

# King of Road and Rail

## Company Provides Unique Intermodal Services

**By Candace Gwaltney**

**I**t's a truck ... it's a train ... it's both. Triple Crown Services in Fort Wayne combines the best of road and rail logistics in its RoadRailer technology.

Triple Crown is a freight carrier that uses specialized equipment to bring rail-based services to a broader customer base. No other company uses the RoadRailer system, which is manufactured in Lafayette, asserts company president Jim Newton.

Here's how it works: On the highway the RoadRailer looks no different than any other semi-trailer on the road. But that same trailer can then travel on railroad tracks once connected to a device called a rail bogie. The bogie raises the RoadRailer wheels above the railroad tracks while the bogie travels on the rail.

The trailers cannot be attached to traditional train cars – “they have to operate in trains of just RoadRailer equipment,” Newton relates.

Triple Crown built its RoadRailer system over the course of several years with the financial backing of its parent company – a venture that would have been cost prohibitive without that type of support, he notes.

### Reaching out

Triple Crown Services “operates its rail system as a hub and spoke network so all the branches (i.e. the railroad lines) come into Fort Wayne and the trains come together and swap trailers between trains – much like FedEx would swap packages every night in Memphis – then the trains would go outbound for their destinations,” Newton explains.

He estimates 98% of shipments travel on rail for at least part of their trip. The other 2% that travel solely by truck are being repositioned to make another pickup by rail. For example, a truck might drive to Grand Rapids, Michigan, to collect a load to bring back to Fort Wayne so it can be added to a train heading to Atlanta, Georgia.

As an affiliate of Norfolk Southern Railroad, Triple Crown Services “complements their conventional intermodal operations by having a different geographical footprint,” Newton shares.

Terminals operate in 12 markets stretching west to Denver, Colorado; east to Bethlehem and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; south to Texas and Florida; and north to Toronto, Canada.

**Triple Crown Services' RoadRailer trailer travels on highways and rail. President Jim Newton says the system is cost efficient because it requires less infrastructure than conventional intermodal** (photo by Tom Galliher/courtesy of Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership).



“Our aim is to cover the area from the Rockies to the East and to specialize in markets where conventional rail intermodal isn’t dominate,” Newton asserts. “We are really trying to get into the truck markets that can’t take advantage of rail services.”

### Competitive method

Rail intermodal service delivers advantages over trucking for longer hauls and in areas where there is a lot of traffic, he says. The RoadRailer system provides additional benefits that make sense in areas where traditional intermodal may not.

“Since it requires less infrastructure, it can operate in shorter, less dense city pairs or traffic lanes than conventional intermodal does,” Newton says. “Much of the challenge of a rail product, since it costs a lot of money to run a train, is getting enough traffic on the train, making a train long enough, so you spread the cost out over a lot of units.

“The RoadRailer system has fewer fixed costs so that it can run with smaller trains in less dense markets where railroads would not ordinarily compete using conventional intermodal practices and technology.”

The top shipping item is automobile parts going to assembly plants, Newton shares. Other products moved by RoadRailers include appliances, building materials and daily consumer goods (such as grocery items).

“Triple Crown is a unique and valuable asset to our regional

distribution and logistics network,” notes John Sampson, president and CEO of the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership (NEIRP). “Their ability to efficiently transfer directly between truck and rail as a means of quickly reaching destinations across the Midwest and the East Coast provides a tangible and flexible advantage to manage shipping costs.”

NEIRP is an organization that markets an 11-county region and teams with local economic development organizations to bring new jobs and commercial investment to the area.

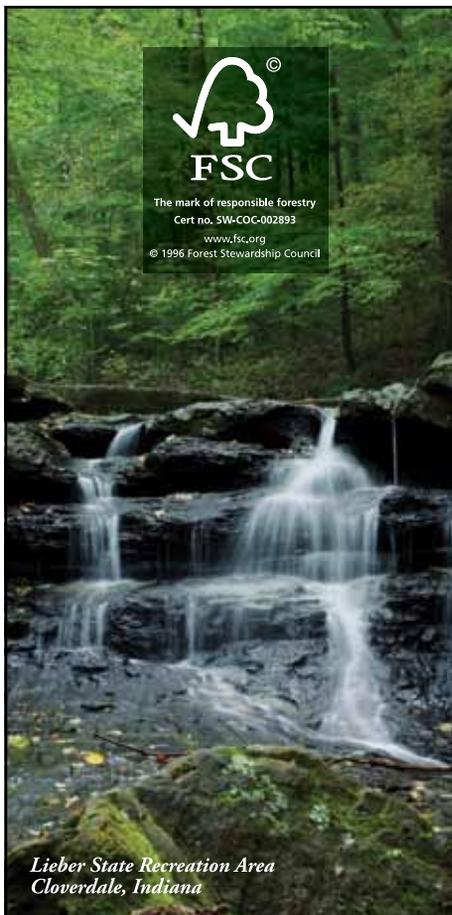
Triple Crown continues to receive praise from its customers through a poll by trade publication *Logistics Management Magazine*. In seven of the last eight years, Triple Crown ranked as the top intermodal service provider by readers of the magazine. The company has no participation in the nomination process.

“We think we do that (rank No. 1) by providing the components shippers want most, which are competitive rates, good equipment that is available, very high reliability and reasonable transit time,” Newton asserts. “We’re not as fast as a truck, but we’re commercially reasonable and very reliable.”

#### INFORMATION LINK

**Resources:** Jim Newton, Triple Crown Services, at (260) 416-3600 or [www.triplecrownsvc.com](http://www.triplecrownsvc.com)

John Sampson, Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership, at (877) 469-3469 or [www.chooseNEindiana.com](http://www.chooseNEindiana.com)



*As your preferred solutions provider, Saint Clair Press is proud to present our Forest Stewardship Council Certification! It's our goal to provide you with the best quality product while being environmentally responsible.*

*Founded in 1993, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is a non-profit organization devoted to encouraging the responsible management of the world's forests. Through FSC Chain-of-Custody, companies can demonstrate their commitment to environmentally and socially responsible forest management and label their products with the FSC trademarks.*

*Count on Saint Clair Press to continue providing the best printed products in the most responsible fashion.*

*Saint Clair* SAINTCLAIR PRESS

GROWING PRINT SINCE 1945

1203 E. St. Clair Street • Indianapolis, IN 46202  
Phone 317-612-9100 • Toll Free 800-748-0323

[www.stclairpress.com](http://www.stclairpress.com)