

The Network Pitt Ohio Built

The Reliance Network is a pooling arrangement that runs off an "information hub" built by Pitt Ohio and housed in Pittsburgh, said Geoffrey Muessig, chief marketing officer of Pitt Ohio.

"We're able to plan for a load coming in from Averitt's national terminal to our Pittsburgh terminal just as easily as we can plan for a load that would come in from our Philadelphia terminal to Pittsburgh," Muessig said.

Averitt Express, in Cookeville, Tennessee, which ranks No. 29 on the TRANSPORT TOPICS Top 100 list of the largest U.S. and Canadian for-hire carriers, is a member of The Reliance Network. Other members are Lakeville Motor Express, New Brighton, Minnesota; Land Air Express, Williston, Vermont; Mountain Valley Express, Stockton, California; Peninsula Truck Lines, Federal Way, Washington; Canadian Freightways in Rocky View, Alberta.; and Kingsway Transport, Mississauga, Ontario. Both Canadian carriers are operating companies of TransForce Inc., in Saint-Laurent, Quebec, which ranks No. 8 on the for-hire TT100.

For customers, Muessig said, the IT system "provides 360-degree visibility on shipment information from a tracking and tracing standpoint," allowing customers to see where The Reliance

Network's shipments are.

Pitt Ohio's existing customers typically tender shipments to the network, Muessig said, adding, "Instead of picking up one or two shipments, we're picking up three or four or five shipments — and as a result we gain economies of scale."

Muessig said the network's pooling agreement was granted by the Surface Transportation Board. "Then we got Department of Justice antitrust immunity."

Dave Bush, director of business processes for Land Air Express, said the network aims for "regional touch, national reach."

To maintain national reach, it's common for Land Air to consolidate LTL shipments at a terminal on the edge of its operating region — New England, New Jersey and New York state — and send them as a truckload to one of its "sister companies" in the network, Bush said. For instance, at its westernmost facility in Buffalo, New York, Land Air will consolidate LTL shipments bound for the Midwest into a truckload, and dispatch it to a Lakeville Motor Express terminal in Chicago, he said. Lakeville then delivers those LTL shipments to their Midwest destinations.

Carriers in networks tend to hold regular meetings to manage their collaborative effort. Bush said he is on four committees that manage different aspects of the Reliance



Pitt Ohio

A dockworker reviews the paperwork before a load is switched between trucks.

Network's operations, and he travels frequently to meetings.

Such meetings are common among network partners, said Carrier Logistics Inc.'s Ken Weinberg.

"They can learn from each other, and they can correct issues," he said. "Maybe one carrier isn't doing as good a job as they should. The others can teach him how to bring his level up. So the image they project to the customer is uniform."

The network is on pace to grow 10% and generate about \$160 million for its member carriers in its current fiscal year, said Muessig, chairman of the executive committee of the network. He said the network has grown to account for about 10% of Pitt Ohio's total LTL business.

— **Stephen Bennett**