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ADMINISTRATION

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Spending on U.S. rail seen stuck at the station

CHICAGO - Major U.S. freight railroads and their advocates have argued for years that government investment is needed in the country's rail system to take freight off congested highways and keep the economy moving. But supporters say rail investments have been largely ignored by Congress, suggesting political support is lacking, despite warnings action must be taken sooner rather than later.

"We're in a growing crisis in terms of investment," Republican Congressman Tom Petri of Wisconsin, who is a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, said in an interview. "Any serious country needs to take a long-term perspective and make reasoned investments in its future." But many rail analysts are skeptical government will act.

"After all of the money that has been spent on bank bailouts and the stimulus package, I doubt there will be enough political will to support significant investment in railroads," said Jason Seidl, an analyst at brokerage Dahlman Rose.

The top domestic carriers include Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corp (BNI.N: [Quote](#), [Profile](#), [Research](#), [Stock Buzz](#)), Norfolk Southern Corp (NSC.N: [Quote](#), [Profile](#), [Research](#), [Stock Buzz](#)), Union Pacific Corp (UNP.N: [Quote](#), [Profile](#), [Research](#), [Stock Buzz](#)) and CSX Corp (CSX.N: [Quote](#), [Profile](#), [Research](#), [Stock Buzz](#)).

Unlike highways that receive public funding, private U.S. railroads foot the bill for rail investments -- spending called insufficient to meet the country's future transport needs by Petri and many industry executives at a meeting this week. "There is not a long tradition of funding freight infrastructure -- yet," said MarySue Barrett, president of Chicago's Metropolitan Planning Council, at the event looking at how to get rail freight investment included in the Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill.

Currently, the funding blueprint making its way through Congress mainly for federal highway and transit programs, includes provisions to streamline freight movement, improve infrastructure and boost safety. For instance, a Senate provision would authorize a 10 percent shift in freight traffic from trucks to rail and other modes by 2020. U.S. freight railroads are lobbying for greater, long-term government investment and have proposed tax incentives to expand capacity and favor public-private partnerships for infrastructure projects.

Much of the concern comes from U.S. Department of Transportation estimates that rail freight tonnage will rise 88 percent by 2035. A 2007 study compiled for the Association of American Railroads estimated the industry would require investments of \$148 billion for infrastructure expansion over that period to keep pace with the forecast demand. About \$96 billion of those funds could come from private railroads, it said.

While demand is set to grow, available track in the country is shrinking. Logistics professor Tom Mentzer of the University of Tennessee said that, when he started watching railroads in 1975 there were 225,000 miles of rail in the United States. Today, that number is about 150,000 miles. But he was not optimistic about big government spending any time soon.

"I don't see things changing without a crisis," he said, citing taxpayer sentiment. "Rail is just not a popular issue." A study issued last week by the Economic Intelligence Unit for consultant KPMG polled 118 U.S. infrastructure executives and found more than 90 percent were concerned the current level of rail infrastructure cannot support long term economic growth. More than a quarter called for government involvement.

Kristine Burr, Assistant Deputy Minister of Policy for Transport Canada, told reporters at the Chicago meeting that the urgency of Canada's own transport situation had helped the government take actions that included increased rail spending. "We were facing a crisis -- there was a lot of congestion," she said. Executives hope the United States will take a similar approach.

"The movement of goods around the country is something people take for granted," said McCain Foods VP of Planning, Distribution and Customer Service Ron Pillsbury. "We need to educate constituencies around the country about what this means to them and their daily lives," he added. "We need to help build political support."

For additional information, please see the following URL website: <http://www.reuters.com/article/ousiv/idUSTRE57B5JF20090812>

Author: [Ian Sherr](#) - Reuters

Date: Wed Aug 12, 2009 4:21pm EDT

President Obama pledges to solve U.S.-Mexico trucking dispute

August 10- During a recent trip to Mexico, President Obama told Mexican President Felipe Calderon he is committed to resolving a dispute over Mexican truck access to U.S. highways, Bloomberg reported Monday.

Obama said he will also address safety concerns about the trucks that have been raised by Congress, an administration official said after the two leaders met in Guadalajara, Mexico, Sunday in a weekend summit among North American leaders, Bloomberg said. Mexico's President Calderon told Obama that the dispute has hurt trade, raised consumer costs and reduced job creation, according to a Mexican statement, Bloomberg reported.

Mexican trucks have been allowed to operate in a border zone within about 25 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border, and the Department of Transportation under the Bush administration began a pilot program in 2007 allowing some Mexican carriers to operate on all U.S. roads.

Congress suspended that program in March and a group of Mexican truckers in June said they would sue the U.S. for \$6 billion over trade concerns related to the prohibition, which they said violates the 1993 North American Free Trade Agreement. About 4,500

trucking companies represented by Mexico's National Cargo Transportation Association are involved in the lawsuit, Reuters reported, citing the association, which is known as Canacar.

The Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA) has long opposed opening the border to long-haul trucks until safe operation by Mexican trucks on U.S. highways can be ensured and Mexican trucking companies are required to meet the same rules and regulations that U.S. trucking operations face. The Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association is the international trade association representing the interests of independent owner-operators and professional drivers on all issues that affect truckers.

President Obama, Calderon and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper concluded their summit meeting on Monday August 10th. For additional information, please see: Transport Topics On-line article at the following URL website:

<http://www.ttnews.com/articles/basetemplate.aspx?storyid=22505>

TxDOT's new rail division looking for a director

August 9- The Texas Department of Transportation is scouting for a Director to lead a newly created Rail Division, a first for the state agency. This newly created and staffed division should put Texas on a faster track for development of passenger rail services and improving the flow of freight rail traffic throughout the state.

The push for a Rail Division at TxDOT started back in 2000 with Texas Rail Advocates, a grass-roots non profit organization based in Dallas. States such as North Carolina, Wisconsin, Illinois, California, Washington and others developed plans for higher speed and frequent passenger rail service while Texas concentrated on more highway projects.

The fact that Texas contains more railroad miles than any other state in the country and lacked full oversight and a vision helped pave the way for advancing a new Rail Division program. Most recently, state legislators voiced concern that Texas was fal-

ling behind other states in the development of rail services and legislation was proposed under the TxDOT Sunset Review to create a Rail Division.

While the transportation department's review did not happen before the end of the recent legislative session, the Texas Transportation Commission was briefed this year on what a potential rail division would encompass and Commissioners voiced support for rail as a multi-modal solution.

The board of Texas Rail Advocates sees the search for a Rail Division Director as a key step in moving the State of Texas forward on both passenger and freight rail development.

For additional information, please see the following URL web-link: <http://myprogressiverailroading.com/blogs/railadvo/archive/2009/08/10/txdot-s-new-rail-division-looking-for-a-director.aspx>

President Obama sets \$2.4 B in electric-vehicle grants

August 5- The Obama administration said that 48 projects will share \$2.4 billion in federal grants to encourage development and use of hybrid and electric vehicles, Bloomberg reported. Grants went to companies in more than 20 states, including projects in Michigan and Oregon. General Motors Co., Ford Motor Co. and Chrysler Group LLC will get parts of more than \$400 million in grants to Michigan-based automakers, Bloomberg reported.

President Obama spoke at a Navistar International Corp. plant in Indiana on Wednesday, outlining a \$39 million plan for the company to build electric delivery vehicles, the company said. In a statement following the president's visit to its Wakarusa, Ind., plant, the truck and engine maker said it "anticipates hiring additional workers immediately as it ramps up production of the all-electric delivery vehicle."

As volumes increase, Navistar said it estimates opportunities for several hundred more jobs in the Elkhart, Ind., area, as the program's grant application calls for the creation of up to 700 jobs, including Navistar employees and suppliers.

Obama has made several visits to the Elkhart area, which calls itself the recreational-vehicle capital of the U.S. and lost more than 15,000 jobs in the past year as sales slumped, Bloomberg reported.

For additional information, please see Transport Topics news online at the following URL website: <http://www.ttnews.com/articles/basetemplate.aspx?storyid=22480>

Rail traffic strengthens again

U.S. rail hauls of metal cargoes reach highest level yet in 2009-

A traffic recovery for large U.S. railroads picked up steam in the week ending Aug. 1, adding to signs that freight demand may be on a sustained climb from recession lows.

The Class I carriers and a few regional carriers that report to the Association of American Railroads said their U.S. operations carried 274,728 bulk carloads, up nearly 800 from a week earlier. Train hauls of intermodal boxes, containers and trailers combined, hit 193,332 units for a gain of about 350.

From the same week in 2008, carloads were down 18.3 percent and intermodal down 16.1 percent. But for the second straight week carloads were their strongest since March 21 while intermodal volume was the most since Jan. 24.

The year-to-date peak in metal shipments -- to 7,727 carloads -- came amid a sustained recent pickup in scrap metal loadings, consistent with demand from metal furnaces to use cheap scrap inputs along with costlier ore when they are getting more metal product orders from other factories.

Other cargoes swelling rail traffic in the latest week included the strongest grain volume since Feb. 14 at 20,983 hopper carloads, chemicals with 27,846 tank cars at their highest since Feb. 28, and pulp or paper shipments the most since Jan. 17 at 5,989 units.

For additional information, please see the following URL web-link: <http://www.joc.com/node/412788>
Source: The Journal of Commerce Online - News
Author: John D. Boyd
Date: Aug 6, 2009 7:31PM GMT

Proposed truck lane ban considered for four Dallas interstates

Looking toward the positive benefits of increased safety, mobility and air quality, the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) a Dallas-based metropolitan planning organization is proposing an expansion of truck lane restrictions on four Texas interstates.

The NCTCOG held three public hearings this past week in order to discuss their plans to restrict trucks with three or more axles from using the left lanes along Interstates 20, 30, 45 and 820. Trucks would be allowed to access the lane for passing only.

Trucks now are restricted from the left lane along nearly 30 miles of I-30 in Tarrant County and I-20 in Dallas County.

And in El Paso, TX, the city council a week ago approved an ordinance prohibiting trucks from using the left lane of a 22-mile stretch of Interstate 10. Once signage is posted between Zaragoza and North Mesa in the next 30 to 60 days, violators will face \$500 fines.

The effort to expand the truck-lane ban on Texas roadways has drawn the ire of OOIDA and truckers. OOIDA, which is opposed to lane restrictions for any class of vehicle, has issued a [Call to Action](#) to its Texas members.

"Adopting lane restrictions is an ill-advised step to take," said OOIDA Executive Vice President Todd Spencer. "Such restrictions invariably cause more problems than they fix."

OOIDA believes "When you start restricting vehicles to certain lanes you end up with more vehicles tailgating and making unsafe passing maneuvers in all lanes. This isn't good for congestion or highway safety. Lane restrictions simply discourage smart, safe driving practices."

Owner-operator and OOIDA member Johnny Poindexter of Fort Worth, TX, said that prohibiting trucks from moving over a lane when neces-

sary is a bad move. "There's going to be a lot of major accidents happen due to the fact that traffic doesn't merge onto the freeways appropriately. They go around trucks to get into the safety lanes. It's just going to be a bad deal around here," Poindexter told *Land Line*.

Poindexter said he spent several years traveling through the Indiana-Illinois area with its lane restrictions. He fears similar consequences to what he witnessed there. "I watched an awful lot of bad accidents happen because of left lane restrictions. I believe Dallas-Fort Worth is going to create the same thing," he said.

Proposed truck lane restriction expansion details:

- Interstate 20: counties of Dallas, Kaufman and Tarrant from U.S. 377 in Fort Worth to FM 740 in Mesquite.
- Interstate 30: Tarrant County from Dale Lane in Fort Worth to FM 157 in Arlington.
- Interstate 45: counties of Dallas and Ellis from I-30 in Dallas to FM 3413 in Ennis.
- Interstate 820: Tarrant County from Westpoint Boulevard in Fort Worth to I-20 in Fort Worth.

Public hearings have already been completed and were held on Monday, Aug. 10, through Wednesday, Aug. 12. Once the comment period is concluded, the council will submit their results to the Texas Department of Transportation. TxDOT is hopeful of launching the next phase of truck lane bans by the spring of 2010.

To submit comments by mail, send to Maribel Chavez, P.E. District Engineer, Fort Worth District, Texas Department of Transportation, 2501 S.W. Loop 820, Fort Worth, TX 76133. Comments must be received at TxDOT by the close of business on Monday, Aug. 24.

For additional information, please see the following URL website:

http://www.landlinemag.com/todays_news/Daily/2009/Aug09/081009/081009-02.htm

Are 110-m.p.h. trains on the right track?

1930s locomotives routinely hit 100 m.p.h.; experts say the new target should be 220 m.p.h.

August 10. A Milwaukee Road rail line coal-burning locomotive was clocked going 124 m.p.h. on a stretch between the Twin Cities and Chicago -- in 1939.

Bringing up the rear of the Art Deco-style Hiawatha train was the "Beaver Tail" parlor-observation car (so-named for its downward-sloping shape), where passengers lounging on recliners and couches watched the countryside pass by.

Such long-distance trains routinely barreling across the Midwest at speeds exceeding the century mark may have been far ahead of their time 70 years ago. On the other hand, today's back-to-the-future plans by the federal government to encourage development of 110-m.p.h. train service in parts of the U.S. may simply lack the spirit and forward-looking approach that was alive back then, or even as recently as the 1960s, when 200-m.p.h.-plus "bullet train" systems were built in Asia and Europe.

It's a touchy subject that has received scant attention as politicians glom onto the idea of investing billions of taxpayer dollars on high-speed rail to stimulate the U.S. economy. But much more is at stake, according to transportation experts and scientists studying the impact of climate change. Through careful planning or just by default, passenger rail could become the nation's primary transportation system for inter-city travel in the next 30 to 50 years as world oil supplies shrink and fuel prices skyrocket.

The question is whether that transportation system will be the envy of the world, or barely exceed speeds and travel times delivered by past technology.

"I am shocked by the timidity of America. If billions of dollars are going to be spent, why end up with a rail system that is only half as good as what the rest of the world has?" said Andy Kunz, president and chief executive officer of the US High Speed Rail Association. The non-profit association was created in July after the [Obama](#) administration announced \$8 billion in economic stimulus funding to start construction of a high-speed rail network.

The association's goal is to advance and coordinate a state-of-the-art system connecting major U.S. cities by 2030. The vision includes building track dedicated to serving 220-m.p.h. electric-powered trains, advanced control systems, top-of-the-line passenger coaches and elegant stations.

The focus of the federal investment should be on offering incentives to states and private-sector partners to build a robust system that serves the nation for 100 years, rather than settle for inferior infrastructure that fails to deliver capacity or high-quality service and will need to be replaced after a relatively short time, Kunz said.

"After seeing \$700 billion bailout packages [for banks and other companies] and a trillion-dollar war [in Iraq], people would not flinch at the cost," Kunz said. "We didn't skimp on building our highways or airports. We shouldn't do so here." The U.S. government did not regulate train speeds in the early 20th Century, effectively encouraging manufacturers to build lightweight, streamlined trains and prompting railroads to rehab their tracks

with heavier rails. In his book "The Hiawatha Story," Jim Scribbins, who spent his career working for the Milwaukee Road, described Hiawatha equipment designed to cruise at 100 m.p.h. and reach speeds of 120 m.p.h., with reserve power if needed. "Ninety-one m.p.h. seemed like 45," Scribbins said about a run on May 15, 1935, between [Milwaukee](#) and New Lisbon, Wis., during which 112.5 m.p.h. was maintained for 14 miles.

"At 100 m.p.h., a shout erupted from the mechanical department personnel doing the timing -- 103.5 ... 105 ... 105.5 ... 109, and still comfortable. Finally came 112.5, and the train rode like a dream. In the diner, a full glass of water held every drop." The Burlington Railroad as well as the Chicago & North Western Railroad also participated in the speed-up on the Chicago-to-Twin Cities route.

"I remember the Chicago & North Western trains very well. The train we usually took would leave Kenosha at 8:16 a.m. and after one stop in [Waukegan](#), arrive at Canal and Madison (in downtown Chicago) at 9:05 a.m. We barely had time to finish our eggs," said Fritz Plous, a lifelong rail buff-turned-expert.

The first priorities outlined in Illinois' preliminary application for federal stimulus funding include operating 110-m.p.h. trains from [Chicago](#) to St. Louis; to Detroit/Pontiac; and to Milwaukee/Madison within three to five years. The effort represents an improvement over the 79-m.p.h. top speeds of today's Amtrak service. Supporters, including President Barack Obama, characterize it as a game-changer that would entice hordes of travelers into train stations.

But the projected time-savings are modest compared with 220 m.p.h. service. The current 5 1/2 -hour trip between Chicago and St. Louis at 79 m.p.h. would be reduced to four hours with 110 m.p.h. service, and slashed to just under two hours using 220 m.p.h. trains. At the behest of a rail advocacy group, Illinois is seeking federal funding to study the concept of expanding service at up to 220 m.p.h. in phases over several decades, according to the Illinois Department of Transportation. IDOT officials said ramping up train speeds to 220 m.p.h. is an attractive idea, but too costly in today's economy.

However, the problem is that 110 m.p.h. vs. 220 m.p.h. is an apples-and-oranges comparison. The components for building each system are distinct and separate, preventing a phased approach, experts say. Going well above 110 m.p.h. would require electrification of the train lines to replace diesel-powered locomotives, installing new signaling and train-control systems and closing railroad grade crossings or replacing them with tunnels or bridges to eliminate the possibility of high-speed accidents between trains and other vehicles.

Only [California](#) and Northeast states, where Amtrak Acela trains now hit top speeds of 150 m.p.h., are dreaming big right out of the gate. California's funding application proposes building 800 miles of 220-m.p.h. track between [Sacramento](#) and [San Diego](#), at an estimated cost of \$40 billion.

Obama says such an ambitious project will serve as a model for other states and that the U.S. will end up with a world-class system. If so, it just seems that the president's home state is taking the long way to get there.

URL Source: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/chi-getting-around-10-aug10.0.2464080.column>

Author: Jon Hilkevitch, Getting Around—Chicago Tribune

Date: 08/10/09

MO knows money: Show-me state diesel grant program opens

Truckers from four specific regions in Missouri may be eligible for a grant to retrofit or upgrade their trucks with emissions-cutting equipment. The Air Pollution Control Program of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources was recently awarded \$1.73 million from the federal government's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The state opened its application system on Friday, July 31, and will continue to accept applications until Sept. 30.

Missouri has selected four agencies to distribute the grant money for specific state regions. Applications may be submitted for emission control retrofits such as diesel particulate filters, idle reduction technology, EPA SmartWay technology designed to reduce aerodynamic drag, fuel conversion kits, engine repowers and vehicle replacements.

- St. Louis area counties include: St. Louis, St. Charles, Lincoln, Franklin, Washington, Warren and Jefferson. A request for proposals can be found at www.stlcleancities.org. For more information, e-mail kevin@stlcleancities.org.
- In the Kansas City area, including Clinton, Clay, Jackson, Platte, Cass, Ray and Buchanan counties, go to the Mid-America Regional Council's site at www.MARC.org/rfp.htm. For more information, contact Amanda Graor at agraor@MARC.org.
- The Southwest region includes counties of Cedar, Polk, Dallas, Barton, Dade, Greene, Webster, Christian, Jasper, Newton, McDonald, Lawrence, Barry, Stone and Taney. Truck owners from those counties can find request for proposals at www.showmecleanair.com or www.drury.edu/ocss. For more information, call Doug Neidigh at 417-873-7641, or e-mail dneidigh@drury.edu.

- The Southeast region includes St. Francois, Ste Genevieve, Perry, Cape, Bollinger, Madison and Iron counties. Truck owners there can find a request for proposals form at www.semorpc.org/airqual/dieselapp.doc. For more information, e-mail cbuchheit@semorpc.org.

Emission control retrofits would be 100 percent funded by the grant, while the idle reduction technology, SmartWay technology, fuel conversion kits and engine repowers would require 25 percent of the cost to be paid for by the truck owners.

Total truck replacements through the program require 75 percent of cost to be paid for by the truck owner.

Eligible vehicles include school buses, transit buses, fire trucks, medium and heavy-duty trucks, trash trucks, construction equipment, agricultural equipment, locomotives, marine engines, stationary diesel engines, mining equipment and cargo handling equipment.

Fifty percent of Missouri's grant funding will be set aside for public fleets, and the other half will go to private fleets.

URL website: http://www.landlinemag.com/todays_news/Daily/2009/Aug09/080309/080309-03.htm

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Author: Charlie Morasch, staff writer

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Famous Quote of the Day:

"I guess we all like to be recognized not for one piece of fireworks, but for the ledger of our daily work."

--[Neil Armstrong](#),
American astronaut

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Information provided is a compilation from other news and on-line media sources, any information relayed is based upon the accuracy of the information provided by other news gathering organizations and does not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the Federal Highway Administration or the State of Texas Border Partnership Working Group.

Next FHWA HQ's Talking Freight Web Seminar (Wednesday, August 19 2009)

The Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Office of Freight Management and Operations and the Office of Planning host the "Talking Freight" web seminars. These web seminars are part of a broader Freight Professional Development Program (FPD) aimed at providing technical assistance, training, tools, and information to help the freight and planning workforce meet the transportation challenges of tomorrow.

These FHWA web seminars are held on a monthly basis throughout the year and are open at no cost to all interested parties in both the public and private sectors.

The next FHWA HQ's Talking Freight Seminar will be held on August 19, 2009 from 12-1:30 PM (CST) and will cover the topic of: "Highway Networks and their Relationship to Freight" This webinar will focus on the role of the federal government in our

nation's highway system and how it has evolved over the previous decades.

Over time, the U.S. Congress has authorized the federal government to create programs for a number of national highway systems. Hear the genesis of and rationale for the National Network, the National Highway System, the Interstate System, and LCV locations.

Guest presenters will include: Mr. Daniel Haake of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission and Ms. Lynn Soporowski of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet.

To register for this free seminar, please go to <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/freightplanning/registration.htm> and click on the seminar topic.

Ohio Conference on Freight (2009)

The third annual Ohio Conference on Freight will consider how we can capitalize on the flow of goods moving through Ohio, the Great Lakes region, and the larger Midwest. [REGISTRATION is available now.](#)

The conference begins at 8 a.m. Tuesday, September 22 and will conclude by 2 p.m. September 23. At this day-and-a-half conference, attendees will hear from leaders in Ohio transportation agencies, federal officials, and international agencies. The 2009 program includes two plenary sessions, a keynote luncheon presentation, and 16 workshops.

Conference topics include the current status of the [Economic Recovery Act](#), the focus areas for the next [Federal-aid Highway Act authorization](#) / ODOT's

21 Century Transportation Priorities Task Force Report – blueprint for Ohio's transportation future/ [Economy](#) – The road to U.S. economic growth: "Let's Rebuild America", from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

[Highways](#) - Freight performance analysis of freight bottlenecks / [Expediting I-35 bridge in Minneapolis](#) / Impact of overweight vehicles on Ohio's highways / Development of [coalitions on corridors](#) of national importance.

Also, other topics to be addressed include [challenges in supply chain management](#) in today's economy, and also key University research benefiting the freight movement industry. Please see the following website for additional information: http://www.tmacog.org/OCF_09/OCF_home_09.htm