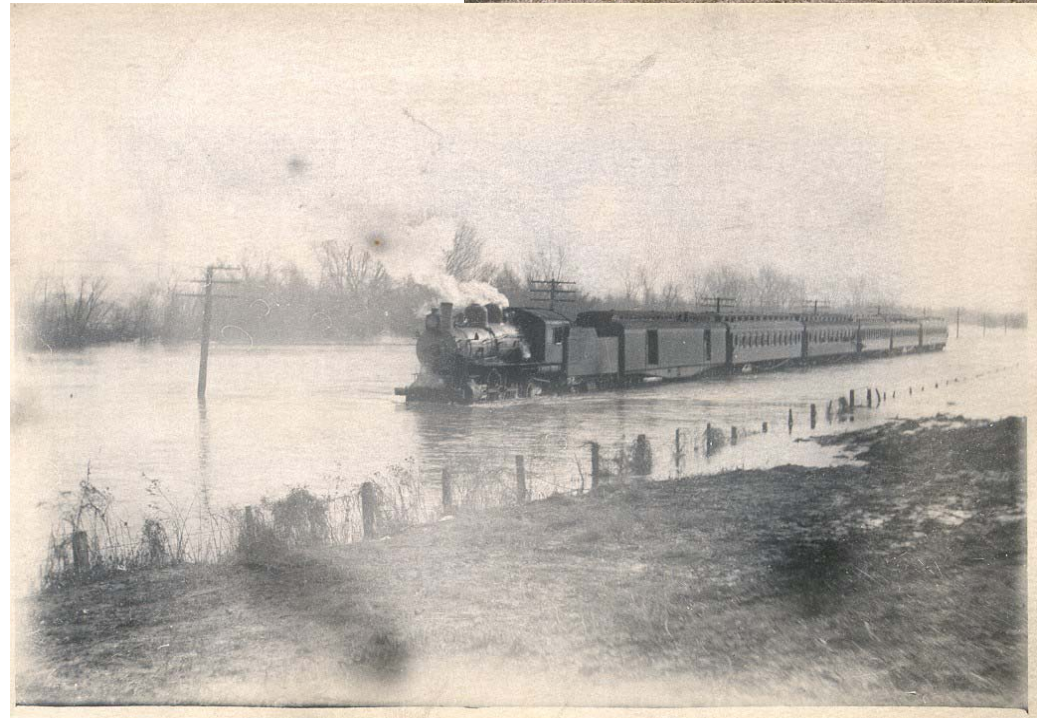


Intermodal Transportation Planning

The economic success of a region to a large degree depends on its connections to the rest of the world and its ability to facilitate the movement of people and goods across and within its boundaries. Increased competition in today's global economy rewards those regions that actively plan for and pursue seamless transportation systems, which depend on efficient connections between all modes of travel. Transportation facilities and service levels are important elements that companies consider when locating to a new area because of the cost savings and increased economic competitiveness these regions provide.

Set between two metropolitan areas, Lawrence and Douglas County fulfill a role as an important link in the regional, statewide, and national transportation system. Although none currently exist in the local area, intermodal freight facilities in Kansas City and Topeka provide Lawrence with connections to the outside world. At the local level, intermodal planning activities and ongoing improvements that address freight and other needs will help to maintain the region's economy and competitiveness.

Intermodalism is the concept that binds the modes together so that people and freight movements can be made in the most efficient manner possible. Beyond the basic travel needs of Lawrence and Douglas County residents, there are additional travel considerations for moving freight on rail and truck and for personal inter-regional travel via bus, rail, and plane.



Air, rail, truck, and inter-city bus industries are essential components in the local economy and play a fundamental role in the Lawrence/Douglas County transportation system. T2025's modal system plans represent a comprehensive effort to build a multimodal transportation system, but additional efforts are necessary to maintain the economic competitiveness and attractiveness of the region. Since many of these planning elements involve private sector entities, it is imperative to involve them in the planning process.

Coordination with private freight transportation providers, either through a task force or some other means, can provide the MPO with a wealth of information if done properly. Private companies are often hesitant to provide government entities with proprietary information. However, through their involvement they may see the virtue in sharing data, especially if it results in improvements to the transportation system that increase freight movement potential.

Freight providers tend to be very knowledgeable about bottlenecks in the system that hinder truck and other vehicle movements. In addition, they may be aware of signal timing, signage, or geometric (e.g., turning radii) deficiencies in the system. With their involvement, the MPO can develop a detailed list of improvement needs and incorporate them into the transportation improvement program (TIP) for implementation. While long-range freight planning is necessary, short-term results are also important in engaging and maintaining interest from freight providers.

Freight movements invariably impact land uses, especially along the corridors utilized by truck and rail traffic. The level of impact is often intensified when sensitive receptors, such as neighborhoods, schools, parks, and so forth, occur along these high traffic routes. Proper long range planning and coordination with appropriate land use planners can serve to alleviate these impacts. This may include periodic designation and update of truck routes, implementation of additional limited-access roadway facilities, and other techniques.

Rail traffic throughout Lawrence and Douglas County is limited primarily to freight operations in and around the northern communities of the county. Limited passenger service exists at the Lawrence Santa Fe depot through Amtrak, but this service is not conducive to commuter travel. As of this writing, the Lawrence/Douglas County MPO is working with the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) in Kansas City and staff in Topeka to study the feasibility of commuter rail between those communities and beyond. Given the economic ties between Lawrence, Topeka, and Kansas City, commuter rail can provide significant benefits in terms of alleviating traffic congestion and reducing the cost of building and maintaining roads and bridges.



Intermodal Action 1: *Coordinate Freight Issues*

The MPO should work with freight transportation companies operating in the region to identify specific deficiencies in the transportation system that hinder freight movements and to incorporate design elements for large trucks in roadway planning and design. In addition, coordination with KDOT on freight issues could provide increased information regarding freight flows and improvement needs. It may be desirable to establish a freight task force for this purpose.



Intermodal Action 2: *Land Use Considerations*

To the extent possible, heavy truck traffic should be separated from light vehicle traffic and sensitive land uses (e.g., neighborhoods, schools, parks, etc.). Industrial land uses should be isolated from residential and commercial areas. Land use planning activities for areas near the airport should carefully consider noise and other impacts so that only compatible uses occur.



Intermodal Action 3: *Roadway Design and Access Management*

Due to their large size, trucks and buses have special needs for moving through the transportation system. Roadway and access requirements for these vehicles should be considered in the design of intersections and interchanges. Roads in and around industrial areas should be designed specifically for the movement of large trucks.

Intermodal Action 4: *Designated Truck Routes*

Truck routes provide freight haulers with a network of the most efficient and least impacting locations for traveling through Lawrence. Designated truck routes can have a positive influence on traffic safety if properly planned, implemented, and enforced. Hazardous materials traffic should be carefully considered in this analysis and routed accordingly. These should be updated periodically, especially as land use changes and roadway improvements occur.



Intermodal Action 5: *Pursue Commuter Rail*

The Lawrence/Douglas County MPO should continue ongoing efforts to study commuter rail feasibility and options with MARC and Topeka.

Intermodal Action 6: Establish a Multimodal Passenger Hub

The identification of a strategic location for multiple modes to come together is an important step in establishing intermodal passenger connections to other regions. Ideally, this facility will be located in close proximity to downtown Lawrence and the airport. Close coordination with the Lawrence Transit System, Greyhound, Amtrack, other jurisdictions, and freight railroad companies is necessary to make the hub a success.

