

3. Project Purpose

The purpose of the Detroit Intermodal Freight Terminal project is to support the economic competitiveness of southeastern Michigan and the state by improving intermodal freight transportation opportunities and efficiencies for business and industry. To achieve this purpose, MDOT proposes to develop a regional intermodal freight terminal with sufficient capacity to provide for existing and future intermodal demand.

It is the role of government (in this case MDOT) to ensure that the businesses and industries involved in the intermodal freight transportation segment of the economy continue to have access to the market (i.e., customers, workers, shippers, and the like). This, in turn, ensures maintenance of a high quality of life for the region's citizens. MDOT's role is served by engaging in the DIFT Project to improve the connectivity through provision of a better interface between the public road system and the private rail system; and, to facilitate the development of significant capacity of the region's intermodal facilities.

The anticipated benefits of developing the Detroit Intermodal Freight Terminal complex include the following:

- Providing the necessary infrastructure to support current and future distribution needs of industry, particularly auto manufacturing, the state's largest industry, and other southeast Michigan businesses.
- Achieving a competitive advantage both regionally and nationally by focusing federal, state, local and private (i.e., railroad and other private entities) investments and resources at a single world-class intermodal freight terminal district.
- Stimulating economic redevelopment of Southwest Detroit/East Dearborn with an associated increase in jobs for local residents.
- Stimulating economic development and redevelopment throughout southeast Michigan through job creation, increasing the tax base, and lowering the price of consumer goods.
- Reducing truck "vehicle miles traveled," which saves lives, reduces pollution and conserves highway capacity.
- Removing intermodal terminal-related truck traffic from the local streets of the nearby neighborhoods so that quality of life issues, such as air pollution and safety, are addressed.
- Strengthening the Southwest Detroit/East Dearborn community by reducing the impact of intermodal terminal expansion on residents and businesses.
- Investing in the Southwest Detroit/East Dearborn community by building/rebuilding infrastructure.

- Buffering the intermodal facility from nearby neighborhoods through improvements that reduce noise and use trees, vegetation and other enhancements to improve the terminal's exterior appearance.

Key public benefits to the broader region to be quantified in the EIS include air quality, roadway safety and maintenance.

- Air Quality – A primary benefit of consolidating terminals is reduced air pollution emissions. Reduced air emissions would derive from several causes: 1) Local to the DIFT area, sections of the yard that are now unpaved will be paved. The particulate matter stirred up by vehicle activity at the yard and by wind would be substantially reduced; 2) Efficient layout will minimize intermodal movements within the terminal district. This will reduce in-yard drayage (trucking and handling of containers); 3) Regionally, the need for drayage will be reduced as the trucks that deliver containers will circulate from one, rather than multiple bases. Finally, rail hauling of containers will substitute for truck hauling from other cities, like Chicago. The reduced air emissions will accrue to the entire length of these trip substitutions.
- Reduced crashes – Anytime that trucks can be removed from the travel stream, there is a potential for reduced conflicts and reduced crashes.
- Reduced highway maintenance – The extent to which trucks are responsible for pavement deterioration is a broadly debated issue. It is clear, however, that fewer trucks mean less maintenance of roads and bridges over the long term.