CHAPTER 6
FREIGHT MOVEMENT

RAIL FREIGHT

Introduction

With a trend toward mergers and the creation of rail mega-carriers (such as Union Pacific/Southern Pacific and Burlington Northern/Santa Fe), as well as the growth of the shortline and regional railroads as links and feeders to the larger carriers, railroad business in the United States has become a growing industry. In the Central New York Region, there is one major (Class 1) carrier, one shortline and one regional railroad (see Map 6-1). The major carrier is CSX Transportation.

CSX Transportation

CSX operates over the Chicago Main line linking Central New York with New York City, New England and the Midwest. The company also operates the Baldwinsville, Fulton and Montreal Secondary lines to the north of Syracuse. CSX has seen a three percent increase in local traffic annually over the last several years and currently handles about 800 carloads of local traffic weekly. Another significant segment of CSX business is the intermodal freight terminal located in the DeWitt rail yard. CSX handles approximately 50,000 containers annually at the DeWitt facility and this number is expected to increase significantly as former Conrail routes are integrated into the CSX Service Lanes. The DeWitt yard is a major intermodal connection serving the entire state and is the only terminal of its type between New York City and Buffalo.

New York, Susquehanna & Western Railway (NYS&W)

The New York, Susquehanna & Western Railway (NYS&W), the area’s regional carrier, currently handles several automobile trains per week between Little Ferry, N.J., and Syracuse for interchange with CSX, as well as local trains. The railway serves local industries between Syracuse and Binghamton and is also the interchange with CSX for Utica traffic (via Binghamton). The NYS&W has access to both Norfolk Southern (NS) and CSX in Binghamton, allowing customers competitive rail freight rates.
**Finger Lakes Railway**

The Finger Lakes Railway, operating between Solvay and Geneva, has produced significant results since taking ownership of the Auburn rail line. The Finger Lakes Railway has been able to stop the decline of rail traffic in its service area and has increased its business significantly. Carloads have increased over the last several years from approximately 5,600 in 1994 to 7,800 annually in 1996 and are anticipated to increase to over 10,000 carloads per year in 2000. The Finger Lakes Railway customers will also see benefits due to the interchange rights with two Class 1 railroads (CSX and NS) instead of one. Interchange with CSX occurs in Solvay and Lyons, while interchange with the NS occurs in Geneva.

**AIR CARGO SERVICE**

**Hancock International Airport**

Hancock International Airport (see Map 6-1) has in recent years undergone a substantial expansion in the capacity to handle air cargo. A highly successful effort has been made by the private sector and the airport to expand and modernize air cargo facilities and services during the last several years. At the present time, eight freight carriers are active, including but not limited to Airborne, Business Air, Emery, Federal Express, Mountain Air, UPS and Wiggins. Over the past 30 years, the tonnage of air cargo has increased from 5,000 in 1967 to 26,099 for 1997.  

Prospects for the future are very positive because Hancock International Airport has the land area available for expanding ground facilities, which will accommodate future growth opportunities. In addition, expansion of runway and taxiway facilities serves not only air passenger needs but those of air cargo carriers as well, offering greater capacity and flexibility to meet changing circumstances.

**General Aviation Airports**

With respect to general aviation airports, there are currently no airfreight services available at general aviation airports within the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC) area or the larger Syracuse Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

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5 The 1967 data is from the Central New York Regional Aviation System Plan. The 1997 data is from the City of Syracuse Department of Aviation Activity Reports.
HIGHWAY FREIGHT

Introduction

Most products utilized by industry or sold in retail outlets at some point move by truck. Rail, air and water intermodal shipments have a trucking aspect at both ends of their trip. In Central New York, a majority of freight shipments move directly by truck from origin to destination. With trucks playing an important role in freight transportation, almost 75% of motor carrier revenues come from long-distance trucking, and the remainder from local trucking. Most truckload freight travels less than 500 miles. Truckloads traveling over 500 miles are more economical if shipped via rail intermodal service. The local and regional nature of trucking was highlighted in the 1993 and 1997 U.S. Department of Transportation Commodity Flow Survey, which found that 30% of the value and 55% of the tonnage moves between locations that are less than 50 miles apart.

Trucking Characteristics

In the SMTC area, there is a system of Qualifying Highways (national network) and Access Highways designated for use by Special Dimension Vehicles in New York State. Although this network is the primary network for truck movements, trucks with trailers measuring 48 feet or less in length are allowed on any roadway not otherwise restricted by local laws or regulations. The Syracuse Metropolitan Area is also home to many regional distribution centers serving the Northeast and eastern Canada, as well as major intermodal connectors to rail and freight networks. Map 6-2 shows the proposed truck routes.

Freight Data Training

The SMTC, beginning in 2001, will be sponsoring a Statewide Shared Cost Initiative intended to train New York State Metropolitan Planning Organization (NYSMPO) and NYSDOT staffs on how to use Reebie data for analysis of freight movement within and through their respective regions. The New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) recently concluded a freight movement study in the NYMTC region that used the Transearch database, a proprietary database updated and maintained by Reebie Associates. The analysis in the study report provides a general idea about the overall patterns of freight movement in the NYMTC region but also provides specific details about freight flows to and from some 41 markets including the immediate region, individual states, and groups of states within the United States. The NYSDOT has provided each MPO with the Reebie data for their respective regions. However, not all MPO’s or NYSDOT staffs are adequately trained on how to use the data. This project, which will provide the necessary training, would facilitate improved planning for freight movement and would assist NYSMPO staffs in better understanding the freight flows within each of the metropolitan areas, their impacts on the economy, and on the transportation system. The SMTC Staff will act as Consultant Project Manager for this project which includes two key Consultant components: (1) the development of a training course for the NYSMPO and NYSDOT; and (2) to teach the course to MPO and NYSDOT staffs in three agreed upon locations throughout New York State.