

Intermodal Freight Transportation

Facility Study - Ongoing discussion of the Interstate 81 improvements and truck-to-rail freight diversion have renewed interest in issues and information documented in this study. Rail hauls of truck trailers/shipping containers generally must be a minimum of 500 to 600 miles in order to realize cost savings over shipping completely by truck. This is a problematic issue for intermodal transfer center viability in the New River Valley and southwest



Virginia, as well as for diversion of truck traffic from I-81. Much of the container traffic to and from southwest Virginia manufacturers is port-oriented and the New River Valley is located less than 300 miles from the ports at Hampton Roads.

This study finds that public development of an intermodal transfer facility in the New River Valley is most likely not financially feasible. The Norfolk Southern railroad is convinced that volume is insufficient to support a facility in the New River and Roanoke valleys. It is also unlikely that the Virginia Port Authority will invest in another facility, such as the Virginia Inland Port at Front Royal, without legislative intervention.

Conditions, however, can change over time. The report includes a recommendation that the Planning District Commissions and economic development entities in southwest Virginia partner with the railroad to re-examine market conditions and traffic volume projections in the future.

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