



Group is focusing on rail, truck traffic

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The truck and rail traffic congestion in California is reaching a crisis level - much like the issues in Crittenden County - and must be addressed by the federal government, representatives from two California cities and the River of Trade Corridor Coalition told local officials on Thursday.

ROTCC members will further discuss the issues at its quarterly national meeting at the Mid-South Community College today.

"I agree with everything they've said," West Memphis Economic Development director Ward Wimbish said. "We've seen little flashes of this every time we have a major accident that shuts down a bridge. All we need is something one day to go really wrong, and we'll see it."

Steve Adams, a member of the ROTCC and a councilman for Riverside, Calif., said his city is the No. 1 "chokepoint" in the nation. Two railroads, Burlington Northern Santa Fe and Union Pacific, intersect in his city, and trains can be seen or heard at any point in his city 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"It never ends," Adams said.

He, ROTCC member David Dean and Mario Cordero, a commissioner for the Port of Long Beach, Calif., said funding for infrastructure improvements is desperately needed.

"The worst is to come if we don't get together and do something about this and start thinking ahead," Dean said.

The ROTCC was created in 2004 and focuses on maximizing the economic vitality of communities along the North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA, corridor. One of the coalition's goals is to lessen congestion along the corridor.

"We must develop the corridor to make the movement of goods efficient in a cost effective way and a time efficient manner," Cordero said.

The representatives said the nine states along the corridor need to use one voice in lobbying the federal government for funding.

"We're an area of national significance, and they need to address these areas," Adams said. The ROTCC wraps up its meeting today.