

Integrated Intermodal Interstate Transportation System (I³TS)

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The construction of the interstate highway system was the last major national transportation program in the U. S. With the growing problems of congestion, safety and security and attendant concerns about energy and environment, there is a need for a bold vision of a new and advanced transportation system that can progressively take advantage of emerging technological advances and can contribute to the increased productivity and global competitiveness of the U. S. industrial and commercial sectors.

We should think about an integrated network of highway and rail transportation modes connecting major population and economic centers with ports and airports. New facilities can be located on existing interstate highway rights-of-way, where possible, or use new rights-of-way, but should have the capability of incorporating various modes for both freight and passenger transportation. While the emphasis will be on intercity travel, the multimodal system can also be useful for intracity movement of passengers and freight. Such a system can bring together the advantages of individual systems, such as high speed passenger and freight rail and exclusive truck ways, to respond to the needs of both passenger and freight transportation. In metropolitan areas bus rapid transit can also be accommodated in the integrated system. At appropriate locations transfer stations should be provided for easy connection between interstate corridors with local systems. In order to minimize right-of-way requirement, the system can be tiered in places. A base system can have a two-rail, high speed rail system installed along the center of the existing median. Facilities for rail, truck and auto systems should be separated. Exits for trucks can occur on separate fly-over or pass-under ramps for safe operation.

An integrated intermodal interstate transportation system (I³TS) can add many times to the capacity of the existing interstate highway system and at the same time drastically improve safety and mobility. An integrated system can also allow a focused security system along with operational measures necessary for traffic operation such as surveillance and control.

The cost of such a system will be substantial and it can be financed through user fees such as tolls, fares and tariffs. Public private partnerships can be pursued to implement such a system.

Several states are contemplating variations of such a system on a statewide basis. In Indiana, a privately sponsored feasibility study has been undertaken by Purdue University in cooperation with Hudson Institute and the Heritage Group. Preliminary results indicated a high potential payoff.

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