

Notes Summary from the MARAD Toolkit Session – 2/23/2015

Are there planning gaps?

- Big ports and small ports have different challenges, especially as they may be part of a larger agency because of the application process for funds and grants.
- Small ports don't have the seed money to do the Preliminary Engineering (PE) that is regulatory for funding application
- Suggestion: different pot of dollars for port planning
- MARAD – advocate inside DOT – ports are different = self-funding
- Whole funding/planning process works for DOTs vs. a port, and especially small ports.
- FAA – there are 9 buckets of money – small, medium, large hubs
- If a small port gets a grant, then it is complicated to complete project/grant due to lack of staff, other regulatory costs.
- Post grant reporting – post completion.
- If there was something to pre-vet a project before the grant process begins.
- Concept turns into seed money.
- Concept turns into Preliminary Engineering (PE) – check its viability, then take the next steps.
- Look at all the stages!
- Ports have different considerations due to business cycles and marketing versus a government agency like the DOT.
- Planning is necessary to help get projects to the shovel-ready stage and marks the difference between dream and construction.
- Ports don't have 5-8 years to plan, design and carry out a project.
- Tools to gauge opportunities and viability of investment.
- Planning funds.
- Discretionary spending through states, and states make it available to ports.
- Suggest legislation.
- Florida has a pot of funding money for which ports compete.
- How such money does not replace current state funding?
- 3 step program (waste & water): (1. Planning; (2. Development planning/PE/NEPA, etc.; (3. Construction.
- Feds are needed to step in.
- Small & mid-size ports are not getting a share of current funding options.
- Everyone thinks their project is amazing!
- Independent review of projects (objective feedback market versus political desire).
- Natural need for project (demand) versus political desire; continual port envy!
- Exclude container ports from eligibility
- Value engineering: optimize opportunity to meet growth versus constructing to construct. What is best value for your money?
- Columbia River – bulk terminals
- Value engineering/feasibility versus build it and they will come.

- Shovel ready – can't get through permitting process without customers, and can't get customers to wait long enough for permitting.
- Need funds to get through Preliminary Engineering (PE), NEPA stage
- Usually 60 days to 6 months to construction.
- Past programs – good for highways, less history in railroads, ports.
- Federal government emphasizes the system as a whole.
- There is no dialogue on how ports fit into the regional transportation plan (ports and airports), no discussion of components, funding, or how they fit into overall roadway plan.
- Need examples of how ports have gotten MPO/TPOs attention, engage beyond highways/bike paths/pedestrian
- How the port creates jobs: convince people to vote since freight doesn't vote!
- Local to federal, origin to destination, reduce for things that can't be controlled
- Panama Canal – what will the price be?
- Ports need to understand their niche – and become attractive to the shipper.
- FHA won't pay for things that can be moved.
- STIP/TIP – State Transportation Improvement Plan/ Transportation Improvement Plan
- State freight coordinators? Only 10 states have people for maritime issues.
- If ports don't have a champion at the state level, then they can't get money and funding.
- Ports need better information.
- Is there a way for the feds to have current data available instead of having to hire costly consultants to develop forecasts based on old data?
- Need a baseline for where facilities are needed.
- Could use customs import data with zip codes to show where cargo is going in own field; could use GIS to map the data.
- Tools for toolkits? Making existing data user-friendly by developing standard data, geo reference and domestic data.
- What tools are missing?
- Private has to see ROI (Return on Investment)
- Best practices guidelines
- Projects shovel ready
- How do you walk special projects through the permit process?
- No federal programs for specific "to market" efforts or to potential customers
- The permitting process is too long.
- Culture of regulatory agencies: the existing attitude is that trying to develop port property for development is a bad thing.
- It is not much help to get the agencies to see the positive aspects of the project. It is a risk even if do everything according to regulations but in the end not get the permit.
- No predictable, logical end; can't even get a framework/process to get to permitting or decision stage.
- Can MARAD help with the Corps of Engineers?
- The processes change along the way. There is no certainty you will get the permit if follow the process. There should be consistency, reliability to the process if you follow the framework and process.

- There should be more resources available to teach and learn.
- Everyone needs to understand ports and their value: all the parties along the chain of ports need to understand competitive and economic factors for jobs and money.
- Tools to educate decision makers: (1. we have to sell the importance of ports to citizens; (2. Congress is not issuing the permits.
- In the end it comes down to the weakest link (desire, responsibility, etc.).
- OR regional solutions team – someone from governor’s office acts as ombudsman.
- Maybe this would work at national level that causes a cultural shift at governor’s office down to the agencies.

Summary

- A big disconnect exists: property ready for market versus permitting, although feds are saying they’re cutting the red tape.
- Accumulation of government statistics – gets more real time data to the present day
- Planning assistant needed for projects not shovel ready –a consistent transparent planning process is also needed.
- Don’t assume anything – it is not easy, and it depends on who is working on the project on the agency side.
- It should be a reliable, predictable, consistent process for all parties involved.