

3.1.3 Trilateral Air Quality Improvement Initiative: North American Trade and Transportation Corridors

Project Summary

This project seeks to address significant air quality and other environmental issues associated with transport along North American trade corridors. Such issues affect all three countries of North America.

Goals and Objectives

The goal for this initiative is to identify and promote opportunities for collaboration on air quality issues in the context of trade and transportation corridors. This will seek to assess potential public health and environmental impacts as trade corridors develop, and identify possible mitigation measures that can address these impacts.

The objectives of this initiative are as follows:

- identify the principal current, and probable future, North American trade and transportation corridors, along with opportunities for environmental cooperation related to them, including sharing best practices; and
- identify and pursue collaborative opportunities on modes of transport.

Rationale

The North American Trade and Transportation Corridors project is designed to promote mutually beneficial, “win-win” opportunities to advance environmental improvements, as well as transportation advancements along trade corridors in North America.

Trade is booming in North America. As regional commerce accelerates, so too does the flow of goods and services pulsing along North American trade arteries—on land, by air and over water. The network that supports our increasingly integrated commercial transactions constitutes a complex and interrelated infrastructure, including highways, airways, waterways, transmission lines and cables, and gas and oil pipelines, to name a few. The flow of goods, services and information through the North American system is influenced, and often constrained, by a host of physical and administrative factors. Cars and trucks idle for hours at borders as custom officials inspect their contents, ground traffic is slowed by inefficient routing or other bottlenecks, and direct rail routes are increasingly difficult to find.

While in many cases other factors, such as local trade patterns, demographic growth or suburban sprawl, may explain stresses on infrastructure, recent studies do identify significant increases in North American trade generally and, in particular, heavy truck travel along the principal routes for inter-American trade. Highways constitute the dominant mode of transportation for North American trade, carrying 80 percent of US exports to Canada and 60 percent of Canadian exports to the United States. US-Mexican and Canadian-Mexican trade reflect similar percentages. Over 70 percent of US-Canadian trade (by value) moves by truck, which also accounts for most of the trade with Mexico as well. Data indicate that truck traffic has increased substantially in the past decade, a trend that is forecast to continue in the future.

Communities have responded to increased traffic on local highways by proposing a wide range of measures, including some intended to facilitate regional trade through transportation corridors. In Canada alone, no fewer than ten regional and corridor-specific initiatives have been launched. Examples include the International Mobility and Trade Corridor Project, the Canamex Corridor, the Central North American Trade Corridor, the Mid-Continent International Trade Corridor Task Force, the North American International Trade Corridor Partnership, North America’s Superhighway Coalition, and the East-West Highway. Some of these, such as the Canamex Corridor, include proposals on a harmonized regulatory environment and distributed infrastructure planning, and many of these initiatives include features of interest to others active in regional planning exercises. In the United States, the federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) allocated up to US\$140 million per year for five years through two programs: the National Corridor Planning and Development Program, and the Coordinated Border Infrastructure Program. In 1999, US\$124 million in grants were approved to fund 55 corridor-related projects.

Inherent in all of the trade corridor proposals are environmental dimensions, some with transboundary or North American significance. Trade corridor initiatives can lead to enhanced cooperation to maximize both environmental and trade/transport benefits.

In this dynamic context, NACEC can make an important contribution by bringing together diverse representatives from the public and private sector to share information on best practices and to stimulate collaborative endeavors.

Progress to Date

Initial scoping work was performed during the latter half of 1999, resulting in the preparation of *North American Trade and Trade Transportation Corridors* (September 1999). The report identified the most significant projects, participating agencies, and the current level of coordination associated with North American transportation corridors. In 2000, NACEC retained ICF Inc. to work with a stakeholders advisory group, which includes government representatives from each country, to identify likely environmental impacts (with special emphasis on the air environment) of North American trade and transportation corridor development and describe opportunities for the prevention or mitigation of these impacts. The project covers the full multi-modal definition of “trade and transportation corridors” (trucking, rail, inland and ocean waterways, air, pipelines, and electric transmission).

Actions 2001

Overview

Assessment of trade and transportation corridors

The work by ICF Inc., in consultation with the stakeholders advisory group, will lead to a public presentation of a report at a NACECsponsored workshop in Winnipeg, Manitoba, during March 2001. The purpose of the report and workshop is to bring attention to the need for including environmental considerations at the earliest planning stages of trade and transportation corridors and to begin to bring national and trinational focus on the need for the coordinated development of these corridors.

2001	Estimated Resources Required (C\$)
Action 1: Assess trade and transportation corridors	95,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity 1: Support a trinational workshop of officials from government agencies and nongovernmental organizations to present and discuss trade corridor scenario analyses 	35,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity 2: Identify and pursue opportunities for collaboration and cooperation as a result of discussions from workshop 	60,000
Total Resources Required	95,000

Public Participation

Members of the public will participate in the corridors workshop, where representatives of citizen and business groups will be invited to review issues and participate in their resolution. The initiative will also receive input from a trade and transportation corridor listserv network established by interested stakeholders in cooperation with NACEC.

Capacity Building

Building capacity to evaluate region-wide environmental impacts and policy options beyond local, state, provincial or federal jurisdictional boundaries will be promoted by scenario assessment of future trade corridors and the exploration of best practices to mitigate potential adverse environmental impacts.

Expected Results

- Greater opportunity for near-term improved air quality in the vicinity of trade and transportation routes.
- Improved understanding of the future environmental impacts of increasing ground transportation.
- Improved understanding of the negative or positive effects of transportation corridors on the air environment.
- Coordination between the three countries, and between involved entities in each of the countries, in the development of transportation corridors designed to transfer goods between the countries of North America.
- Greater consideration being given to the needs of the environment during the development of the transportation corridor system.

Expected Partners and/or Participants

These include trade, transportation, health, and environmental agencies from the three countries, citizen groups, local governments, private businesses, and other interested stakeholders. JPAC has identified NAFTA transportation corridors as a priority for its work and will be invited to participate in the Winnipeg meeting.

Linkages to other NACEC Projects

The North American dialogue on the environmental considerations associated with transportation corridors remains in its formative stage, affording NACEC an opportunity to play a proactive and preventative role in this fast-developing area. As an interdisciplinary undertaking, the initiative will require close internal coordination with both the Pollutants and Health and the Environment, Economy and Trade program areas.

Actions 2002–2003

Overview

NACEC expects that the three North American countries and the discussion from the 2001 conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba, will provide additional insight into further activities for 2002 and 2003 necessary to develop corridor coordination at the national and regional levels.