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Ohio · Kentucky · Indiana
Regional Council of Governments

First Double-Stack Freight Train on Heartland Connector Rolls into Cincinnati

Cincinnati, Ohio – The Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI) Board President and Clermont County Commissioner Edwin Humphrey announced the first double-stack intermodal train began traveling along the new Heartland Connector this week. OKI partnered with Norfolk Southern (NS), the Ohio Department of Transportation and the Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC) to augment five overpasses to allow the double stack trains to run between Columbus and Cincinnati.

“The completion of these double-stack projects maximizes freight rail efficiency, lessens the burden on our highway system and by reducing costs, helps us compete in the global marketplace,” said Humphrey.

The first double-stack train rolling along the connector between Cincinnati and Columbus represents the culmination of a \$6.1 million effort to upgrade the rail line, which will provide substantial benefits to customers and the general public. Among the benefit is the shortening of travel time for double-stack intermodal trains leaving the Port of Hampton Roads, Va., for the Midwest as well as reduced traffic congestion on southwestern Ohio interstate highways.

The connector is part of a larger rail network between the Midwest and the Port of Hampton Roads called the Heartland Corridor, designed to allow the passage of double-stack intermodal trains.

“These changes represent the ultimate completion to the vision that spurred the Heartland Corridor project at its inception,” said NS Group Vice President International Intermodal Jeff Heller. “Rerouting these trains over the new route will provide improved service and increased capacity to shippers in these key markets”

The Heartland Connector upgrade involved opening clearances at five locations between Cincinnati and Columbus and installing new track at the Rickenbacker Intermodal Terminal near Columbus. Financial support for the project included \$3.6 million from the federal government combined with matching contributions from OKI and NS.

“The Rail Commission is very happy to have been able to facilitate this very important infrastructure project that builds on previous investments and further solidifies Ohio position in the global supply chain,” said Matt Dietrich, ORDC executive director. Dietrich added that the connector will provide competitive shipping rates, faster service and better freight service to Ohio and the nation.

Prior to the opening of the Heartland Connector, double-stack intermodal trains traveling to the Midwest from the Port of Hampton Roads, VA, would have to follow elongated paths through Tennessee and Pennsylvania. The new Heartland Connector will allow traffic to use the high capacity route that provides shippers with improved transit times and better service reliability.

Edwin H. Humphrey
President

Mark R. Policinski
Executive Director

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And it will:

- Reduce transit times from the Port of Hampton Roads to Cincinnati by one to two days for Monday – Wednesday departures.
- Add an additional day of frequency from both Norfolk International Terminals and the Portsmouth APMT marine terminal to Cincinnati and Detroit.
- Improve consistency and reliability between these markets and the Port of Hampton Roads.

The general public benefits, as well. The more goods shipped by rail means fewer long-distance trucks on interstate highways like I-71 and I-75, and trains – capable of hauling one ton of freight 480 miles per gallon of fuel – are more fuel efficient than tractor trailers.

OKI is a council of local governments, business organizations and community groups committed to developing collaborative strategies, plans and programs to improve the quality of life and economic development potential of the Tri-State.

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