

BNSF, CSX launch faster cross-country intermodal service



Among the nine lanes included in the BNSF-CSX service upgrades are two new lanes consisting of Los Angeles to Louisville and Philadelphia. Photo credit: Ian Dewar Photography / Shutterstock.com.

[Ari Ashe, Senior Editor, Intermodal Rail](#) | Nov 17, 2025, 3:32 PM EST

BNSF Railway and CSX Transportation on Monday partnered to launch service upgrades featuring new trains and faster transits from Southern California to the Ohio Valley and Northeast, in most cases slashing more than a day off prior transits.

The moves represent the latest effort by the two railroads to jointly convince shippers to shift more truckload freight to rail by addressing intermodal's slower transits.

Nine lanes are covered in the latest upgrades, including a new service from Southern California to Louisville and Philadelphia. The other seven pre-existing routes will see an average savings of nearly 32 hours less in transit. Trains will run five days per week, originating from BNSF's Hobart terminal just outside of downtown Los Angeles.

The new BNSF-CSX partnership comes months after the two railroads announced a joint “single-line like” service from Los Angeles to Charlotte and Jacksonville and Phoenix to Atlanta. Unlike that service, however, which is a straight train all the way through, the latest partnership will include breaking down trains and building new ones in CSX’s terminal in North Baltimore, Ohio.

The joint upgrades come as Union Pacific Railroad and Norfolk Southern Railway seek to merge in an \$85 billion transaction that would create a single-line railroad covering the US coast to coast.

Major, high-volume lanes will benefit from the BNSF-CSX moves. From Los Angeles to Columbus, Ohio, the expedited service will be 28 hours faster, to Newark (Kearny) 32 hours, and to Springfield, Massachusetts, 52 hours faster.

“These new schedules offer even more immediate value for our customers today by increasing speed, flexibility and optionality while delivering integrated service for freight moving across the US,” BNSF wrote in an advisory announcing the service upgrades.

Using trains with fewer crew changes

BNSF and CSX say they will provide the better service in two ways. First, BNSF has converted trains to expedited trains, known as “Z” trains, which have fewer crew changes along the way and may travel at faster speeds. Secondly, BNSF and CSX will take all trains to a CSX terminal in Northwest Ohio where major work will be done to reconfigure the trains.

No work will occur in Chicago, where cross-town drays between two rail terminals often add a day or more to the transit. The BNSF intermodal trains will still run through Chicago, being handed off to a CSX crew at 59th Street before continuing onward to Ohio.

Upon reaching Northwest Ohio, CSX would then build trains for Columbus and Louisville, a train for Newark (Kearny) with a stop in Philadelphia, and a train to Springfield with a stop in Syracuse.

BNSF and CSX will also be able to ramp up service to Newark and Philadelphia next year once double-stack intermodal service through Baltimore launches next spring.

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