

Symposium

**Symposium on Intermodal Transportation:
Introduction**

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The National Center for Intermodal Transportation is pleased to present this special peer reviewed Symposium issue of the *Transportation Law Journal*. Transportation is among the world's most important infrastructure industries. Without transportation, commerce would grind to a halt, and whole economic systems would fall into decay. But in a global, competitive economy, efficient and seamless transportation flows facilitate economic growth and prosperity. They link together distant producers and consumers, providing consumers with a wider array of goods at lower cost. Intermodalism offers a promising means of stimulating productivity and efficiency, thereby facilitating trade and contributing to broader economic growth.

Trade routes have always been important to the progress of civilization. From the Silk Road across Asia, to the merchant trading ships of the Phoenecians, trade has stimulated economic growth and cultural in-

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teraction, and made possible the creation of vast cultural and economic Empires.

Crossing the vast oceans was a major barrier overcome only in the last half Century. Events involving ships have had a major impact upon the world. The most obvious example is Christopher Columbus's famous voyage in 1492. His discovery of America forced Europeans to develop a new view of the world and of their place in it. It also led to numerous other voyages of discovery and the subsequent emergence of new patterns of international trade.

Another less well known voyage which has had a great impact upon people's lives, albeit in a more restricted way, was the journey that a ship called the *Ideal X* made in 1956. For the first time, goods were transported in containers. That voyage transformed the ways in which goods moved, for once the feasibility of using containers was demonstrated, the numerous advantages involved led to the rapid diffusion of this innovation. Before long, ships were hauling containers across the oceans and a new industry was created that profoundly affected all aspects of the existing transportation system.

That voyage marked the beginnings of freight intermodalism – the seamless movement of goods from origin to destination, using several modes. However, no such dramatic developments have yet taken place on the passenger side. While sending a package from Des Moines to Timbuktu involves a simple phone call to a carrier, broker or freight forwarder, moving one's person between these points is no easy matter, requiring numerous inquiries about bus or shuttle service to an airport, connections to numerous flights, and arranging for surface transportation at the destination. In short, passenger transportation is by no means seamless. Nevertheless, social, economic and environmental pressures have been growing that are leading to the development of new policies and initiatives in the U.S. and elsewhere to facilitate the seamless movement of people.

Though progress has been made, many governmental and private sector institutions remain stubbornly stratified and segregated along modal lines. Funding, planning, and coordination continue to be based primarily on intramodal considerations. Yet, as the benefits of intermodalism have become more apparent, and as various transportation firms have demonstrated its superiority in terms of productivity, efficiency and time, it has become a world-wide phenomenon that has gained the attention of policy makers, private sector leaders, and transportation professionals.

Today intermodalism is a concept whose time has come. There is widespread agreement on the shortcomings of the existing passenger system, of the need to eliminate bottlenecks that remain on the freight side,

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and of the need to view the passenger and freight system from a holistic, comprehensive perspective. Nevertheless the educational world has paid rather limited attention to this topic. Most transportation programs in the United States, and indeed, in the rest of the world, remain modally oriented. In order to fill this gap, the Intermodal Transportation Institute was established at the University of Denver. Subsequently, the National Center for Intermodal Transportation, a cooperative effort between the University of Denver and Mississippi State University was established by the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century.

ITI and the NCIT are committed to educational, outreach and research activities in intermodalism. ITI has worked to fill this gap by developing a unique Master of Sciences program and holding various conferences. Two are particularly noteworthy. The first, held in October 1997, brought together, for the first time, the Secretaries and Ministers of Transportation from Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. They also met with distinguished leaders of the intermodal industry, many of whom today serve on the ITI Board of Directors. In 1999, concerned with the limited attention being paid to the history of this dynamic industry, ITI organized the "Founding Father's of Intermodalism" conference which brought together, also for the first time, the pioneering entrepreneurs who created the intermodal freight industry. These sessions were recorded and videotaped and form a rich and unique resource for future historians.

This volume is an important part of the effort to contribute to the development of an intermodal science, for it is surprising how few compiled works deal with intermodalism. Although there is a voluminous literature scattered among various periodicals, including many scholarly articles, there is only one comprehensive textbook dealing with intermodal freight and none on intermodal passenger issues. Accordingly, we felt that it was important to bring together a group of academic experts who could deal with the many issues and aspects of intermodalism as we enter the new millenium. However, this is not a traditional law journal issue, for all the articles in this Symposium have been carefully peer reviewed.

The contributors deal with a range of important issues confronting intermodalism as well as many topics of concern to scholars working in this area. The most obvious is that intermodalism is a work in progress. Despite all that has been achieved, many obstacles and barriers will have to be overcome before the intermodal vision that many aspire to can be realized. That is the topic of the Szyliowicz chapter, "Intermodalism: The Challenge and the Promise". He points out that passenger intermodalism lags behind the freight sector. Goetz and Vowles' "Progress in Intermodal Passenger Transportation" focuses on this question, emphasizing the ways in which the private sector is pursuing initiatives that

promise to at least begin to close the gap. Intermodalism is a new concept but goods and people have utilized two or more modes for centuries. Arthur Donovan's "Intermodal Transportation in Historical Perspective" provides important insights into how modalism became intermodalism and why it emerged at a particular point in history. Holguin Veras and Passwell in their "New York Regional Intermodal Freight Transportation Planning" note, however, that intermodal freight transportation also confronts serious bottlenecks and they present an important case study of the issues confronting planners in the New York area.

Because it is a new concept, there is little agreement on the precise meaning of intermodalism. In "Developing a Standard Definition of Intermodal Transportation" Jones, Cassidy and Bowden discuss the various definitions and seek to derive one that can become standardized. Not only is there a need for conceptual clarity, there is also a need for persons at all levels and sectors of the transportation enterprise with the necessary skills to develop, operate, and maintain an intermodal system. In "Intermodal Education in Comparative Perspective," Jervell, Szyliowicz and Sherry report on a pioneering study carried out for Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) that analyzes the kinds of skills that will be required and the limited degree to which educational institutions are presently providing the requisite skills and knowledge. Dempsey's "The Law of Intermodal Transportation" looks explicitly at the legal issues and traces how the present situation evolved and the issues and gaps that remain to be addressed.

The appeal of intermodalism has been based on the benefits that it offers. Yet, there have been few efforts to analyze these and to measure them against the costs of such a system. Yevdokimov's "Measuring Economic Benefits of Intermodal Transportation" analyzes this question and suggests ways in which further research could help provide a better understanding. Such an understanding will inevitably involve computer simulations and in their piece, Graham et al, "Modeling Intermodal Transportation Systems" explicitly discuss how to overcome a fundamental problem that presently limits progress in this area – the lack of a common terminology.

Taken together these articles provide important insights into the present state of intermodalism and many of the key issues that it confronts. Hopefully this volume will be of interest to practitioners and of use to scholars and teachers working in this area. Most importantly, we hope that it will stimulate further work in these and related areas so that those of us who teach intermodal transportation will have a wealth of materials to choose from.