

Landside Port Access

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One critical but often overlooked component of the nation's transportation system is efficient landside access to ports. Today truck-congested roads and inadequate rail links to marine terminals threaten the efficiency of the intermodal transportation system in this country. Frequently it is on those few miles of rail and road nearest to the port where cargo can be delayed, leading to higher costs and lower profit margins for the transportation industry. These costs in turn put pressure on carriers to raise the price of their services to the user.

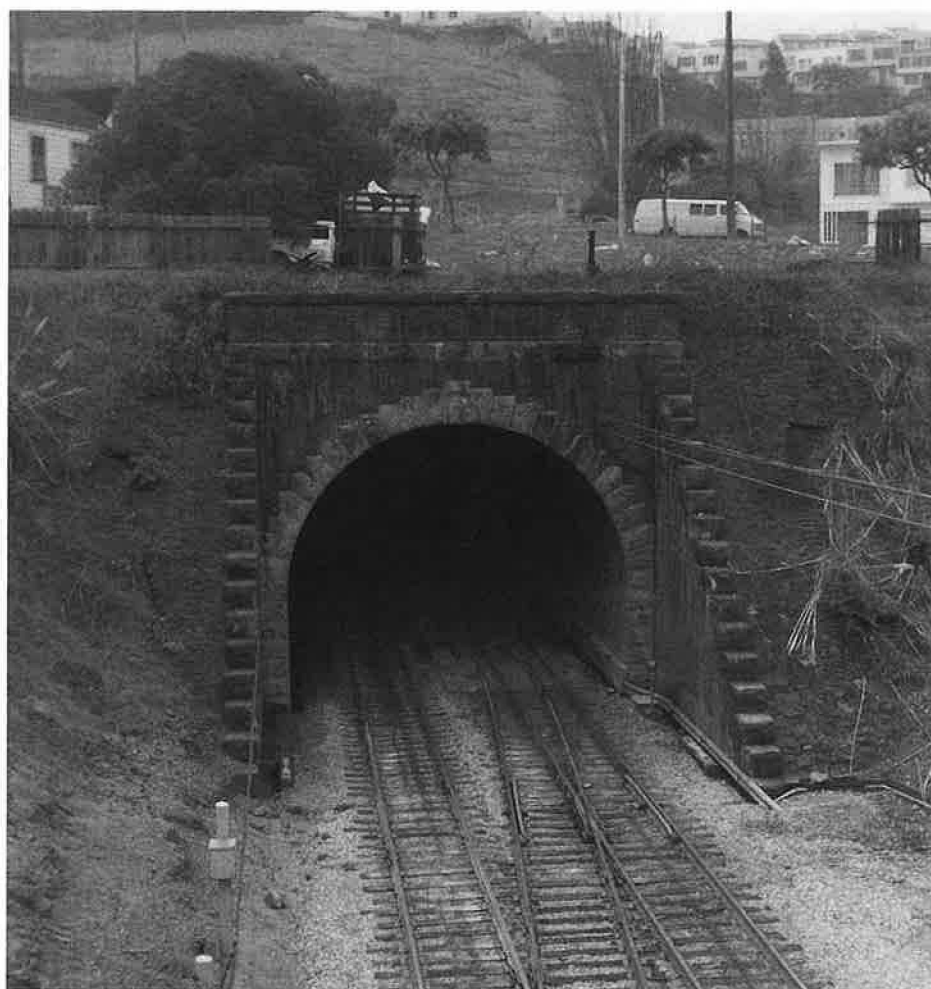
An important goal of the President's National Transportation Policy, developed under the leadership of former Secretary of Transportation Samuel K. Skinner, is enhancement of intermodal connections at

ports to improve the foreign trade competitiveness of the United States. As Skinner said in ceremonies marking the completion of Interstate 40:

Efficient container ships at a seaport are of little use if trains or trucks transporting cargo containers encounter impediments and delays in reaching them. No matter how good the individual components of the transportation system may be, the key to timely movement of people or goods from origin to destination is the intermodal connection.

Assessing Intermodal Land Access

During the last two years, the Maritime Administration (MARAD) has taken the lead



Inadequate clearance for double-stack train movement in rail tunnel in San Francisco area is example of physical impediments facing some ports.

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in assessing the adequacy of intermodal land access at U.S. ports. MARAD has been joined by four other U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) agencies in this effort: the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Research and Special Programs Administration (RSPA), and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). These DOT agencies were joined by the American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA), American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), and Inland Rivers, Ports and Terminals, Inc. (IRPT). Under the lead of MARAD's Office of Port and Intermodal Development, these organizations have formed a working group to guide the nationwide assessment.

MARAD asked the Transportation Research Board to establish a study panel to investigate the severity of inadequate land transportation links to ports. With technical support from AAPA, AASHTO, and IRPT, the DOT agencies joined in assisting the efforts of the TRB panel to identify and recommend strategies to alleviate landside port access bottlenecks. TRB plans to complete its investigation in two phases, concentrating in Phase I on general cargo and container ports and in Phase II on bulk cargo ports. An interim report on Phase I was released in March 1992 and a final TRB report (which will include Phases I and II) is scheduled for completion in October 1992. The working group has reported on land access concerns and issues at 16 ports throughout the country.

Four main categories of issues are involved in the investigation: institutional, physical, land use, and regulatory. *Institutional* concerns have been focused on the poor communication and coordination that may inhibit effective use of organizations that can properly address rail and highway congestion issues in port areas. *Physical* factors include obstacles such as overhead clearance limitations for double-stack trains, access to Interstate highways, and inadequate street design and pavement strength to handle heavier and larger vehicles. These factors inhibit the efficient movement of trucks and rail cars to and from port areas. *Land-use* concerns focus on encroachment of nonmaritime activities

that may impede transportation access to port facilities. It is increasingly important to emphasize maintenance of sufficient land for port-related ancillary services for present and future use. In the *regulatory* category, MARAD has sought to address government regulations concerning safety, the environment, operating constraints, and contractual rules that impede and add to the cost of interchanging intermodal freight at marine terminal locations.

ISTEA Review

The port and intermodal shipping community has concurrently begun a comprehensive review of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) as a potential tool to plan and fund landside port access problems. In broad terms, the act provides authorization for highways, highway safety, and mass transportation for U.S. fiscal years 1992–1997, and carries with it federal funding of approximately \$155 billion, as outlined in six separate titles. ISTEA's statement of policy enunciates its purpose clearly, as follows:

[T]o develop a National Intermodal Transportation System that is economically efficient, environmentally sound, provides the foundation for the nation to compete in the global economy, and will move people and goods in an energy efficient manner.

As stated, the act goes beyond basic highway provisions into the realm of an integrated intermodal transportation system. In particular, briefly described below are the four key programs of importance to ports:

- The *National Highway System* will consist of 155,000 miles (plus or minus 15 percent) of major roads in the United States which may serve ports, airports, and other major intermodal transportation facilities. This system will include all Interstate routes, a large percentage of urban and rural principal arterials, the defense strategic highway network, and strategic highway connectors. The NHS funding level is \$21 billion for the six-year period covered by the legislation.

- The *Surface Transportation Program* represents a new type of block grant program that may be used by the states and localities for roads (including NHS) that are not functionally classified as local or rural minor collectors. Total funding for STP over the six years is \$23.9 billion. This total can be augmented by funds from other programs.

- The *Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation Program* is an existing program designed to provide funding assistance for any bridge on a public road. The continued authorization is \$16.1 billion.

- The *Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program* directs funds toward transportation projects in nonattainment areas for ozone and carbon monoxide. These projects will contribute to meeting the attainment of national ambient area air quality standards. If a state has none of these nonattainment areas, the funds may be used as if they were STP funds. Total funding for the program is \$6 billion.

The federal share for each of these programs is 80 percent. Highway funds are also available for activities that enhance the environment, such as wetland banking, mitigation of damage to wildlife habitat, and other activities, through several programs under Title I of the act.

Although the act states in its declaration of policy that "The National Intermodal Transportation System shall provide improved access to ports and airports, the Nation's link to world commerce," funding is not guaranteed to accomplish this objective. Through the key programs already mentioned and other provisions, it affords ports the opportunity to present transportation access needs to state and local planning organizations for consideration and federal funding on the basis of certain specified criteria.

MARAD Programs

MARAD anticipates acceleration of its activities to deal with land access problems at ports. One of the key initiatives planned is for MARAD to work with the public and private sectors to implement pertinent pro-



Interagency study team members at Port of Richmond, California. *From left:* Michael Powers (Port of Richmond), William Druhan (AASHTO), John Porco (RSPA), Kelly Chapman and Richard Walker (MARAD), Cristina Casgar (TRB), and William Marley (FHWA).

visions of ISTEA. This includes a number of training and outreach programs with port and transportation industry organizations seeking relief from access bottlenecks and with state and local organizations responsible for planning and funding such projects.

This initiative will parallel another key program, which entails the implementation of a memorandum of understanding recently signed by the administrators of MARAD and FHWA. Four of the provisions include cooperation to

- Jointly develop an outreach program for state transportation agencies, metropolitan planning organizations, and U.S. port authorities to discuss mechanisms for effectively incorporating landside port access considerations into the transportation planning process.

- Jointly develop guidelines for landside port access for consideration by states in transportation planning and project identification.

- Incorporate jointly developed training

material on landside port access issues into appropriate FHWA transportation planning courses.

- Share information on landside port access problems and the NHS designation process with each other and with state and local transportation agencies so that such information may be considered when analyses of intermodal connectivity are considered.

Summary

Intermodal connections at U.S. ports will continue to be a critical factor in the nation's ability to compete in international trade. Passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 now gives representatives of public port agencies the opportunity to present their connectivity needs on an equal basis with those of other transportation projects that facilitate passenger as well as freight transportation. Historically, passenger transportation proj-

ects have received greater political support because they directly affect constituents. Intermodal access improvement projects near port locations that facilitate cargo do not get the same media coverage and visibility that mass transit programs garner at the local level—the truism being “Freight does not vote.”

Public awareness of the nation's escalating land transportation bottlenecks at U.S. ports must be increased. Greater priority must be given by states and localities to identify and fund projects that benefit goods movement as an aspect of national competitiveness. This is the challenge and opportunity faced by U.S. ports in becoming more actively involved with state and local transportation agencies. Their concerns must be heard to ensure that connectivity needs are adequately considered in designating the new NHS and in developing urbanized area and statewide transportation plans.