



Research Brief

* THE COMMONWEALTH'S OFFICIAL SOURCE OF POPULATION AND ECONOMIC STATISTICS *

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Study Released on Freight Railroads in Pennsylvania

MIDDLETOWN, Pa— “Railroads are of crucial significance to Pennsylvania’s transportation system,” according to Dr. Jeremy Plant, professor of Public Affairs at Penn State Harrisburg.

“Pennsylvania has a varied railroad system of 60 carriers including to major freight carriers, a major Canadian railroad, tourist lines, regional and short line railroads and switching and terminal operations,” Dr. Plant continues. “Railroad freight traffic is routed over 11 major corridors. However, population growth in the state is not occurring alongside major freight arteries, lessening demands for mixed use of tracks for commuter rail and freight.”

Dr. Plant’s new report “Railroads in Pennsylvania,” was published by the Pennsylvania State Data Center. This report provides an understanding of the Commonwealth’s railroads and puts them into the context of the needs of today’s economy and overall transportation system. It primarily focuses on freight rather than passenger lines.

Other highlights from the report include:

1. Intermodal shipments, involving the partnership of railroads with other transportation modes, is the fastest growing portion of the rail freight business and one that has attracted the interest of public and private leaders in Pennsylvania.



2. The Commonwealth is giving considerable attention to rail issues through its planning process and the Rail Freight Assistance Program. Planning focuses on grade crossing safety, intermodal facilities, increased track capacity, doublestack capability and improved signaling.
3. Problems with customer service and the continuing efforts to merge major railroads into national or continental systems has led to close scrutiny of the industry by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The Pennsylvania State Data Center is the Commonwealth's official source of population and economic statistics and services. It is based at Penn State Harrisburg's Institute of State and Regional Affairs. The Pennsylvania State Data Center is part of the U.S. Census Bureau's national State Data Center Program.

Editors: For additional data, contact Amy Jonas at the Data Center's State Capital Office, (717) 772-2710, or for comment on this topic by Dr. Jeremy Plant, contact him via email (preferred) at jfp2@psu.edu or at (717) 948-6045.

To order the publication, contact the PaSDC at (717) 948-6336.