

Freight and Commercial Goods

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The movement of freight is an important part of a metropolitan area's transportation system. The efficient movement of freight within and through a region is critically important to industry, retail, agriculture, international and regional trade, and terminal operators. Metropolitan areas with their air cargo airports, intermodal freight yards, large trucking terminals, truck stops, and rail yards are especially affected by freight movement issues.

What is the role of the MPO in freight transportation planning?

As the forum for cooperative transportation planning and decision-making, the MPO is responsible for making sure that freight movement is considered in the transportation planning process.

MPOs can systematically incorporate freight movement issues into planning activities by:

- ▶ Defining those elements of a metropolitan area's transportation system that are critical for efficient movement of freight
- ▶ Identifying ways to measure system performance in terms of freight movement
- ▶ Developing freight-oriented data collection and modeling to identify problems and potential solutions
- ▶ Creating a freight movement advisory committee to identify important bottlenecks in the freight network

MPOs can use planning funds for freight planning and can dedicate funds for specific project implementation. Funding for specific freight projects must meet federal eligibility requirements for funding.

Projects that provide improved access to terminals and airports can be included in the federally funded transportation improvement program (TIP). In those cases where freight investment projects can directly bring about reductions in pollutant emissions, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds can be used to support those projects.

Freight and commercial transportation in the Albuquerque metro area

Measured by the dollar value of goods destined for or originating in New Mexico, trucking is the dominant mode of freight transport. Albuquerque is New Mexico's motor freight hub for truck firms, terminals, and warehouses.

Trucking terminals in Albuquerque are presently concentrated in three areas. The largest concentration of terminals is within a two square mile radius of Edith Boulevard and Montaño Road in the North Valley near I-25. A smaller concentration can be found on the West Mesa near Hanover Road and Coors Boulevard, near I-40. A new concentration is developing on the West Mesa along Central Avenue at Nine Mile Hill, near I-40.

Consulting firm Parsons Brinckerhoff conducted a truck survey in 2002 on Albuquerque's interstate system. The intent was to determine the number of large trucks – "18 wheelers" – traveling on the interstate through Albuquerque without stopping. Only trucks with enclosed trailers were counted. Data was collected from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. between April 16 and April 30, 2002. The methodology was to follow trucks until they exited the interstate. Termini points were located at the Carnuel interchange on east I-40, the 98th Street interchange on west I-40, the Tramway

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Boulevard interchange on north I-25, and the Rio Bravo Boulevard interchange on south I-25.

A summary of the data indicates that of the 443 trucks that were followed, approximately 83 percent (367) were found on I-40. About 91 percent (333) of the trucks that entered the urban area on I-40 did not stop in Albuquerque. In fact, almost all of them (320) never even left the interstate. By contrast, approximately 72 percent (55) of the followed trucks that entered the urban area on I-25 did not stop in Albuquerque. Sixty four percent (35) of these did not leave the interstate.

I-40 carries the largest volume of freight traffic: eight to nine thousand heavy trucks daily. This high concentration of heavy trucks is unique to I-40.

Issues and Concerns

MPO staff coordinated with the New Mexico Trucking Association, long-haul freight companies, and local representatives of national delivery companies to identify issues, concerns and potential strategies and investments to enhance freight and commercial goods mobility and access.

Issues identified:

- ▶ Truck access restrictions on facilities such as Tramway Boulevard, Paseo del Norte and Alameda Boulevard can result in trucks driving further, sometimes onto local streets, to make freight and package deliveries. This can increase congestion on parallel routes and produce more overall vehicle emissions.
- ▶ Noise restrictions can inhibit commercial good deliveries much as access restrictions. Improved vehicle technologies may assist in diminishing engine and tire noises. Some freight companies

have argued that in many cases trucks are quieter than autos and motorcycles, yet the noise restrictions apply only to the commercial vehicles and not the private ones.

- ▶ Hazardous materials loading facilities are limited in number and situated in the center of the metropolitan area near downtown Albuquerque. The location presents a safety issue and the surrounding commercial and residential neighborhoods, as well as the relatively narrow streets leading to the facilities, hinder large truck access.
- ▶ Freight deliveries to residential addresses are increasing, mostly due to internet shopping and package deliveries to home-based businesses. Some package and freight delivery companies report that in five years residential deliveries have increased from 5% to 15% of total freight delivery within the Albuquerque metro area, and continues to increase as a percentage every year. Access and noise restrictions in neighborhoods can result in more circuitous delivery routes, taking longer and adding expense.
- ▶ The 4th Street overpass height on Paseo del Norte is thirteen feet, nine inches (13'9"), yet semi's require fourteen feet (14') for overhead clearance. For Paseo del Norte to ever be used by large commercial trucks, the clearance issue will have to be resolved.
- ▶ Intelligent Transportation Systems are needed on the interstates and major roadways. The ability to detect incidents or congestion and to relay that information through the radio and electronic message signs in a timely manner would be particularly helpful on I-40 both east and west of the metro area.