



Your Holiday Helper: Intermodal Freight Rail

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With Thanksgiving just around the corner, it's time to deck the halls for another holiday season—whether you're ready or not. Fortunately, freight railroads have been in the holiday spirit for months. Together with trucks and cargo ships, America's freight railroads have worked since the dog days of summer to move thousands of containers filled with consumer goods to retailers across the country. Inside are countless holiday must-haves: from watches to tablets, rocking horses to ugly sweaters. Even Christmas trees! Thanks to freight rail and America's intermodal network, you can be sure that no matter how last minute your shopping, you'll find everything you need to make the holiday season merry and bright.

What is Intermodal?

Defined as the movement of freight across multiple modes of transportation, you may recognize intermodal by the big steel containers, or truck trailers, stacked on the backs of freight trains.

Railroads pioneered intermodal in the 1950s—and it quickly became a game changer. For the first time, cargo—including oddly shaped, small and fragile consumer goods—could be transported in bulk and quickly transferred across trucks, trains and cargo ships. This breakthrough helped smooth the handling of cargo at ports and inland terminals—one of the costliest and most time-consuming elements of shipping freight. It also meant that shippers could capitalize on the benefits of each mode—the global reach of cargo ships, the nimble nature of trucks and the unrivaled carrying capacity and efficiency of freight rail—to reach markets around the world more affordably and efficiently than ever before.

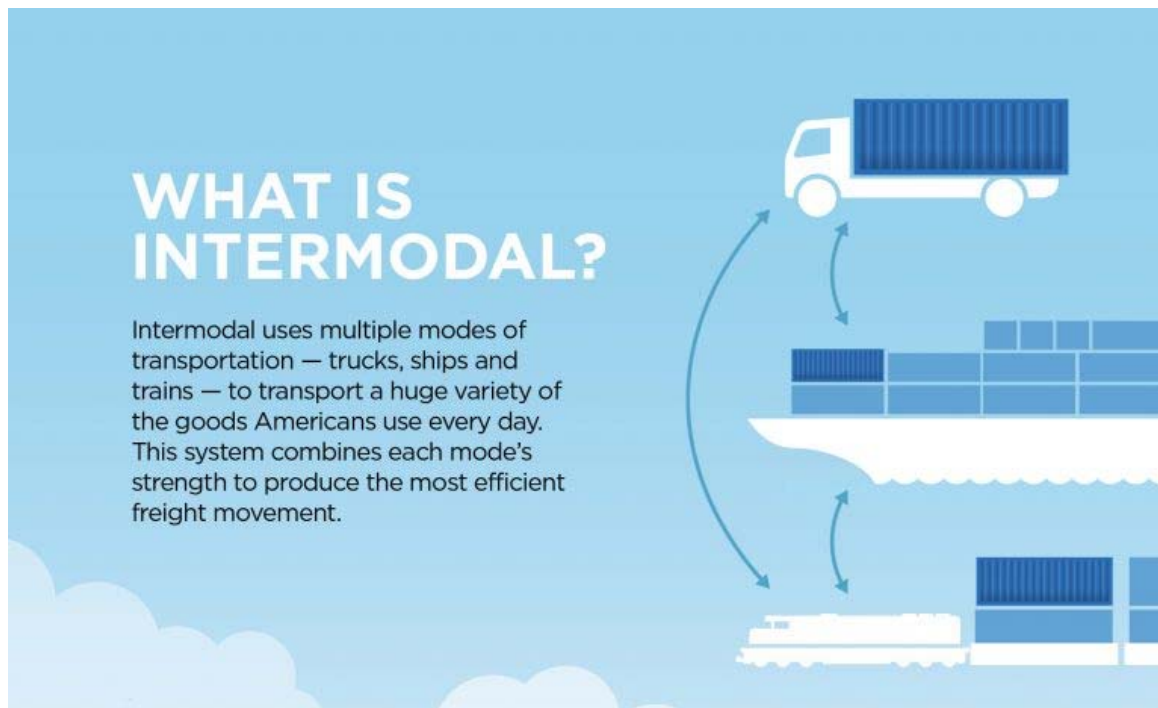
Scroll to the bottom of the page to learn more about intermodal transportation.

Putting the Happy in Holidays

Over the last half-century, America's freight railroads have helped pave the path for this evolution in freight transportation. Since the early 1990s, railroads invested heavily to build and expand intermodal terminals across the country and outfit them with cutting edge technology designed to keep the transfer of freight between modes efficient. Railroads have also added track capacity to handle the steady stream of intermodal cargo from places like China and other parts of Asia, and have raised clearances and upgraded tunnels to allow containers to be stacked, effectively doubling the amount of freight each train can carry.

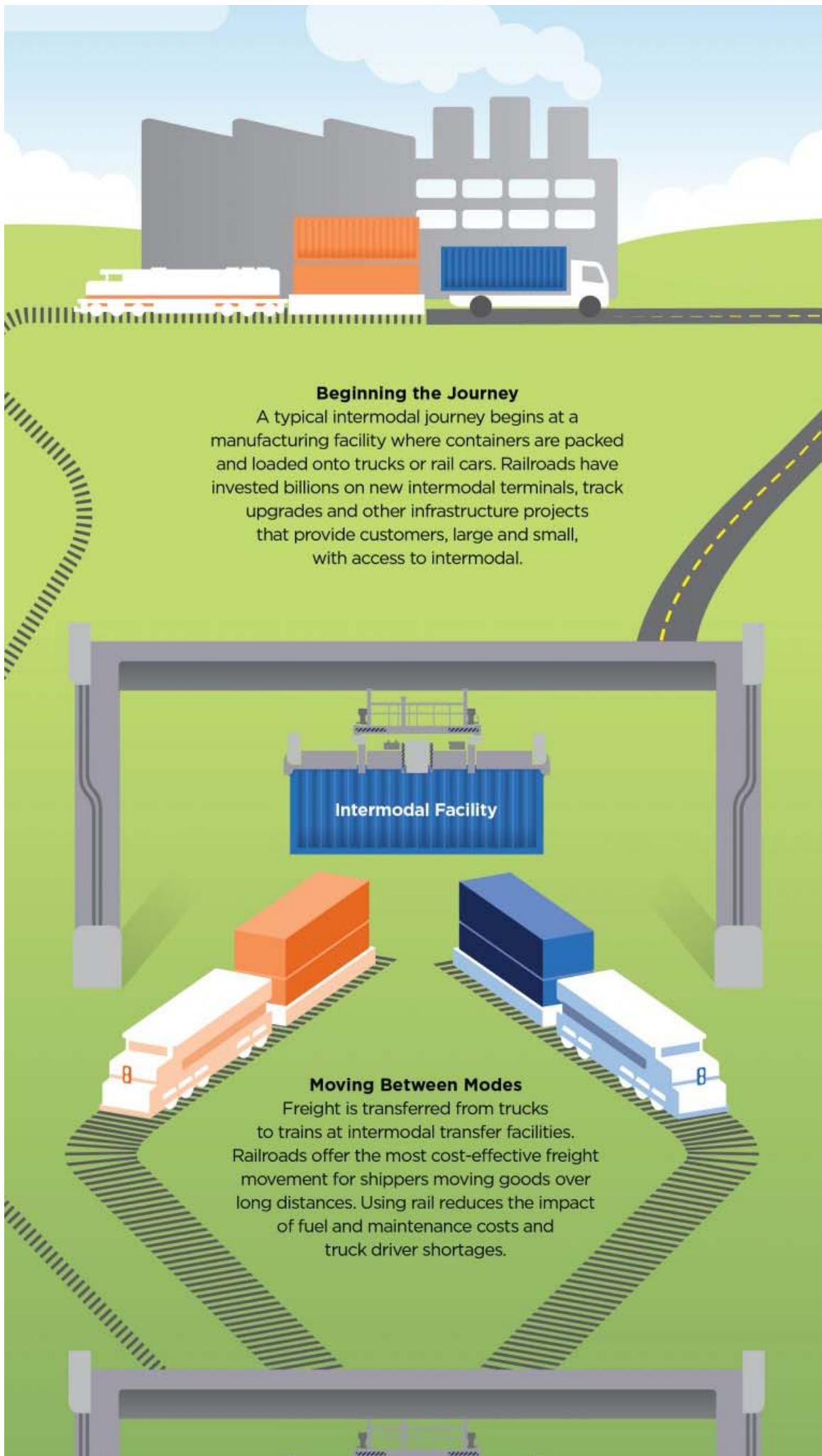
Investments like these allow freight rail to handle a growing volume of freight while driving down costs for shippers. Since 1980, freight railroads have doubled traffic volume and lowered average rail rates by 45 percent. This year is no exception: In September, freight railroads experienced their busiest intermodal week in history as they helped retailers prepare for the holidays. The National Retail Federation forecasts that 2017 holiday sales will increase four percent compared to last year. And, as holiday shopping habits have evolved with the ecommerce revolution, so too has railroad traffic. In 2016, holiday related ecommerce was up 11% over 2015 and freight rail was pivotal in moving the packing materials and boxes necessary to complete those shopping lists.

So this holiday season, whether you find yourself preparing a feast, shopping online or frantically wrapping presents, freight rail is by your side. And as you ring in a new year, we'll already be hard at work, making our intermodal network even better so we can deliver happy cheer for years to come.



WHAT IS INTERMODAL?

Intermodal uses multiple modes of transportation — trucks, ships and trains — to transport a huge variety of the goods Americans use every day. This system combines each mode's strength to produce the most efficient freight movement.





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Unexpected Alliances are Revolutionizing Freight Movement

Competitors have become collaborative partners for the benefit of businesses and consumers across the nation.

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