



Central Pennsylvania

RAIL REPORT

Fall 2007

Regional Rail Freight Summit is Planned

The benefits and importance of rail freight service will be highlighted at a region-wide conference in Lewisburg on November 16. The Rail Freight Summit, sponsored by the SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority (JRA), will be held at the Best Western Country Cupboard Inn on Route 15.

According to Jeff Stover, Executive Director, JRA, "Shipping by rail saves energy, saves

money, and reduces wear and tear on our local highways. And rail service is vital to the economic development of our region. It is a cost efficient means of bringing raw materials in and shipping finished products out, and for certain bulk commodities it's the only practical shipping alternative."

In terms of cost-effective energy use, studies show railroads to be around four-and-a-half times more fuel efficient than trucks.

The Rail Freight Summit will stress the value of rail freight both to companies with direct access to rail service, and to those not directly located on a rail line. "Transload" or "intermodal" facilities permit companies to ship products to rail access points by truck, where they are loaded onto rail cars for distribution across the country. Intermodal facilities of varying size are under construction or planned throughout much of Central Pennsylvania.

Officials from industrial development groups and chambers of commerce are strongly encouraged to attend the Rail Freight Summit.

Currently, 16% of the nation's freight is shipped by rail. If that freight were shifted to trucks, it would cost rail shippers an additional \$69 billion. It would add 92-billion truck miles-of-travel to the highway system, and cost an additional \$64 billion for highway improvements over the next 20 years.

Among issues that will be explored at the Freight Summit is the need to retain developable industrial properties that have rail access. The role of rail freight in terms of jobs and business retention will also be discussed.

Details of the Rail Freight Summit are being developed. For more information, contact Jamie Shrawder, tel. 570-524-4491, or e-mail jshrawder@seda-cog.org.

Rail Operator and JRA Receive Awards

Central Pennsylvania's system of shortline railroads was the recipient of three awards at Norfolk Southern's shortline railroad meeting this summer. As a major Class I railroad, Norfolk Southern connects with over 250 shortlines throughout the eastern United States.

The SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority (JRA) received the first ever Industrial Development award in recognition of work the Authority has undertaken in the last three years, facilitating a number of projects that resulted in new rail traffic.

The Nittany & Bald Eagle RR, one of the Authority's five lines, received a Marketing Initiative award for economic development activities in conjunction with companies in the Clinton County area. The Nittany & Bald Eagle serves industries in the areas of Bellefonte, Lock Haven, State College, and Tyrone.

The General Managers Award for Norfolk Southern's Northern Region was presented to the North Shore RR, also a part of the JRA's system. The award is based on four aspects of the railroad's operations: communication, collaboration, cooperation, and execution.

Short Lines of the SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority

Juniata Valley Railroad
— Burnham-Lewistown-Maitland

Lycoming Valley Railroad
— South Avis-Williamsport-Muncy

Nittany & Bald Eagle Railroad
— Tyrone-Lock Haven-Bellefonte-
Pleasant Gap

North Shore Railroad
— Northumberland-Berwick

Shamokin Valley Railroad
— Sunbury-Mount Carmel

The five short lines are owned by the SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority and operated by a private contractor operator. The 200 mile rail system serves 65 customers in Central Pennsylvania that, in aggregate, employ over 8,000 persons. In 2006, the five lines handled nearly 30,000 carloads of freight.



Preserving Rail Freight
in the Susquehanna Valley

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Ready to Roll at Industrial Complex

Tracks have been repaired. New “transloading” facilities are in place. The rails are ready to roll at the BIDA industrial complex in Berwick.

Ceremonies this fall marked completion of the over-one million dollar project. Virtually all the track within the complex was rehabilitated or reconstructed. A portion was reconfigured, offering shippers access to an overhead crane and the transloading capabilities it provides, i.e., moving goods and materials from truck to train, or vice-versa. This is useful for offloading steel and similar commodities, and will be an asset for the entire North Shore RR which extends from Berwick to Northumberland. The new track work has resulted in new prospects eyeing the complex for rail to truck transloading.

New track within the complex should all but eliminate derailments that had occurred within the BIDA (Berwick Industrial Development Association) complex three or four times a year. This is especially important to Consolidated Container Co. and Ciba Specialty Chemicals, which rely on supplies that are delivered by rail.

Through the project, 3,500 feet of track—about two-thirds of a mile—were reconstructed. Some of it actually dated back to the late 1800s and was too light to carry heavier loads. As for derailments, they only occurred on a stretch of track along a warehouse, the only spot on the North Shore RR with such a problem. That’s now been remedied and shipping by rail is now more efficient than ever at the BIDA complex.

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Remember those three numbers. One ton of freight, shipped by rail, can travel 423 miles on one gallon of diesel fuel. Freight railroad fuel efficiency has risen 76% since 1980. In 2005, railroads could move a ton of freight 423 miles, on average, per gallon of diesel fuel. That’s up from 235 miles in 1980 and 332 miles in 1990. Passenger vehicles would average more than 35 miles per gallon if fuel efficiency had improved at the same rate as railroads.

Hi-Tech Brakes

Under new proposed federal rules, advanced brake technology will enable locomotive engineers to improve train control and allow trains to safely travel longer distances between required brake tests. Electronically Controlled Pneumatic (ECP) brakes are a significant safety improvement over conventional air brake systems. ECP brakes can help avert some train derailments caused by sudden emergency brake applications, prevent runaway trains caused by loss of brake air pressure, shorten train stopping distances up to 60% under certain circumstances, improve fuel efficiency, and reduce emissions.



In ceremonies marking the completion of rail renovations at the BIDA industrial complex, Columbia County Commissioner Christopher Young (center) cuts the ribbon, flanked by fellow Commissioners Bill Soberick (left) and David Kovach (right).