

CONTAINER/TRAILER ON FLATCAR IN  
INTERMODAL SERVICE ON MONTANA'S  
RAILWAY MAINLINES

---

FHWA/MT-08-009/8191

---

*Final Report*

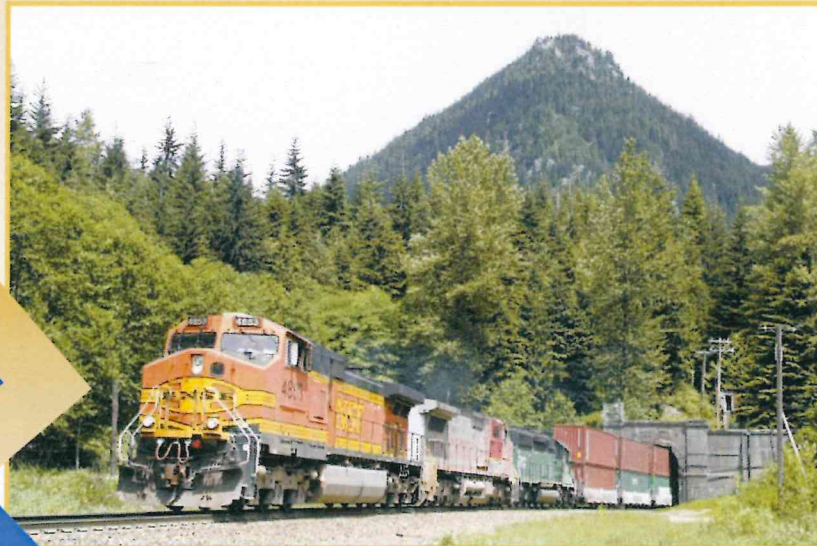
*prepared for*  
THE STATE OF MONTANA  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

*in cooperation with*  
THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

---

*November 2008*

*prepared by*  
Prime Focus LLC  
Western Transportation Institute



RESEARCH PROGRAMS



If existing or previous intermodal capability is reduced in relative importance (i.e., by one-half, using a scale of 0 to 2), Shelby still clearly remains the most favorable site, while the desirability of Billings and Butte–Silver Bow becomes somewhat harder to distinguish relative to the desirability of Great Falls, Missoula, and Glasgow (see Table 24). Great Falls, Missoula and Glasgow have attractive potential container volumes, but their access to the transportation system (rail and highway) is limited. Billings and Butte–Silver Bow have less attractive container volumes, but they have better system access.

Based on the comments above, and the survey response, attention was focused upon Shelby, Billings, and Butte–Silver Bow as potential intermodal sites. Additional information on past, present, and possible future operations at Shelby, Butte–Silver Bow, and Billings is presented in subsequent sections of this report.

**Table 24: Simple Quantitative Assessment of Potential Intermodal Terminal Locations.**

Location	Region	Score (0 to 4, 4 highest)				Total Score (all columns)	Total Score (using ½ column 3 value)
		Container Volume	Rail Situation	Previous or Existing Facility	Highway Situation		
Whitefish–Kalispell	Northwest	3	4	0	1	6	6
Missoula	Northwest	3	2	0	3	8	8
Shelby	North Central	4	4	4	3	15	13
Glasgow	Northeast	4	4	0	1	9	9
Miles City	Southeast	0.5	2	0	2	4.5	4.5
Billings	South Central	1	3	4	4	12	10
Butte–Silver Bow	Southwest	0.5	2	4	4	10.5	8.5
Great Falls	Central and North Central	4	2	0	2	8	8
Helena	Central and Southwest	2.5	1	0	2.5	6	6
Bozeman	Southwest and South Central	2	1	0	3	6	6

All of these sites must also compete with other modes of transportation. In this situation competition may be unit grain trains or single truck shipments. Unit trains remain the most efficient and cost-effective mode of transportation, yet many shippers not moving unit-train volumes prefer smaller quantities or truckload shipments. Table 25 lists a mileage analysis comparing rail miles to highway miles in key export lanes. In all cases the highway miles are shorter than the railroad miles before drayage is considered. This means that the rail rates will have to be lower on a per-mile basis to be competitive.