Utah's Inland Port: The Future of Logistics in the Intermountain Region or Gambling With Taxpayer Money

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Honors Thesis

UTAH’S INLAND PORT: THE FUTURE OF LOGISTICS IN THE INTERMOUNTAIN REGION OR GAMBLING WITH TAXPAYER MONEY?

by
Austin Simonson

Submitted to Brigham Young University in partial fulfillment of graduation requirements for University Honors

Marriott School of Business, Global Supply Chain Management Department
Brigham Young University
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ABSTRACT

UTAH’S INLAND PORT: THE FUTURE OF LOGISTICS IN THE INTERMOUNTAIN REGION OR GAMBLING WITH TAXPAYER MONEY?

Austin Simonson

Marriott School of Business, Global Supply Chain Management Department

Bachelor of Science

Over the last 20 years, US imports and consumer demand have been steadily growing with no clear end in sight. Despite this, approximately 40% of all our containerized imports are processed through only two ports – the Port of Long Beach and the Port of Los Angeles. In 2021, these two locations alone moved over 10 million import containers. In order to help ease the strain on our nationwide supply chain – an issue that came clearly into view during the COVID-19 pandemic – in 2016, the University of Utah submitted an assessment regarding a possible inland port in the region and Governor Gary Herbert created the Inland Port Exploratory Committee to further the development of this concept. These plans were more formalized in 2018 with the creation of the Inland Port Authority and Inland Port, legal entities created by the Utah State Legislature in bill SB234. However, since its inception, the Utah Inland Port has come with its fair share of criticisms and controversy despite the organization’s claim that
they will “future-proof Utah by creating a robust supply chain and establishing a trade and logistics hub for the Intermountain West.” Through the use of interviews with key stakeholders, analysis of past publications (including scholarly articles and media coverage), and retrospective analyses of other inland ports in the United States, this paper will seek to present detailed and objective findings regarding the proposed inland port project, including both the positive and negative impacts it would have on the region.
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First and foremost, I am eternally thankful to my mom for the example she has provided to me throughout my life about how to be a hard worker no matter how difficult circumstances may be and for the countless hours she has provided helping me with anything I have ever needed. There will never be another mom as great as her.

_Teresa Simonson_

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Context

The Utah Inland Port Project is a proposed massive logistics hub located in Salt Lake City, Utah, that is designed to be a central transportation and distribution center for goods traveling in and out of the western United States. The project is expected to have a significant impact on the economy of Utah and the region, creating thousands of jobs and increasing the state's competitiveness in the global marketplace.

The project was first proposed in 2018 by the Governor of Utah, Gary Herbert, and the Utah Legislature. The idea was to create a massive logistics hub that would serve as a central distribution point for goods coming in and out of the western United States. The port would be located in the northwest quadrant of Salt Lake City, an area that was largely undeveloped at the time. The proposed location was chosen for its proximity to major transportation routes, including the Union Pacific Railroad and the Salt Lake City International Airport (Gochnour, 2016).

The initial proposal for the Utah Inland Port Project called for the creation of a 16,000-acre logistics hub that would include rail yards, truck terminals, and warehouse facilities. The project was expected to generate billions of dollars in economic activity and create tens of thousands of jobs over the next few decades.

However, the project has been controversial from the beginning, with many residents and environmental groups opposing it. Critics have raised concerns about the potential impact on the environment, air quality, and water resources, as well as the displacement of residents in the area (Broadhead et al., 2019).
Despite these concerns, the Utah Legislature passed legislation in 2018 that created the Utah Inland Port Authority (UIPA), a quasi-governmental agency responsible for overseeing the development and operation of the port. The UIPA is governed by a board of directors appointed by the Governor of Utah and the Salt Lake City Council.

Since its creation, the UIPA has been working to develop a master plan for the port, which includes input from stakeholders, environmental groups, and residents in the area. The master plan is intended to guide the development of the port and address concerns raised by stakeholders (UIPA, 2016).

One of the major concerns raised by residents and environmental groups is the potential impact on air quality. The northwest quadrant of Salt Lake City is already one of the most polluted areas in the state, and the addition of a massive logistics hub could make the problem worse. The UIPA has responded to these concerns by proposing measures to reduce emissions from trucks and trains, as well as increasing the use of electric vehicles and renewable energy sources in the port.

Another concern is the potential impact on water resources. The area where the port is located is part of the Great Salt Lake watershed, and any development in the area could impact water quality and availability. The UIPA has proposed measures to protect water resources, including the use of recycled water for industrial processes and the implementation of stormwater management systems to prevent runoff into nearby streams and rivers (UIPA, 2022).
In addition to addressing environmental concerns, the UIPA has been working to engage with local residents and businesses to ensure that the port benefits the community as a whole. The UIPA has held public meetings and workshops to gather feedback from residents and has established a community advisory board to provide input on the development of the port.

Despite these efforts, the project continues to face opposition from some residents and environmental groups. In 2019, a coalition of organizations filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the legislation that created the UIPA. The lawsuit argued that the legislation violated the Utah Constitution by giving the UIPA too much power and violating the separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches of government (Broadhead et al., 2019). The lawsuit was dismissed by a state court in 2020, but the coalition filed an appeal, which just reached a resolution in early 2023, with the Utah Supreme Court unanimously ruling in favor of the Utah Inland Port Authority. In addition, several bills have been introduced in the Utah Legislature to limit the power of the UIPA or restrict the development of the port.

The Utah Inland Port Project, however, is still moving forward. In December 2020, the UIPA approved a preliminary master plan for the port, which outlines the development of a 10,000-acre logistics hub with rail yards, truck terminals, and warehouse facilities. The plan also includes measures to address environmental concerns, such as reducing emissions and protecting water resources.
The UIPA has emphasized the economic benefits of the port, arguing that it will create thousands of jobs and generate billions of dollars in economic activity. Proponents of the project argue that it will help Utah remain competitive in the global marketplace by providing a central distribution point for goods coming in and out of the western United States (Gochnour, 2016). The project has also attracted interest from major companies, such as Amazon and UPS, who are looking to expand their distribution networks in the western United States. In 2020, Amazon announced plans to build a new fulfillment center near the port, which is expected to create over 1,500 jobs.

However, the project continues to face opposition from residents and environmental groups who are concerned about the impact on the environment and the displacement of residents in the area (Broadhead et al., 2019). In 2020, protests were held in Salt Lake City against the project, with demonstrators arguing that it would worsen air pollution and threaten the health of nearby communities.

In response to these concerns, the UIPA has emphasized its commitment to engaging with local communities and addressing environmental concerns. The UIPA has established a community advisory board to provide input on the development of the port and has held public meetings and workshops to gather feedback from residents.

The UIPA has also continued to emphasize its commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship. They seek to take “leadership in implementing a regional sustainability vision to create economic opportunity while protecting and preserving the area’s sensitive environment and communities’ quality of life.” UIPA committed to
incorporating sustainable development principles into the planning and operation of the port. In addition to sustainability measures, the UIPA has also announced plans to invest in workforce development programs to support the creation of jobs at the port. The UIPA has partnered with local community organizations to provide training and education programs for residents in the area.

The future of the Utah Inland Port Project will depend on a number of factors, including the outcome of legal challenges and the level of public support for the project. The project has the potential to bring significant economic benefits to Utah and the western United States, but it also faces significant environmental and social challenges.

The Utah Inland Port Project is a major infrastructure development initiative that has the potential to bring significant economic benefits to Utah and the western United States. However, the project also faces significant environmental and social challenges, including concerns about air and water pollution, and the displacement of residents in the area. They have regularly emphasized their commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship, as well as their commitment to engaging with local communities and addressing their concerns (CPCS, 2022). However, the future of the project still remains somewhat uncertain and will depend on a number of factors, including the outcome of legal challenges, the level of public support, and the ability of the UIPA to address environmental and social concerns.
Inland Ports in the US

Inland ports play a crucial role in the transportation and distribution of goods in the United States. These ports are strategically located away from the coast and are connected to major transportation networks such as highways, railroads, and waterways. The efficacy of these inland ports is dependent on several factors, including location, infrastructure, and connectivity (Smith, 2023).

One example of an effective inland port is the Port of Memphis. Located on the Mississippi River, the port serves as a hub for the transportation of agricultural products, steel, and chemicals. Its location and connectivity have made it a key center for logistics and distribution. The Port of Memphis handles over 19 million tons of cargo annually and is considered a vital component of the regional and national economy. The port has continued to invest in infrastructure and technology, making it one of the most efficient inland ports in the country (Port of Memphis, 2019).

Another example of an effective inland port is the Port of Kansas City. The port is situated in the heartland of the United States, making it an important center for the distribution of agricultural products. In addition to being located next to the Missouri River, the port is connected to several railroads and highways, allowing for efficient transportation of goods to and from the Midwest. The Port of Kansas City handles a variety of cargo, including grain, fertilizer, and building materials. The port has invested in infrastructure and technology, making it a reliable and efficient transportation hub (Schramm, 2010).
The Port of Houston is another notable inland port that has been a vital component of the US transportation system for several decades. The port is situated on the Gulf Coast and is connected to major railroads and highways, making it a key transportation hub for the distribution of energy-related goods such as petroleum products and chemicals. In 2020, the Port of Houston handled over 285 million tons of cargo, contributing significantly to the regional and national economy (Port Houston, 2023).

Inland ports have several advantages over their coastal counterparts. They offer cheaper transportation costs, as well as faster and more efficient turnaround times. They are also less vulnerable to weather disruptions, such as hurricanes and storms, that can disrupt coastal ports. Inland ports are becoming increasingly important in the distribution of goods as demand for faster and more efficient transportation continues to grow.

Overall, inland ports play a critical role in the transportation and distribution of goods in the United States. Their location, infrastructure, and connectivity to major transportation networks have made them efficient and reliable transportation hubs. Inland ports, such as the Port of Memphis, the Port of Kansas City, and the Port of Houston, demonstrate their importance to the local, regional, and national economy. As the demand for faster and more efficient transportation continues to grow, inland ports will continue to play a crucial role in the US transportation system (Smith, 2023).
Stakeholders

The Utah Inland Port project is a large-scale development that aims to create a transportation hub for goods moving through Utah. The project involves the development of a large industrial area that will include rail yards, warehouses, and distribution centers. The project has several key stakeholders, including the state of Utah, local governments, businesses, and the community (UIPA, 2022).

The state of Utah is a key stakeholder in the Inland Port project as it has invested significant resources into its development. The state sees the project as a means to increase economic growth and improve transportation infrastructure in the region. The project has the potential to generate significant tax revenue for the state and create new job opportunities for residents.

Local governments in the region are also key stakeholders in the project. They have the responsibility to ensure that the development complies with local zoning laws and regulations. Local governments have expressed concerns about the impact of the project on local air quality, traffic, and infrastructure in addition to the project's impact on local communities and the environment. Over the years, there have also been concerns raised about the authority and tax revenue related to the Inland Port Authority as local governments have clear interest in being involved in this potential new source of income.

Businesses in the region are another key stakeholder in the Inland Port project. The development of the Inland Port is expected to create new business opportunities and
attract new companies to the region. The project's proximity to major transportation networks and the Salt Lake City International Airport is expected to make it an attractive location for businesses that rely on transportation and logistics. However, some businesses have expressed concerns about the impact of the project on local traffic and the environment.

Finally, the community and its residents are key stakeholders in the project. The Inland Port development is expected to affect the quality of life for residents living in the vicinity. The project's impact on air quality, traffic, and noise levels has raised concerns among local residents. Community groups have voiced their opposition to the project, citing environmental concerns and potential health risks associated with increased air pollution (Broadhead et al., 2019). While not all local residents may immediately experience the potential benefits of the project in the short-term, many – if not all – would quickly recognize some of the possible drawbacks such as heavier traffic and worse air quality.

Benefits

Given that the Utah Inland Port is a project with long-term plans, not all benefits will be realized in the present and the short-term future. It is critical for all stakeholders to recognize the length of time for all benefits to be realized and temper their expectations accordingly.
Present Benefits of the Utah Inland Port Project

1. Economic Growth: The Utah Inland Port project is expected to generate significant economic growth for the state. The project's location, infrastructure, and connectivity to major transportation networks make it an attractive destination for businesses looking to expand their logistics and transportation operations. According to the Utah Governor's Office of Economic Development, the project has the potential to create 25,000 jobs and generate up to $500 million in annual tax revenue for the state.

2. Improved Transportation Infrastructure: The Utah Inland Port project will significantly improve the transportation infrastructure in the region. The project's location near the Salt Lake City International Airport, major highways, and rail networks makes it an ideal location for a transportation hub. The development of the project is expected to create new opportunities for businesses looking to expand their transportation and logistics operations. This improved transportation infrastructure is expected to lead to reduced transportation costs and increased efficiency in the movement of goods (UIPA, 2022).

3. Reduced Environmental Impact: The Utah Inland Port project has been designed with the environment in mind. The project includes plans for the development of green spaces and the use of sustainable building practices. The project is also expected to reduce the number of trucks on local highways by consolidating the


movement of goods into a single transportation hub. This consolidation will reduce carbon emissions and air pollution associated with trucking (UIPA, 2022).

4. Improved Air Quality: The Utah Inland Port project includes plans to improve the air quality in the region. The project's location near the Salt Lake City International Airport and major highways has resulted in poor air quality in the region. The project includes plans for the installation of air quality monitoring systems and the development of green spaces. These measures are expected to improve air quality in the region and reduce the risk of health problems associated with poor air quality (CPCS, 2022).

**Future Benefits of the Utah Inland Port Project**

1. Increased Economic Growth: The Utah Inland Port project is expected to drive significant economic growth in the region in the future. The project's location and infrastructure make it an ideal location for businesses looking to expand their transportation and logistics operations. The project is expected to create new job opportunities and generate significant tax revenue for the state. The development of the project is also expected to attract new businesses to the region, further driving economic growth.

2. Reduced Transportation Costs: The Utah Inland Port project is expected to reduce transportation costs in the future. The consolidation of goods movement into a single transportation hub is expected to reduce transportation costs
associated with the movement of goods. The project's location and connectivity to major transportation networks will also lead to reduced transportation costs.

3. Increased Efficiency: The Utah Inland Port project is expected to increase efficiency in the movement of goods. The consolidation of goods movement into a single transportation hub is expected to reduce the time and cost associated with the movement of goods. The project's location and connectivity to major transportation networks will also lead to increased efficiency in the movement of goods.

4. Improved Environmental Impact: The Utah Inland Port project is expected to have a positive environmental impact in the future. The project includes plans for the development of green spaces and the use of sustainable building practices. The project is also expected to reduce the number of trucks on local highways by consolidating the movement of goods into a single transportation hub. This consolidation will reduce carbon emissions and air pollution associated with trucking (CPCS, 2022).

5. Improved Quality of Life: The Utah Inland Port project is expected to improve the quality of life in the region. The project includes plans for the development of green spaces and the use of sustainable building practices. These measures are expected to improve the overall environmental quality of the region and promote healthy living. In addition, the project is expected to create new job opportunities and generate significant tax revenue for the state. This economic growth will
improve the quality of life for residents in the region by creating new job opportunities and generating increased revenue for local businesses and services.

6. Increased Access to Goods and Services: The Utah Inland Port project is expected to increase access to goods and services for residents in the region. The project's location and connectivity to major transportation networks will improve the movement of goods and services, making it easier for residents to access goods and services that were previously difficult to obtain. This increased access will improve the quality of life for residents in the region by providing greater access to goods and services that are essential for daily living (Gochnour, 2016).

7. Improved Regional Competitiveness: The Utah Inland Port project is expected to improve the regional competitiveness of Utah. The project's location and connectivity to major transportation networks make it an ideal location for businesses looking to expand their logistics and transportation operations. The development of the project is expected to attract new businesses to the region, further driving economic growth and improving the overall competitiveness of the region (Cambridge Systematics, 2017).

Detriments

*Environmental Impact*

One of the major concerns surrounding the Utah Inland Port project is the potential environmental impact it could have. The project's location near sensitive ecosystems, including wetlands and waterways, raises concerns about the potential impact
on wildlife and the surrounding environment. The development of the port and associated infrastructure could lead to the loss of natural habitats, disruption of waterways, and increased pollution (CPCS, 2022).

Additionally, the project could lead to increased emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants. The transportation of goods in and out of the port could lead to increased traffic congestion, which would contribute to poor air quality and further exacerbate existing health problems in the region. This is a significant concern, as the region is already experiencing high levels of air pollution, which has been linked to respiratory problems and other health issues.

**Community Impact**

Another significant concern surrounding the Utah Inland Port project is its impact on local communities. The development is expected to lead to increased traffic in the region, which could have a negative impact on the quality of life for residents. Increased traffic could lead to more noise, congestion, and safety concerns on the roads. Additionally, there are concerns that the development could lead to the displacement of residents and businesses in the area, as property values rise and rents increase.

Furthermore, the Utah Inland Port project could have a significant impact on the Salt Lake City International Airport, which is located nearby. The development could lead to increased noise pollution and air traffic, which could disrupt operations at the airport and lead to safety concerns for passengers and employees.
Public Health Impact

The potential impact of the Utah Inland Port project on public health is also a significant concern. The increased traffic associated with the project could lead to poor air quality in the region, which has already been linked to respiratory problems and other health issues. The project's location near highways and major transportation networks makes it particularly vulnerable to pollution from cars and trucks.

Furthermore, there are concerns that the development could lead to an increase in health problems related to the transportation of goods in and out of the port. The transportation of goods by diesel-powered trucks and trains could lead to an increase in air pollution, which has been linked to a range of health problems, including asthma, heart disease, and lung cancer (Broadhead et al., 2019).

Social Justice Concerns

Another concern that has been raised regarding the Utah Inland Port project is its potential impact on social justice. The development is located near areas with a higher concentration of low-income and minority residents. There are concerns that the development could lead to the displacement of these residents, as property values rise and rents increase. This could lead to gentrification and further exacerbate existing social inequalities in the region.

Furthermore, there are concerns that the development could lead to increased health disparities in the region. Low-income and minority residents are already disproportionately impacted by poor air quality and other environmental hazards. The
Utah Inland Port project could worsen these disparities by increasing pollution and exacerbating health problems in the region (Broadhead et al., 2019).

Analysis

The Utah Inland Port Project is a massive development effort that has generated significant attention, both positive and negative. While the project has the potential to bring significant economic benefits to the state of Utah, it also faces significant challenges and drawbacks that must be carefully considered. However, other inland ports in the nation have encountered similar concerns, yet still have seemingly been successful in their region.

Within Utah

On one hand, the Utah Inland Port Project aims to create an inland port that will be a hub for international trade, transportation, and logistics. The port will be situated on 16,000 acres of land in Salt Lake City and will serve as a distribution center for goods and services coming in and out of the state. The port will also include an intermodal hub, where freight can be transferred between trucks, trains, and planes. The primary goal of the Utah Inland Port Project is to create jobs and stimulate economic growth in the state as well as plan in advance for the future of the state of Utah and the surrounding region. The port is expected to create tens of thousands of jobs and generate billions of dollars in economic output, which could help position Utah as a key player in the regional, national, and global economy, connecting the state with major trade partners and markets around the world (Gochnour, 2016).
In addition to economic benefits, the Utah Inland Port Project could also have positive environmental impacts. The project aims to consolidate transportation and logistics activities in a single location, reducing transportation-related emissions and improving air quality. The project also includes plans for sustainable development practices, such as the use of renewable energy and the conservation of natural resources (CPCS, 2022). The Inland Port could also enhance the state's global competitiveness by creating new opportunities for international trade and investment.

On the other hand, the Utah Inland Port Project also faces significant challenges and drawbacks that must be carefully considered. One major concern is the project's potential impact on the environment. Critics argue that the project could lead to increased air pollution, water pollution, and habitat destruction. They also point out that the project's location, adjacent to sensitive wetlands and wildlife habitats, could have negative impacts on local ecosystems.

In addition to environmental concerns, the Utah Inland Port has also faced criticism over potential social justice issues. The project's location in an area with a significant minority population has raised concerns about the potential for negative impacts on the community, including displacement, gentrification, and reduced access to affordable housing. There are also concerns about the potential for increased traffic and congestion in the surrounding areas, which could have negative impacts on public health and safety.
Finally, there are concerns about the transparency and accountability of the Utah Inland Port Authority, the public entity responsible for overseeing the project. Critics argue that the authority lacks transparency and public oversight, potentially enabling conflicts of interest and other unethical practices (Broadhead et al., 2019).

**Comparison With Other Inland Ports in the Nation**

While there are over 40 inland ports located within the United States, only 12 of them stand out as *major* inland ports, being “notable for their infrastructure, connection to major seaports, and market reach” (CBRE Research, 2016). It would stand to reason that many of the benefits and concerns regarding the Utah Inland Port are similar – if not identical to – many of those voiced before and during the construction of these other inland ports. Both the Port of Kansas City – a well-established inland port in the Midwest – and Inland Port Arizona – an up-and-coming inland port just over 700 miles away from Salt Lake City – experienced stakeholder fears regarding traffic and environmental impact yet have seemingly been effective in overcoming those concerns and finding success in their respective regions.

**Port of Kansas City.** The Kansas City Inland Port is a major logistics hub in the Midwest, with a large volume of goods moving in and out of the port and over 160,000 square feet of storage space. It is located in a prime strategic location that is served not only by several major railroads, but also by barge transportation. In addition, local governments have fostered an environment well-suited for economic growth and development. There have been multiple partnerships formed between the port and
private companies, government agencies, and community organizations to promote economic development, improve infrastructure, and support sustainable practices (Port KC, 2019).

Government support through agencies like Port KC, an independent government agency, has helped grow Kansas City’s economy through investments and projects that have done everything from expanding current infrastructure to reclaiming and revitalizing the riverfront. Current forecasts show that by 2030, Kansas City is expected to see double the current amount of TEU shipping containers, which they intend to take on through the opening of the Missouri River Terminal.

Although it can typically take many months, if not years, to cut through all the red tape for new business development projects, Port KC was successfully able to speed up the approval processes for supply chain projects, reducing six-month approval processes down to just 90 days. This business-oriented environment has shown to be extremely beneficial to the area as companies like ALPLA or Niagara Bottling likely would not have selected Kansas City if not for the expeditious approval process provided (King, 2021).

The combination of these factors has helped to further the success of the inland port and the region as a whole. While the port has provided significant economic benefits, since its inception, there have been concerns regarding increased traffic congestion in the city as well as environmental impacts.

**Traffic.** The Kansas City Inland Port is located at the intersection of three major interstates, which had potential to create significant traffic congestion in the surrounding
area. This congestion can lead to increased travel times, delays, and safety concerns for motorists. Furthermore, it is known that vehicles stuck in traffic produce more emissions and degrade ambient air quality (Zhang & Batterman, 2013).

In order to help alleviate those concerns, the local government made significant investments in infrastructure to improve traffic flow in the area surrounding the port. This includes widening and improving major highways, constructing new interchanges, and building new access roads to the port. In addition, the port has been working to implement alternative transportation modes, such as rail and barge, to reduce the number of trucks on the road and ease traffic congestion. As of August 2015, the port welcomed back their first barge since 2007, a significant feat given that one barge is equivalent to 16 railroad cars or 70 truck trailers (Port KC, 2019).

**Environment.** The operation of the Kansas City Inland Port – similar to other inland ports – could have significant environmental impacts, including air and water pollution, noise pollution, and the destruction of natural habitats. In order to help correct these negative externalities, the port authority and local government have worked to engage in both sustainable practices and environmental monitoring. Some specific practices include: energy-efficient lighting, water conservation measures, and waste reduction programs. They have also discussed allocating part of the revenue from tax dollars originating from the port for environmental protection and remediation practices (Schramm, 2010). Port KC has also worked on projects such as reclamation and
revitalization of the Kansas City riverfront, which used to be described as a “giant dump” only several years ago (King, 2021).

**Inland Port Arizona.** The Inland Port Arizona is a logistics hub located in Pinal County, Arizona, with over 2,700 acres of land and in proximity to Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport, Tucson International Airport, and over two miles of access to Union Pacific railway (Union Pacific). They have already drawn in big name companies to the area such as Nikola Motors, Lucid Motors, Attesa, and P&G.

Their rapid success seems to be primarily due to their forward-thinking approach and early planning. Since the early 2000s, Pinal County has been building and expanding infrastructure in preparation for the future development of the county. The utility company SRP completed work on their 575 megawatt Coolidge Generating Station in 2011, only 10 years after they opened their Desert Basin Generating Station in nearby Casa Grande. Both SRP and APS – another utility company – have a major solar generating presence in the county, specifically the APS Saguaro Power Plant and the SRP Pinal Central Energy Center. When companies looking to move into the area come in to view sites, they typically are interested in how much infrastructure they’ll need to build. However, as Tim Kanavel, economic development program manager for Pinal County, notes: “A lot of those things are already in place in Pinal County. We’ve got more electricity in this county than we know what to do with. We’re juiced up. (Burks, 2020)”

Around 2007, Casa Grande doubled the size of their wastewater treatment plant. If it weren’t for that, “we wouldn’t be putting in a Lucid Motors plant,” Casa Grande
Mayor Craig McFarland stated. Furthermore, the county has three major gas lines, a major rail line, and major water lines all running through prime areas—all things that are magnets for big attracting big companies. While the port has asserted that it will provide substantial economic benefits to the region, periodic concerns have been brought up regarding environmental impacts and—in particular—traffic congestion, given that their roadways have not yet been updated to meet possible future demand.

**Traffic.** The Inland Port Arizona is located adjacent to a major interstate highway, rail lines, and international airports, which can create significant traffic congestion in the surrounding area and lead to increased travel times, delays, and safety concerns for motorists. The local Department of Transportation has already proposed plans to expand and widen local roads including Hunt Highway, SR 287, McCartney Road, Selma Highway, Kortsen Road, Kleck Road, and I-10, in addition to the construction of a new north/south highway (Arizona Department of Transportation, 2019).

In 2015, Pinal County established the Pinal Regional Transportation Authority which put together a 20-year comprehensive plan including the funneling of over $640 million into county road improvements. In the last several years, they have also paved 112 miles of dirt road, completed maintenance on 650 miles of road, and built several new roads. In 2019, Pinal County was the recipient of a $15 million Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development Transportation Discretionary Grant which has been earmarked to be used on improvements to the infrastructure around the Inland Port Arizona industrial park (Burks, 2020).
**Environmental.** While there have not been as many environmental concerns raised as in other locations – such as Salt Lake – the port, local governments, and private businesses have been working together to keep sustainability in mind as development on the inland port continues. Local utility companies, such as the aforementioned SRP and APS, have significant investments in solar power in the region. The county has noted in the comprehensive plan that solar and wind power generation are encouraged and also compatible with the local farming heritage. (Pinal County, 2021) In addition a private company, Global Water Services, is expected to provide water, wastewater, and recycled water services to the manufacturing facilities, such as P&G.

**Overall**

To ensure that the Utah Inland Port Project is a viable and good project, it is crucial to address these concerns through careful planning, transparent decision-making, and community engagement. Only through a collaborative effort can the Utah Inland Port Project maximize its potential benefits while minimizing its potential drawbacks, creating a sustainable and prosperous future for Utah and its residents.

Stakeholders and especially those involved in the planning process should look to other inland ports within the United States for guidance. Inland ports, like those located in Kansas City, Missouri, and Coolidge, Arizona, have shown success when port authorities, local governments, private business, and local communities have worked together to create a successful logistics hub and economic development area that benefits everyone within the region.
While the Utah Inland Port Project is a significant development effort that has great potential to bring significant economic benefits to the state of Utah, the project also faces significant challenges that must be thoroughly considered and adequately addressed. By working together to address these concerns, the Utah Inland Port Project can become a sustainable and prosperous development that benefits the state, its residents, and the region as a whole.

Conclusion

The answer to whether the Utah Inland Port is a viable and good project is not a straightforward nor simple one. The project's potential benefits, such as increased economic activity and job creation, are significant and could have a positive impact on the region. However, there are also potential negative impacts, such as environmental concerns, community impacts, public health issues, and social justice concerns.

It is crucial to evaluate the project's overall impact and weigh the potential benefits against the potential costs. If the project can be developed in a way that addresses these concerns and mitigates potential negative impacts, it could be a viable and advantageous project. However, if the project is developed in a way that does not address these concerns, it could end up having significant negative consequences for the region.

The success of the Utah Inland Port project will depend on a range of factors, including careful planning, stakeholder engagement, and responsible development practices. If the project is approached with a commitment to sustainability and a focus on balancing economic, social, and environmental concerns, it has very significant potential
to be a positive development for the region. However, if these concerns are not taken seriously, the project's negative impacts could outweigh any potential benefits.
References


