



Texas Freight Advisory Committee Meeting #46

8 a.m. to noon, March 26, 2026

In-Person Meeting

Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Greer Building

Ric Williamson Auditorium, 125 E. 11th St. Austin, TX 78701

COMMITTEE ATTENDEES

- Gerry Schwebel – Chair, International Bank of Commerce (IBC), Attended
- Candice Armenoff, Port Houston, Attended
- Ken Becker, Owner-Operator Independent, Drivers Association (OOIDA), Attended
- Adriana Cruz, Office of the Governor, Absent
- Terry Zrubek, proxy for Adriana Cruz, Attended
- John Esparza, Texas Trucking Association, Attended
- Joey Evans, TNW Corporation, Attended
- Laura Freeland, Southern Dallas County Inland Port Transportation Management Association, Attended
- Teclo Garcia, Mission Economic Development Corporation, Attended
- Lauren Garduno, Ports-to-Plains Alliance, Attended Virtually
- Nicholas Konen, Hillwood, AllianceTexas, Attended
- Miriam Kotkowski, TECMA Transportation Services, Attended
- Charlie Leal, Texas Farm Bureau, Attended
- Robert MacDonald, Texas Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (TEMPO), Attended
- Ryan Martin, LDR Partners, Absent
- Tiffany Melvin, North American Strategy for Competitiveness, Attended
- Lindsay Mullins, BNSF Railway, Attended
- Dr. Rolando Ortiz, Killam Development, Ltd., Attended
- Steven Schar, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Attended

COMMITTEE ATTENDEES (continued)

- Clint Schelbitzki, Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR), Attended
- Sean Stibich, Port of Victoria, Absent
- Isaac J. Tawil, City Manager of McAllen/ representing McAllen Economic Development Group, Absent
- Matt Woodruff, Kirby Corporation, Attended

Total Count of Committee Present (includes proxy members): 19

Texas Transportation Commission Attendees

- Commissioner Alvin New, Acting Chair
- Commissioner Alejandro "Alex" G. Meade III

TxDOT Attendees

- Loretta Brown
- Jorge Almada Diaz
- Andrew A. Canon
- Leah Casey
- Farideh Dassi
- Kale Driemeier
- Don Franks
- Norma Y. Garza
- Humberto "Tito" Gonzalez Jr.
- Rafael Gonzalez
- Tyler Graham
- Rose Guajardo
- Claudia Lagos Galindo
- Brandye Hendrickson
- Mildred Litchfield
- David Mass
- Caroline Mays
- Travis Milner
- Beto Padilla
- Eric Williams

Agency/Consultant Team Attendees

- Eva Esquivel, HNTB Corporation
- Lauren Ramirez, HNTB Corporation
- Jeremy Upchurch, HNTB Corporation
- Robert Elizondo, PCI
- Brian Comer, HNTB Corporation
- Max Hoffman, HNTB Corporation
- Paulina Lopez, WSP
- Alejandra Lopez, WSP
- Lizzie Welch, WSP

Other Attendees

- Genevieve Bales, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Will Barresi, BGE, Inc.
- Chris Brown, Sulphur Springs Economic Development Corporation
- Eduardo Calvo, El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Deirdre Delisi, Delisi Communications
- Bill Eisele, Texas A&M Transportation Institute
- Adrienne Evans, Office of Lt. Governor
- Kritwa Jetley, BNSF
- Dennis Kearns, BNSF and Texas Railroad Association
- Peter LeCody, Texas Rail Advocates
- Myra Leo, HBS/CPKC
- Charles Lino, Town of Pecos City
- Steve Linhart, GFT
- William Long, Jacobs
- James Lovett, SH 130
- Bruce Mann, RCR Rail Company
- Michael Medina, Rio Grande Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (RGVMPO)
- Travis Nedrich, Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Don Rodman, Alliance for I-69 Texas
- Debra Ruhmand
- Allan Rutter, Texas A&M Transportation Institute
- David Salgado, Texas A&M Transportation Institute
- Hannah Santiago, Cambridge Systematics
- Carl Seifert, Jacobs
- Jennifer Shepard, Alliance for I-69 Texas

Other Attendees (Continued)

- French Thompson, BNSF
- Cameron Walker, Permian Basin Metropolitan Planning Organization

Opening Comments and Safety Minute

Tyler Graham, Freight Systems Branch Manager at the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), opened the meeting by welcoming members to Austin for the first Texas Freight Advisory Committee (TxFAC) meeting of 2026. He thanked committee members for their continued participation and reviewed emergency procedures for the TxDOT facility. Mr. Graham delivered the meeting's safety-minute, focusing on truck blind spots and safe driving practices around freight vehicles. He emphasized awareness of no-zones, proper passing behavior and patience when trucks maneuver, encouraging participants to drive courteously and safely on Texas roadways.

TxFAC Welcome, Call to Order, and New Business

Chairman Gerry Schwebel of IBC Bank formally called the meeting to order following the safety presentation. He thanked members for their support in electing him chair. He emphasized that TxFAC meetings are intended to be collaborative, working sessions rather than passive briefings. Chairman Schwebel underscored expectations for consistent member attendance and active participation, noting that the committee's effectiveness depends on engagement by its appointed members.

Texas Transportation Commission Acting Chair Alvin New thanked Chairman Schwebel for assuming the chair role and emphasized the importance of TxFAC in shaping TxDOT's freight-related planning and investment decisions. He noted that the committee's input helps guide statewide transportation priorities.

Commissioner Alejandro "Alex" G. Meade III also addressed the committee, acknowledging the value of TxFAC and the role freight mobility plays in sustaining Texas' economic growth.

Caroline Mays, Senior Director of Planning and Modal Programs at TxDOT,

TxFAC Welcome, Call to Order, and New Business (continued)

congratulated Chairman Schwebel and noted that TxFAC consistently receives strong commissioner engagement due to the significance of freight in major corridor investments.

Humberto “Tito” Gonzalez, Jr., P.E., Director of Transportation Planning and Programming at TxDOT, highlighted that development of the 2027 Texas Freight Mobility Plan would be a primary focus of TxFAC’s work, with Commission adoption targeted for January 2027.

Texas Freight Advisory Committee Overview

Andrew Canon, Director, Freight International Trade and Connectivity at TxDOT, provided an overview of TxFAC’s history, statutory authority and responsibilities. The presentation reviewed the committee’s origins, its establishment in the Texas Administrative Code, and the federal FAST Act requirement for state freight advisory committees.

Staff emphasized that TxFAC advises TxDOT on freight priorities, funding needs and policy direction and plays a central role in the development of the Texas Freight Mobility Plan. Recent federal guidance released in February 2026 was cited as reinforcing the close relationship between freight advisory committees and state freight plans.

In response to member questions, Mr. Canon explained that the freight plan is a living document used continuously to inform project prioritization, design decisions, and eligibility for federal freight funding programs.

Member Updates Roundtable

Chairman Gerry Schwebel facilitated an extended roundtable to gather updates from TxFAC members, emphasizing the value of real-world, -sector specific insights to inform development of the 2027 Texas Freight Mobility Plan (TFMP).

Member Updates Roundtable (continued)

Members were asked to identify their organization, geographic focus and current -freight related priorities- or challenges.

Ken Becker, Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA), emphasized ongoing truck parking shortages and highlighted a recently completed public-private effort to open a new privately operated truck parking facility in Hutchins, Texas. He described the permitting and local coordination required to bring the project online and noted it as a model that could be replicated statewide. Mr. Becker stressed that truck parking remains a nationwide safety issue, not limited to Texas. He also referenced coordination with TxDOT safety staff related to driver awareness and infrastructure education initiatives.

Terry Zrubek, Texas Economic Development and Tourism Office (Office of the Governor), discussed Texas' sustained population and labor force growth and the central role freight infrastructure plays in continued economic success. He referenced Governor Abbott's statewide economic development strategic plan and noted that infrastructure is now a formal pillar alongside business and workforce. Mr. Zrubek encouraged alignment between TxDOT freight planning efforts and state economic development goals. He emphasized collaboration and asked committee members to view the TFMP as a tool for supporting future business recruitment.

John Esparza, Texas Trucking Association, focused on highway safety, congestion and the importance of reliable infrastructure for trucking operations. He noted that congestion directly affects safety, efficiency and operating costs for carriers. Mr. Esparza emphasized the value of TxFAC as a forum to align industry priorities before engaging the Legislature or federal partners. He offered continued support from the Texas Trucking Association to assist TxDOT and the committee.

Joey Evans, TNW Corporation, emphasized the role of short line railroads in connecting rural producers and industries to the broader freight network. He highlighted the importance of collaboration between rail, trucking, and port partners to improve overall system efficiency. Mr. Evans noted that this was his second TxFAC freight plan cycle and expressed appreciation for the committee's collaborative approach.

Member Updates Roundtable (continued)

He offered support from the short line rail sector in identifying opportunities and constraints.

Laura Freeland, Dallas County Inland Port Transportation Authority, described rapid growth at the Dallas County Inland Port and the historical lack of a unified freight voice for warehouses, manufacturers and logistics operators in the region. She shared data showing significant increases in truck volumes into North Texas, particularly freight originating from Laredo and Houston. Ms. Freeland emphasized the importance of regional perspectives in freight planning rather than corridor-only analysis. She expressed enthusiasm for integrating these trends into the TFMP.

Teclo Garcia, Mission Economic Development Corporation, provided updates on binational freight planning efforts and recent border master plan meetings involving Texas and Mexico stakeholders. He discussed progress on Interstate 69 upgrades and emphasized the importance of completing projects that serve urbanized border areas before reaching rural segments. Mr. Garcia highlighted the volume of truck crossings in Hidalgo County and stressed the need for continued investment. He added that coordination with federal and binational partners was identified as critical.

Miriam Kotkowski, TECMA Transportation Services, El Paso Region, discussed freight challenges facing the El Paso region, including capacity constraints at ports of entry and pending federal operational decisions affecting commercial lanes. She cited recent funding awarded for bridge improvements expressing concern that lane reductions elsewhere could significantly reduce freight capacity. Ms. Kotkowski emphasized the economic importance of El Paso as a trade gateway and urged coordination to address these risks. She asked how regional concerns should be elevated through TxFAC and the TFMP process.

Nicholas Konen, AllianceTexas, described AllianceTexas as one of the nation's largest inland ports, supporting air, rail and highway freight movement. He highlighted significant economic output and recent industrial investments within the Alliance development. Mr. Konen stressed the importance of Interstate 35 to the success of North Texas freight and noted that counties along I35 contribute more than half of Texas' GDP. He emphasized continued focus on maintaining I35 capacity and reliability.

Member Updates Roundtable (continued)

Don Franks, TxDOT Rail Division, provided an overview of TxDOT's rail safety, oversight and investment activities. He highlighted recent commission approval of more than \$150 million for rail safety and grade separation projects statewide. Mr. Franks explained TxDOT's role in coordinating rail crossing improvements, inspections and roadway-rail interfaces. He emphasized that these investments improve safety for both freight and the traveling public.

Candice Armenoff, Port Houston, discussed Port Houston's continued growth and the urgency of accommodating increasing freight demand. She emphasized that while roadway access remains critical, reliance on highways alone is unsustainable in the Houston region. Ms. Armenoff highlighted strong growth in exports, particularly energy-related commodities, and the need for multimodal solutions. She stressed the importance of integrating ports, rail, and highways within the TFMP.

Charlie Leal, Texas Farm Bureau, outlined challenges facing agricultural freight, including drought conditions, water scarcity, rising input costs and significant loss of farmland to development. He emphasized agriculture's reliance on rural roads, short line rail and reliable access to national networks. Mr. Leal expressed concern about rail service reliability and competitive access for agricultural shippers. He stressed that freight constraints ultimately affect food prices and rural economies statewide.

Robert MacDonald, Texas Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (TEMPO), discussed coordination among Texas MPOs and recent meetings addressing freight integration across metropolitan plans. He noted growing focus on freight within MPO planning processes and federal reauthorization discussions. Mr. MacDonald emphasized the importance of presenting a unified Texas voice when engaging Congress and federal agencies. He described freight as a crosscutting issue affecting all modes and regions.

Tiffany Melvin, North American Strategy for Competitiveness (NASCO), described NASCO's trilateral role in supply chain coordination among the United States, Mexico and Canada. She discussed corridor-level initiatives along I35, including technology coordination and truck parking hotspot analysis. Ms. Melvin highlighted preparations for increased freight and travel

Member Updates Roundtable (continued)

activity tied to the upcoming World Cup. She supported the idea of using TFMP outputs for coordinated federal advocacy.

Lindsay Mullins, BNSF Railway, described the meeting as the start of a “new school year” for the committee and emphasized the importance of connectivity—not only within the transportation system but among the stakeholders represented at the table. She commended TxDOT and the commissioners for convening a highly productive group and stated that Texas leads the nation in how it approaches freight collaboration. Ms. Mullins noted that Texas has the largest rail network and the highest number of rail-highway-grade crossings in the country, underscoring why rail safety and grade separation remain critical priorities. She highlighted BNSF’s headquarters in Texas and the strong working relationships among Class I railroads in the state. Mullins also acknowledged TxDOT’s support for state grade-crossing elimination funding and emphasized BNSF’s commitment to partnering with communities and pursuing federal resources to address infrastructure challenges.

Dr. Rolando Ortiz, Killam Development, Ltd., described the daily impact of international trade on border communities, noting that Laredo and the Mission–McAllen areas are directly shaped by cross-border freight activity. He stated that Laredo handled more than \$350 billion in trade last year, with approximately 15,000 to 16,000 trucks crossing daily, underscoring the scale of freight demand at the border. Dr. Ortiz highlighted progress on border infrastructure, including four international bridge permits, expansion of the World Trade Bridge from eight to 16 lanes and multiple alternative routes designed to relieve congestion on Interstate 35. He described several public-private partnership projects, including donated right-of-way and shared funding from local, state, federal and military sources, as examples of how border freight projects are being delivered. Dr. Ortiz emphasized that Laredo handles a wide range of consumer and industrial goods beyond vehicles and autos, and that efficient connections to North Texas and Houston are critical to keeping trade moving statewide.

Steven Schar, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), explained that the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality oversees air, water and

Member Updates Roundtable (continued)

waste issues that affect freight and industry across the state. He said TCEQ is currently working closely with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to understand federal regulatory actions that could affect Texas regions. Mr. Schar noted that water scarcity remains a significant concern statewide, with a recent focus on the Corpus Christi region. He highlighted emergency directives issued by the governor that allowed rapid permitting of emergency wells to support residents, irrigation districts and industry, with approvals completed within a week. Mr. Schar emphasized that TCEQ continues to monitor water conditions statewide while hoping for improved rainfall.

Clint Schelbitzki, Union Pacific Railroad, said he was energized by the roundtable discussion and emphasized strong alignment across members on freight priorities. He highlighted Texas' leadership in rail safety and grade separation investments, noting that the state serves as a national model among the 23 states in which his company operates. Mr. Schelbitzki reported that the rail industry achieved its safest year on record, with industry-wide derailments and personal injury rates at historic lows, including significant year-over-year improvements at Union Pacific. He also discussed efficiency and sustainability investments, including a \$1.2 billion locomotive modernization program that will bring work to the Fort Worth area. Mr. Schelbitzki highlighted Union Pacific's new 2,000-acre rail served industrial park in Rosenberg as a major opportunity to support manufacturing and freight growth, reinforcing that "freight can't wait."

Matt Woodruff, Kirby Corporation, described the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway as a critical freight corridor moving more than 100 million tons of cargo annually, the majority of which originates or terminates in Texas. Mr. Woodruff raised concerns about aging federal waterway infrastructure, including floodgates and movable bridges outside Texas that affect Texas' freight reliability. He explained that while waterways are federally managed, failures elsewhere create constraints for Texas' commerce and warrant coordinated advocacy.

Freight Plan Update- Part I- Parking Assessment and Modal Profiles

Kale Driemeier, Project Development Manager of Freight Systems Branch at TxDOT, presented the first TFMP update by framing the 2027 Texas Freight Mobility Plan as both a federally required document and a practical investment and implementation tool. He explained that the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act mandates updated multimodal freight plans, including specific elements such as a statewide truck parking inventory and assessment. He emphasized that maintaining an approved and current TFMP is essential for Texas to remain eligible for federal freight formula funding and discretionary grant opportunities.

Brian Comer, HNTB, presented detailed findings from the updated statewide truck parking assessment and facilitated a robust discussion with committee members. The assessment documented approximately 36,000 truck parking spaces statewide, with the overwhelming majority provided by private operators. While parking supply has increased significantly since 2020, Mr. Comer noted that demand has accelerated faster — particularly along I-35, I-10, and I-20, resulting in persistent peak-hour shortages. Committee members discussed how staging activity near manufacturing centers, ports and border crossings further strains capacity, often forcing trucks to park in unsafe or informal locations to comply with federal hours of service requirements. The discussion moved beyond data into implementation challenges. Members highlighted that private-sector investment alone cannot resolve truck parking gaps in rural areas or at remote corridor junctions, where commercial development is not economically feasible. TxDOT staff described the agency's role in strategically placing public parking facilities, improving lighting, security, and communications infrastructure and supporting partnerships where private development is viable but hindered by local zoning or community resistance.

Following the truck parking discussion, Jeremy Upchurch, HNTB, presented an overview of the freight modal profiles being developed as part of the Texas Freight Mobility Plan update. The profiles document existing conditions, infrastructure, freight flows, performance measures and economic impacts across the highway, maritime, rail, air cargo, pipeline, and military freight systems. These profiles are intended to satisfy federal freight planning requirements and provide a consistent baseline for identifying trends and

Freight Plan Update- Part I- Parking Assessment and Modal Profiles (continued)

future needs. While several data points reflect 2022–2023 conditions, updated 2024 datasets are currently under review and will be incorporated.

Key observations since the 2022 Freight Plan include continued growth in highway freight volumes and vehicle miles traveled, with persistent congestion at major truck bottlenecks despite ongoing capacity projects. Texas ports have expanded their role as national and global trade gateways, supported by rising energy exports, container activity and significant investments in channel deepening and terminal modernization. Rail freight continues to support high-volume and intermodal movements, with sustained growth in cross-border traffic and improved safety at rail-highway crossings. Air cargo activity is rebounding at major airports, driven by technology, medical, and ecommerce supply chains, while pipeline infrastructure expansion continues to support the state’s energy economy. Military freight relies on integrated multimodal connectivity to support base operations, deployment, and national defense

During the discussion, TxFAC members noted that publicly available datasets do not fully capture real-time industry activity or planned investments. Members recommended targeted one-on-one engagements and industry-specific deep dives to address data gaps, particularly related to autonomous trucking, emerging freight technologies, drone delivery, port and energy sector initiatives and the growing space industry. TxDOT and the project team acknowledged these inputs and noted that stakeholder engagement will continue throughout future phases of the TFMP, including needs assessment and recommendations.

The committee discussion included freight-related emerging industries, particularly the space sector. Several members raised questions about how TxDOT and the TFMP are accounting for logistics demands tied to spaceports, launch facilities and aerospace manufacturing. TxDOT staff explained that the agency recently completed a statewide space industry freight and logistics assessment in coordination with the Texas Space Commission and other partners. That effort evaluated roadway conditions, oversize and overweight movements, rail access and supply chains serving space-related facilities across Texas.

Freight Plan Update- Part I- Parking Assessment and Modal Profiles (continued)

Staff emphasized that space industry freight presents unique challenges, including oversized components, time-sensitive deliveries, and access to remote or coastal sites. Committee members discussed parallels between space logistics and other energy- and manufacturing-driven freight movements, noting the importance of early planning to avoid capacity and safety issues as the industry scales. TxDOT confirmed that space-related freight considerations will be reflected in the TFMP as part of broader emerging industry analysis rather than as an isolated sector.

Freight Plan Update- Part II- Trends, Disruptors, Opportunities, and Stakeholder Engagement

Farideh Dassi, Senior Transportation Planner, Freight Systems Branch at TxDOT, presented Part II of the TFMP update focused on broader systemwide trends shaping freight movement in Texas, emerging disruptors and opportunities and the stakeholder engagement activities planned to inform the remainder of plan development. She framed this portion of the discussion as forward-looking, intended to ensure that the TFMP reflects not only historical data but also rapidly evolving economic, technological and industrial conditions.

Lizzie Welch, WSP, presented an overview of the trends, disruptors and opportunities influencing freight demand in Texas as part of the 2027 Texas Freight Mobility Plan. This task examines largescale economic, demographic, and industry forces to explain why freight patterns are changing and how those changes should inform future infrastructure planning and investment prioritization.

Energy was identified as a major driver of freight activity statewide, with both traditional and renewable energy growth increasing demand for oversize and overweight movements and placing additional strain on rural and urban corridors. Agriculture was noted as highly truck-dependent, relying heavily on

Freight Plan Update- Part II- Trends, Disruptors, Opportunities, and Stakeholder Engagement (continued)

farm-to-market roads and facing challenges related to seasonal demand, perishable commodities, land-use changes, and long-term workforce transitions.

Manufacturing trends indicate continued growth in higher value and advanced sectors, including aerospace and space-related industries, which require reliable, multimodal and just-in-time freight service. Trade was emphasized as a statewide issue, with Texas maintaining its position as the nation's top trade gateway and Mexico as its primary trading partner. Efficient intermodal connections and inspection processes were identified as critical to maintaining competitiveness and avoiding systemwide ripple effects from gateway delays.

The presentation also highlighted growth in ecommerce, warehousing and distribution, which is increasing first and last-mile freight activity and shifting impacts to local and arterial roadways, particularly in major metropolitan areas. Technology and digital infrastructure were described as increasingly integral to freight mobility, while disparities in rural connectivity remain a concern. Finally, population and employment growth concentrated in urban regions was noted as a key factor shaping future freight demand, facility location and transportation needs across Texas.

Tyler Graham then outlined upcoming stakeholder engagement activities, describing a series of regional workshops and listening sessions planned across the state. These sessions are intended to supplement TxFAC input by gathering perspectives from freight operators, MPOs, local governments, economic development organizations, ports, and corridor coalitions. Regions identified for engagement include North Texas, West Texas, Central Texas, the Gulf Coast, the Border, and the Rio Grande Valley.

Committee members emphasized that the workshops should be interactive and discussion-based, rather than presentation heavy, to draw out real-time intelligence on planned projects, operational constraints, workforce challenges, land-use conflicts and permitting barriers. Several members recommended follow-up one-on-one discussions for complex or confidential projects that may not be suitable for open workshops.

Freight Plan Update- Part II- Trends, Disruptors, Opportunities, and Stakeholder Engagement (continued)

TxDOT staff confirmed that stakeholder feedback will directly inform TFMP needs identification, prioritization and implementation strategies, and that results from engagement activities will be documented and shared with the committee. The discussion concluded with agreement that meaningful engagement—and clear linkage between stakeholder input and plan outcomes—will be essential to producing a credible, actionable 2027 TFMP

2026 TxFAC Meeting Dates

Tyler Graham announced the remaining 2026 TxFAC meeting dates: June 8, September 9, and December 3. Meetings are tentatively scheduled for Austin, though members interested in hosting future meetings were encouraged to contact TxDOT staff.

Election of Vice Chair and Remarks

Chairman Schwebel opened the floor for nominations to fill the vacant vice chair position. Tiffany Melvin nominated Nicholas Konen of AllianceTexas, citing his experience, leadership, and the strategic importance of Alliance as a major inland port. The nomination was seconded by John Esparza, and with no additional nominees, Konen accepted the position and was unanimously elected vice chair. Members briefly discussed election procedures.

Adjourn

Chairman Schwebel closed the meeting by thanking TxDOT staff, presenters and committee members for their active participation. He encouraged continued collaboration between meetings, early sharing of materials to support informed discussion and unified advocacy on freight priorities. Chairman Schwebel emphasized that TxFAC's work remains central to shaping the state's freight system and supporting Texas' economic vitality. The meeting adjourned by 12:05pm with appreciation for attendees and wishes for safe travel.