

OVERVIEW

The nation's ports, both coastal and inland, are facing a dilemma. It is a challenge to a large degree resulting from their own successes.

In most cases, ports were one of the very first transportation systems developed. As their role of point-of-entry to unexplored or undeveloped areas grew, so too did their surrounding populations. Eventually, competing interests were bound to converge, or even collide.

Today, ports must conduct business in an increasingly complex and difficult urban arena. It involves far more than loading or unloading the cargo and getting to or from the port. Ports must be a good neighbor, contributor to the community, job creator, and tax revenue generator.

Such dual-purpose roles are also expected of the entire transportation industry serving ports. For some, it is a new task and somewhat unexpected. For others, it is a familiar responsibility necessary to conducting business in the area.

It is in this multipurpose, sometimes conflicting, set of requirements, responsibilities and expectations that ports and the surface transportation community find themselves operating.

The timing of the subject, **Ports-Land Access: Public Policy Issues**, is especially important, when viewed against parallel trends:

- growing U.S. international trade;
- intense international economic competition;
- worsening urban traffic congestion in port regions;
- increasing awareness of environmental quality in port regions; and
- acceptance of leadership position by seaports for land access issues.

At the same time, certain policy windows of opportunity should be considered:

- reauthorization of the U.S. Surface Transportation Assistance Act (passed October 1991);
- new national Transportation Policy Statement;
- new state-level Transportation Policy Statements;
- technological developments in transportation, service hardware and software; and
- indications of improved communication and cooperation between transportation labor and management.

With the growing focus on port-land access issues, more coordinated approaches and solutions will be developed and applied. To be successful, they must address a broad spectrum of issues, including:

1. transportation system supply and future capacity
2. transportation system demand
3. equipment
4. rights-of-way
5. technology
6. environmental needs
7. safety
8. permits
9. labor
10. management
11. funds
12. land use competition

Consider what the benefits are from successfully negotiating such challenges: more efficient logistical systems, newer technologies, less urban and highway disruption, fewer railroad delays, cleaner air and energy savings; and for the consumer: lower transportation costs. The bottom line for the nation is a stronger, competitive trade position.

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