The Case for Freight

Increasing capacity on our nation’s transportation system will:

• Unlock Gridlock,
• Generate Jobs,
• Deliver Freight,
• Access Energy,
• Connect Communities

Did you know?

• The amount of freight moved in this country—from milk, toothpaste and toilet paper to sparkplugs, wheat and wind turbines—is expected to double in the next 40 years?

• The Interstate Highway System represents only 4 percent of total miles but carries 70 percent of commercial truck traffic?

• Each of the top ten worst freight-truck bottlenecks cause over one million hours of delay a year?

“Texas’ position as a gateway of international commerce between the United States and many other countries from around the world requires that we develop and maintain a robust, multi-modal transportation system. When these rail, port, waterway, and highway systems become clogged with traffic, the inefficient movement of this international freight costs all of us more money. These important projects on some of Texas’ most important freight corridors will enable us to improve these vital links in the global commerce system, ensuring we have a more efficient transportation system to help Texas and the United States continue to compete internationally in the global economy.”
—Amadeo Saenz, Texas Department of Transportation Director

Freight Capacity Needs
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Rail Projects
With the creation of a Rail Division in 2009, the Texas DOT has become involved in numerous projects and rail issues throughout the state. With the exception of the El Paso area, many of the issues regarding train delay/congestion on rail lines near the Interstate 10 corridor are due to railyard congestion and capacity issues.

In the Houston area, there is an issue at the railyards with the number of local service trains versus through freight trains that interchange with the Port of Houston.

In the San Antonio area, delays and congestion are caused by the lack of long approach tracks off the main line at the East Yard and Kirby Yard. Idling trains increase emissions and block vehicular traffic in those areas.

For more information: http://expandingcapacity.transportation.org/
In the El Paso area, two existing rail lines meet just west of the railyard support facilities in the downtown area where the westbound UP Sunset Route connects to the UP Tucumcari Route east of downtown. Railway activity, coupled with international traffic in the area, is plentiful. Nearly every railyard in the area is adjacent to the I-10 corridor and to some degree limits the ability to expand the interstate highway.

In Beaumont, TxDOT is funding the construction of a turnout from the main line to the south directly into the Port of Beaumont in an effort to alleviate congestion. It is also funding construction of additional tracks inside the port -- a project currently under construction.

TxDOT is also monitoring the new Marine Highway Program introduced by the U.S. DOT. This program will be examining locations where marine transportation parallels major freight corridors, such as I-10 along the Gulf Coast. The initiative encourages the transfer of containers from trucks to barges to reduce highway congestion and air pollution, which is sure to impact infrastructure at Texas ports.

**Interstate 35**

With projected higher volumes of freight and commuter traffic, TxDOT is currently in the midst of an improvement plan to expand I-35 to six lanes between the I-35E/I-35W interchange near Hillsboro to the Bell/Williamson county line. More than $1.1 billion has been approved for widening projects that are either constructed or are underway along the I-35 Corridor. Future plans in the Laredo, San Antonio, Austin, and Dallas/Fort Worth regions include lane additions, truck lane restrictions, and connectors.

**Interstate 10**

Houston is considered the most-important distribution center along I-10 with its large metropolitan population and established warehouse capabilities. To facilitate the movement of freight and vehicles, the Katy Freeway Reconstruction Project in west Houston was completed in 2008. The interstate now provides a minimum of four lanes in each direction with as many as eight lanes at entrance/exit ramps. There are also managed express lanes for Metro buses, carpools, and toll-paying vehicles. Currently a widening project on I-10 is underway from Washington Avenue to Taylor Street.

**Ports to Plains**

This is the only U.S. corridor connecting Texas and Alberta. It runs through a major U.S. trading region generating $167 billion in trade with Canada and Mexico, nearly 20% of total NAFTA trade. TxDOT recently submitted plans for a truck reliever route that will go around Big Spring from FM 700 to Ranch Road 33.

**La Entrada al Pacifico**

This corridor begins at the Mexican border adjacent to Presidio; proceeds north intersecting U.S. 90, I-10, and I-20; and continues northeast to the U.S. midsection. To facilitate the movement of freight, TxDOT has completed a 16-mile reliever route in the Midland area and passing lane sections on U.S. 67 between Alpine and I-10.

**Freight Shuttle System**

With the expansion of international trade, the volume of freight-related traffic on our nation’s highways has also grown exponentially. This growth has caused increased highway congestion, greenhouse-gas emissions from idling vehicles, and severe damage to the infrastructure.

To address these growing concerns, Steve Roop, head of the Texas Transportation Institute’s Multimodal Freight Transportation Division, developed the Freight Shuttle. The shuttle will provide customers with a
lower cost and more-efficient alternative to trucking in highly congested freight transportation corridors. The system will move trailers and containers via electrically powered vehicles propelled by linear induction motors that run on a specialized, emission free, derailment-proof guideway. The project has received some federal funding and its development continues.