



International Commerce & Mobility Forum

5 June 2025

ICM Steering Committee – Fall Event Planning and Forum Preparation

Purpose of the Meeting:

To plan logistics and content for the upcoming ICM Forum 10 and fall events, including a joint CTS Workshop and Forum 11.

Key Discussion Points:

- Ongoing container shortages and logistics barriers for Midwest exporters
- Updates on Freight Logistics Optimization Works Program and agricultural shipping needs
- Plans for October 8th combined ICM Forum 11 and CTS Workshop including preview at June 25th Forum
- Discussion on leveraging university research for logistics innovations and policy guidance
- Proposal to pilot cargo community system at Duluth Port
- Tariff impacts on supply chains and exemptions for Great Lakes shipping
- Preview and prototyping of Freight Network Optimization Tool
- Updates on Expo 2031 planning and St. Lawrence Seaway pilot project
- Anticipated need for upper deck widebody air freight service

Notable Contributions:

- **Jan Bauer** raised urgent concerns over the lack of 20- and 40-foot containers impacting agricultural exports, and previewed plans for a pilot project tied to the St. Lawrence Seaway with expected UK-bound shipments by July.
- **Mark Berndt** discussed the Freight Logistics Optimization Works Program with 85 participants, highlighted the logistical struggles faced by identity preserved grain producers, and emphasized the need to integrate past research into new logistics systems.
- **Kyle Shelton** is coordinating plans for the October 8th workshop and Forum, navigating potential conflicts such as the Vikings London game, and working with CTS and MFAC for broader participation.
- **Gina** is scheduled to present a 10-minute overview of the October event at the June 25th Forum to increase visibility and engagement.
- **Charles Edwards** proposed establishing a cargo community system pilot in Duluth, leveraging CN Railroad links and international shipping potential.
- **Dr. John Pournoor** elaborated on the broad influence of tariffs on shipping decisions and supply chains, drawing from both pandemic-era and ongoing policy impacts; he will present on this topic at the upcoming forum.
- **Ben Zietlow** confirmed a 35-minute demonstration of the Freight Network Optimization Tool (FNOT) at Forum 10, highlighting its ability to evaluate shipping scenarios and support green corridor planning.
- **Andrew Andrusko** emphasized FNOT's long-term prototyping and scenario modeling capabilities, including support for air and ocean freight strategies.
- **Frank Douma** proposed engaging University of Minnesota students in research and analysis of the Duluth cargo system initiative.



- **Mike Loney and Brian Peters** supported the concept of upper deck widebody service, with projected Europe and Asia routes discussed by Bill Goins based on current freight volumes and future demand forecasts.

Motions:

- Motion to confirm October 8th as tentative date for Forum 11 and CTS Workshop pending NFL conflict resolution – **Passed (17 votes)**
- Motion to allocate 35 minutes at Forum 10 for the FNOT demo and a full walkthrough on June 26th – **Passed**
- Motion to approve inclusion of Duluth pilot project discussion in future forum agendas – **Passed**
- Motion to remove “Mayor’s Corner” from June 25th Forum agenda and streamline session – **Passed Unanimously**

Next Steps:

- **Kyle Shelton & Mark Berndt** to finalize October 8th event date and coordinate with MFAC and CTS
- **Gina** to prepare and present October event preview at June 25th Forum
- **Robin Hutchinson** to draft October agenda for presentation by June 25th
- **Mark Berndt** to align December CTS Symposium with October topics to avoid redundancy
- **Ben Zietlow & Andrew Andrusko** to complete FNOT prototype and prepare demo and scenarios
- **Jan Bauer** to provide project updates on St. Lawrence Seaway pilot at June 25th Forum
- **Dr. John Pournoor** to prepare presentations on tariffs and tie FNOT into TPAC findings
- **Frank Douma** to initiate student-led research into cargo community system



Detailed Notes

Meeting 1

The Virtual Meeting of the ICM Steering Committee focused on logistics and planning for upcoming fall events, including the ICM Forum 11 and a collaborative CTS Workshop. Key highlights included a detailed outline for an October half-day workshop themed 'Unpacking Freight', which aims to bridge the gap between freight and passenger transportation, alongside discussions about forming smaller expert groups for in-depth topic exploration. The committee reviewed the agenda for the upcoming ICM Forum 10, scheduled for June 25, emphasizing a balance of collaborative discussions and specific presentations on topics such as tariff impacts and transportation needs in Minnesota. Additionally, updates on the Freight Network Optimization Tool were provided, with plans for a demonstration at the forum to showcase its analytics and user functionality. Action items were assigned to committee members for finalizing event schedules, preparing demonstrations, and organizing the forum logistics, while discussions stressed a focused approach to problem-solving in the agenda.

Notes

Meeting Logistics and Fall Planning (00:00 - 06:48)

- Kyle will conclude scheduling for 8th, 10th, 15th dates by tomorrow
- Discussion about fall plans including ICM Forum 11 and CTS Workshop collaboration
- Kyle mentioned MFAC involvement in the fall events

Fall Workshop Planning and Format Discussion (06:48 - 19:34)

- Kyle detailed plans for a half-day workshop in October focused on 'Unpacking Freight' theme
- Workshop will explore overlaps between moving people and moving goods
- SRF (Justin, Andy and team) will host the fall workshop
- Workshop aims to include both freight experts and transportation planners
- Sallie suggested splitting the fall session into two parts - workshop followed by updates
- Discussion about forming smaller expert groups to meet between forums to dive deeper into specific topics
- Bill mentioned potential collaboration with Phillips Medical regarding supply chain and tariff challenges

ICM Forum 10 Agenda Review (19:35 - 32:35)

- Upcoming ICM Forum 10 scheduled for June 25th
- Agenda includes intro (10 min), collaborative topic discussion, and rail transportation segment (Tessa)
- John Pournoor will present on tariff impacts (10 min)
- Mark Berndt will provide more depth on Minnesota's transportation needs (15 min)
- Discussion about balancing agenda items with time constraints
- Andrew suggested reducing repetitive updates to focus on more in-depth discussions
- William mentioned potential for upper deck widebody aircraft within next two years

Freight Network Optimization Tool Discussion (32:36 - 43:19)

- Ben confirmed they will demonstrate the Freight Network Optimization Tool at the ICM forum
- Tool will show analytics, freight flows, benchmarks, and optimization scenarios
- Andrew noted they're preparing for user registration and login functionality
- Tool demonstration will be a 'preview' before the full walkthrough the day after ICM forum
- Bill discussed Jan Bauer's need for identifying industry clusters and companies for UK shipping program



- Andrew highlighted how the ICM Forum can assist with data to support international trade initiatives

💡 **Agenda Refinement and Meeting Structure (43:21 - 48:48)**

- Tessa suggested focusing more on the problems being solved rather than just solutions
- Bill reiterated that ICM started with a question: 'Why are we trucking international air freight to Chicago?'
- Mayor's Corner segment removed from upcoming agenda to focus on fewer topics
- Expo updates will be included only if there's new information to report
- Discussion about balancing ICM with other events like CTS Logistics seminar and MFAC quarterly meeting
- Meeting confirmed for June 25th with networking at 2pm and formal session 3-5pm

Action items

Kyle

- Conclude scheduling for the fall workshop dates by tomorrow (00:10)

Ben Zietlow

- Prepare demonstration of the Freight Network Optimization Tool for ICM forum on June 25 (32:36)

Meeting 2

Overview

- Jan Bauer highlighted ongoing container availability issues affecting shipping operations, with major challenges in accessing 20-foot and 40-foot containers critical for product transport.
- Mark Berndt detailed the Freight Logistics Optimization Works Program, which has 85 participants and addresses container demand 1-2 weeks out, while struggling with supply shortages.
- Identity preserved grain producers in Illinois need better container access to enhance profits by loading directly in fields without third-party processors, yet logistics remain a barrier.
- The upcoming combined workshop and ICM forum on October 8th, led by Kyle Shelton, aims for larger attendance and will feature a 10-minute overview from Gina at the June 25th Forum.
- Mark Berndt emphasized the necessity of leveraging two decades of university research to support modern logistics, including air cargo and electronic trade platforms.
- Charles Edwards proposed Duluth as a pilot site for a cargo community system, harnessing its international shipping capacity and synergy with CN Railroad.
- Dr. John Pournoor noted that tariffs are influencing supply chain decisions significantly, with steel tariffs affecting shipping costs and small businesses accounting for 40% of export dollar value.
- The USDOT has approved tariff exemptions for Great Lakes ships under 50,000 metric tons to promote maritime trade amidst rising costs.
- The Freight Network Optimization Tool will be demonstrated at Forum # 10, designed to identify early shippers and analyze air freight and ocean shipping scenarios.

Notes

📦 **Container Availability Challenges (00:41 - 08:44)**

- Jan Bauer raised ongoing concerns about container availability affecting shipping operations



- Mark Berndt provided comprehensive overview of ISO container challenges - 20 and 40 footers owned by shipping lines, often unpacked at ports into 53-foot domestic containers
- Chicago has fair number of containers, but other markets struggle with access
- Midwest farmers willing to grow identity preserved/non-GMO crops but need sealed containers for foreign buyers
- Railroads won't allow partially filled 53-foot containers due to stability issues
- Container depot in Kansas City serves egg producers from across Midwest, but farmers drive hundreds of miles after field work
- Failed grant attempt to build container facility outside Omaha
- North Star container stuffing facility in Twin Cities previously existed but closed
- Asian shipping lines prefer to send containers back empty rather than track them inland
- Major inland hubs like Chicago and Kansas City have better container access



Freight Logistics Optimization Works Program (05:29 - 06:47)

- Program started during COVID with 85 participants sharing container information
- Provides information 1-2 weeks out about container demand and chassis locations
- Addresses supply shortages and help coordinate container and chassis availability
- Continues to be challenge especially for heavy products like agricultural goods
- Getting access to 20-foot containers remains particularly difficult



Agricultural Container Shipping Challenges (07:27 - 10:29)

- Identity preserved grains add value by bypassing third-party processors like Cargill or ADM
- Illinois producers have moved to identity preserved grains but need container access
- Grain producers can load containers directly in fields, putting more money in their pockets
- Twin Cities intermodal yards not considered major hubs like Chicago or Kansas City
- Transload facility off Pierce Butler loading grain into containers and logs has grown over 5 years
- North Star facility in Twin Cities previously tried container stuffing but failed due to inconsistent container supply
- Bob Sinner from Sinner Brothers Grains in North Dakota active in specialty grain alliance



October Workshop and Forum Planning (14:47 - 19:29)

- Combination workshop and ICM forum number 11 planned for Wednesday, October 8th
- Kyle Shelton from CTS developing Forum and Workshop concept
- Gina will present 10-minute overview at June 25th Forum
- Rough draft agenda expected by next week for June 25th presentation regarding the October Forum
- SRF providing conference facilities, expecting larger attendance than typical 30 in-room, 30 online
- CTS and Minnesota Freight Advisory Committee, (MFAC), will invite participants
- Need planning coordination with CTS Annual Freight Symposium typically held in December



Research and Knowledge Network Development (18:05 - 26:40)

- Mark Berndt emphasized need to build on two decades of university and other research
- Suggested research agenda to support air cargo, green ocean container corridor, and electronic trade platform efforts
- Noted disconnect between available research and current program leadership knowledge
- Proposed updating and leveraging existing knowledge base
- Charles Edwards mentioned UN data governance and definitions available but largely unknown



- University of Minnesota student involvement proposed for cargo community system analysis

Duluth Port and Cargo Community System (26:40 - 29:20)

- Charles Edwards proposed Duluth as pilot location for cargo community system
- Duluth offers international shipping capabilities despite container challenges
- Kale Logistics has contract with Port of Montreal, creating potential synergy
- CN Railroad operates at both Duluth and Montreal ports
- Jan Bauer confirmed Duluth would welcome pilot program
- Kevin serving as both CFO and executive director during transition period at Duluth Port Authority
- New Coast Guard commander introduced at Deb's going away party

Tariffs and Supply Chain Impact (29:55 - 38:29)

- Dr. John Pournoor drawing from 3M experience during COVID when N95 demand spiked 1000%
- 65 export controls on intermediate components during pandemic resolved politically
- Tariffs becoming primary driver of business supply chain decisions
- Steel tariffs affecting ships - 50% of commercial shipping made in China subject to tariffs
- Ships pay tariffs twice if visiting multiple US ports
- Brexit example showed pharmaceutical companies relocating rather than paying tariffs
- 97% of small businesses export but only account for 40% of export dollar value
- Major companies like 3M and Cargill dominate export volumes
- Tariff calculators now available from C.H. Robinson, Ernst, and others

Great Lakes Shipping Tariff Exemptions (37:53 - 38:29)

- USDOT approved exemption for ships under certain volume from Chinese vessel fees
- Great Lakes ships under 50,000 metric tons exempt from tariffs
- Originally proposed at 1 million dollars, now reduced to 500,000 dollars
- Implementation delayed approximately 6 months
- Liquid natural gas vessels also exempt due to US being net LNG exporter
- LNG critical for European heating since Russian gas cutoff during Ukraine war

Freight Network Optimization Tool (40:54 - 44:48)

- Ben from Quetica has confirmed FNOT tool will be previewed at forum number 10
- 35 minutes allocated for demonstration and prototyping discussion
- Multiple planning calls over recent days preparing for FNOT demonstration
- Andrew Andrusko from MnDOT is heavily involved in preparation and the upcoming presentation on June 25th
- Tool can identify early adopter shippers and support ocean shipping analysis
- Approximately one-year prototyping timeline proposed
- Additional detailed session planned for day after ICM Forum (session will be held on June 26th)
- Tool can evaluate market potential for green corridor service with price points
- Can run scenarios to determine necessary price points for supply chain switching

Expo 2031 Planning Update (45:46 - 48:25)

- Wendy leading expo efforts with team assembled and high-level political support
- Congressman Emmer and others involved at highest levels
- Approval sitting with White House awaiting Presidential signature
- Biden administration transition delayed signing
- Optimistic about moving forward once signed



- 4 million+ visitors expected over 6 months
- Broader than horticulture - includes technology, culture, new products
- Potential game changer for regional economic development and international business attraction
- 2031 timeline provides 6 years for preparation

St. Lawrence Seaway Project Progress (49:35 - 50:08)

- Jan Bauer leading project with focus on launching pilot program
- Committed exporters to UK secured for pilot
- Potential UK ship arrival with goods expected end of July
- Planning media coverage for ship arrival if timing allows
- Project ties into broader container availability and shipping discussions
- Integration opportunities with FNOT tool and cargo community system

Upper Deck Widebody Air Freight Initiative (51:44 - 53:25)

- Mike Loney from Abbott initiated discussion based on nightly trucking to Chicago
- Brian Peters and MAC study showing potential need for service
- Tony Scales from Phillips identified as another potential supporter
- Anticipation of upper deck widebody service to Europe (potentially Liege) within 2 years is predicted by Bill Goins
- Studies show potential need for Asia routes as well

- **Action items**

Kyle Shelton

- Continue working on finalizing the best date for the combined workshop and ICM forum number 11, considering the Vikings London game conflict (14:47)

Gina

- Prepare and deliver 10-minute presentation about the October workshop and forum combination at the June 25th ICM forum (14:47)

Robin Hutchinson

- Create rough draft agenda for the October workshop by next week to have ready for the June 25th forum (27:39)

Mark Berndt

- Coordinate planning for December CTS Freight and Logistics symposium to avoid overlap with October workshop topics (18:05)
- Continue working on finalizing the best date for the combined workshop and ICM forum number 11, considering the Vikings London game conflict (14:47)

Frank Douma

Explore University of Minnesota student involvement in cargo community system analysis and research

Dr. John Pournoor

Prepare and deliver presentations on tariffs and their impact on supply chains for the June 25th Forum



Prepare Region 9 findings and connect the FNOT to TPAC project discussions

Ben Zietlow

Demonstrate the Freight Network Optimization Tool during the 35 minute segment at the upcoming ICM Forum

Jan Bauer

Provide updates on the St Lawrence Seaway project and pilot program launch during the June 25th Forum