

TEXAS TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

ALL Counties

MINUTE ORDER

ALL Districts

In compliance with Title 23 U.S.C. §135, as implemented by 23 C.F.R. Part 450, and Transportation Code §201.601, the Texas Department of Transportation (department) developed a statewide long-range transportation plan (SLRTP) covering a period of 24 years that provides for the development and implementation of a transportation system and contains all modes of transportation, including: (1) the systems and facilities for highways and turnpikes, aviation, public transportation, railroads and high-speed railroads, waterways, pedestrian walkways, and bicycle transportation facilities; and (2) the transportation users of each type of transportation facility. The SLRTP was adopted by the Texas Transportation Commission on November 18, 2010, by Minute Order 112495.

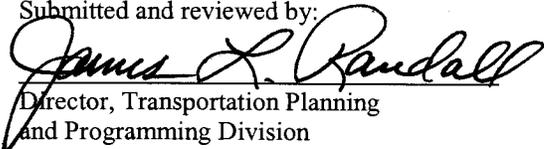
Metropolitan planning organizations are required to develop long-range transportation plans for urbanized areas that identify and prioritize future transportation projects within funding constraints; however, no equivalent rural long-range plan exists. While the SLRTP included an overall assessment of rural transportation needs and a prioritization of Texas Highway Trunk System corridors, added-capacity highway projects were not identified or ranked.

The department has developed the Texas Rural Transportation Plan 2035 (TRTP) as a rural component of the SLRTP. The TRTP has been developed in cooperation with a representative rural stakeholder group comprised of county judges, mayors, public works directors, regional planning organizations, chambers of commerce officials, economic development officials and individuals with an interest in transportation. The TRTP includes an assessment of needs for non-highway modes in rural areas and an analysis of unfunded added-capacity highway projects.

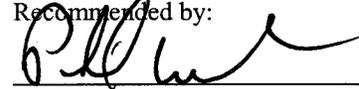
The TRTP has been presented for public comment by means of various stakeholder meetings held throughout the process to solicit input and one round of public meetings conducted in each department district throughout the state. A public hearing on the TRTP was held in Austin on May 21, 2012, and written comments were accepted through June 4, 2012. A summary of the comments is included in the TRTP.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that the TRTP, which is attached as Exhibit A to this order, is hereby adopted as a rural component of the SLRTP.

Submitted and reviewed by:


Director, Transportation Planning
and Programming Division

Recommended by:


Executive Director

113155 JUN 28 12

Minute
Number

Date
Passed

The Texas Rural Transportation Plan

Volume 1

Component of the Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan

Submitted for Texas Transportation Commission Action, June 2012



Texas Department of Transportation
Transportation Planning and Programming Division

The preparation of this report has been financed in part through grant(s) from the Federal Highway Administration and the U.S. Department of Transportation, under the State Planning and Research (SPR) Program, Section 505 of Title 23, U.S. Code. The contents of this report do not necessarily reflect the official view or policy of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

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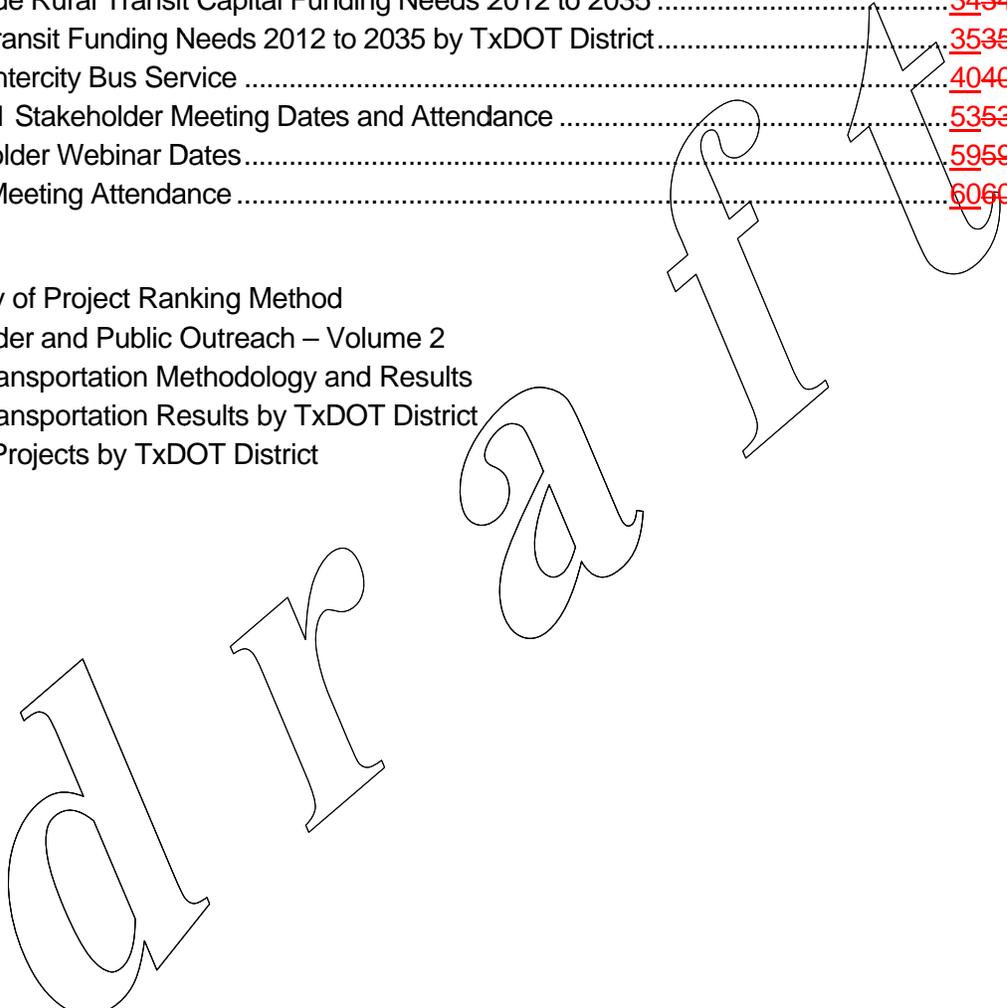
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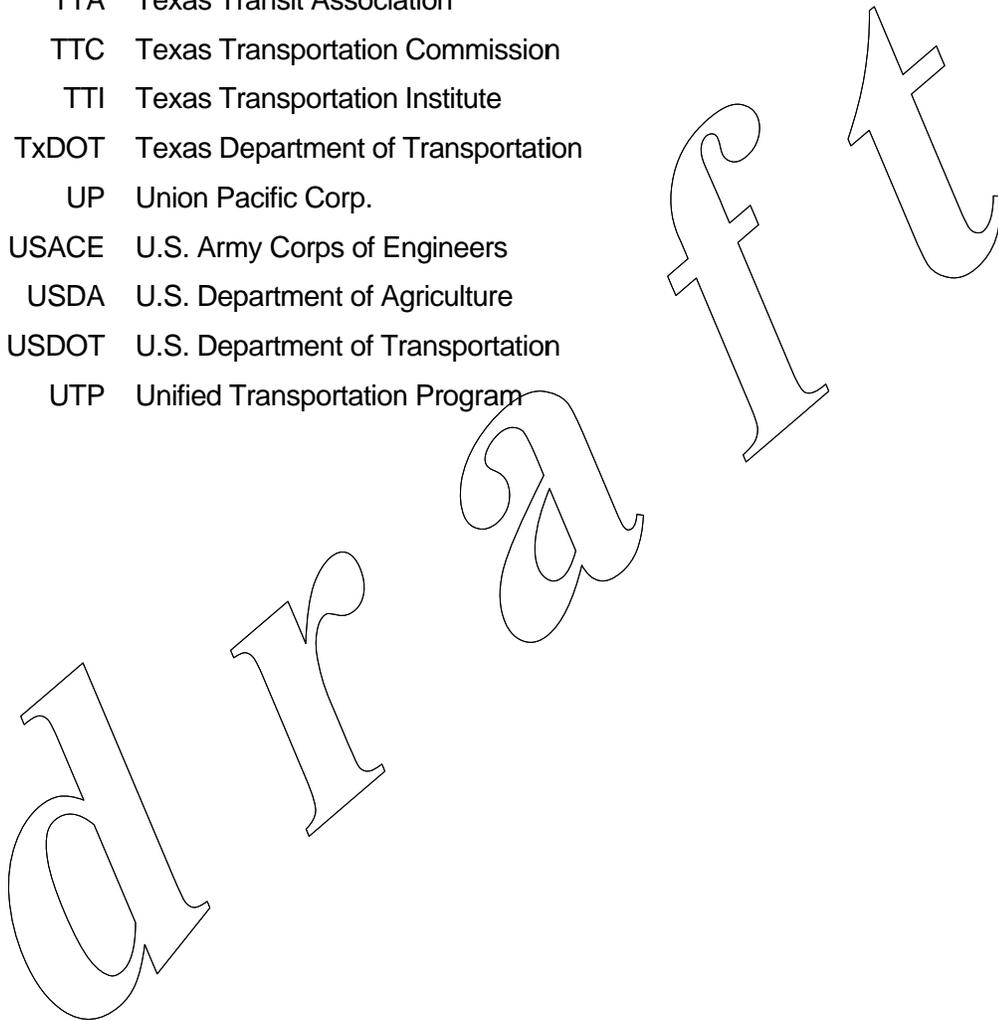


Acronyms and Abbreviations

AIP	Airport Improvement Program
ARRA	American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009
BNSF	Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway
CIP	Capital Improvement Program
EDCP	Economically Disadvantaged County Program
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FRA	Federal Railroad Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
FTE	full-time equivalent
GC&SS	Gulf Colorado & San Saba Railway
HER	Hurricane Evacuation Route
I-45	Interstate 45
ICB	Intercity bus
IRP	Intermediary Relending Program
IRR	Indian Reservation Roads/Bridges Program
ITS	Intelligent Transportation Systems
LOS	Level of Service
mph	miles per hour
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MTP	Metropolitan Transportation Plan
NCHRP	National Cooperative Highway Research Program
NETEX	Northeast Texas Rural Rail Transportation District rail line
NPIAS	National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems
PCE	Passenger Car Equivalent
PTN	Public Transportation Division
RBEG	Rural Business Enterprise Grant
RPO	Regional Planning Organization
RTD	Rural Transit District
SAFETEA-LU	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users
SLRTP	Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan



SORR	South Orient Rail Road (aka South Orient rail line)
TASP	Texas Airport System Plan
TBA	Texas Bus Association
TIGER	Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery
TIGGER	Transit Investments for Greenhouse Gas and Energy Reduction
TRTP	Texas Rural Transportation Plan
TTA	Texas Transit Association
TTC	Texas Transportation Commission
TTI	Texas Transportation Institute
TxDOT	Texas Department of Transportation
UP	Union Pacific Corp.
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USDOT	U.S. Department of Transportation
UTP	Unified Transportation Program



Executive Summary

What is the Texas Rural Transportation Plan?

The Texas Rural Transportation Plan (TRTP) is the rural component of the Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan (SLRTP) 2035.¹ As part of the SLRTP, the TRTP is a blueprint for the planning process in the rural areas that will guide the collaborative efforts between the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), local and regional decision-makers, and all transportation stakeholders to reach a consensus on needed transportation projects and services through 2035. It is a standalone document, fully consistent with the SLRTP.

The TRTP is a multi-modal transportation plan that includes the following modes:

- ★ Highways;
- ★ Non-Automobile/Non-highway modes;
 - Bicycles and Pedestrians;
 - General Aviation;
 - Inland Waterways;
 - Rail (freight and passenger); and
 - Public Transportation.

Why was the TRTP Developed?

Unlike urbanized areas where Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are required by law to develop Metropolitan Transportation Plans (MTPs) that identify and prioritize future transportation projects within funding constraints, there is no equivalent requirement for rural areas. While the SLRTP included an overall assessment of rural transportation needs and a prioritization of Trunk System corridors (Chapter 5 of the SLRTP 2035), added capacity highway specific projects were not identified or ranked.

Rural transportation needs tend to be different than the transportation needs encountered in urbanized areas. As such, for the TRTP, “rural” is defined as any area outside of MPO boundaries. While the SLRTP identified capacity needs for many rural highways, capacity is usually not the primary issue as compared with urban areas. However, the impact of traffic growth in rural areas can create safety concerns. Stakeholders have overwhelmingly indicated that safe passing on rural highways is one of their top concerns, particularly given the intermittent high volume of truck traffic.

¹ See TxDOT website: https://www.txdot.gov/public_involvement/transportation_plan/report.htm



In addition to rural highway needs, the TRTP includes an analysis of rural transportation needs for non-automobile/non-highway modes. This provides for a more consistent approach to statewide multi-modal planning, and presents a more complete analysis of rural transportation for Texans.

The Relationship between the TRTP and SLRTP Goals

Goal-setting is an important early step in transportation planning. Goals help guide an organization in investing resources that are consistent with the entity's vision and mission. The SLRTP addressed six goals that were based on TxDOT's 2011–2015 Strategic Plan:²

1. Develop an organizational structure and strategies designed to address the future multi-modal transportation needs of all Texans;
2. Enhance safety for all Texas transportation system users;
3. Maintain the existing Texas transportation system;
4. Promote congestion relief strategies;
5. Enhance system connectivity; and
6. Facilitate the development and exchange of comprehensive multi-modal transportation funding strategies with transportation program and project partners.

While all goals were considered, those related to mobility and connectivity (Goals 4 and 5) were used to analyze long-term added capacity highway projects in an objective manner in the TRTP.³

The TxDOT goals were recently updated as part of the new 2013–2017 Strategic Plan. These new goals are listed below, together with the SLRTP goals with which they are associated:

- ★ Maintain a safe system (SLRTP Goals 2 and 3);
- ★ Address congestion (SLRTP Goal 4);
- ★ Connect Texas communities (SLRTP Goal 5); and
- ★ Best in class state agency (SLRTP Goals 1 and 6).

² See TxDOT website: http://www.txdot.gov/about_us/strategic_plan.htm

³ Criteria associated with goals 4 and 5 were used to assess added capacity highway projects only. These criteria were not used to assess projects associated with non-highway modes. The TRTP only identified rural transportation needs associated with non-highway modes.



Goals 4 and 5 from the SLRTP are similar to the 2013–2017 Strategic Plan goals to address congestion and connect Texas communities. The TRTP highway analysis therefore remains consistent with the revised 2013–2017 Strategic Plan goals.

How was the TRTP Developed?

TxDOT has adopted a proactive approach to developing the TRTP. There are two inter-related components used to develop the TRTP:

- ★ Stakeholder/public participation; and
- ★ Technical approach.

A summary of how stakeholders and the public participated in the development of the TRTP can be found in Chapter 4 of the TRTP.

The TRTP objectively ranks all identified added capacity highway projects.⁴ The rankings are presented in the TRTP in two ways:

- ★ Statewide comparison of all projects; and
- ★ Highest ranked projects in each district.

TxDOT recognizes the long-term importance of multi-modal transportation planning and the need to coordinate all modes of transportation. To this end, TxDOT has identified the non-highway needs in the TRTP through coordination with the appropriate public and private sector partners for the various non-highway modes. It should be noted that specific projects for non-highway modes were not analyzed in the same level of detail as those for highways.

How will the TRTP be Used?

Prior to adoption by the Texas Transportation Commission (TTC), stakeholders and citizens had the opportunity to review and comment on the draft TRTP, its approach, and findings.

For highways, stakeholders and citizens were invited to highlight any relevant data or factors that were not incorporated into the added capacity highway project ranking process. Where justified, projects were added and re-ranked based on any relevant new data or factors not previously considered. Public comments provided 64 additional project that were added to the analysis.

⁴ A tool was developed to rank 650 rural added capacity highway projects against a consistent set of criteria that were reviewed with stakeholders. The criteria were then weighted based on stakeholder inputs.



For non-highway modes, stakeholders and citizens were also invited to highlight any relevant data or factors that were not incorporated into the TRTP, especially information that might enable TxDOT to enhance its approach to multi-modal transportation system planning.

The TRTP will provide an objective basis for the TxDOT Districts to begin project planning when planning funds become available. In addition, the TRTP presents needs for rural non-highway transportation across the state. This will enable a more consistent approach to statewide multi-modal planning by presenting a more complete analysis of rural transportation. Future transportation funding can be invested to secure the greatest benefits for all citizens.

When will TRTP be Updated?

As the rural component of the SLRTP, the TRTP content will be updated with the SLRTP. It is envisioned that the SLRTP will be updated every 4 years. The next update to the SLRTP is anticipated in 2014. Transportation planning is a continuous process and transportation needs evolve thereby necessitating continual reevaluation of transportation priorities.

What does the TRTP Include?

Approximately 650 added capacity rural highway projects were evaluated and ranked. The three highest ranked projects in each TxDOT District are shown on **Figure 2-4**. Detailed maps of projects in each TxDOT District can be found in Appendix E.

The project rankings do not indicate the priority in which projects will be funded or constructed. Prioritization will be determined by TxDOT, taking into account knowledge of any additional local factors that did not lend themselves to inclusion into the statewide ranking process.

Identifying needs for non-highway modes is more complex than for highway modes and harder to quantify. An overview for each mode is as follows:

- ★ **Bicycles and Pedestrians** – In addition to the safety concerns related to surface treatment and positioning of rumble strips, the TRTP identifies the broader approach to planning and designing the street environment in small cities known as “Complete Streets.” This approach considers the respective needs of bicyclists, pedestrians, transit users, and drivers. The TRTP also emphasizes the potential economic impact of biking events and tourism.



- ★ **General Aviation** – TxDOT's 5-year Texas Airport System Plan is the primary planning tool. The TRTP emphasizes the potential economic impact of General Aviation, especially enhancing design standards to allow corporate jets.
- ★ **Inland Waterways** – Texas has a significant marine transportation system that supports commerce, recreation, and tourism. TxDOT has developed a capital program for Texas ports for 2011–2012. The primary focus is on deepening channels, landside facilities, and intermodal interchanges. Most ports are within MPO boundaries and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is responsible for maintaining the channels.
- ★ **Rail (freight and passenger)** – TxDOT has developed the Texas Rail Plan. Freight rail is provided through a combination of local short-line railroads, which connect with Class I railroads. Passenger rail improvements were identified in four corridors.
- ★ **Public Transportation** – TxDOT has worked closely with regional planning organizations to support the development of rural transit coordination plans in each region. Initial plans were developed in 2006, and updated in 2011. For the TRTP, TxDOT has additionally developed a long-range plan to identify rural public transportation capital and operations needs. The TRTP also highlighted recent declines in the level and availability of intercity bus services.

While the TRTP identifies known projects for non-highway modes, these projects are not ranked.

Conclusions

The following strategies identified in the TRTP are driven by the competing challenges of limited funding, growing demand, and very large transportation needs:

- ★ Focus available transportation funds on the most cost-effective investments;
- ★ Manage our transportation system in ways that encourage cost-effective shifts in how we travel; and
- ★ Develop partnerships for providing transportation improvements.

This approach is valid for the TRTP and, for the most part, the SLRTP strategies and recommendations apply equally to the TRTP. The TRTP lists some minor modifications to the SLRTP strategies and recommendations to address rural transportation needs. The TRTP also recommends some minor enhancements to the added capacity highway project ranking process in the next SLRTP update.

Overall, the emphasis on “cost-effective” strategies specifically addressed in two of the three SLRTP goals is heightened for the TRTP and likely for the next SLRTP update also. Availability of funding for projects and needs identified in the TRTP will continue to