

RAILROAD/GOODS MOVEMENT

Introduction

Rail is an important goods movement component that can potentially move about half of the goods from the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to destinations outside of Southern California. A study was prepared to evaluate the railroad system's ability to move goods in various future scenarios. The questions to be answered in the Railroad Goods Movement Study included:

- What level of cargo growth is expected by the year 2035?
- Does the current rail system have the available capacity to handle this volume?
- What infrastructure improvements, such as yards, terminals and track capacity, would be needed to handle future cargo growth?
- Are there other implications?

Cargo Growth Forecasts

Three scenarios were used to assess future port growth and facility capacity:

- **Scenario 1:** High Cargo Demand (43 M TEUs), High On-Dock Rail Capacity, No New or Expanded Near-Dock Rail Facilities
- **Scenario 2:** High Cargo Demand (43 M TEUs), High On-Dock Rail Capacity, Expanded Near-Dock Rail (development of SCIG and expansion of ICTF)
- **Scenario 3:** Low Cargo Demand (28.5 M TEUs), Low On-Dock Rail Capacity, No New or Expanded Near Dock Rail

Each scenario included an evaluation of the following:

- Volume of goods coming into the ports (expressed as twenty-foot equivalent units, or TEUs – the average container is about two TEUs).
- Expansion of on-dock railyards, for direct transfer of containers from the ports by train.
- Level of expansion of near-dock or “ship-to-truck-to-train” railyards close to the ports, such as Intermodal Container Transfer Facility (ICTF) or Southern California International Gateway (SCIG).
- Number of containers per train.

Scenario 1 has been adopted by the I-710 Project Committee as the forecast for moving forward with subsequent I-710 studies. The Project Committee confirmed the study's conclusion that, even with the current slowdown in imports and exports and even with forecasted slowing of world economic growth and diversion of cargo to other North American ports, there remains significant growth in demand at Southern California ports. These forecasts also show that, between now and 2035, demand will exceed planned capacity.

Scenario 1 represents the maximum amount of cargo that the ports can handle with current expansion plans. It recognizes the continued uncertainty about whether expansion of SCIG

and ICTF will be able to proceed with acceptable environmental and community impact mitigation. This scenario also has the advantage of assuring that maximum mitigations be included in the EIR/EIS studies.

Capacity of the Rail System to Handle Expansion

While increasing use of the rail system can result in lower growth in the number of trucks on the road, the Railroad Goods Movement study found that providing capacity in the rail system to handle future expansion will require significant investment and operational improvements. These will be challenging to achieve for several reasons:

- Freight railroad systems are nearing their efficient capacity in the Los Angeles Basin.
- Some of the mainline routes travel through built-out areas where available land for adding tracks is difficult to acquire.
- Passenger rail (Metrolink) operates on tracks owned and used by the freight railroads. Expansion of one can preclude expansion of the other without additional right-of-way.
- Increased number and length of trains increases potential for delay and the need for grade separation projects that separate trains from other vehicles at crossings.
- On-dock railyard expansion is likely, but even this expanded capacity will not be sufficient to accommodate all of the port cargo that moves by rail. In addition, logistic considerations make it more practical to move some cargo by off-dock intermodal rail yards.
- Near-dock railyard expansion is also limited by concerns about neighborhood impact. More containers will need to travel the roadways to get to expanded or additional off-dock rail facilities.

Study Conclusions

- More on-dock railyards facilities are needed.
- Mainline railroad systems will likely continue to be capacity-limited in the future even if additional track is constructed. This will constrain passenger train growth.
- Additional railroad track grade separations are needed.
- New or expanded off-dock railyards are needed and will likely increase truck traffic on local freeways and roadways.
- Railroad system usage and capacity needs to be monitored in the future to assure maximum goods movement by rail can be achieved so that approximately half of the containers from the ports can continue to be moved by rail.

For more information on the I-710 Corridor Project EIR/EIS, please visit our website at www.metro.net/710 or contact us in one of the following ways:

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