TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................................... 3
PROJECT ........................................................................................................................................ 3
SCOPE AND PURPOSE ................................................................................................................ 3
1.3 GOALS & OBJECTIVES ....................................................................................................... 4

TASK 1: ENGAGE KEY REGIONAL PUBLIC & PRIVATE STAKEHOLDERS ...................... 4
1.1 STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION ............................................................................... 4
1.2 STAKEHOLDER DATABASE MAINTENANCE ............................................................... 5
1.3 STAKEHOLDER RECRUITMENT ............................................................................... 5
1.4 STAKEHOLDER INPUT & COMMUNICATION ............................................................. 6
1.5 INTERNAL PROJECT TEAM COORDINATION ......................................................... 7
1.6 EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT ............................................................... 7
1.7 COMMUNICATION OUTREACH CHANNELS ............................................................ 7
1.8 PROJECT BRANDING ................................................................................................. 8
1.9 PROJECT COMMUNICATION DELIVERABLES ........................................................... 8

TASK 2: ECONOMIC CONNECTIONS ............................................................................... 8
2.1 TASK 2 OVERVIEW ..................................................................................................... 8
2.2 TASK 2 DELIVERABLES .............................................................................................. 9

TASK 3: HARMONIZING REGULATORY OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES .................... 9
3.1 TASK 3 OVERVIEW .................................................................................................. 9
3.2 TASK 3 DELIVERABLES .......................................................................................... 10

TASK 4: DATA SHARING & MANAGEMENT .......................................................... 10
4.1 TASK 4 OVERVIEW ................................................................................................. 10
4.2 TASK 4 DELIVERABLES .......................................................................................... 10

TASK 5: FINAL REPORT ................................................................................................ 11
5.1 TASK 5 OVERVIEW ................................................................................................. 11
5.2 TASK 5 DELIVERABLES .......................................................................................... 11

SCHEDULE .......................................................................................................................... 12
INTRODUCTION

PROJECT BACKGROUND
The Central Plains/Heartland Region is a national hub for agriculture, manufacturing and freight distribution that includes the states of southwestern Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska. Changes in the freight industry are creating a paradigm shift in how all participants in goods movement (from supplier to end consumer) interface with transportation infrastructure. To address the need that this shift presents, the Central Plains/Heartland Region has created this project to develop a freight technology plan (Heartland Freight Technology Plan) that will deliver:

- A prioritization framework for new technologies;
- Goals and strategies for harmonizing regulation;
- Recommendations for data management and sharing, and;
- A blueprint for action and implementation.

The Heartland Freight Technology Plan (plan) is part of FHWA’s National Economic Partnership grant program, and is being developed through a partnership of six MPOs, five state DOTs, the Heartland Civic Collaborative and other academic, business and industry leaders.

To assist the Heartland Freight Technology Consortium (Consortium) in engaging key public and private stakeholders around a regional freight technology plan, the following engagement strategy outlines roles, responsibilities, and communication methods to foster input, buy-in and sustained collaboration throughout the plan development, implementation and beyond.

SCOPE AND PURPOSE
The purpose of this plan is to document and guide the stakeholder engagement activities in developing a freight technology plan that will support the vitality of the Central Plains/Heartland mega-region. The plan is a living document that provides guidance throughout the project lifecycle. It is designed to facilitate discussion among stakeholders while fostering collaboration and understanding that actively involves all impacted stakeholders in a timely manner, allowing for sufficient opportunity to voice needs, opinions, and concerns. It is not merely a plan to distribute information, but to incorporate feedback from stakeholders into project deliverables. This plan also defines roles and responsibilities, a timeline for stakeholder involvement as well as stakeholder feedback loops for key deliverables.
The scope of the stakeholder outreach effort has been focused to address the three specific tasks that will be addressed in the plan. This was done to avoid the broad scope of potential candidates and instead leverage the collective energy of the Consortium members and potential stakeholders in the direction of specific needs.

1.3 GOALS & OBJECTIVES
The following are identified goals and objectives of the engagement strategy:

- **Identify and engage** multi-jurisdictional partners to work alongside the Consortium to establish stronger regional freight and commerce collaboration.
- **Differentiate** this effort from other planning efforts, such as statewide freight plans.
- **Establish sustainable strategic partnerships** that share regional insight and experiences for evaluating, cultivating, and adopting beneficial New Freight technologies.
- **Craft effective communication and messaging strategies** to support regional collaboration and convey study findings with public and private sector stakeholders.
- **Outline best practices** to ensure appropriate stakeholders continue to participate and stay engaged.

TASK 1: ENGAGE KEY REGIONAL PUBLIC & PRIVATE STAKEHOLDERS

1.1 STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION
One of the most important aspects of stakeholder engagement is identifying the right stakeholders to engage. The project team, led by WSP, will work closely with the Consortium to identify a broad set of stakeholders and other groups to engage in the project. A second resource for stakeholder identification will be the respective industry groups and representatives of their various committees, including standards committees and similar. Organizations such as the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), ITS America, American Trucking Association (ATA), American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA), Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA), and others will all be considered in this process. Our team will also look for opportunities to bring in stakeholders from the growing AV industry.

Using the above list and criteria, the WSP project team will prepare a stakeholder database organized by industry, role, geographic location, and anticipated project task.
involvement. The initial stakeholder list may be refined and/or expanded as the project progresses and will be categorized as follows:

- **Industry** (shippers/receivers such as manufacturers and retailers)
- **Logistics** service providers (carriers of all types, third-party logistics (3PLs), ports and airports, warehousing, forwarders)
- **Technology** researchers and providers
- **Public** agencies and organizations (including economic development)
- **Advocacy/Interest Groups** (including industry associations)
- **Academia**

### 1.2 STAKEHOLDER DATABASE MAINTENANCE

WSP and the Consortium must work as a team to maintain the stakeholder database. The database will be created by the project team and then shared with the Consortium for review. The Consortium will be asked to provide the name and contact info, including email, phone, and suggested role in the project for specific members of their freight and technology committees as well as other contacts within their networks. WSP will be responsible for updates to the database which will be maintained throughout the life of the project. At a minimum, the spreadsheet will be updated on the Trello site monthly; updates may occur more often to capture new stakeholders as well as to record participation, outreach attempts and interactions.

WSP will propose a recommended process to facilitate this continual exchange of information and provide a project team point of contact to lead this task. An early project meeting agenda will include review, discussion and group development/maintenance of the stakeholder list. Once agreed upon, the initial stakeholder database and maintenance process will be formalized.

The project team will maintain the database in an Excel spreadsheet format and will share updates in either Excel spreadsheet or PDF file formats.

### 1.3 STAKEHOLDER RECRUITMENT

Reaching stakeholders in the way best suited to them will be key to fostering sustained input and collaboration. Doing this will allow the Consortium and project team to gauge where stakeholders stand, what they value and their possible concerns. Strategic outreach and engagement will take place throughout the project and key tasks/deliverables are outlined in an engagement schedule within this report. Communication tools will be established and updated as the project progresses to provide the information needed to encourage stakeholders to participate in the Freight Technology Planning process. It will be important for Consortium members to leverage existing relationships with stakeholders to recruit meaningful participation. WSP will lead a
collaborative process to prioritize and match stakeholders to support project tasks. This will be done with support from Consortium members to leverage established relationships, geographic location and industry expertise.

The project team will prepare a project introduction letter/fact sheet and schedule that will be used as part of the stakeholder recruitment process. Upon agreement on the stakeholder data and the initial engagement material by the Consortium, the project team and Consortium members will initiate recruitment – contacting potential stakeholders, conveying the purpose and need for their input and documenting their commitment. Any stakeholder engagement that occurs should be reported to the project team to be recorded in the database. All stakeholder interactions should be tracked and recorded in the stakeholder database, including:

- Email distribution
- Survey distribution
- Phone call
- Presentation attendance (via sign-in sheet)
- Workshop invitation/attendance

1.4 STAKEHOLDER INPUT & COMMUNICATION

The project team will maximize value for and from stakeholders through effective and consistent messaging, communicating early and often and by blending an appropriate mix of in-person and online outreach channels. Online webinar-style meetings can be hosted, as appropriate, to limit calendar conflicts and travel time. Available coordination and input methods include:

- Face-to-face and telephone interviews
- Workshops/small-group meetings
- Conferences
- Electronic communications (E-blasts)
- Webinars and/or teleconferences
- Online survey (MetroQuest)
- Consortium-hosted Summit

The project team will work with the Consortium to identify the most appropriate stakeholder outreach method to gather the input and data needed to support the outlined project tasks. During the recruitment phase, key stakeholders should be asked to provide their preferred method for engagement, including in-person meetings, phone interviews/updates, teleconference, or a one-time online survey. This information would be captured in the stakeholder database and inform the primary communication methods utilized by the project team and Consortium.
1.5 INTERNAL PROJECT TEAM COORDINATION
With six MPOs and five state DOTs, the immediate marker for success will be adopting best practices for early and continuous information sharing and collaboration. The project team will utilize the existing Trello project site as the primary means for providing Consortium members with updates and reference materials to be reviewed and utilized. This information will be kept current for easy access and distribution.

1.6 EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT
As the project progresses, WSP will create communication tools to support the data needs of each outlined task and keep participating agencies/groups informed. A messaging “toolkit” will be created with information provided in monthly project update reports. This information will be formatted for both print and digital promotion via project website, Consortium /partner agency social media pages and other outlets as determined most effective for the message to be communicated and target audience. The use of thoughtful, consistent messaging through effective outreach tools will help the Consortium and project team gain the internal and external support needed for further implementation and growth.

1.7 COMMUNICATION OUTREACH CHANNELS
The project team will utilize a range of online and in-person techniques and strategies to share project information/updates and elicit participation. Together with the Consortium, the project team will identify the appropriate outreach channel for communication and input needs throughout the project, including:

- **Project Website** – explore stand-alone project site in addition to existing Consortium member websites
- **Social Media** – the project team will create messages and suggested posts to be shared through established Consortium and stakeholder Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram pages.
- **Informational Video or Narrated Power Point** – the project team may create short videos or narrated presentations to help tell the project story, recruit stakeholders, provide updates at milestone points of the project, or promote regional economic differentiators. WSP will explore ways to partner with Consortium members for support in the production of the video.
- **Presentations** – the project team will create a PowerPoint presentation that can be used by Consortium members to share with stakeholders
- **Email** – the project team will create messaging to be distributed by the Consortium members via established email lists
- **Internal Communications/Internet** – the project team will create messaging to be distributed in existing internal newsletters or intranet channels
Media Relations – the project team will work with the Consortium to craft news releases and formulate responses to media inquiries. The Consortium members will serve as the primary spokespeople for the project promotions.

1.8 PROJECT BRANDING
The project team will work with the Consortium to establish a project “look-and-feel” using font, color, and consistent formatting for all outreach materials to build brand recognition and awareness. In addition to final/approved, ready-to-use outreach tools created by the project team, the Consortium will be provided templates/guidelines for sustained use. These items include:
- Visual Identity Including Logo and Style Guide
- Microsoft Word Document Template(s)
- PowerPoint Presentation
- Email Template

1.9 PROJECT COMMUNICATION DELIVERABLES
The project team expects to deliver the following products throughout the life of the project to support the tasks of the study:
- Stakeholder engagement schedule
- Stakeholder database (Excel file) with contact information
- Stakeholder recruitment packet with an email/letter, fact sheet and schedule
- Short video or narrated PowerPoint
- External communications toolkit with PowerPoint presentation
- Project website
- Monthly emails, website posts and social media posts to be distributed by Consortium members
- News releases
- Talking points
- Online and printed survey(s) (up to three, timing TBD throughout project)

TASK 2: ECONOMIC CONNECTIONS

2.1 TASK 2 OVERVIEW
WSP will define the key supply chains, flows and locations for the region. Supply chains derive advantage from location, whether from proximity to resources, suppliers, markets, labor, infrastructure or other factors. Working with the Consortium, WSP will define the region’s major urban and rural nodes by reviewing and mapping such factors from national freight data sources such as a) total freight traffic in tons and value by county;
b) traffic and employment by county for critical sectors; c) forecast growth; and d) percentages of urban versus rural activity.

During Task 2, information gaps may be identified that can best be filled by stakeholder insight, and this information will inform the framing of survey questions for an online, interactive survey through MetroQuest. WSP will develop a survey using the MetroQuest engagement tool that can be emailed to stakeholders, linked to from websites, and posted on social media. Paid advertisements may be used for targeted outreach. The survey will be crafted to gather stakeholder input and preferences quickly (within five minutes) in an interactive format.

**2.2 TASK 2 DELIVERABLES**
- MetroQuest Survey
- Facebook/Instagram Advertisements

**TASK 3: HARMONIZING REGULATORY OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES**

**3.1 TASK 3 OVERVIEW**
The project team will identify and analyze the current and expected deployment of freight technologies. To inform this process, a literature review will be conducted. Stakeholders will then be engaged through interviews as needed to deepen understanding of agency challenges.

WSP will summarize best practices and introduce them in a workshop or small group setting with representatives from the partner agencies for comparison of business practices, the institutional obstacles they may face and how they may be overcome. Together with the Consortium, the project team will utilize these workshops and information-gathering sessions with relevant stakeholders to gather input and stimulate brainstorming on the data policy.

Traditional print and online surveys, may also be used in addition to MetroQuest. These surveys could be targeted to specific stakeholder types and will allow for delving deeper into key issues with particularly engaged stakeholders and stakeholder groups.

From the surveys, best practices review and workshop, we will be able to formulate a SWOT analysis of freight technology planning in the region and define the steps needed to commence deployment of probable, beneficial technologies in the next one to two years, and the next five to ten years.
**3.2 TASK 3 DELIVERABLES**
- Stakeholder interview scripts
- Stakeholder interview summaries
- Workshop agenda
- Workshop presentation
- Workshop materials
- Workshop summaries
- Small group meeting agenda
- Meeting summaries
- Traditional print/online survey(s) (up to three, timing TBD throughout project)

**TASK 4: DATA SHARING & MANAGEMENT**

**4.1 TASK 4 OVERVIEW**
WSP will create a plain language Data Guidebook, highlighting best practices, data sharing/management templates and a system architecture to push the region and freight stakeholders forward – setting the stage for enhanced data management practices that benefit freight stakeholders and agencies alike.

A key step toward creating this guidebook will be a workshop with partners to evaluate the potential architecture for data sharing, use and management. The workshop outcomes will establish a clear definition of the broad spectrum of private and public sector data aggregation, sharing, use and other arrangements key to integration. Furthermore, the workshop would establish high-level requirements for a future multi-state data sharing and management system.

WSP will support any level of required functionality for this workshop, from simple webinars to interactive, in-person meetings. WSP will also evaluate data exchanges using a framework that looks at not only public sector data products, but also business-to-business interactions, business-to-infrastructure data sharing and open data sharing.

The MetroQuest survey will continue through Task 4. Other surveys will also be used as needed at workshops and during other stakeholder engagement activities to gather additional input.

**4.2 TASK 4 DELIVERABLES**
- Workshop Agenda
- Workshop Presentation
- Workshop Materials
- Workshop Summary
TASK 5: FINAL REPORT

5.1 TASK 5 OVERVIEW
The final report will provide a narrative summary of the methodology, process, challenges, and solutions in providing regional guidance, and incorporate technical analyses prepared during the prior tasks. It will be a companion to the Data Guidebook created during Task 4 and will be designed for readability at 10-15 pages in length.

WSP will coordinate with the Consortium through the review and final approval of the report. The report will be sent to Consortium members and stakeholders identified during the study. It will be made available publicly through websites, social media, emails, new releases and other methods as determined by Consortium partners.

The results of stakeholder engagement efforts will be documented. Effectiveness of these efforts will be determined based on the number of stakeholders engaged, how many contacts resulted in interviews, attendance at workshops/small group meetings, and the number of surveys completed. WSP will provide a summary including details about which engagement and outreach methods proved most effective.

The project team will additionally recommend next steps, roles, and responsibilities for the Consortium in developing and sustaining regional collaboration around the freight technology plan. These will include methods and approaches to find, qualify and ensure appropriate stakeholders continue to participate and stay engaged.

5.2 TASK 5 DELIVERABLES
- Final Report
- Stakeholder engagement summary and results
- Stakeholder engagement recommendations
- Public and stakeholder communications toolkit
## SCHEDULE

### STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT TASKS ACTIVITIES AND DELIVERABLES

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<th>TASK</th>
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<th>2020</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nov</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TASK 1: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT</strong></td>
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<td>Stakeholder Engagement Plan</td>
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<td>Monthly Communications Toolkit</td>
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<td><strong>TASK 2: ECONOMIC CONNECTIONS</strong></td>
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<td>MetroQuest Survey</td>
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<td>Facebook/Instagram Advertisements</td>
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<td><strong>TASK 3: REGULATORY STRATEGIES</strong></td>
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<td>Stakeholder Interviews</td>
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<td>Workshop/Small Group Meetings</td>
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<td>Additional Surveys (TBD)</td>
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<td><strong>TASK 4: DATA SHARING &amp; MGMT</strong></td>
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<td>Workshop</td>
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<td><strong>TASK 5: FINAL REPORT</strong></td>
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<td>Stakeholder Engagement Summary</td>
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<td>Summary Communications Toolkit</td>
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**LEGEND:**
- **ACTIVE TASK**
- **DELIVERABLE**