



Urban Freight Perspectives on Minnesota's Transportation System

June 2019

Metro District / Greater Twin Cities



Note: This condensed report is only to be used as an example

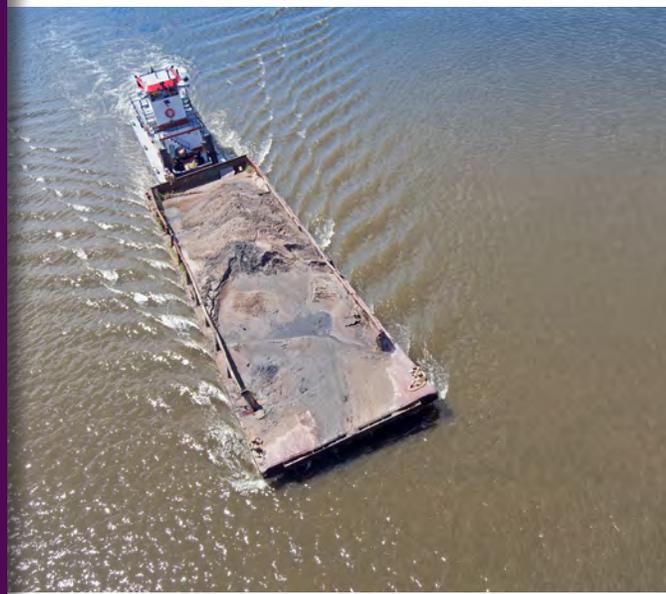


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Manufacturers and other freight-related businesses are an important customer segment for the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and a critical component of the economy for the state and the Twin Cities area. Within MnDOT's 8-county Metro District alone, there are thousands of manufacturing firms, plus warehouses, distribution centers, and other freight-related companies. For these reasons, MnDOT engaged in a 2018-19 Urban Freight Perspectives (UFP) study involving semi-structured, in-person interviews with manufacturing and other freight-related businesses in the Twin Cities region.

For the interviews, MnDOT concentrated mostly on businesses in targeted zones with high concentrations of freight-related firms located in the heart of the metro area along Interstate 94, which carries significant freight movement between Minneapolis and St. Paul. In this way, the study primarily reflects business transportation impacts along the area of MnDOT's Rethinking I-94 project between those two central cities' downtowns¹. The interviews allowed MnDOT to systematically collect and analyze customer information and develop relationships with freight-related firms, in order to better understand their transportation perspectives and priorities and simultaneously provide the businesses with information about metro area construction projects with significant freight impacts.

This report presents the findings from that 2018-19 UFP study, based on MnDOT interviews with 48 businesses that generate or carry freight.² The business classifications for those 48 firms include Manufacturing (19), Wholesale Trade (18), and Transportation and Warehousing (11) consisting mostly of businesses engaged in

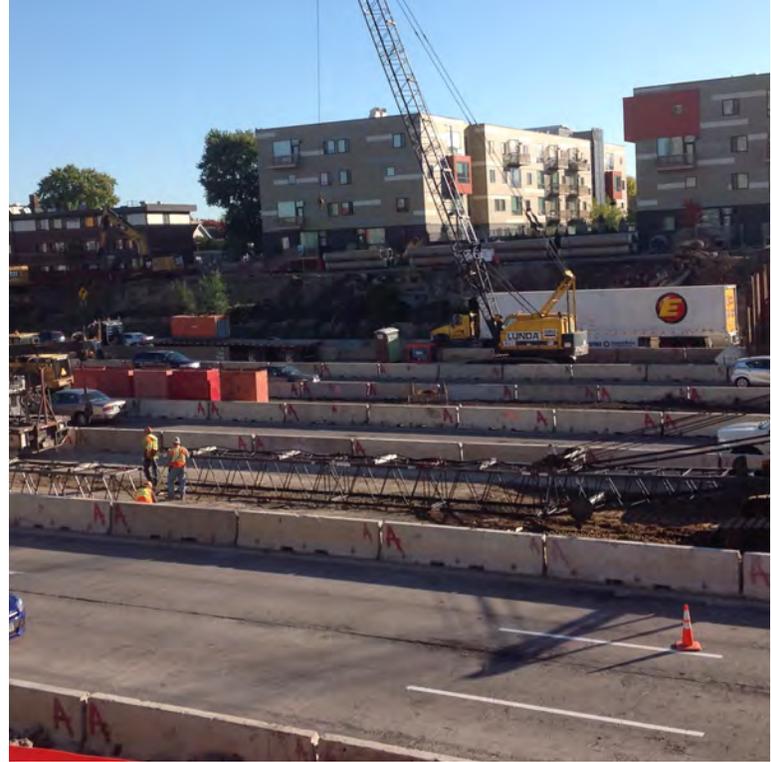
general and specialized freight transportation. Of the 48 businesses interviewed, 11 are freight carriers and 37 are freight generators, including five that handle all their own shipping, 19 that use their own trucks but also ship through carriers, and 13 that use only carriers to ship their freight.

During the interviews, MnDOT staff captured many suggestions and requests for location-specific actions to improve routes and transportation in the Twin Cities area. Subsequently, the project staff compiled location-specific comments that MnDOT is reviewing, categorizing, prioritizing, and considering for possible short-term action or for longer-term work plans and project scoping.

1 See Rethinking I-94 Area Map on page 14.

2 Two additional MnDOT interviews were conducted with passenger transportation companies (for a total of 50 business interviews), yielding useful ideas and suggestions regarding the Twin Cities area transportation system but not relating directly to freight transportation.

Steps Toward Continuous Improvement Ideas for Freight Transportation



The comments from freight-related businesses in the Metro District offered support for – and validation of – much of MnDOT’s work and priorities. Businesses also provided useful input to inform and enhance both existing efforts and future initiatives. Based on analysis of the interview comments, MnDOT’s Central Office and the Metro District might consider the following to help drive continuous improvement:

- Address useful suggestions pulled from the interview notes and compiled as potential items for short-term action and longer-term planning and project scoping.
- Continue to invest in and focus on effective congestion management to ameliorate problems such as bottlenecks and the costs that congestion poses for freight-related businesses.
- Keep freight-related businesses well informed about construction projects and pursue strategies that lessen the adverse impacts of construction on their operations.
- Consider adding more dynamic, electronic signs and make the messages conveyed on those signs as clear as possible.
- Explore opportunities for partnerships with city and county governments to address items such as truck parking challenges and safety improvements for bicyclists and pedestrians sharing the road with trucks, where appropriate.
- Continue MnDOT’s general communication and 511 information efforts, perhaps with an expanded focus on outreach to freight-related businesses and efforts to promote and increase awareness of the 511 mobile-based application and 511’s Truckers’ webpage portal.
- Build upon the 2018-19 UFP study and its interviews to strengthen relationships with freight-related businesses going forward.

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- Near real-time updates on winter road conditions, truck restrictions, traffic incidents, construction and road closures
- Travel time delays associated with traffic reports
- Commercial vehicle restriction information
- Snow plow camera images
- Current traffic speeds
- Roadside camera images
- Road weather information
- Locations of roundabouts throughout the state
- Rest area locations including real-time truck parking availability for select state-run rest areas along I-94 and I-35.



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