claire urbanized area in west-central Wisconsin, including the cities of Eau Claire, Chippewa Falls, Altoona, the Village of Lake Hallie, and surrounding portions of Chippewa and Eau Claire Counties. The MPO is responsible for conducting a comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing transportation planning process that supports all transportation modes, including freight movement by truck, rail, and air.



Source: WCWRPC MPO

Highway Freight Network

Truck transportation is the dominant freight mode in the Chippewa-Eau Claire region. The metropolitan area occupies a strategic location along the Interstate 94 corridor, one of Wisconsin's most important east-west freight routes connecting Minneapolis-St. Paul to Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago. I-94 serves as the region's primary freight spine and supports national and regional freight movements.

Other significant freight corridors include US 53 (Eau Claire-Superior/Duluth-Twin Cities region), US 12, State Highway 29, and various county trunk highways serving industrial parks, manufacturing facilities, agricultural producers, and distribution centers.

Rail Freight System

The **MPO region is served by the Union Pacific Railroad (UP), Canadian National Railway (CN), and Progressive Rail Inc. (PR).** The freight rail system in the Chippewa-Eau Claire MPO region serves as an important complement to the area's truck-based freight network, providing connections for agricultural, industrial, manufacturing, and bulk commodity shipments. The MPO's Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) identifies rail as a key transportation mode and inventories existing rail

infrastructure as part of its multimodal planning process. Rail service supports regional businesses by linking the Eau Claire-Chippewa Falls area to statewide and national freight markets, helping move commodities such as agricultural products, forest products, and industrial materials. Preserving rail access and maintaining freight connectivity are recognized components of the MPO's long-range transportation strategy.

Air Freight

The Chippewa Valley Regional Airport (EAU) serves as the region's primary aviation facility and provides air cargo capabilities in addition to passenger service. The airport is not a major cargo hub, but supports through time-sensitive freight, parcel delivery, express shipments, and business logistics activities for the region.

Freight Planning Priorities

The MPO's 2025-2055 LRTP evaluates highway, bicycle, pedestrian, transit, rail, aviation, and freight systems together rather than developing separate modal plans. Key freight planning themes within the plan include:

- Preserving freight mobility on major regional corridors,
- Supporting economic competitiveness,
- Maintaining connectivity to statewide and national freight networks,
- Improving reliability and system performance, and
- Coordinating land use and transportation investments.

Best Practices

Comprehensive Public Engagement Program

The MPO has adopted an extensive public involvement process for transportation planning that was implemented during development of the 2025-2055 LRTP, and includes a regional transportation survey, open houses, online engagement opportunities and public hearings and formal comment periods. This level of outreach is notable for a metropolitan area of this size and helps ensure freight-related concerns are considered alongside residential and business transportation needs.

Corridor Preservation and Strategic Freight Routes

The region's planning efforts place significant emphasis on preserving major freight corridors, particularly those associated with I-94 and US 53. This approach reflects a proactive strategy that seeks to protect future freight mobility before congestion and development constraints become severe.

Technology Implementation

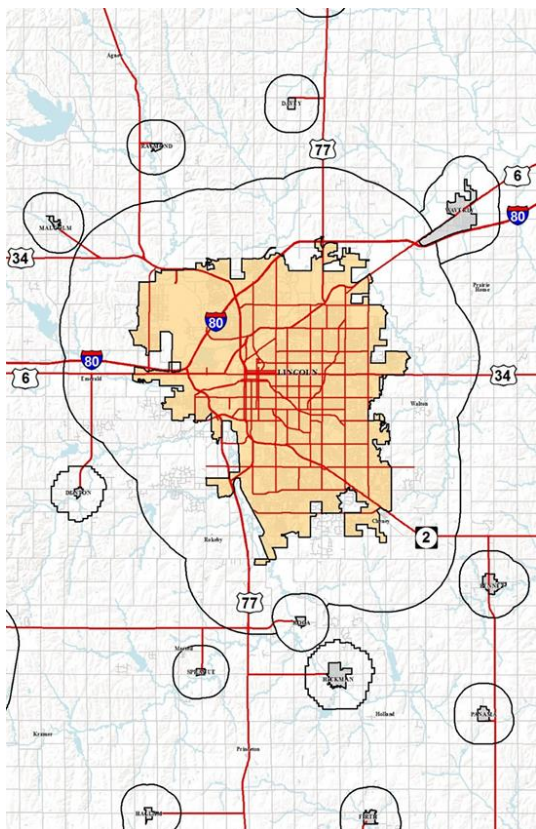
The most important freight-related technology initiative in the region is the ongoing US 53 corridor study between County AA (Golf Road) in Eau Claire and WIS 29 near Lake Hallie. Although no final improvement package has been selected, the study creates the foundation for future deployment of traffic monitoring systems, dynamic traffic management, real-time corridor performance monitoring, incident management technology, and advanced traffic detection systems.

Conclusion

The Chippewa-Eau Claire MPO's freight transportation system is built around a strong highway freight network anchored by I-94 and US 53, supplemented by freight rail service and regional air cargo capabilities. While the MPO has not pursued large standalone freight master plans seen in some larger metropolitan areas, its planning framework follows current best practices by incorporating freight transportation into broader regional mobility, economic development, and infrastructure planning efforts.

Lincoln MPO (NE)

The Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) serves as the regional transportation planning agency for the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County, Nebraska. The MPO is responsible for coordinating a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process that guides investment decisions across the region's multimodal transportation network. Freight transportation is a critical component of Lincoln's economy because the city serves as a major logistics, manufacturing, warehousing, agricultural processing, and distribution center within eastern Nebraska and the broader Great Plains region. Lincoln's strategic location along Interstate 80 places it directly on one of the nation's most important freight corridors, connecting the Midwest, Rocky Mountain region, West Coast, and major national markets.



Source: Lincoln MPO

Lincoln's freight transportation system consists of an extensive highway freight network, Class I railroad service, and air cargo facilities at Lincoln Airport. Freight considerations are incorporated into the MPO's Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Congestion Management Process (CMP), travel-demand modeling efforts, and coordination with the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT), Lincoln Airport Authority, freight carriers, and local governments. Rather than maintaining a separate freight plan, the MPO incorporates freight needs within its broader multimodal transportation planning framework.

Highway Freight Network

The backbone of Lincoln's freight transportation system is its highway network. Interstate 80 serves as the region's primary freight corridor and one of the most heavily traveled truck routes in North America. The corridor provides east-west connectivity between Omaha, Des Moines, Chicago, Denver, Salt Lake City, and West Coast markets, carrying substantial volumes of long-haul truck traffic, consumer goods, agricultural products, industrial materials, and manufactured goods. Lincoln's location directly along I-80 has helped establish the metropolitan area as an important logistics and distribution center for Nebraska and the central United States.

In addition to Interstate 80, U.S. Highway 77, Nebraska Highway 2, Nebraska Highway 6, and several major arterial roadways provide critical freight access to industrial districts, business parks, rail-served properties, warehousing facilities, and agricultural processing operations throughout Lancaster County. Freight planning efforts frequently focus on maintaining efficient truck access, preserving mobility on regional corridors, reducing congestion, and improving reliability for freight operators while accommodating continued urban growth. [\[dot.sd.gov\]](http://dot.sd.gov),

Rail Freight System

Rail freight remains an important component of the regional freight network. Lincoln is served by major Class I railroads, including Union Pacific and BNSF Railway, providing direct connections to national and international freight markets. These rail corridors support the movement of agricultural commodities, grain, ethanol, manufactured products, construction materials, and other bulk freight shipments that play a significant role in Nebraska's economy. Lincoln's rail network provides businesses with competitive freight transportation options while helping reduce truck dependency for certain commodities and industries.

The MPO recognizes the importance of preserving freight rail infrastructure and maintaining access to rail-served industrial areas. Rail transportation planning considerations often include coordination of roadway improvements at rail crossings, preserving industrial land uses that depend on freight rail service, and supporting multimodal freight connectivity throughout the metropolitan area.

Air Cargo

Lincoln Airport supports air cargo operations that complement the region's truck and rail freight systems. The airport accommodates time-sensitive shipments, express freight, business logistics operations, and specialized cargo movements serving manufacturers, healthcare providers, technology firms, and distribution companies. The Lincoln Airport Authority participates directly in MPO planning activities, allowing aviation planning and surface transportation planning to be coordinated more effectively.

Freight Planning Priorities

Lincoln faces several freight transportation challenges that influence MPO planning efforts. Continued population growth, industrial development, warehousing expansion, and increasing travel demand place pressure on key freight corridors throughout the metropolitan area. Congestion, reliability concerns, and conflicts between freight movement and urban development require careful transportation planning to ensure the region remains economically competitive. As a result, the MPO

seeks to balance freight mobility and economic development objectives with community priorities related to safety, accessibility, environmental stewardship, and quality of life.

The MPO's planning framework and 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan emphasize a multimodal approach that supports freight transportation while addressing broader transportation system goals. Freight-related priorities include:

- Maintaining efficient freight movement along Interstate 80 and other major corridors.
- Supporting access to industrial districts, logistics centers, and employment hubs.
- Preserving freight rail infrastructure and rail-served economic development opportunities.
- Improving transportation system reliability through congestion management and operational improvements.
- Coordinating transportation investments with long-range land-use and growth planning.
- Strengthening multimodal freight connectivity among truck, rail, and aviation facilities.

Best Practices

Integrating Freight into Long-Range Transportation Planning

One of Lincoln's strongest planning practices is its integration of freight within the broader Long-Range Transportation Plan rather than treating freight planning as a separate activity. Freight needs are considered alongside roadway, transit, bicycle, pedestrian, safety, and land-use objectives. The LRTP serves as the primary framework for evaluating future transportation investments and incorporates freight considerations into project prioritization and policy development.

Advanced Travel Demand Modeling and Scenario Planning

The MPO maintains a sophisticated travel-demand modeling program and is currently updating both its 2050 LRTP and transportation modeling tools. This data-driven process helps planners evaluate future transportation demand, identify potential bottlenecks, assess freight corridor performance, and prioritize improvements needed to support long-term economic growth. For a metropolitan area of Lincoln's size, the integration of travel modeling into freight-related decision-making represents a strong planning practice.

Congestion Management Process

Lincoln's Congestion Management Process provides a structured approach for identifying transportation system performance issues and evaluating operational improvements. Freight carriers are particularly sensitive to travel-time reliability and recurring congestion. By incorporating congestion management into regional planning, the MPO can improve freight mobility through operational strategies, intersection improvements, corridor management, and targeted capacity investments.

Coordination with Nebraska State Freight Planning

The MPO benefits from close coordination with Nebraska's State Freight Plan, which establishes statewide freight goals related to economic competitiveness, safety, resiliency, asset preservation, and multimodal connectivity. This relationship allows Lincoln to leverage statewide freight data, industry engagement, and freight investment priorities while ensuring that regional transportation initiatives support broader state freight objectives.

Freight-Airport Coordination

Because the Lincoln Airport Authority is a participating MPO agency, freight planning benefits from direct coordination between aviation and surface transportation planning. This partnership helps ensure adequate roadway access to airport facilities, supports future cargo development opportunities, and strengthens multimodal freight connectivity within the region.

Transportation-Land Use Coordination

The MPO's 2050 transportation planning efforts are coordinated with the Lincoln-Lancaster Comprehensive Plan process. This approach helps transportation investments support future growth patterns while preserving access to industrial and freight-generating land uses. Coordinating transportation and land-use planning can reduce future conflicts between freight operations and residential development while maintaining efficient access to economic centers and logistics facilities.

Technology Implementation

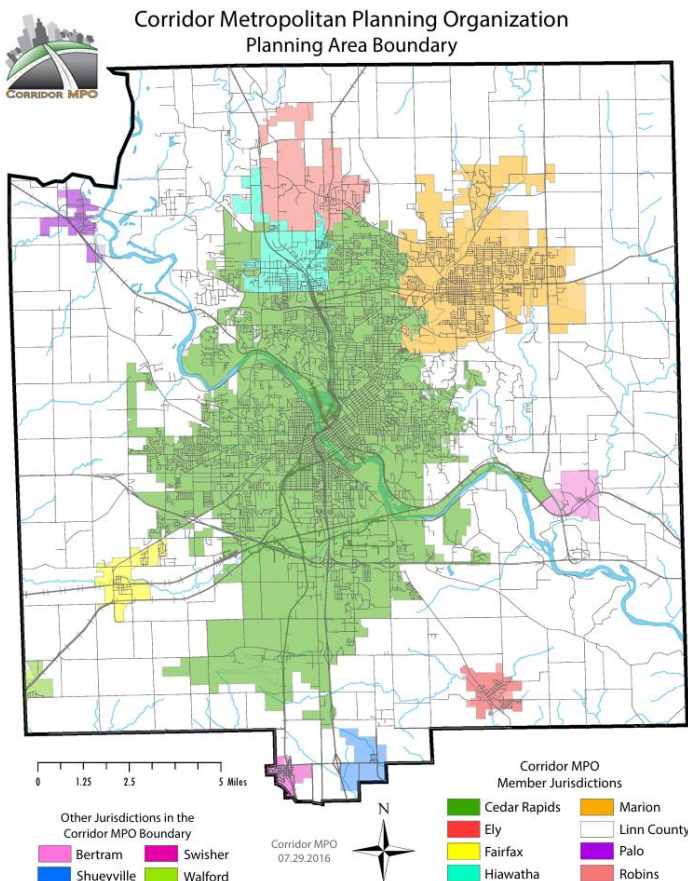
Nebraska has deployed automated traffic monitoring and message-board systems along the Lincoln area I-80 corridor, including traffic flow sensors, traffic data collection equipment, traveler information systems, and dynamic message signs. These systems support real-time management of one of the state's most important freight corridors.

Conclusion

Lincoln's freight transportation system is anchored by Interstate 80, supported by Class I rail service and regional air cargo capabilities. The region functions as a key freight and logistics hub within Nebraska and the central United States. While Lincoln is not generally recognized for standalone freight initiatives, its planning program demonstrates several best practices, including integrating freight into long-range multimodal planning, utilizing advanced travel-demand modeling, coordinating with statewide freight planning efforts, incorporating congestion management into freight mobility planning, and aligning transportation investments with long-term land-use objectives. For an MPO of its size, Lincoln's primary innovation is its systematic integration of freight transportation into broader regional transportation, economic development, and growth-management planning processes

Corridor Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) (Cedar Rapids, IA)

The Corridor Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) serves the Cedar Rapids metropolitan area, including Cedar Rapids, Marion, Hiawatha, Fairfax, Robins, Ely, Palo, and Linn County. The MPO is responsible for regional transportation planning and programming and oversees the development of the region's Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and other transportation planning activities. Since its creation, the Corridor MPO has focused on coordinating transportation investments that support regional growth, economic development, mobility, and quality of life throughout the rapidly growing Cedar Rapids metropolitan area.



Source: Corridor MPO

Freight transportation plays a significant role in the regional economy. Cedar Rapids is one of Iowa's largest manufacturing, agricultural processing, food production, and distribution centers. The region is home to major agricultural, industrial, logistics, and commercial employers that depend on efficient truck, rail, and air freight transportation. The MPO incorporates freight considerations through its 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, and coordination with the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT), freight railroads, local governments, and economic development organizations.

Highway Freight Network

The backbone of the Cedar Rapids freight system is its highway network. Interstate 380 serves as the region's primary freight corridor, linking Cedar Rapids with Iowa City, the Interstate 80 corridor, and national freight markets. I-380 carries significant volumes of commercial truck traffic moving agricultural commodities, manufactured goods, consumer products, and industrial materials throughout eastern Iowa and the Midwest.

Additional freight corridors include:

- U.S. Highway 30
- U.S. Highway 151
- Iowa Highway 13
- Iowa Highway 100
- Major industrial arterials serving manufacturing and logistics districts throughout Cedar Rapids and Marion.

The combination of these facilities allows Cedar Rapids to function as a regional freight hub connecting eastern Iowa to Chicago, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Kansas City, Omaha, and Mississippi River freight gateways. Freight planning efforts often focus on corridor mobility, interchange operations, congestion mitigation, and industrial access improvements because these facilities serve both regional truck traffic and local travel demand.

Rail Freight System

Rail freight is a major strength of the Cedar Rapids region. The area is served by the Cedar Rapids and Iowa City Railway (CRANDIC), which provides important freight connections to national rail networks. Through CRANDIC, local industries gain access to multiple Class I rail carriers, creating substantial freight-shipping flexibility for manufacturers, agricultural processors, and distribution facilities.

The region has long recognized the value of rail connectivity for economic development and industrial competitiveness. Freight rail infrastructure remains an important consideration in transportation and land-use planning efforts throughout the metropolitan area.

Air Cargo

The Eastern Iowa Airport (CID) serves as the region's primary air cargo facility. The airport supports express freight, parcel delivery services, and time-sensitive shipments for manufacturers, healthcare providers, technology firms, and regional distribution networks. The airport's proximity to major highways and industrial districts enhances its role within the regional freight system and provides multimodal freight opportunities for local businesses.

Freight Planning Priorities

The Cedar Rapids region continues to experience growth in industrial development, warehousing activity, distribution operations, and regional freight movement. As a result, freight planning efforts focus on maintaining system reliability while addressing growing demands on key transportation

corridors. The MPO seeks to balance freight mobility with broader community goals related to safety, multimodal accessibility, sustainability, and economic development.

The Corridor MPO's planning framework emphasizes:

- Maintaining efficient freight movement on Interstate 380 and major regional freight corridors.
- Supporting access to industrial parks, manufacturing centers, and logistics facilities.
- Preserving rail freight connectivity and industrial rail access.
- Enhancing transportation system safety and reliability.
- Coordinating transportation investments with economic development and future land-use growth patterns.
- Strengthening multimodal freight connections among truck, rail, and airport facilities.

Best Practices

Integrating Freight into the 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan

Like many leading MPOs, the Corridor MPO incorporates freight considerations directly into its regional transportation planning process rather than maintaining a separate freight planning program. The 2050 LRTP guides investment decisions across all transportation modes and serves as the foundation for future transportation improvements throughout the region. Freight mobility is evaluated alongside roadway, transit, bicycle, pedestrian, safety, and economic development objectives.

Regional Multimodal Planning

The Corridor MPO has historically emphasized comprehensive regional planning that integrates transportation with land use, recreation, environmental resources, and economic development. This multidisciplinary planning framework helps ensure freight transportation needs are considered within broader regional development decisions.

Cedar Rapids Logistics Park Initiative

Perhaps the most notable freight-related initiative associated with the region was the proposed Cedar Rapids Logistics Park. Although ultimately not constructed, the project represented an ambitious effort to establish a full-service intermodal freight facility combining truck and rail freight operations. The proposed facility would have connected CRANDIC rail service with multiple Class I railroads while providing direct access to Interstate 380, U.S. 30, and the Eastern Iowa Airport. The project highlighted the region's strategic freight location and demonstrated a forward-looking approach to multimodal freight transportation planning.

Freight and Economic Development Coordination

The Cedar Rapids region has long leveraged transportation investments to support industrial development and economic competitiveness. The MPO works closely with member communities and regional partners to coordinate transportation improvements with employment centers, industrial districts, logistics facilities, and future development areas. This approach helps protect freight corridors while supporting business growth and job creation.

Transportation Improvement Program Process

The MPO's TIP process provides a transparent and structured mechanism for advancing transportation investments. Freight-supportive roadway, transit, and multimodal projects are evaluated within a fiscally constrained framework, allowing transportation improvements to be prioritized based on regional needs, performance objectives, and available resources.

Technology Implementation

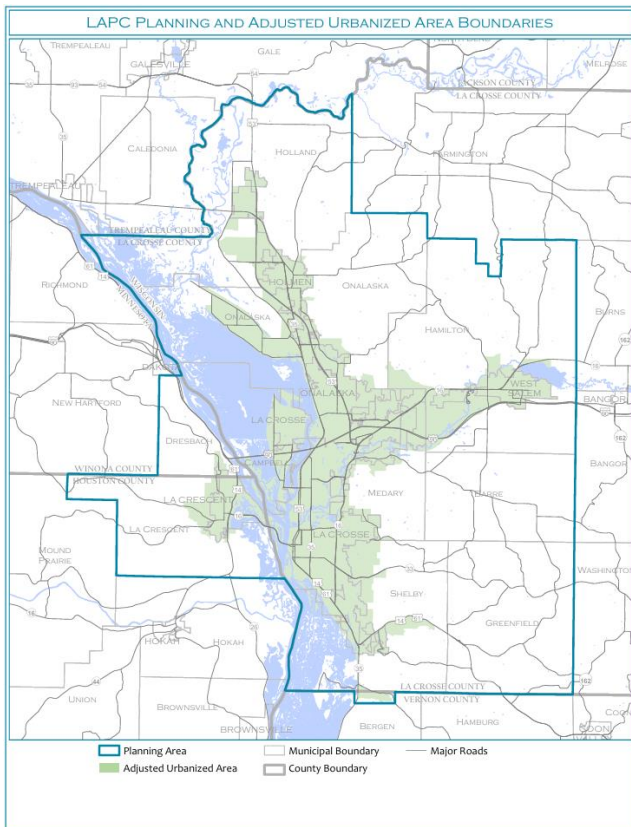
Current and planned freight projects that incorporate technology in the Cedar Rapids region are largely focused on Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), traffic operations, interchange modernization, incident management, truck parking, and corridor management. The Corridor MPO's 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan identifies future transportation investments across the Cedar Rapids metropolitan area, which include freight-supportive technology elements such as traffic data collection systems, signal optimization, corridor management improvements, and other ITS infrastructure.

Conclusion

The Corridor MPO oversees a freight transportation system anchored by Interstate 380, supported by major highway corridors, CRANDIC rail service, access to multiple Class I freight railroads, and air cargo capabilities at the Eastern Iowa Airport. Cedar Rapids functions as one of Iowa's most important industrial and logistics centers, serving agricultural, manufacturing, food-processing, and distribution industries throughout the Midwest. The MPO's most significant freight-planning strengths include its integrated multimodal planning framework, strong coordination with economic development objectives, preservation of rail freight opportunities, and its willingness to pursue innovative concepts such as the Cedar Rapids Logistics Park. For a metropolitan area of its size, the Corridor MPO demonstrates a practical and forward-looking approach to integrating freight transportation into broader regional growth and transportation planning initiatives.

La Crosse Area Planning Committee (Wisconsin-Minnesota)

The **La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC)** serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the bi-state La Crosse, Wisconsin-La Crescent, Minnesota urbanized area. The MPO encompasses the Cities of La Crosse, Onalaska, and La Crescent, along with numerous surrounding communities in Wisconsin and Minnesota. As a cross-state MPO, LAPC works closely with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), local governments, transit providers, and freight stakeholders to support a multimodal transportation system that serves both people and freight movement throughout the region. The organization's mission includes promoting the safe and efficient development, management, and operation of transportation systems while fostering economic growth and supporting regional mobility.



Source: La Crosse Area Planning Committee

Freight transportation plays an important role in the regional economy because La Crosse sits at the intersection of major highway, rail, river, and air transportation corridors. The area's location along the Mississippi River and at the junction of Interstate 90 and key freight rail corridors makes it one of western Wisconsin's most significant multimodal freight hubs. LAPC incorporates freight considerations into its Moving Ahead to 2055 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and ongoing coordination with WisDOT, MnDOT, freight carriers, and economic development agencies.

Highway Freight Network

The backbone of the region's freight transportation system is the highway network. Interstate 90 is the area's principal freight corridor, providing east-west connectivity between Minneapolis-St. Paul, La Crosse, Madison, Chicago, and national freight markets. The interstate carries substantial volumes of long-haul truck traffic, including consumer goods, agricultural products, construction materials, and manufactured products.

Additional freight corridors include:

- U.S. Highway 53
- Wisconsin Highway 35
- U.S. Highway 14/61
- Minnesota Highway 16
- Regional industrial and commercial truck routes serving manufacturing, warehousing, and river terminal facilities.

Because many of these highways also serve local commuters and tourists, LAPC planning efforts frequently focus on balancing freight mobility, safety, congestion management, and community access.

Rail Freight System

Rail freight is a major component of the La Crosse freight transportation system. The region lies along important BNSF Railway transcontinental freight routes connecting the Pacific Northwest, Upper Midwest, Chicago, and eastern United States markets. The river corridor through La Crosse carries substantial volumes of intermodal traffic, agricultural commodities, industrial products, construction materials, and consumer goods. The area's rail infrastructure also supports regional manufacturing and distribution activities throughout western Wisconsin and southeastern Minnesota.

The MPO recognizes rail as a critical freight transportation asset and coordinates with state transportation agencies and freight stakeholders to preserve rail connectivity, improve multimodal access, and support economic development opportunities dependent on freight rail infrastructure.

River Freight and Port Facilities

Unlike many MPOs of similar size, La Crosse benefits from direct access to the Mississippi River navigation system, one of the nation's most important inland freight corridors. River terminals in the region support the movement of grain, agricultural commodities, aggregates, fertilizer, and other bulk cargoes. The river provides a cost-effective freight option that complements truck and rail transportation and expands the region's multimodal freight capabilities.

The combination of highway, rail, and river transportation makes La Crosse one of the Upper Midwest's most diverse freight gateways.

Air Cargo

The La Crosse Regional Airport supports air cargo and express freight operations serving local manufacturers, healthcare institutions, distribution firms, and business customers. While air cargo

represents a smaller share of overall freight activity than trucking or rail, it remains important for time-sensitive shipments and high-value goods. The airport contributes to the region's multimodal freight network and economic competitiveness.

Freight Planning Priorities

The La Crosse region faces several freight-related transportation challenges. Population growth, increased freight demand, aging infrastructure, and geographic constraints associated with the Mississippi River valley place pressure on major transportation corridors. Freight planning efforts seek to maintain regional mobility while balancing community goals related to safety, environmental stewardship, tourism, and quality of life.

The Moving Ahead to 2055 plan emphasizes a multimodal transportation system that supports economic activity and freight movement while addressing broader transportation objectives. Freight-related priorities include:

- Maintaining efficient freight movement on Interstate 90 and other major freight corridors.
- Preserving rail freight infrastructure and multimodal connectivity.
- Supporting access to industrial, manufacturing, and river-port facilities.
- Improving safety and operational performance along truck-intensive corridors.
- Coordinating transportation investments with regional economic development goals.
- Building system resiliency while accommodating future growth in freight demand.

Best Practices

Multistate Freight Coordination

One of LAPC's most distinctive strengths is its role as a bi-state MPO. Freight corridors routinely cross the Wisconsin-Minnesota border, making interstate coordination essential. LAPC provides a framework for coordinating transportation planning, project development, and investment priorities across state lines, helping maintain seamless freight movement throughout the region.

Integrating Freight into the Moving Ahead to 2055 Plan

The MPO incorporates freight directly into its long-range transportation planning process rather than treating freight as a separate planning activity. Freight mobility is evaluated alongside transit, bicycle, pedestrian, highway, and safety objectives by using a performance-based multimodal planning framework.

Multimodal Freight Planning

La Crosse's location provides access to highway, rail, airport, and river transportation systems. LAPC planning efforts recognize the value of these connections and seek to preserve and enhance multimodal freight opportunities. Few MPOs of comparable size possess this combination of freight transportation assets.

Innovative Digital TIP Management

LAPC recently implemented an online Transportation Improvement Program platform using EcoInteractive's Project Tracker system. The platform allows users to view maps, project details,

updates, and public comments through an interactive interface. This represents a more transparent and accessible approach to transportation programming than traditional static documents.

GIS and Web Mapping Tools

LAPC has invested heavily in web-based mapping tools that allow transportation facilities, projects, performance measures, and planning initiatives to be visualized in an interactive format. These tools help stakeholders better understand freight corridors, transportation investments, and infrastructure needs across the region.

Transportation Demand Management and System Efficiency

A noteworthy aspect of LAPC's planning philosophy is its emphasis on transportation demand management (TDM) strategies. Rather than relying solely on roadway expansion, the MPO evaluates operational improvements, multimodal alternatives, and system-management strategies that can improve corridor performance and reliability. These approaches can also benefit freight operations by reducing congestion and improving travel-time predictability.

Conclusion

The La Crosse Area Planning Committee oversees one of the Upper Midwest's most multimodal freight transportation systems, combining Interstate 90 truck freight, BNSF rail service, Mississippi River freight navigation, and regional air cargo facilities. The region serves as an important freight gateway connecting Wisconsin, Minnesota, and national transportation markets. LAPC's most notable strengths include its multistate governance structure, integration of freight into long-range multimodal planning, emphasis on web-based planning tools and public engagement, and coordination of highway, rail, river, and airport transportation assets. For an MPO of its size, La Crosse stands out for its ability to incorporate freight mobility into a comprehensive regional transportation planning framework while leveraging one of the most diverse freight systems in the Upper Midwest

III. SUMMARY OF BEST PRACTICES

The overview in the previous section identified a number of best practices and strategies utilized by each of the regional agencies in addressing freight planning needs within their overarching planning practice. A high-level summary of these best practices is included in Table 2 on the following pages. The table includes a column for each peer region. The columns are marked with a (▲) symbol to indicate where those regions are notable or exceptional for their implementation of the best practice.

This summary will be reviewed by Metro COG and the Study Review Committee to identify best practices which are already being implemented by Metro COG as well as the identification of best practices that may be incorporated into this plan update. Additional details regarding these recommendations will be summarized in the primary freight plan document to be developed later in this study.

Table 2: Summary of Peer Region Best Practices

Best Practice	Practice Description	Sioux Falls MPO	Missoula MPO	Mankato/North Mankato (MAPO)	Chippewa-Eau Claire MPO	Lincoln MPO	Corridor MPO (Cedar Rapids)	La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC)
Freight Integration Into Existing Planning	Freight needs are embedded in the MPO's core long-range planning documents instead of being treated as a separate side effort. This makes freight mobility part of routine project prioritization, investment programming, multimodal coordination, and regional policy decisions. All peer regions incorporate this best practice to a fairly high extent. Lincoln MPO is notable for its LRTP, TIP, CMP, modeling program, and NDOT coordination for all incorporating freight considerations in a systematic planning framework.		▲			▲	▲	▲
Scenario Planning / Future Growth Analysis	Scenario planning tests how population growth, land development, technology, and multimodal investments may change future freight and travel demand. It helps MPOs identify resilient corridor, access, and capacity strategies before congestion or development conflicts become severe. Sioux Falls MPO is notable for their Go Sioux Falls 2050 plan because it evaluates multiple growth scenarios, emerging mobility technologies, and freight across a unified regional strategy.	▲				▲		
Transportation-Land Use Coordination	Transportation-land use coordination aligns freight corridors, industrial lands, employment centers, and future growth areas so goods movement remains reliable as communities develop. This practice reduces conflicts between truck routes, residential expansion, safety goals, and economic development needs. Missoula MPO is notable because Missoula Connect 2050 is explicitly linked to city and county growth policies and emphasizes protecting industrial land and truck access.		▲			▲	▲	
Corridor-Based Freight Planning	Corridor-based freight planning focuses on the specific routes where truck access, rail crossings, bottlenecks, safety, and development pressures affect freight performance most directly. It allows MPOs to target practical operational, access-management, and capacity improvements rather than relying only on broad regional policies. Missoula MPO excels because its corridor studies address freight bottlenecks, safety, access management, and multimodal conflicts on critical freight routes.		▲	▲	▲			
Multimodal Freight Planning	Multimodal freight planning considers truck, rail, airport, river, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian systems together so freight decisions support the entire transportation network. This approach helps preserve modal options, improve connectivity, and balance freight mobility with community access and safety. LAPC is notable because La Crosse combines highway, BNSF rail, Mississippi River freight, airport access, and bi-state planning in one multimodal framework.			▲		▲		▲
Rail Freight Preservation / Connectivity	Rail freight preservation protects rail corridors, rail-served industrial land, and connections to larger freight networks that support bulk and long-distance shipping. Maintaining rail access can reduce truck dependency and strengthen long-term economic competitiveness for freight-intensive businesses. MAPO is notable because it emphasizes preserving Union Pacific service, CPKC/DM&E interchange access, and rail-served industrial land as development pressures grow.		▲	▲			▲	
Air Cargo Planning / Airport Coordination	Air cargo planning coordinates airport access, express freight, logistics growth, and surface transportation connections for time-sensitive shipments. Even smaller cargo markets benefit when airport master planning is linked to MPO freight and economic development priorities. Sioux Falls MPO is notable because FSD's Air Cargo Master Plan evaluates e-commerce growth, regional market capture, and future cargo infrastructure needs.	▲				▲		
Economic Development Integration	Economic development integration links freight investments to industrial parks, employment hubs, logistics facilities, manufacturing districts, and regional competitiveness. It helps MPOs prioritize transportation projects that directly support business growth, job access, and supply-chain reliability. Corridor MPO stands out because Cedar Rapids coordinates freight planning with industrial development and advanced the Logistics Park concept to connect rail, highways, airport access, and economic growth.						▲	

Best Practice	Practice Description	Sioux Falls MPO	Missoula MPO	Mankato/North Mankato (MAPO)	Chippewa-Eau Claire MPO	Lincoln MPO	Corridor MPO (Cedar Rapids)	La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC)
Public Engagement Innovation	Public engagement innovation uses surveys, online tools, open houses, StoryMaps, and transparent project information to broaden input beyond traditional meetings. Strong engagement helps capture freight-related concerns from businesses, residents, and stakeholders while improving trust in project selection. Sioux Falls MPO excels because its statistically based transportation market research study provides measurable public input for MTP priorities.		▲	▲	▲			
GIS / Story Maps / Digital Visualization Tools	GIS, StoryMaps, and digital visualization tools make freight corridors, industrial areas, projects, and performance issues easier for stakeholders to understand. These tools improve transparency and allow MPOs to communicate complex multimodal and land-use relationships visually. Missoula MPO stands out because it uses interactive project maps, StoryMaps, engagement platforms, and transportation data tools extensively for an MPO of its size.		▲	▲				▲
Freight Cluster / Industrial Area Planning	Freight cluster planning focuses investments on industrial parks, logistics centers, rail-served land, ports, and warehousing districts where freight demand is concentrated. It supports efficient first-mile and last-mile access while protecting freight-supportive land uses from incompatible development. Missoula MPO's Wye Infrastructure Plan is notable because it coordinates transportation, rail, industrial land, and warehousing needs in a major freight cluster.		▲			▲	▲	
Congestion Management / Operations Focus	A congestion management and operations focus improves freight reliability through signal timing, ITS, intersection improvements, corridor management, TDM, and targeted capacity projects. This practice is especially valuable where truck routes share space with commuters, local traffic, and constrained urban corridors. Lincoln MPO excels because its formal Congestion Management Process links performance monitoring, operational strategies, and freight-sensitive reliability improvements.				▲	▲		▲
Freight Safety Integration	Freight safety integration evaluates truck mobility alongside crash risk, rail crossings, Complete Streets, Vision Zero, and community quality-of-life goals. It helps MPOs manage conflicts between heavy vehicles, vulnerable users, and growing urban activity on freight corridors. Missoula MPO stands out because it explicitly connects freight movement with Vision Zero, Complete Streets, safety planning, and multimodal corridor investments.		▲					
Technology / ITS Implementation	Technology and ITS implementation use traffic detection, signal modernization, cameras, message boards, data systems, and traveler information to improve corridor reliability. These tools help agencies monitor freight routes, manage incidents, and support data-driven operations without relying solely on roadway expansion. Sioux Falls MPO is notable because it is advancing signal modernization, adaptive traffic systems, cameras, and corridor management on key freight arterials and I-229 access routes.	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲	
State Freight Plan Coordination	State freight plan coordination aligns local MPO priorities with statewide data, freight networks, investment goals, and agency resources. This improves consistency across jurisdictions and helps smaller MPOs leverage technical tools, funding priorities, and freight stakeholder knowledge.			▲		▲		▲
Multi-State Coordination	Multi-state coordination requires a unique balance of potentially contradictory or misaligned state freight planning goals and trends. Both the Sioux Falls MPO and Lacrosse Area Planning Committee represent multiple states.	▲						▲