

KEEPING COUNTIES MOVING: FREIGHT TRANSPORTATION AS AN ECONOMIC ENGINE



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INTRODUCTION

America's counties play an essential role in developing transportation and infrastructure networks. Counties own and maintain 45 percent of America's roads and 40 percent of bridges, in addition to investing over \$122 billion annually in infrastructure and public works.

These investments and policy decisions play a critical role in not only moving people quickly and safely, but also in the efficient transport of goods. Investments in maritime and inland ports, rail and multimodal facilities, and crucial connector networks enable cargo to be moved throughout the nation and across the globe. In turn, freight transportation provides an opportunity for significant direct and indirect economic benefits as a return on these investments.

This report will describe how freight transportation investments can fuel local and regional economic development. The four counties featured in this report have leveraged multi-sector partnerships, public and private funding and regional planning activities to link freight planning with economic development strategies to promote economic competitiveness, create jobs and invest in local communities.

MURRAY COUNTY, GEORGIA

RURAL GLOBAL CONNECTION AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Murray County, Ga.—home to just under 40,000 residents—is a rural county in mountainous Northwest Georgia, bordering Tennessee. Not unlike other communities in rural Appalachia, Murray County has long been challenged economically by isolation. Additionally, in the last decade, the recession and housing market decline proved detrimental to the county and revealed a troublesome reliance on the flooring and textile industries. Unemployment rose to around 15 percent and many leaders began looking for options to address these challenges and diversify the industry base for Murray County and the surrounding region.¹

Freight transportation emerged as a viable option for economic growth in Murray County after the Georgia Ports Authority devised their Network Georgia initiative, which sought to expand rail-to-ship connectivity in Georgia and ultimately result in six inland port intermodal facilities to be developed throughout the state. It was out of this initiative that the Georgia Ports Authority first conceptualized the Appalachian Regional Port (ARP) project.²

The ARP was officially announced in the summer of 2015 as an intermodal inland port to be built in the unincorporated Murray County community of Crandall, Ga., a site championed by the county for its strategic geographic position in proximity to interstate transport links. The facility will be located on a rural, undeveloped 42-acre site off US Highway 411 and the CSX rail line, both of which run north-south through the heart of the county. The port will feature approximately 9,500 linear feet of rail track and will enable cargo containers to be transferred on-site from semi-trailer trucks to rail and transported 388 miles directly to the Garden City terminal at the Port of Savannah—the fourth largest container port and one of the fastest growing ports in the United States.³ Likewise, containers entering the Garden City terminal—mostly from international markets—can be sent by rail directly to the Appalachian Regional Port and, in turn, transferred to trucks and dispersed throughout the Southeast and beyond.



A graphic rendering of the Appalachian Regional Port set to open in Murray County, Ga. in 2018.

Source: Georgia Ports Authority

“ THIS PROJECT ALLOWS A RURAL COMMUNITY TO BE CONNECTED TO INTERNATIONAL MARKETS, AND THAT IS VERY RARE FOR A RURAL COMMUNITY. ”

— Murray County Sole Commissioner
Brittany Pittman

A collaborative public-private partnership allowed for this \$24 million project to ultimately become a reality. Murray County acquired the property for the facility with a \$700,000 investment—\$500,000 of which coming from an economic development grant from the state of Georgia, while the county Economic Development Authority added \$200,000. The Georgia Ports Authority and CSX Transportation contributed \$7.4 million and \$5.5 million, respectively, while the state of Georgia was able to provide \$10 million to close a critical funding gap in the project.⁴ After initially acquiring the property, Murray County is now in the process of transferring the site over to the Georgia Ports Authority—who will own and operate the port facility under a memorandum of understanding between the partners.

Murray County leaders have remained committed throughout the process of developing the ARP due to the economic impact it will bring to the county. Murray County Sole Commissioner Brittany Pittman sees this project as extremely vital to diversifying their industry base and believes it will have a true regional impact not just on Northwest Georgia, but even stretching into Tennessee and the Carolinas. “The opportunities this will bring to our community and the entire Northwest Georgia area will be well worth the investment” said Commissioner Pittman. “This project allows a rural community to be connected to international markets, and that is very rare for a rural community.”⁵

In addition to providing jobs and broadening the local tax base itself, the Appalachian Regional Port will give the county and surrounding region a crucial competitive advantage to help retain and expand existing industries, while also

spurring new enterprise growth. Located in an existing industrial belt, this intermodal facility will help retain existing industries throughout the region by providing critical connectivity and making their manufactured products—including carpet, flooring, automobiles and tires—more competitive in the global market. The Volkswagen Chattanooga Assembly Plant, located just under 50 miles north in Chattanooga, Tenn., is just one example of a major regional employer that will be ideally suited to take full advantage of the ARP and the direct connection it would provide to its international suppliers and markets.⁶

Pittman, who also spearheads Murray County's economic development efforts, believes this regional inland port will serve as critical economic development tool that will be used to attract new businesses to the county. Pittman has already seen an uptick in perspective business calls and interest since the ARP announcement. In February 2016, in fact, Murray County was able to attract Turkish company ART Carpet—a producer of woven rugs—to locate its US headquarters facility in the county, creating 40-50 jobs.⁷ “When we were originally looking for places to locate in the United States, Murray County, Ga. was high on our list at the very beginning,” said John Brooking, President of ART Carpet. “We saw that Murray County was receiving the Appalachian Regional Port, a direct line to the global market through the Port of Savannah, and that made the area extremely attractive.”⁸ Pittman also sees potential business growth in logistics and distribution for the county due to proximity to the regional port and growing population centers.

In addition to having such a significant impact on Murray County and Northwest Georgia, the Appalachian Regional Port will have a sweeping

effect throughout the rest of Georgia. “It’s a win-win for everybody,” said Pittman. Specifically, this project unifies interests of the urban and suburban Atlanta metropolitan area with the interests of the Northwest Georgia mountains. By enabling containers to be shipped between the Port of Savannah and Northwest Georgia via rail, the ARP will eliminate 14 million truck miles on Georgia roads in year one alone.⁹ This will significantly reduce travel time and will have a drastic effect on traffic congestion on Georgia interstates, particularly those in the Atlanta area. In turn, this project will also keep true to the Georgia Ports Authority’s commitment to sustainability by leading to an 80 percent reduction in Co2 emissions, as transporting freight via rail is three times more efficient than by road.¹⁰

Construction on the Appalachian Regional Port will break ground in 2016 and plans to be up-and-running by 2018. This also presents Murray County the opportunity to engage in a necessary planning process for future growth and development related to the facility. The county has applied to the Appalachian Regional Commission for a planning grant in order to strategically engage in land use planning in areas surrounding the ARP. Though a significant increase in traffic is expected through this project, preliminary studies reveal that traffic counts would still be less than figures before the recession and decline in local manufacturers in the mid-to-late 2000's.¹¹ Still, the county is working with Georgia Department of Transportation to study the current connector road network—particularly US Highway 411—and prepare for the increase of up to 50,000 container trucks in year one.¹²

Ultimately, planning for the future of Murray County was, in fact, one of the driving factors to Commissioner Brittany Pittman seeking office as Sole Commissioner, and as she notes, it remains at the core of what this Appalachian Regional Port project is about: “We want a sustainable future for our local economy.”¹³

SHELBY COUNTY, TENNESSEE

COUNTY-CITY COLLABORATION MODEL IN “AMERICA’S DISTRIBUTION CENTER”

Located on the banks of the Mississippi River in the southwest corner of Tennessee, Shelby County is the state’s largest county in terms of both geographic size and population.¹⁴ Encompassing the urban footprint of the city of Memphis and much of its surrounding suburbs, the county is home to approximately 939,500 residents. This area’s strategic location on the Mississippi River led to the founding of Memphis as a river port city and it emerged as a cotton and timber hub.¹⁵ The efficient transportation of goods has since continued to play a commanding role in the area’s economy.

“We’re very much a distribution and logistics center,” asserted Shelby County Mayor Mark Luttrell. “We’ve got all the ingredients and it’s become our brand. We’re very fortunate; we’ve got rail, river, runway and road. We’ve got all four R’s you look for when it comes to freight movement right here.”¹⁶ The Memphis area is home to five Class I railroads, the nation’s fifth largest inland port and a convergence of multiple highway systems.¹⁷ However, it is access to the runway that has really shaped Memphis into “America’s Distribution Center” and the logistics hub it is today.

FedEx located its world headquarters to Memphis in 1973 and opened the FedEx SuperHub at Memphis International Airport in 1981. As a result, Memphis International Airport saw drastic increases in freight capacity, eventually becoming the largest cargo airport in the world – a superlative it would maintain for many years until being slightly surpassed recently by Hong Kong.¹⁸ In addition to employing around 30,000 people in Shelby County directly, FedEx has fueled significant business and job growth to the area, creating an extensive network of firms and supply chains and one of the most highly specialized logistics-driven economies in the country.¹⁹ Today, in fact, more than 127,000 people in the Memphis area work at companies related to the logistics industry.²⁰ When asking businesses what brought them to Shelby County, Mayor Luttrell finds, “Usually the very first thing they say is ‘FedEx.’” Now even a new term—



A warehouse interior in Shelby County, Tenn. Transportation, distribution, and logistics are a major employer and economic driver in “America’s Distribution Center”.

Source: *EDGE of Memphis & Shelby County*

'Aerotropolis'—is being used to brand the massive complex and network of logistics-driven firms and support services, with Memphis International Airport as the focal point.²¹

Though it is the irrefutable brand and economic driver of Memphis and Shelby County, logistics and distribution employment has plateaued since the recession.²² In order to best leverage resources and ensure the Memphis area maintains its logistics brand and competitive advantage in the 21st century global economy, Shelby County and the City of Memphis partnered to streamline and expand their economic development efforts. In 2011,²³ EDGE—the Economic Development Growth Engine for Memphis and Shelby County—was created by the Memphis City Council and

Development Board of Memphis & Shelby County, EDGE oversees The Port of Memphis and Foreign Trade Zone 77; thus, freight transportation and logistics remain a daily concentration.

EDGE is also currently managing and assisting in several freight infrastructure projects, in order to ensure the Memphis area remains a global hub when it comes to the movement of goods. For example, EDGE is working with Canadian National Railways (CN) and CSX Transportation to expand the current size of their jointly owned Intermodal Gateway Memphis facility in Frank Pidgeon Industrial Park. EDGE and the two railroad companies are currently in the final planning stages of this new 95-acre expansion, which will double the size of the current facility

and is touted to potentially attract \$300 million in investment and 5,000 jobs.²⁷ Frank Pidgeon Industrial Park was first planned and developed by Memphis and Shelby County in the 1950's and 60's, yet it remained undeveloped until the 1990's due to lack of adequate industrial access roads. Learning lessons from the past, EDGE has spearheaded a \$2.5 million, 6,800 foot extension of Paul Lowery Road—a main connector road to the industrial park and intermodal facility. This crucial expansion will provide connectivity to the new CN Riverport Logistics Center as well as a secondary access point for the expanded Intermodal Gateway.²⁸

The other Class I railroads across the Memphis area have also invested in intermodal facilities—including BNSF's Lamar Terminal and Norfolk Southern's new Memphis Regional Intermodal Terminal in nearby Rossville, Tenn.—creating quite the intermodal cluster and further solidifying the region as a freight hub.²⁹

Through EDGE, both city and the county leaders again proved to represent a strong model for county-city collaboration by collectively looking to the future of freight and logistics in the region through the Memphis and Shelby County Regional Economic Development Plan. In 2014, 150 regional stakeholders, driven by the Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Business Planning model, helped create Focus: A Roadmap to Transforming the Metro Memphis Economy in 2014.³⁰ Different from a typical comprehensive plan, this roadmap outlines seven core strategies of emphasis to address identified opportunities and challenges. Among these strategies are the need to build off of the area's core strengths and secure the global logistics brand, yet at the same time, leveraging these strengths to diversify the economy. Targeting new sectors that require rapid turnaround, such as medical, biotechnology and diagnostics, as well as expanding exports and international trade, were cited as specific strategic opportunities to leverage the region's core strengths.³¹

“**OUR LONG-TERM SUCCESS DEPENDS ON THE CHOICES THAT WE MAKE BOTH NOW AND MOVING FORWARD. STRATEGICALLY ALIGNING OUR REGIONAL AGENDA AROUND TRANSFORMATION TO A COMPETITIVE 21ST CENTURY ECONOMY REPRESENTS THE FIRST MOVE.**”

— Mark Luttrell, Shelby County Mayor

the Shelby County Commission and funded through asset sales, port revenues and closing fees on incentives. EDGE is governed by a board of citizens—mostly business leaders—who are appointed by both the mayors of the Memphis and Shelby County.

Through its first four years, EDGE has worked with 43 large companies and 27 small businesses, while attracting more than 10,000 jobs and \$2.1 billion in capital investment to the Memphis and Shelby County area. Approximately half of these large job-creation projects since 2011 have been in the transportation, distribution and logistics realm.²⁴ In addition to managing the Industrial

and more than triple the current annual container throughput of 140,000 twenty-foot equivalent units.²⁵ Originally completed in 2005 through a \$25 million CN investment, this will expand the freight connections of the Memphis area to international markets of Asia through Prince Rupert and Vancouver in British Columbia, as well as to Europe via Halifax, Nova Scotia.²⁶

Subsequently, EDGE is also working with CN to develop 730 acres of property adjoining the Intermodal Gateway Memphis facility into the CN Riverport Logistics Center, which will fuel off of the intermodal facility expansion and attract businesses in distribution and logistics

BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

PORT EVERGLADES PLANNING TO REMAIN A POWERHOUSE

Broward County, Florida is a large, urban county on the Atlantic coast in South Florida. With a population of 1.8 million people, Broward County is the second most populous county in the state of Florida and one of the most populous counties in the nation.³² Broward County is perhaps most widely known for its popular beach cities and communities such as Fort Lauderdale and Hollywood Beach. While the sun and sand certainly have a large economic impact on the county, freight transportation also serves as an economic power for Broward County, namely through Port Everglades.

First established as a deep-water harbor in 1927, Port Everglades is governed by the Broward County Board of County Commissioners and is a self-supporting Enterprise Fund of the county that uses revenue rather than local tax dollars for operations and capital investments. Branded as "Florida's Powerhouse Port", Port Everglades is the leading container port by volume in the state of Florida, seeing more than 1 million TEUs (twenty-foot equivalents) and 6.6 million tons of cargo alone in 2015.³³ Additionally, it is also the top seaport in Florida by both revenue (\$153 million) and exports (\$13.6 billion).³⁴ Thanks to its strategic South Florida location on both North-

**PORT EVERGLADES
GENERATES MORE THAN
\$28 BILLION ANNUALLY
IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY—
WITH BROWARD COUNTY
DERIVING MUCH THE
BENEFIT.**



Florida East Coast Railway's newly completed intermodal container transfer facility (ICTF) at Broward County's Port Everglades.

Source: Port Everglades.

“OUR ‘LAST MILE’ CONNECTIONS ARE ALL NEARLY COMPLETE...LANDSIDE CONGESTION PLAGUES MANY SEAPORTS, BUT PORT EVERGLADES IS FORTUNATE TO HAVE DIRECT INTERSTATE HIGHWAY ACCESS AND A STRONG PARTNERSHIP WITH THE FLORIDA EAST COAST RAILWAY AND THE STATE OF FLORIDA THAT KEEPS COMMERCE ON THE MOVE.”

— Steven Cernak, Chief Executive and Port Director, Port Everglades

South and East-West trade routes, Port Everglades also serves as the top gateway for US trade with Latin America, representing 15 percent of all Latin American trade in the U.S.³⁵ The port has also developed a niche as a petroleum port, handling 116.8 barrels in 2015. One-third of Florida’s fuel needs are met by petroleum stored or distributed by companies at Port Everglades, while the port directly supplies jet fuel to three international airports: Fort Lauderdale, Miami and Palm Beach.

The subsequent economic impact figures of Port Everglades only further solidify its role as an economic powerhouse for Broward County and beyond. According to a 2014 economic impact study produced by Martin Associates, Port Everglades generates more than \$28 billion annually in economic activity—with Broward County deriving much of the benefit.³⁶ The port supports more than 224,000 jobs across the state of Florida and directly provides 13,322 jobs locally in Broward County alone. Furthermore, the port generates \$809 million in state and local tax revenues.³⁷

In order to ensure its place as a world-class seaport and driver of economic vitality in the region, Port Everglades updates its master plan every two to three years. Port staff consulted with AECOM Technical Services to engage in this visioning process and ultimately produced the 2014 Port Everglades Master/Vision Plan, which was approved by the Broward County Board of Commissioners in June of 2014.³⁸ This plan will serve as a roadmap for future growth for the next 20 years and has identified and prioritized \$1.6 billion in capital improvement projects that will best benefit Port Everglades and Broward County.³⁹ Port Everglades has already moved forward and made significant progress on several of these projects, particularly on the landside of the port.

One of the most notable recent capital improvement projects undertaken at the port is a new near-dock intermodal container transfer facility (ICTF) which Florida East Coast Railway (FECR) and Port Everglades joined forces to complete. In a model public-private partnership, the \$53 million ICTF was constructed by FECR on 43.4 acres provided by Broward County’s Port Everglades and valued at \$19 million.⁴⁰ The Florida Department of Transportation (DOT) Strategic Intermodal System program provided \$18 million in grants, in addition to \$30 million from a Florida DOT-approved State Infrastructure Bank Loan and \$5 million from Florida East Coast Railway’s capital plan. After 18 months of construction, the facility opened in July 2014 and now allows containers to be directly transferred between rail and ship without leaving the port, drastically boosting the speed and efficiency of products-to-market. Up to 18,000 linear feet of rail track exists at this state-of-the-art facility, in addition to three rubber-tired gantry cranes and two separate entrance gates that accommodate international and domestic containers simultaneously.⁴¹

In addition to eventually supporting an estimated 2,188 jobs throughout South Florida, this project also improves the quality of life for the residents and everyday travelers of Broward County by alleviating highway congestion and reducing emissions; it is expected to take as many as 180,000 trucks off the road by 2029.⁴² After just one full year in operation, FECR announced in July of 2015 that this intermodal facility had already seen an increase in volume of 26 percent.⁴³ FECR and Port Everglades expect this growth to continue as more infrastructure improvements and upgrades to the port take place.

Port Everglades and Broward County also recently took another significant step in ‘last mile’ port connectivity and reducing roadway congestion with the opening of the Eller Drive Overpass. This project, funded through Florida DOT, provides direct access to the port’s main entrance from the east end of Interstate 595—the Port Everglades Expressway—which connects to Interstates 95 and 75. Furthermore, this overpass allows trains from the ICTF to travel at grade, while not interrupting the flow of vehicle traffic into and out of the Port. “Our landside or ‘last mile’ connections are all nearly complete with the opening of Florida’s East Coast Railway’s intermodal facility and the Eller Drive Overpass from I-595, and better aligning our interior roadways, which is attractive from a distribution point of view,” stated Port Director Steve Cernak. “Landside congestion plagues many seaports, but Port Everglades is fortunate to have direct interstate highway access and a strong partnership with the Florida East Coast Railway and the State of Florida that keeps commerce on the move. We like to boast that there is only one stop light from Port Everglades to Los Angeles.”⁴⁴

Port Everglades is now shifting their focus to waterside capital improvement projects identified in the Master Plan/Vision in order to accommodate increased volumes and larger, ‘Post-Panamax’ ships now traveling through the Panama Canal after its expansion. Additional cargo berths, Super Post-Panamax cranes and deepening and widening channels are among these waterside future improvements and expansions. Steven Cernak asserts, “With our continued investments, Port Everglades is well positioned to capitalize on this growth.”⁴⁵

WAYNE COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

GATEWAY TO THE HEARTLAND AND GLOBE

Wayne County is a largely rural county of over 41,000 residents in the 'Tri-State' region, bordering Kentucky and Ohio on the western edge of the Appalachian Mountains. Marketed as the "Western Gate to the Mountain State", connectivity and transportation of both people and goods are vitally important to Wayne County and its economy. Wayne County is bordered to the north by the Ohio River and both the Big Sandy and Tug Fork Rivers to the west. Major road and rail transportation lines traverse the county, including Norfolk Southern and CSX rail and the Interstate 64 and the US Highway 52 (future Interstate 73/74) corridors. Also located in northern Wayne County is West Virginia's second busiest airport—Huntington Tri-State Airport—which also houses a FedEx freight hub on-site.⁴⁶

Freight transportation, in particular, has recently elevated in importance as it relates to the future of Wayne County, namely due to the development of the Heartland Intermodal Gateway facility. "We believe our future, in our location in West Virginia and in the United States, is in transportation—moving goods across the country, north and south, or even to the Panama Canal," stated Don Perdue, the Executive Director of the Wayne County Economic Development Authority (WCEDA), as well as a West Virginia state delegate.⁴⁷ Funded through both the Wayne County Commission and business property assets, WCEDA was established to develop and promote all business and industrial activity in Wayne County and is led by a Board of 15 Directors, approved by the Commission.

Located in Prichard, W.Va., the Heartland Intermodal Gateway—a truck-to-rail cargo transfer facility—opened in December 2015 after more than a decade of planning and five years of construction. As a result of a 2007 West Virginia Senate bill creating the Intermodal and Rail Enhancement Fund, a market analysis conducted by the West Virginia Ports Authority (WVPPA) determined the need for an inland port intermodal facility in the state.⁴⁸ The current 100-acre Heartland Intermodal Gateway site in Wayne County between the Big Sandy River and

US Highway 52 was eventually identified as the optimal site for this facility by WVPPA, Norfolk Southern, and Wayne County leaders.⁴⁹ Total construction costs for this facility exceeded \$30 million, with more than \$18 million funded by the State of West Virginia and \$12 million from a US Department of Transportation TIGER III grant awarded to the WVPPA.⁵⁰ Norfolk Southern supported with \$1 million, in addition to donating the property. The Heartland Intermodal Gateway is owned by the WVPPA while Cincinnati-based Parsec has been tasked with managing the facility.

This Heartland Intermodal Gateway facility project is also a critical piece of the larger Heartland Central Corridor Double-Stack Clearance project which sought to create a shorter, more efficient route from the East Coast Port of Virginia in Norfolk to the industrial Midwest and Chicago. The Heartland Central Corridor Double-Stack Clearance project too was a public-private partnership, bringing together the Federal Highway Administration, Norfolk Southern, and the states of Virginia, West Virginia, and Ohio. Starting in 2007 and completed in 2010, this partnership funded the raising of 28 rail tunnels and 24 other low obstructions in the aforementioned states, enabling trains to double-stack containers en route from Norfolk to Chicago and reducing travel time by an entire day compared to previous circuitous routes through Harrisburg, Pa. or Knoxville, Tenn.⁵¹

The Heartland Corridor and the new Heartland Intermodal Gateway will both allow businesses throughout the Tri-State area to efficiently ship products west to Chicago or east to the Port of Virginia in Norfolk, in turn, opening up new markets across the country and globe. "Our opportunities now have grown in West Virginia, in particular in Wayne County in terms of global supply and global markets. It would be hard for me to visualize 10 years ago, that in Wayne County we could literally ship worldwide from the central part of the county," added Don Perdue. "So that's a remarkable achievement."⁵²

With these investments in the intermodal facility and rail corridor, Wayne County is poised to leverage these assets for economic development. "We believe this will be the primary economic driver for Wayne County for many years to come," stated Don Perdue. At a time when the coal industry has declined drastically throughout West Virginia and Appalachia, the Heartland Intermodal Gateway project and related freight transportation development strategies represent new economic potential for the region.⁵³ Existing industries, such as the Toyota Motors manufacturing plant in nearby Buffalo, W. Va., are expected to take full advantage of this facility by saving money and time on shipping. Wayne County leaders are also seeking to leverage this new facility and intermodal capacity to attract new businesses and have recognized the growth potential in the distribution and warehousing market. Specifically, Wayne County and WCEDA are engaging with the Tri-State Airport Authority—which Wayne County Commission President Robert Pasley also serves as President—in order to develop airport property to attract businesses seeking to take advantage of Wayne County's multi-modal freight transportation options.

With this new Heartland Intermodal Gateway facility adding to an already extensive infrastructure, Wayne County is truly a transportation gateway community and will look to continue to market that connectivity for business attraction and development. As Don Perdue puts it, "We refer to Wayne County as the 'Western Gate to the Mountain State.' That gate will now be open to the entire globe."

A reach stacker vehicle moves cargo containers at the Heartland Intermodal Gateway in Wayne County, W.Va.

Source: Wayne County Economic Development Authority



“ WE REFER TO WAYNE COUNTY AS THE ‘WESTERN GATE TO THE MOUNTAIN STATE.’ THAT GATE WILL NOW BE OPEN TO THE ENTIRE GLOBE. ”

— Don Perdue, Executive Director Wayne County Economic Development Authority



CASE STUDY TAKEAWAYS FOR COUNTY LEADERS

- Make planning decisions and build partnerships that tie into the county's economic development strategy. All four counties profiled here specifically sought freight investments that would support the needs of existing local businesses and create opportunities for new businesses to locate in the county.
- Develop strong relations with federal and state officials, business leaders and other stakeholders from both the public and private sectors. For example, leaders in Murray County, Ga., and Wayne County, W. Va., recognized how their communities were well-positioned to fit into larger state goals around strategic freight planning, and worked with state leaders to align those investments.
- Identify your economic strengths, and how to leverage those to support your county's competitive advantage. For example, Shelby County leveraged its existing distribution and logistics infrastructure and brand to target specific businesses and industries that require on-time delivery and world-class logistics support.
- Identify ways to capitalize on national and international economic trends and new infrastructure projects. For example, Broward County and Wayne County cited the Panama Canal expansion and increasingly larger ships as factors that influenced freight investments decisions in their regions. All four counties have also taken advantage of trends in freight and shipping toward intermodal facilities.
- Seek opportunities to make capital improvements that will have multiple community and economic benefits. Broward County, for example, identified necessary improvements at Port Everglades which will position the port to remain an economic powerhouse, while reducing traffic congestion and emissions at the same time.

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About the National Association of Counties

The National Association of Counties (NACo) unites America's 3,069 county governments. Founded in 1935, NACo brings county officials together to advocate with a collective voice on national policy, exchange ideas and build new leadership skills, pursue transformational county solutions, enrich the public's understanding of county government and exercise exemplary leadership in public service. More information at: www.naco.org.

About NACo's Economic Development, Transportation, & Infrastructure Practice Area

To help counties grow stronger, more competitive, more resilient places, NACo supports county leaders seeking to develop innovative economic development strategies and invest in transportation and infrastructure systems to create great places.

Each year, counties invest billions in economic development and public infrastructure projects. Counties create economic development strategies; build and maintain roads, bridges, transit and water systems; develop land use plans and community development programs; support workforce training and business assistance; and convene decision-makers in public agencies, private firms and regional and state institutions.

Within this practice area, NACo convenes public- and private-sector stakeholders, produces special reports, develops webinars and podcasts, facilitates peer learning, provides technical assistance and hosts workshops and roundtable events.

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To request copies of this publication or other materials about the National Association of Counties, please contact: Jack Morgan, NACo Program Manager. jmorgan@naco.org . 202.942.4274





25 MASSACHUSETTS AVE NW • SUITE 500 • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20001
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