

Steel Interstate: Renewing America's rail network for safer, cleaner, faster, more reliable movement of people and goods

Today a dollar can buy more U.S. freight-carrying capacity when invested in rail than when spent on more highway lanes. To understand why, think of the Steel Interstate as analogous to Interstate Highways built over the last 50 years.

The Interstate Highway System gave us a core national network of roads that made travel faster and safer than on the old system of U.S. Highway routes. Today's railroads similarly lack capacity to handle today's growing freight and passenger demand. But they, too, can be rebuilt as a grade-separated, high-capacity, electrified national system of key rail corridors – a Steel Interstate.

Using only a third of the fuel to move a ton-mile of freight than trucks, railroads are far more energy efficient and less polluting, including greenhouse gases. We should want as much freight as possible moved by rail. The Steel Interstate would provide the capacity to make this happen.

Railroads can readily be electrified, so Steel Interstates can be powered by many energy sources. U.S. transportation is now totally dependent on oil, so we are vulnerable to supply disruptions and price spikes. Electrified rail corridors could be powered by natural gas, oil, nuclear, coal, wind, solar, hydro and biomass. Such lines could also help transmit remote wind or solar power generation to urban markets.

Sustainable infrastructure investments can provide a national Steel Interstate System of high-capacity, electrified rail lines that would be the backbone for fast, efficient, reliable movement of freight and passengers in 21st Century America

Besides passenger trains and conventional freight, a Steel Interstate would provide capacity to carry trucks aboard trains. Though U.S. railroads have done a great job developing long-haul intermodal business, it is focused almost entirely on double-stacked containers, handled through huge, regional terminals with significant cost and delay. The nation needs an "open" intermodal approach, a technology that can readily handle not only shipping containers, but all kinds of trucks and trailers for true highway-competitive rail service.



Entire trucks drive off a train at Freiburg, Germany



Canadian Pacific E>x<pressway service for trailers



RoadRailer involves putting railroad wheels under trailers

The three photos above suggest more highway competitive rail options that greater capacity and reliability would stimulate. Millions of trucks on the nation's highways remain a huge untapped opportunity and challenge. Currently the U. S. railroad system lacks the capacity, reliability, and speed necessary for true highway-competitive handling of trucks, is chronically congested, and has no margin to handle new business. The Steel Interstate can fix this.

The time has come to explore innovative public/private financing options for a Steel Interstate. RAIL Solution is working to form the North American Steel Interstate Coalition (NASIC) to promote this goal. Read more about NASIC on the other side. For more about the Steel Interstate concept and its compelling benefits, please see: steelinterstate.org

North American Steel Interstate Coalition

A New Vision for Railroads in the 21st Century



ELEMENTS OF STEEL INTERSTATE DESIGN: A minimum of two grade-separated *through* tracks, engineered, signaled, and dispatched for 79 MPH to 110 MPH, offering frequent, reliable service. The electrified Steel Interstate System would create adequate capacity to divert most non-local truck freight to intermodal trains, and to accommodate passenger trains without impairing freight operations.

WE ARE ON THE CUSP OF A TRANSPORTATION CRISIS: Forecasts from many sources predict that demand for freight transportation in the U.S. will as much as double by 2040. Interstate Highway capacity is increasingly congested, especially in urban areas. The Highway Trust Fund cannot afford new roads, with maintenance of existing roads and bridges consuming all its money. Road expansion projects are also being increasingly viewed as environmentally unacceptable. Trucking companies face a chronic driver shortage, railroads in many areas are at or near capacity, and both modes are exposed to the high cost of oil. How, then, can future freight growth be accommodated?

SOLUTION! A HIGH-PERFORMANCE RAIL SYSTEM: Shifting to rail-based shipping and passenger transportation powered by electricity from renewable sources could significantly reduce our near-total dependence on oil and greatly reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. We could, if we act now, begin to add the sustainable infrastructure investment needed for new freight transport capacity, assure affordable mobility of people, and improve our economic competitiveness and standard of living for decades to come. .

JOIN THE REBIRTH OF U.S. RAIL—THE NORTH AMERICAN STEEL INTERSTATE COALITION. Making the Steel Interstate a reality requires more research and promotion. To capture imaginations and enter our national vision, the concept needs to be considered in all regions. RAIL Solution is spearheading the formation of the North American Steel Interstate Coalition and advocating a prototype demonstration in the I-81/I-40/I-75 Corridor, upgrading existing rail lines between Harrisburg, PA and Memphis, TN to Steel Interstate standards. For more information, please visit steelinterstate.org Join RAIL Solution and help secure this brighter future for American railroads. These other groups have already signed on as partners:



All Aboard Ohio
 Virginia Assn. of Railway Patrons
 All Aboard Washington
 Texas Rail Advocates
 Maine Rail Transit Coalition
 Rail, Inc., New Mexico