

5. Findings

Investments by foreign-owned firms, such as Cargill and Ford New Holland, provide further illustrations of the benefits of industrial locations in Western Canada and Manitoba, particularly as the base to serve markets across the region.

The extensive operations and recent investments of Air Canada and Purolator in Winnipeg illustrate the importance of this location as an air transport hub, and furnish further evidence of the existing capability on which the corridor region could be served more extensively from this site.

Winnport's evolving plans include the establishment of a business park and free trade zone in the airport area, and the Winnipeg Airport Authority is looking towards expansion of the services it offers in consulting and training.

Elsewhere in the corridor, innovations are driving the development of the trade and transportation systems. For example, in Texas the Alliance air/container port is enabling shippers and carriers to pool their resources and work together effectively to sort out cargo and move it more rapidly. Tentative steps are being taken to create more sophisticated electronic monitoring of goods moving across the corridor, particularly by truck, in an effort to ensure on-time performance and coordinate transfers from truckloads to less-than-truckload carriers.

In each of these cases, there has been a fundamental rethinking of the challenges and opportunities afforded by the corridor, and changes of both strategy and plans to deal with them.

The Midcontinent International Trade Corridor and its gateways have competitive strengths relative to other north-south routes, such as the other corridors mentioned earlier. It is widely accessible from all directions and has increasingly updated inter-modal capabilities, including air transport. Being located at the centre of the continent, it has a larger geographic window than other corridors. And, it runs through favourable flat, dry terrain, with fewer weather-related interruptions.

Markets throughout the central US and into Mexico can be readily accessed from Manitoba using the corridor. It offers the shortest distance and least travel time between the population centres of Mexico and Western Canada. By incorporating these countries and including the key gateway cities, the corridor provides a breadth of international trade opportunities unsurpassed by others.

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Given these advantages, the Midcontinent International Trade Corridor makes strong economic sense and provides strengths on which Manitoba and Winnipeg can build. In the mandate of this Task Force, there was particular reference to what could be done to advance the development of Winnipeg and Port of Churchill. We found that there were no special measures necessary for either of them, but they would benefit from a series of initiatives that would have broad application to industries and transportation companies in Manitoba and elsewhere across Canada.