

Keynote Address

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Approximately 300 multi-modal terminals (river-rail-truck) currently operate in West Virginia, handling a wide diversity of cargo.

According to tonnage reports maintained by the West Virginia Navigation Center in Huntington, total approximate tonnage moved on the Mon decreased from 32 million tons in 1981 to 28 million in 2006: On the Mon between 1990 and 2006, marked decreases were noted in the transport of coal (32.7 to 24.2 million tons); petroleum products (1.5 million to 420,000 tons); and aggregates such as sand, gravel and rock (2.3 million to 1.5 million tons). Shipments of iron ore and scrap also decreased 1990-2006 (approximately 178,200 tons to 116,371 tons).

However transport of several products increased substantially: chemical shipments more than doubled from approximately 134,000 to 280,000; other crude materials from 90,000 to 612,000 tons; and primary manufactured good from 273,000 to more than 561,000 tons.

Expanding on those modest but encouraging gains requires increased planning and funding at local, state and national levels.

Nationally, the US is facing a national freight crisis: we must plan to mitigate the impact of a massive wave of international goods inundating our international ports, many of which currently are operating at capacity. Meeting these goods' transportation needs requires development of an efficient, sophisticated and integrated national transport system.

With sufficient funding, inland navigation may provide the answer: it's cost-effective and environmentally friendly.

At the state level, a statewide transportation plan currently is under development by the WV Department of Transportation. However, the WVDOT currently has no jurisdiction over maritime or rail systems within the state.

Locally, commercial and industrial interests must join civic leaders and government planners for discussions concerning the location and operation of multi-modal terminals. They must appreciate the impact of their decisions on broader community needs.

The immediate challenge on the Mon and throughout West Virginia, however, is to identify consumer-driven products that can be transported cost-effectively by an integrated river transport system.