



Steel Interstate Newsletter

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March 1, 2018

Welcome to the Steel Interstate Coalition industry update. This periodic communication attempts to keep you informed of key developments and place our Steel Interstate advocacy in context. This **Newsletter** is also attached as a PDF to facilitate downloading and reviewing on a wider variety of electronic devices. More information on the Steel Interstate concept and benefits can be found at www.steelinterstate.org

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Déjà vu All Over Again

This famous phrase, attributed to Yogi Berra, came to mind recently when I read about a proposed 40-mile truck-only highway in Georgia between Atlanta and Macon. That's because RAILSolution got its start fighting dedicated truck lanes in the Interstate 81 Corridor of Virginia between 2003 and 2007.

In opposing such a plan, being a NIMBY is not enough. There has to be a credible alternative. In the I-81 example, that was to upgrade the parallel Norfolk Southern rail line between Harrisburg, PA and Knoxville, TN to carry more freight than moving by truck. Intense grassroots organizing throughout the Corridor led to over 50

resolutions of support from local governments, over 70% of public comments supportive of rail, and ultimately, with lots of help from others, the defeat of the truck lanes.

Here is a link to the recent story by Georgia Public Radio on the proposed truck-only highway between Atlanta and Macon: <https://www.wabe.org/georgia-wants-build-truck-highway-worth/>

It's worth a look at how these proposals arise. First motorists get fed up with the congestion and delays caused by heavy truck traffic. They complain, and elected representatives get an earful. "Get the trucks off I-75" gets to be a popular campaign. Politicians in turn complain to Georgia DOT. "Do something! My constituents are mad." The state DOT reaches for the only solution they understand, which is more highway lanes. At first these solutions involve such things as truck climbing lanes, or general widening in busiest areas. But the trucks don't keep right and still annoy drivers by blocking multiple lanes at once. So increasingly we see attention focused on separating the trucks altogether. The public enthusiastically embraces this idea. Truck drivers support it, too – at first anyway.

Billions of dollars are being poured into autonomous trucking both by vehicle manufacturers and governments. Advocates envisage what they call platoons of automated trucks operating on highways in the near future. And, of course, they are excited about dedicated truck highways, anticipating, correctly I think, that the public will not be wild about sharing the road with platoons of automated trucks. Notice that the public radio article cited above mentions this eventual likelihood.

Together this is the powerful array of forces rail advocates face. For although trucks can also be removed from highways by adding upgraded capacity on parallel rail lines, this alternative is rarely considered. The railroads themselves seem happy with the *status quo* and uncommitted to luring more trucks onto rails, making the task of rail advocates much harder. It remains to be seen how long this rail industry intransigence prevails. Vast quantities of freight are being trucked over the road, and capturing this traffic represents one way railroads could grow volume in the future and help replace lost coal business. For example, the 2013 [Federal Railroad Administration, Higher Speed Freight Truck Market Analysis](#) found that U.S. railroad companies leave \$28 billion annual revenue on the table, freight now being hauled by truck.

But there is a larger public interest here. We are on the cusp of a major infrastructure divide in America. Constructing this whole new tier of highway infrastructure would have an enormously disruptive environmental footprint. Plus each truck still has to operate much as it does today, getting 6 to 8 mpg. Moving mid- to long-distance freight over the road by truck uses three to four times more fuel per ton-mile than moving the freight by railroad. More fuel consumed directly equates to more pollution and greater greenhouse gas impacts.

There is a second, better, way to separate the trucks, and that's by carrying them on trains. If as a nation we adopt a strategy of launching a whole new tier of highways just for trucks, eventually automated trucks, we will forever foreclose moving this freight on rail with its many public benefits. Anyone and everyone who believes moving freight by rail is the better way will need to pull together to make any headway, given the formidable forces against us.

Need for Broader Support is Critical

The Steel Interstate Coalition is primarily supported by RAIL Solution, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, dependent on the financial support of donors. There is a lot of work to do at this critical time. If the future freight transportation paradigm in America is selected to be autonomous trucking on a new tier of dedicated highways, expansion of the privately funded and operated railroad system of today that has so much unrealized potential will be forever foreclosed.

A donation from you, or your organization, is needed to allow the Steel Interstate Coalition to continue to fulfill its grassroots advocacy role. The future of rail transport is under assault and we cannot fight the well-funded proponents of autonomous trucking without broadened financial support and more allies. Please help! Click on the Donate button at www.steelinterstate.org.

Donations to the Steel Interstate Coalition are needed so we can research and learn about opportunities, write those in charge, and follow-up with calls, meetings, and briefings to sustain pressure and to fulfill our mission. We are a small organization dependent completely on our participants and volunteers.

We are working to pursue our mission in Virginia, Georgia, Nevada, and Oregon. Success requires sustained, persistent staff outreach to grassroots political units including neighborhood associations, city councils, county commissions, and Native American tribes. They must be motivated to pressure their state and U.S. DOTs to plan and implement alternative transportation to relieve highway congestion by diverting through trucks to trains.

If you recently donated, we thank you and encourage your continued involvement. If you haven't recently, or ever donated, donate now. We need donations at all levels, from \$100, \$1,000, to \$10,000, and bequests, too.

RAIL Solution Updates

1. Nevada. Our work in Nevada continues, albeit at a reduced level. Steel Interstate Coalition can no longer afford to contribute the stakeholder outreach and project planning without some kind of identifiable funding. We continue to believe there is significant potential not only in the I-80 Corridor, but I-15 and I-11 as well. As long as there is receptivity from Nevada DOT and the Transportation Center at UNLV, we will continue to work together on this opportunity. And we remain active in seeking funding. For more on this, see the Steel Interstate Coalition updates below.

2. Officers. At the Annual Meeting in December, David Foster, former Executive Director, was named Chairman. Robinson Foster, no relation to David, who had been Development Director was named Executive Director.

3. Annual Report. In November the RAIL Solution Annual Report was mailed to all participants. Anyone who wishes to receive a copy can request one by sending an e-mail to railsolution@aol.com

Steel Interstate Coalition March 2018 Update

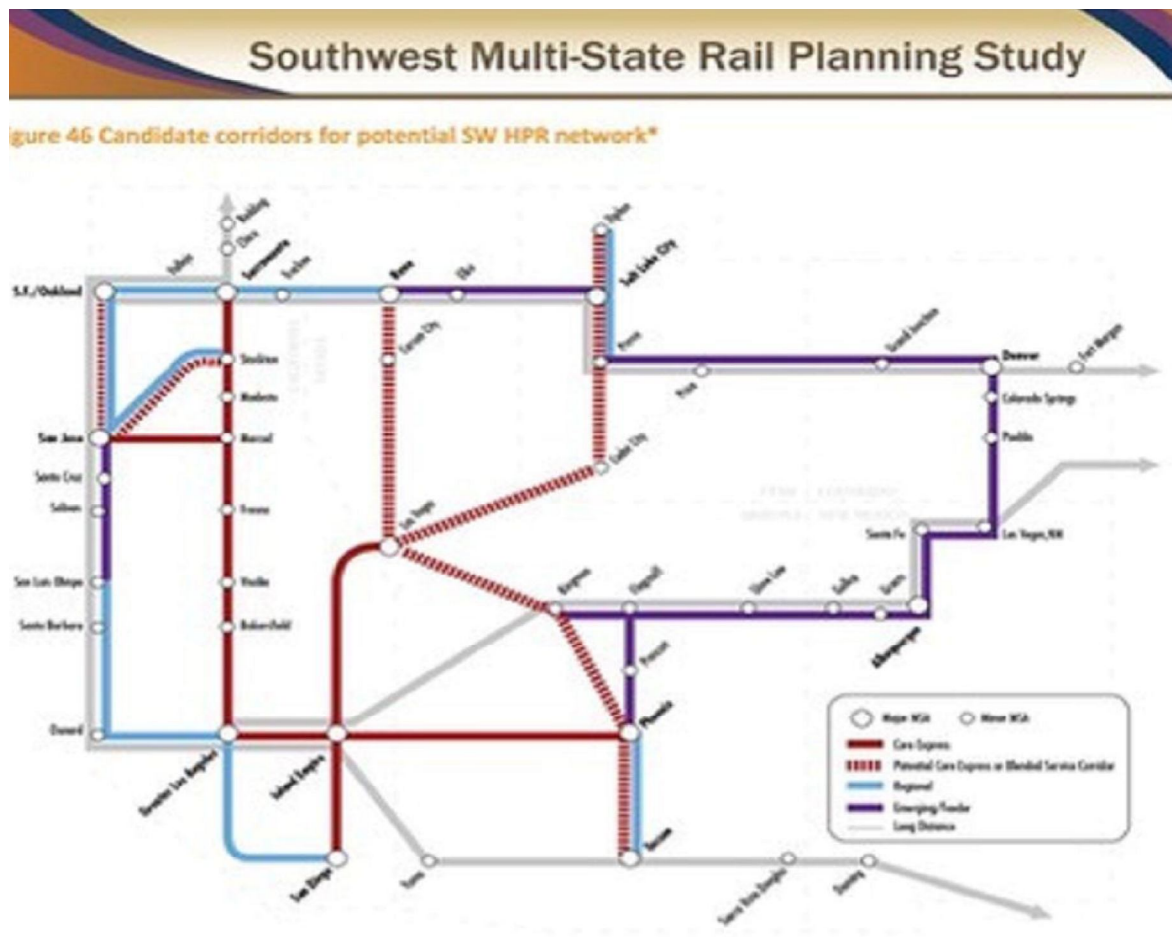
The Steel Interstate Coalition remains on task to fulfill its mission to get the [Scope of Work for I-80 Land Ferry/Steel Interstate Phase II Assessment](#) funded.

Our thesis is simple and direct. Land Ferry for trucks, (see the [Phase I Land Ferry Economic and Engineering Assessment Video](#)), may generate revenue that cross finances passenger trains recommended by the Federal Railroad Administration's [Southwest Multi-State Rail Planning Study](#), (see the map, below, included in the [SW Study Summary Report](#), and [SW Study Technical Background Report](#)). We aim to divert trucks off highways, and promote passenger trains at the same time.

Working to get funds to pay for Phase II Study are:

→ [Alexander Paz, Ph.D., P.E., Director, Transportation Research Center, University of Nevada, Las Vegas](#), is applying to the Federal Railroad Administration, [Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements grant program](#).

→ Dave Foster, Chairman, Steel Interstate Coalition, is following a two-step process that may lead to Nevada Department of Transportation funding. First, to place Land Ferry on the State Transportation Improvement Plan. Second, to request funds from its State Transportation Board.



Map Notes:

Source: CONNECT Beta Version, 2022

**Figure identifies desired connections between metropolitan areas. It does not identify alignment or station locations and does not preclude multiple alignments within a corridor segment.*

The solid red line represents Core Express service in the CHSR network and the key connections from Southern California to Las Vegas and Phoenix. The S.F./Oakland to Reno corridor in blue is shown as Regional service, representing an upgrade and extension of the Capitol Corridor as well as plans for the existing Pacific Surfliner corridor. The corridors shown with a dashed red line represent corridors that might be considered for Core Express service over the long-term once the core network was developed.

Several corridors are depicted as Regional with a red dashed line, indicating that these might start as regional corridors and could potentially grow into Core Express based on other investments in the network. Alternatively, these could exist as hybrid corridors with Core Express equipment operating through service at reduced speeds mixed with commuter or traditional intercity service (some might classify this approach as 'blended service'). Emerging/Feeder services are shown in purple.

One of the key metrics estimated by CONNECT is the operating recovery ratio. This metric is calculated for each corridor in isolation, with no connections to other corridors on the network (defined as the "stand-alone" context), as well as in the network context. The network context accounts for connections to other corridors as