

6. Strategy

The Government of Canada understandably has difficulty in establishing detailed national policies on corridor development when there are several groups across the country each suggesting different priorities for federal involvement and support of their particular corridor region. The Government of Canada is expected to adhere to policies that are consistent across the country and serve a broad national interest. Its role in terms of the Mid-Continent International Trade Corridor is important, but it must act with a recognition of the need for balance and regional fairness.

The Task Force found that where federal government action was required and would be favorable to this corridor it would be consistent with existing national policies and also be beneficial to other regions of Canada.

This corridor and others are not meant to be working towards erasing the boundaries between the three nations of North America. What they are doing, and should continue to do, is transform what have often been border roadblocks into accessible doorways between the nations.

The public policy and business issues surrounding the Mid-Continent International Trade Corridor have as much to do with preventing the loss of opportunities as with eliminating impediments to development. Specifically, the corridor requires the rapid expansion of business activity and the underlying growth of exports and imports to provide the essential purpose and returns on trade and transportation system investments. Measures to ensure the human resources, skill sets and business climate to achieve that purpose are essential.

Specifically, there are four categories of crucial issues related to the corridor: harmonization, infrastructure and investment, education and training, and innovation.

Harmonization issues are those that require consistency in the rules and procedures of the several jurisdictions along the corridor. Of increasing importance is the ability to use the corridor to fulfill the requirement of companies to have their products delivered reliably on-time and to carry out their export and import business efficiently. In the case of Winnipeg, for instance, the ability to deliver to markets quickly through the corridor is paramount to attracting customers. Timing is increasingly crucial in transportation, and impediments at borders can only serve to undermine the viability of the corridor for Canada and Mexico. Obstacles at the borders of Canada, United States and Mexico - chiefly differences in information and procedural requirements, approaches to enforcement and hours of service - were identified as serious problems affecting this and other corridors. At the same time, Task Force members recognize that governments need to take measures at the frontier to protect public safety. The success of the corridor will depend in large part on how well governments are able to align their control processes with modern business practices and how well business understands government requirements.