The Intermodal Container Era

History, Security, and Trends
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INTRODUCTION

Toward More Golden Anniversaries: Securing Transportation’s Place in the National Policy Agenda
Jeffrey N. Shane

The golden anniversaries of the Interstate Highway System and container shipping have made 2006 a special year for transportation. At the same time, a new wave of transportation innovation is gaining momentum through several initiatives, including a transformational and collaborative national strategy to solve the shortfall in transportation capacity and to move freight more reliably and efficiently, so that the transportation system continues to drive economic growth.

Freight Transportation Industry Roundtable: Fostering a Dialogue with Federal Policy Makers
Michael D. Meyer

The Containership Revolution: Malcom McLean’s 1956 Innovation Goes Global
Brian J. Cudahy

On April 26, 1956, the Ideal X cast off from Port Newark, New Jersey, for Houston, Texas, specially equipped to carry 56 trailer-truck bodies, the first containers, and launched a revolution that has transformed and stimulated the growth of U.S. and world trade. The author traces the origin and development of the intermodal freight innovation by Malcom McLean, the evolution of the vessel designs, the efficiencies achieved, and the obstacles overcome in creating and shaping a now-global industry.

Container Shipping and the Economy: Stimulating Trade and Transformations Worldwide
Marc Levinson

The container is at the core of a highly automated system for moving goods from anywhere to anywhere worldwide, with a minimum of cost and complication, making shipping cheap and changing the shape of the world economy, this author notes. New ports have emerged that function like vast factories and serve as hubs in a nearly seamless global freight system. Container shipping has played a major role in increasing the integration of the global economy.

The 40-Foot Container: Industry Standard Faces Challenges and Change
Ron Katims

The drive to increase the economies of scale in container shipping on waterways, highways, and railways is challenging the modular standards of 20- and 40-foot container lengths, set by the International Organization for Standardization in the early 1960s. This author reports that the 53-foot container is in widespread use in U.S. domestic freight, and China also may adopt the larger size, which will require adjustments by carriers, ports, and terminals.

Can Intermodal Freight Terminals Handle Supersizing?
Robert Harrison

COVER: View of the Port of Long Beach, California, from the upper structure of a new gantry crane on Pier J, showing containers on trucks, trains, and ships. The port handled more than 6.7 million containers in 2005. (Photo courtesy of the Port of Long Beach.)
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World Trade Security Is Imperative and Attainable:
Cooperative Effort, U.S. Leadership Are Necessary
Charles G. Raymond

Containerization was an American innovation, proved in domestic trade by an American company, Sea-Land Service, Inc., before becoming a global revolution. To accomplish the complex and far-reaching task of securing world trade from outside threat, American leadership is needed again to drive the infrastructure and technology investments required for continued economic prosperity, this author maintains, presenting a blueprint for a layered, cooperative approach involving government and industry.

22 From There to Here: Supply Chain Security
Text and graphics courtesy of the Port of Tacoma

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COMING NEXT ISSUE

The future of highway and transit finance—identified as a critical issue by the TRB Executive Committee—is the topic of a feature article reviewing current sources of revenue, the financing system, and the options ahead, in the November-December 2006 TR News. Other features examine the outsourcing of project delivery functions by state departments of transportation and present one state's successful model for a pavement preservation program, plus an initiative to improve road safety in developing countries and the latest on commuting in the United States.