Analysis of the Regulatory, Operational, and Economic Feasibility of Combined Passenger and Freight Intermodal Operations

**Project Timeframe:** 9/1/2008 – 9/30/2009

**Principal Investigators**
Patrick Sherry, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Counseling Psychology
University of Denver
psherry@du.edu

Gregg Baxter
Intermodal Transportation Institute
University of Denver
gibaxter@comcast.net

**Project Funding**
National Center for Intermodal Transportation: $10,000
Total Funding: $10,000

**Project Objective**
The objectives of this research will be to provide an in-depth review and analysis of the regulatory, operational, structural and economic identification of the key factors and issues affecting the development of combined passenger and freight intermodal operations. There has been no previous published research on this topic. However, several locations around the country have considered or are considering this effort. The economic viability and feasibility of the project must be considered to determine whether it is cost effective. Second, the operational challenges of combining these operations must be reviewed. Finally, when all of the above have been reviewed all regulatory issues must be identified and addressed. Apparently, significant roadblocks exist from the point of FRA regulations that present major obstacles to the implementation of this approach. The present project will provide an overview of the issues faced in each of these areas. The proposed research would seek to identify a list of key parameters that could be used in deciding on the economic and operational viability of such projects. Furthermore, recommendations as to how to address the regulatory issues will also be provided. A final review of the recommended actions will be made and published.

**Project Abstract**
The goal of this project is to review and identify ways to improve the intermodal transportation system from the perspective of both freight and passenger operations. Presently, there is no model available to attempt to optimize the size, structure, configuration, and economic viability of such an intermodal operation. Industry experts indicate that such a tool would be useful across the industry, for both public and private sector applications.
**Task Description**

Several steps will be pursued sequentially and concurrently:

1) The first task will be to conduct a literature review on the existing methods for determining design operational and economic feasibility of combined freight and passenger intermodal operations.

2) Second, an in-depth review of the FRA regulations relevant to these types of operations will be conducted. Focus groups with FRA officials will be undertaken as well.

3) Third, we will conduct on-site focus groups with key industry leaders who are currently engaged in these types of operations to gather additional information and material relative to the conduct and implementation of these proposed operations. Interviews and short questionnaires will be administered in person and over the internet to key individuals.

4) Fourth, after obtaining the results of the interviews we will develop a list of factors that have been considered as relevant to making decisions regarding the operational development of these combined operations. These factors will be listed and prioritized for further consideration.

5) Fifth, a specific set of analyses and recommendations relative to the economic feasibility of such operations will be conducted. Pilot data from an existing operation will be used to create a model that can serve as a template for future analyses and investigations.

6) Sixth, a specific set of analyses and recommendations relative to the regulatory feasibility of such operations will be conducted. Descriptions of successful operations will be provided and recommendations for successful implementation will be discussed.

7) Finally, we will convene an expert group to determine review the findings and make final recommendations as to whether to proceed with implementation in a test location.

**Technology Transfer**

At least one paper will be prepared and submitted to a refereed conference, such as the TRB Annual Meeting, for presentation. An additional presentation will made at the Global Supply Chain Conference in Atlanta. At least one paper will be submitted to appropriate transportation journals, such as the *World Review of Intermodal Transportation Research*. Results of the proposed project will also be disseminated through the various websites associated with NCIT and ITI where those interested will be able to access the final report.

**Benefits of Project**

There are a number of benefits of this project. First, it will address a number of the key issues facing the industry. Second, it will review and critique the key recommendations that are being proposed today relative to the restructuring of the transportation industry. Three, it will provide a much needed basis for stimulating the discussion relative to the reauthorization issues. Finally, it will provide a needed educational tool.