



***At-a-Glance...Goods Movement
Transportation & the Freight Industry***

Globalized, trade-dependent supply chains require an efficient, reliable long-distance transportation system for the 21st century.

- The U.S. transportation system moved, on average, 53 million tons of freight worth \$36 billion each day in 2002; which is expected to grow to 102 million tons by 2035.ⁱ
- At the same time, national investment in the efficiency and capacity of freight infrastructure has remained uncoordinated and lagged behind the national demand. Between 1980 and 2006, road infrastructure capacity increased 4.5 percent while railroad route miles actually decreased 23.6 percent.ⁱⁱ

Strategic interstate design and intelligent transportation technologies have been underutilized in addressing chokepoints in key freight corridors.

- Congestion on the mainline railroad network is also forecast to spread significantly, without additional investment. By 2035 thirty percent of the rail network, or 16,000 miles, will experience unstable flows and service break-down conditions.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Recurring road congestion during peak periods is forecast to slow traffic on 20,000 miles of the highway system and create stop-and-go conditions on an additional 45,000 miles by 2035.^{iv}

Railroads provide an essential alternative to less efficient, oil-dependent, heavy-duty trucks to move goods across the country.

- Railroads are, on average, three or more times more fuel-efficient than trucks and have a smaller carbon footprint. Every ton-mile of freight moved by rail instead of truck reduces GHG emissions by two-thirds or more.^v
- The freight industry is one of the first sectors of the economy to be effected by volatile energy prices, with price fluctuations posing ramifications for the cost of all retail products and the US economy.

The movement of goods in the US has disproportionately damaged low-income and minority communities across the country.

- Pollution from the freight transportation sector is concentrated around ports, highways, rail yards, railroad tracks, warehouses, and distribution centers.
- Children suffer more from the harmful effects of pollution because their immune systems are sensitive they spend more time outside.

Goods movement in the US is a critical national issue that requires a forward-thinking, innovative national freight policy. The Transportation for America platform includes the following solutions:

1. Establish a National Infrastructure Commission tasked with identifying transportation investments of national priority.
2. Incorporate freight planning into regional transportation plans, and evaluate them against a set of national transportation objectives such as reduced energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, improved access, mobility, and safety.
3. Include public health assessments as part of the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) review of all major proposed transportation investments.
4. Establish national incentives to create efficient connections from ports and distribution centers to national freight corridors, including state-of-the-art intermodal facilities to transfer freight between rail and truck, expanded cross-country rail freight mainlines, and improvements in the condition of short line railroad track.

Transportation for America is made up of a growing and diverse coalition of organizations from a variety of disciplines, from real estate developers to environmental and public health groups. We are focused on creating a national transportation program that will take America into the 21st Century by modernizing our infrastructure and building healthy communities where all people can live, work and play. To that end, we are proposing a national platform of transportation reform that seeks to ensure all Americans have ample and affordable options for living and commuting. More information about the Coalition may be found at www.t4america.org

ⁱ U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Office of Freight Management and Operations, Freight Analysis Framework, version 2.2, 2007.

ⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Office of Freight Management and Operations, Freight Facts and Figures 2008. Table 3-1. Miles of Infrastructure by Transportation Mode: 1980- 2006.

ⁱⁱⁱ Association of American Railroads, National Rail Infrastructure Capacity and Investment Study prepared by Cambridge Systematics, Inc. (Washington, DC: September 2007), figure 4.4, page 4-10.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v U.S. EPA. Inventory of US Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks: 1990- 2006.