

PROGRESS *IN MOTION*



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YOUR LINK TO KNOWLEDGE
SHARING FOR TODAY'S
TRANSPORTATION

Texas International Corridor, Meeting The Needs of Tomorrow



TRANS-TEXAS CORRIDOR SYSTEM

A major change in the way we do business is happening in Texas. The Trans-Texas Corridor System (TTC), which has been compared to the Interstate System, is a 4,000-mile network of corridors designated to move people and goods quickly, safely and securely through Texas from Mexico to Canada. The corridor may be up to 1,200 feet wide in some places and will have separate lanes for passenger vehicles (three in each direction) and trucks (two in each direction). The corridor will include six rail lines (three in each direction), one for high-speed passenger rail between cities, one for high-speed freight and one for conventional commuter and freight. The third component of the corridor will be a 200-foot-wide dedicated utility zone carrying electricity, data, water, oil and natural gas.

"We need a transportation system that meets the needs of tomorrow, not one that struggles to keep up with the needs of yesterday," Governor Rick Perry said. "The Trans-Texas Corridor will map out a brighter future for Texas. It is a plan to ease traffic congestion and increase the safety and security of Texans living in crowded cities and suburbs, near congested border crossings, and in our smallest communities in rural Texas."

"The Trans-Texas Corridor plan also will help Texas reduce air pollution and lead to better stewardship of our natural resources," Perry said. "Improved infrastructure will provide unprecedented opportunities for economic growth, creating jobs and luring businesses to Texas because of a superior, safe and efficient transportation system."

If you were able to drive straight from Mexico City to Chicago and then straight from Los Angeles to Miami, you would find that your trips intersected in Texas.

This concept shows the importance of Texas and the need to be mindful of the role it has played. That role continues to grow in value and has most recently been brought to the forefront by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

It makes sense that most of the imports from Mexico and South America come through Texas and may even go as far as Canada. Most exports to Mexico and South America also go through Texas. In fact, 79 percent of all U.S.-Mexico trade passes through Texas ports of entry. With NAFTA that traffic flow will only increase.

The transportation needs of the 21 million people who live in Texas is also very important and that's not counting the traffic that uses Texas highways on their way to other states.

Texas' population jumped from 16.9 million in 1990 to 20.8 million people in 2000. Growth is projected to continue at a rate of 30,000 new residents a month. It is believed that the current infrastructure of roads and bridges will not be sufficient to handle the major increase of traffic anticipated. Not only is there not enough capacity to handle the increased traffic but the roads and bridges are also in need of maintenance and repair.

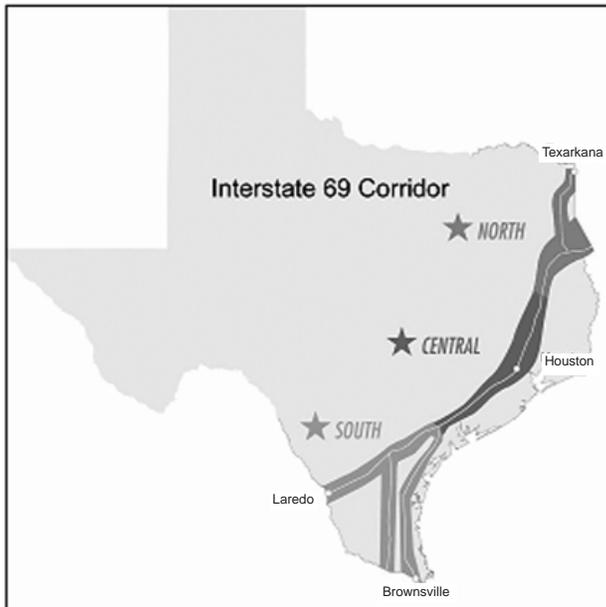
"We need a transportation system that meets the needs of tomorrow, not one that struggles to keep up with the needs of yesterday."

- Rick Perry, Governor of Texas

According to Governor Perry, the Trans-Texas Corridor System will allow for much faster and safer transportation of people and goods. It will relieve congested roadways. It will help keep hazardous materials out of populated areas. It will help improve air quality by reducing emissions and providing a safer, more reliable utility transmission system. It will keep Texas economy vibrant by creating new markets and jobs.

A priority element of the Trans-Texas Corridor System is Interstate 69 (I-69/TTC). It is an interstate project reaching from Mexico to Canada on 1,600 miles of roadway, 1,000 of which transverses Texas from one border to another. This multi-modal corridor across the state can serve as an example for other states to follow in determining how to make I-69/TTC a process of improving the state's transportation system.

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The FHWA and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) are working together more closely than at any other time with other federal and state agencies to communicate, cooperate and coordinate the direction of the project.

In explaining the process, the FHWA Texas Division Administrator, Dan Reagan, pointed out that the Trans-Texas Corridor System could serve as a new way of building roads utilizing more private monies in the process. "The Trans-Texas Corridor might well serve as a benchmark for any other state," said Reagan.

TxDOT has held a series of public hearings to discuss possible routes for the corridor system. "I don't think that with the Trans-Texas Corridor we will see a cookie cutter formula," Texas Transportation Commissioner John Johnson said. "It will adapt to each area it serves."

TxDOT Executive Director, Mike Behrens, said TxDOT was looking forward to getting healthy input from the public at the meetings.

"We'll just go visit with the folks and see if we can have a good discussion," he said. "And we wanted to go out and sort of put out some of the ideas that we've been thinking about and see what the public feels about them and see what kind of input

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We encourage you to send in any information that you feel is important enough to be shared. We want to know about it.

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they have. And that's what we're doing and we're going to continue doing it." Additional public hearings will be held throughout the environmental process.

Amadeo Saenz, TxDOT Assistant Executive Director for Engineering and Operations, has indicated that legislation has now been approved for the Trans-Texas Corridor System and potential developer teams have been identified. "Work is proceeding forward," said Saenz.

The corridor is estimated to cost between \$145.2 billion and \$183.5 billion, said Gabriela Garcia, who works in TxDOT's public information office in Austin. It would be funded in various ways including tolls, the sale of bonds, private dollars and a partnership between state and federal government.

The Trans-Texas Corridor System plan uses innovative and sound financing options that allow the state to build the corridor with a limited use of public funds. Those options were approved by the Texas Legislature and by Texas voters last year. Governor Perry said that through Exclusive Development Agreement Authority, Toll Equity, Regional Mobility Authorities and the Texas Mobility Fund, Texas can use increasingly tight state and federal funds to partner with public and private entities to design, build, operate and manage the innovative system - without new taxes.

"The Trans-Texas Corridor might well serve as a benchmark for any other state."

- Dan Reagan, FHWA Texas Division Administrator

The Trans-Texas Corridor System also improves the state's ability to prevent and respond to terrorist attacks or other disasters by creating hazardous material routes outside major cities, and by providing transportation alternatives that make it more difficult to paralyze the state's infrastructure.

Governor Perry said he recognizes the concerns of rural property owners whenever road construction is mentioned and emphasized that the Trans-Texas Corridor System "will serve as a new lifeline to our more rural communities, providing economic opportunity through a fast, safe and reliable transportation system and providing access to public resources necessary to prosper."

"It is important to remember the Corridor right-of-way and assets - without exception - will be owned by the State of Texas," Governor Perry said. "This represents the best opportunity we have to move people, freight, water, oil and gas, electricity and communications more efficiently to the benefit of rural and urban Texas alike. Instead of various entities trying to obtain separate easements and overcome separate obstacles, right-of-way is acquired just once, maximizing investment dollars and minimizing disruption to the state's landscape." ■

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