

7.19 Another essential aspect of an innovative approach for the corridor would be the use of technology and evolution of the "intelligent highway" that would bring it into the forefront of technology and efficiency. This matter is of particular interest to Transport Canada, which plans to have a full-scale pilot test in place by next year to enable the filing of shipping information electronically. Using this system, trucks would not necessarily have to stop for checks at Canadian border points. In addition to that project, it was suggested to the Task Force that a trade compliance centre be established to house the array of trade services, including customs inspectors, warehouse facilities, traffic management and travel information. By drawing together the key people involved in international trade activities, it would enable goods to be handled quickly and efficiently. Operating in conjunction with emerging technologies for harmonized customs clearance and pre-arrival systems, the centre would illustrate vividly the position of the Mid-Continent International Trade Corridor as a user-directed innovator. The Government of Manitoba has already taken the initiative in extensive preliminary work on the concept.

Recommendation

Encourage and assist a feasibility study located in Winnipeg to establish an international trade compliance centre to provide services to improve the movement of goods through the corridor and beyond.

7.20 For this corridor to become more innovative and driven by the needs of its users, it needs valid and timely data on which investment and business expansion plans can be reliably based. Unfortunately much of the data, particularly from Statistics Canada, is less than useful due to long time lags. The official data on air cargo activity, for instance, is collected and processed too slowly and there is insufficiently detailed output. At the same time there is little compatibility of the data on trade and transportation flows across the three corridor countries. It appears that there is a need for better data collection by third-parties, with both collection and dissemination by electronic communications.

Recommendation

Integrate the data collection and distribution activities related to international trade and transportation among Canada, US and Mexico, and direct the production of Statistics Canada data into timely delivery.

7.21 The Task Force found that there is still a job to be done to build the corridor beyond its current stage and to pursue the business development that is needed to fuel its next phase of evolution. It was suggested that there may be a need for an organization or entity of some sort to pursue specific business objectives and to market Manitoba's and Western Canada's involvement in the corridor. This in no way implied that the work being done by the current stakeholders was inadequate; the progress to date has been remarkable in many respects. The need that became apparent to this Task Force is for a complementary effort, which does not overlap with the existing initiatives and work already being done well by others.