

4. Region in Transition

Corridor Systems

Other north-south international trade corridors and their key gateways have been identified and promoted in recent years. These include the Canamex route, Central North American Trade Corridor, and the North America's Superhighway Coalition. In all, there are an estimated 38 such corridors extending in a variety of directions across North America.

In some respects these trade corridors and gateways compete with one another, primarily for infrastructure funding from the US federal government. However, they compete only marginally with one another for the tonnage of goods and types of products and services in their regions or along their transportation routes.

Each of the corridors has its particular features. In the case of the Mid-Continent International Trade Corridor, those features include its ready accessibility to key US and Mexican markets and its mature air, rail and trucking infrastructure, as well as its link to the northern seaport at Churchill. Public awareness of this corridor has grown dramatically, particularly with the recent Mayors' Summit in Winnipeg, involving government officials and others from across the region. It was clear at that event that there is widespread commitment in the US and Mexico for the Mid-Continent International Trade Corridor and extensive recognition of its benefits.

The existence of integrated corridor routes has become especially important to freight forwarders and transportation brokers, who recognize the need for speed and on-time delivery, particularly for manufacturing components, business services and many agricultural products.

What the promoters of each corridor have been seeking is greater investment in infrastructure, primarily highways, and more consistency in government rules and regulations affecting trade and transportation among the several state and provincial jurisdictions. They share a similar purpose of forging the business, trade and transportation links necessary for stronger economic growth.

Beyond Transportation

The most typical public perception of corridor systems has transportation as its principal focus. The reality, however, is that international trade and business activities are the more crucial, but less visible, factors that constitute the corridors and create their ultimate value. The transportation system does not exist for its own purposes, but serves the needs of people and the firms using it within Canada and internationally.

For the Mid-Continent International Trade Corridor to grow and prosper, it first needs the economic and business activities that constitute the fundamental market-driven incentives for its development. Transportation capability is not the primary reason why Canadian companies and industries are exporting. The real reasons have been the fundamental shift in business attitudes towards global markets and the necessity of trade as an increasingly important element of the strategies of companies.