

HOUSE BILL 1284

By Calfee

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 54,  
relative to the long-term effects of freight  
transportation in Tennessee.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. The general assembly finds that:

(1) This state is in need of adequate and up-to-date information regarding its role as a keystone in the nation's national freight network, including freight industry trends that indicate a significant increase in the flow of freight traffic over the next decade;

(2) Tennessee already experiences a heavy volume of commercial freight traffic on its rail, interstate system, waterways and in the key air freight hub of Memphis, Tennessee;

(3) A number of national studies have forecasted a significant increase in movement of freight on all transportation modes;

(4) Forecasts for increased volume through all ports along with the widening of the Panama Canal suggest that Tennessee will see significant increases in traffic volume on its share of the interstate system;

(5) The forecasted growth of freight in all modes will have an impact on all of Tennessee's state agencies;

(6) The National Transportation Research Center, Inc. (NTRCI), a not-for-profit research organization located in Knox County, Tennessee, is in a unique position to support this state in being prepared for forecasted growth due to its research focus on heavy vehicle safety, security and efficiency;

(7) NTRCI has been nationally recognized for its work in heavy vehicle research and for its efforts to build a network of public and private-sector research partners;

(8) As a congressionally-designated University Transportation Center and through its Heavy Vehicle research program, NTRCI has worked with, and established relationships with the following:

(A) Agencies within the United States department of transportation, including the federal highway administration, the federal motor carrier safety administration, the national highway traffic safety administration, and the research and innovative technology administration;

(B) Associations within the private transportation industry sector, including the American Trucking Association (ATA) and the Truck Manufacturers Association (TMA); and

(C) Transportation research organizations and universities across the United States with research experience and expertise in transportation;

(9) A study should be conducted to provide the state with valuable data to shape a comprehensive, statewide freight policy that complies with new federal legislation which establishes a national freight policy, and to take advantage of federal incentives to improve the movement of freight within this state; and

(10) The NTRCI would engage the most appropriate and qualified in-state and out-of-state resources in conducting such a study.

SECTION 2. To the extent funds are specifically provided in the general appropriations act, the NTRCI is directed to conduct a study, to be known as the "Keystone Study," as detailed in Section 1 concerning the forecasted growth, movement, and heavy volume of freight on all transportation modes in this state. The "Keystone Study" may be conducted in at least three (3) phases. In conducting the study, the issues to be assessed by NTRCI shall include, but not be limited to:

(1) The latest data and projections for growth trends in freight movement, with a particular emphasis on the impact on Tennessee's road, rail and water networks;

(2) The potential impact of activities such as the expansion of the Panama Canal and ports on the eastern United States coast as well as West Coast ports on the volume of freight traffic for Tennessee and surrounding states;

(3) The impact on Tennessee's freight transportation network of related activities in surrounding states and NAFTA free trade regulations, including increased heavy vehicle traffic for Interstates 40, 75, 81, 65, 55 and 26, and secondary roadways; and

(4) The impact of trends in freight movement on the environment, economic development, congestion, revenue and safety.

SECTION 3. The NTRCI shall report its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the general assembly no later than February 1, 2014. The findings and recommendations shall address the following issues:

(1) Potential revenue and safety enhancement opportunities;

(2) Economic development and employment enhancement opportunities;

(3) Infrastructure and other investment opportunities to assist in the development of investment priorities;

(4) Forward looking changes to state laws, rules and regulations that could reduce the burden;

(5) Funding opportunities from the federal government; and

(6) Potential uses of advanced technologies to assist in solving the issues described in this act.

SECTION 4. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.