

## Cooper Says Carolina Connector Rail Depot Easing Supply Chain Woes

By Administrator

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Three months after opening, the Carolina Connector (CCX) intermodal transportation facility in Edgecombe County is already helping ease national supply chain shortages and bolstering economic development prospects. The new facility has opened new markets for commercial rail from the Port of Wilmington and played a role in reducing congestion at the Port of Savannah that has contributed to supply chain challenges nationwide. “We’re already seeing benefits from the Carolina Connector,” Governor Roy Cooper said. “The facility is helping to quickly and affordably get products to shelves across the region and building new interest from prospective industries looking to grow their businesses in North Carolina. That’s a win-win for our economy and shows the importance in smart investments in infrastructure.”

The Carolina Connector, which opened in Rocky Mount Nov. 18, enables the quick movement of containers within the intermodal rail network and connects the Port of Wilmington and eastern U.S. ports to their final destinations.

The new facility is helping relieve supply chain issues for the Port of Savannah that have gotten national attention. The Georgia Ports reported Feb. 9 that it had arranged a fifth pop-up container yard by loading import containers for delivery to the 330-acre CCX yard in Rocky Mount.

The Carolina Connector has also helped grow North Carolina’s economy by enabling NC Ports to start the Wilmington Midwest Express, opening up new markets by connecting Port of Wilmington customers with daily direct freight rail service to the Midwest. This new service provides an essential intermodal capability of expediting shipping containers to the Midwest while reducing customer transit costs and emissions.

The Wilmington Midwest Express services a five-day connection to Chicago and Northwest Ohio and a seven-day connection to St. Louis, providing customers with access to Midwest markets.

The Carolina Connector was the result of a public private partnership between the State of North Carolina and CSX Corporation. CSX contributed \$40 million to the project and is operating the facility that was built on the company’s main rail line. The N.C. Department of Transportation invested \$118 million for construction of the terminal. CCX aims to provide greater access to North Carolina’s ports at a lower cost, making the deep-water seaport in Wilmington more attractive to shippers worldwide.

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“The Wilmington Midwest Express positively impacts our customers by providing a direct connection between shippers and consumers,” said Brian Clark, executive director of NC Ports. “With supply chain issues impacting ports across the United States, this new service provides a sense of relief for customers through the expedited delivery of goods to their final destination.”

“The steps we have taken to add capacity have broken the logjam in global logistics for our customers and created jobs throughout the supply chain,” said Georgia Ports Authority (GPA) Executive Director Griff Lynch.

The state-of-the-art facility allows trucks to bring cargo containers to the rail terminal, where they are transferred to trains for transport. It provides regional industries with efficient access to rail, helping connect products to consumers nationwide. CCX’s location also offers businesses incentives to locate to the area by creating cost-effective rail service in Nash and Edgecombe counties.

CCX is generating great interest from many businesses. Norris Tolson, the chief executive officer and president of the Carolinas Gateway Partnership, said his agency’s recruitment efforts have never been better, thanks to the new Carolina Connector Intermodal site.

Tolson said multiple companies, most of which are advanced manufacturing or logistics firms, are discussing with the Partnership the possibility of locating in eastern North Carolina so they can take advantage of the intermodal facility.

“We’re seeing more interest from economic development projects than we’ve ever seen in this region before and many of the industries looking at our region are driven by an interest in their proximity to the CCX intermodal facility,” Tolson said. “They want to be near a railroad or an intermodal facility that will help them get their products to the end consumers faster.”