



Texas Freight Advisory Committee Meeting #43

May 7, 2025, 8 a.m. to noon

In-Person Meeting at TxDOT Stassney Campus
Auditorium, 6230 E. Stassney Ln., Austin, TX 78744

ATTENDEES

Committee Members	Organization	Attendance
Judge Ed Emmett – Chair	Rice University	Yes
Ken Becker	Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA)	Yes
Adriana Cruz	Office of the Texas Governor	Did not attend
John Esparza	Texas Trucking Association	Did not attend
Laura Freeland	Southern Dallas County Inland Port Transportation Management Association	Yes
Teclo Garcia	Mission Economic Development Corporation	Yes
Lauren Garduno	Ports-to-Plains Alliance	Yes
Brenda Gunter	Mayor, City of San Angelo	Yes
Charlie Jenkins	Port Houston	Yes
Miriam Kotkowski	Tecma Transportation Services	Did not attend
Russell Laughlin	Hillwood, Alliance Texas	Did not attend
Charlie Leal	Texas Farm Bureau	Did not attend
Robert MacDonald	Texas Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (TEMPO)	Yes
Ryan Martin	Evolve Houston	Did not attend
Tiffany Melvin	North American Strategy for Competitiveness	Yes
Lindsay Mullins	Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway	Did not attend
Rolando Ortiz	Killam Development Ltd.	Did not attend
TBD	McAllen Economic Development Corp.	N/A
Steven Schar	Texas Commission on Environmental Quality	Did not attend

Committee Members	Organization	Attendance
Clint Schelbitzki	Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR)	Did not attend
Gerry Schwebel	International Bank of Commerce, San Antonio	Yes
Sean Stibich	Port of Victoria	Did not attend
Paul Treangen	TNW Corporation	Did not attend
Matt Woodruff	Kirby Corporation	Yes
Proxy Members	Organization	Attendance
Raquel Espinoza	Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR)	Yes
Ex Officio Members	Organization	Attendance
Cameron Walker	Permian Basin MPO	Yes

Total Count of Committee Present (includes proxy and ex officio members): 13

Texas Transportation Commission

Commissioner Alejandro “Alex” G. Meade III

TxDOT

Jorge Almada
Amanda Austin
Loretta Brown
Brandi Bush
Andrew Canon
Darlynn Cherry
Emily Clisby
Chad Coburn
Farideh Dassi
Kale Driemeier
Lorena Echeverria de Misi
Yvette Flores
Humberto “Tito” Gonzalez, Jr.

Tyler Graham
Rose Guajardo
Brandye Hendrickson
Geir Eilif Kalhagen
Cary Karnstadt
Nicole Lawson
Travis Milner
Ana Ramirez
Zeke Reyna
Dora Robles
Sergio Vasquez
Giacomo Yaquinto
Aslan Zarafshan

Agency/Consulting Team

Brian Comer, HNTB
Eva Esquivel, HNTB
Jeremy Upchurch, HNTB
Robert Elizondo, Poznecki-Camarillo, LLC
William Long, Poznecki-Camarillo, LLC
Elizabeth Story, Poznecki-Camarillo, LLC

Other Attendees

Quincy Allen, BGE Inc.
Oscar Galvis, Cambridge Systematics
Matt Miles, Cambridge Systematics
Hannah Santiago, Cambridge Systematics
Qi Si, Cambridge Systematics
Mike Williamson, Cambridge Systematics
Charles Lino, City of Pecos
Mark Jones, DCCM
Ernie Gonzalez, EMC Strategy Group
Genevieve Bales, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Nair Barrios, Garver
Tracy Michel, Garver
Tom Tsai, GFT Inc.
Don Rodman, I69 Alliance
Louis Cutaia, Jacobs
Dan Seedah, Jacobs
Amy Tripson, Jacobs
Jeff Swenson, LineHaul Station
Brad Johnson, Northeast Texas Rural Rail Transportation District (NETEX)
Danny Schnautz, Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA)
Candice Armenoff, Port Houston
Elissa Garza, Poznecki-Camarillo, LLC
Debra Richmond, Permian Strategic Partnership
Bruce Mann, RCR
Michael Medina, RGV MPO
Rudy Zamora, RGV MPO
Binny Paul, SH 130 Concession Company
Rodger Horton, Shea Transportation
Bill Eisele, Texas A&M Transportation Institute
Curtis Morgan, Texas A&M Transportation Institute
Allan Rutter, Texas A&M Transportation Institute
Sushant Sharma, Texas A&M Transportation Institute
Jason Wallis, Texas A&M Transportation Institute
Jeff Warner, Texas A&M Transportation Institute
Jim Rizk, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
Tyson Moeller, The Port of Texas City – Texas City Terminal Railway Company
Joe Bryan, WSP
Lizzie Welch, WSP

1. TxFAC Welcome, Call to Order, Safety Minute, and New Business

Tyler Graham, freight systems branch manager with TxDOT's freight planning branch, opened the meeting at 8:30 a.m. with a safety minute. Mr. Graham discussed the importance of routine vehicle maintenance, such as checking tire pressure and wiper blades.

Judge Ed Emmett, Texas Freight Advisory Committee (TxFAC) chair and fellow in energy and transportation policy at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy, welcomed the committee, brought the meeting to order, and expressed his appreciation to TxDOT staff. The chair noted how important this time is to discuss freight transportation in Texas, and that this committee has the full support of the Texas Transportation Commission.

Texas Transportation Commissioner Alejandro "Alex" G. Meade III welcomed the committee to the TxDOT Stassney Campus. The commissioner noted TxDOT is an economic development entity, which is a statement validated and confirmed by the work done on freight movement. When it comes to projects, finding funding is easy, but finding consensus is hard. This freight advisory committee has consensus on this important topic.

Chair Emmett introduced Charlie Jenkins, the new CEO of Port Houston since August 2024. Mr. Jenkins has worked at Port Houston for more than 30 years and was previously on this committee over 15 years ago. Transportation is the supply chain's number one risk, and the topic requires focus for the region and for Texas.

Next introduced was Mayor Brenda Gunter of San Angelo, who also serves as the I-27 Advisory Committee chair. Mayor Gunter's central strategy is transportation, noting it is the key to any city's success and to the success of the West Texas community. Success will depend on how well we manage transportation at all levels.

Finally, two members of the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA) board of directors were introduced: Kenneth Becker and Danny Schnautz. Mr. Becker stated his organization advocates for trucker rights and needs across the United States. Mr. Schnautz noted that transportation has two sides: the user and the beneficiary. Truck drivers want to make everyone happy, including the highway users and the people they work for.

Chair Emmett asked how many trucks are owned and operated by owner-operators in the United States. Mr. Schnautz responded that the percentage of truck companies is over 80% owner-operators compared to company-owned trucks such as private carriers or extremely large fleets.

Chair Emmett added that when California considered enforcing truck drivers to transition to electric battery-operated vehicles, it failed to consider the financial burden this would place on owner-operators.

1. TxFAC Welcome, Call to Order, Safety Minute, and New Business- continued

Andrew A. Canon, freight, trade, and connectivity section director for TxDOT, expressed his appreciation for the committee's participation, dialogue, and discussion. From the perspective of TxDOT, the work of this committee is important to the agency as they move forward with freight planning.

Chair Emmett noted that the committee has the full support of both Texas Transportation Commission and TxDOT.

2. Roundtable: Member Updates and State of Freight Discussion

Chair Emmett led the committee through member updates and provided an update on his current work on the fuels of the future. He noted that previous eras of fuel were natural (e.g., winds and tides) and steam via coal and wood. The petroleum era is shifting to alternative fuels across all modes of transportation due to environmental needs and government policy. For example, the ocean shipping industry is testing at least 12 different fuel types. While the international maritime association recently said ships would be fueled by Liquified Natural Gas (LNG), most ship orders placed in the past two months have been for ethanol. The dominance of LNG is unknown, and the question remains who decides which fuels move forward. Airplanes have limited choices. The chair mentioned that renewable diesel and biodiesel have key differences, including the type of engine required. He noted that while everyone talks about the binary choice of electric and gas, freight has a wider range of options. Chair Emmett also stated that with the potential for modular nuclear plants, nuclear-powered trains or ships could be part of the future.

Mayor Brenda Gunter, city of San Angelo and I-27 Advisory Committee chair, celebrated the recent placement of an I-27 sign, designating a southern portion of I-27 from U.S. 87 south of Lubbock as the first segment of I-27. This segment is part of the federally designated Ports-to-Plains Trade Corridor. Mayor Gunter noted this milestone signifies I-27 is no longer a dream; it is a reality. I-27 will serve as an interstate for freight movement and future development. The importance of the Ports-to-Plains Trade Corridor is greater than 10 years ago, or prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mexico is a primary trading partner, and the waits at the border are significant. Mayor Gunter stated that Texas needs better and alternative routes for these trucks, not just I-35. The congestion on I-35 cannot be solved without an alternative route. The proposed I-27 project relieves I-35 and provides an alternative for truck drivers who view time as money.

Tyson Moeller, president of the Texas City Port & Terminal Railway Company, introduced himself and noted his 30 years of experience with the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR). The organization is owned by both Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway and UPRR.

Matt Woodruff, vice president of public and government affairs at the Kirby Corporation, stated his company is the nation's largest operator of tank barges. Mr. Woodruff noted how the barge industry moves liquids such as petroleum and chemicals from different Texas facilities to markets throughout the United States. A new movement involves refined products going south on the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway into Harlingen with destinations in Mexico. Kirby Corporation serves as a facilitator for the other modes of the "economic miracle" that is Texas energy. The company is reviewing alternative fuels, such as a plug-in hybrid towing vessel and others under construction. Mr. Woodruff also expressed gratitude for the increasing role and involvement of TxDOT in maritime freight.

2. Roundtable: Member Updates and State of Freight Discussion- continued

Tiffany Melvin, president of the North American Strategy for Competitiveness (NASCO), stated her organization has been busy with changes since January, working with members in Canada, the United States, and Mexico. NASCO's National Roadway Digital Infrastructure Transcontinental Corridor Strategy Program aims to develop a national digital infrastructure layer for roadways, focusing on transcontinental corridors like I-35. State departments of transportation are encouraged to work along major freight corridors, supporting efforts like advanced travel information, work zone data, disruptions, and truck parking availability. They are managing the accountability for supply chains among major freight networks. With increasing costs and uncertainties from new policies and potential tariffs, the role of state departments of transportation is to reduce barriers and regulations. Ms. Melvin requested any elimination of burdens on the freight industry to reduce costs, increase security, and improve collaboration across state lines. Ms. Melvin noted that the effort on I-35 can be replicated on I-27 and is looking forward to future opportunities.

Kenneth Becker, a member of the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA) board of directors, stated the need for truck parking is one of the key issues discussed with federal elected officials. House Bill 1659 would allocate money across the country to create truck parking.

Danny Schnautz, also a member of the OOIDA board of directors and Vice President of Clark Freight Lines, Inc., has decades of experience on the road. He noted that highway congestion, once limited to urban areas, is now common in rural areas, and there has been an increase in driver confusion. At risk are safety and productivity, as well as the desirability of truck driving as a job. Delays cut into potential driver income. Mr. Schnautz expressed interest in making truck driving a lucrative career and the most productive industry.

Raquel Espinoza, senior director of public affairs at UPRR, noted that this committee represents all the players who make up the backbone of the Texas economy. Railroads connect Texas with Mexico and Canada. UPRR supports customers who want to expand or attract new customers. The railroad also engages with leaders at local, county, and state levels to help communities that carry the state's successes as they live near a rail yard, port, or border. Ms. Espinoza added that Texas is good at building roads and expanding ports but is not keeping pace with building grade separations for communities. TxDOT plays an important role in this effort. Ms. Espinoza expressed excitement for the potential funding for grade separations and hopes it comes to fruition, which will help UPRR ensure it is an economic powerhouse providing neighbors with the mobility they need.

The discussion turned to metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and their role in freight transportation planning. Robert MacDonald, transportation planning director for the Corpus Christi Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and representative from the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (TEMPO), praised the diversified perspectives within this committee. Mr. MacDonald stated that what this committee does for freight, MPO staff do at the local level. Mayors, county commissioners, TxDOT, and others deal with freight as part of short- and long-term planning. Freight is a major component, and MPOs look to tie it all together with local planning, including working with everyone to stitch together a regional transportation plan. MPOs look at this group from a statewide perspective to ensure nothing is missed. Mr. MacDonald mentioned a recent presentation he gave to the Texas Trucking Association with the Texas Department of Public Safety in attendance, where safety was emphasized as a critical priority. MPOs across the state are developing safety action plans for their

2. Roundtable: Member Updates and State of Freight Discussion- continued

respective regions. The freight industry may have an interest in these studies and data, such as a history of crashes in the region and along certain routes. The MPOs bring local perspectives to that data.

Cameron Walker, executive director for the Permian Basin Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), expressed pride in finishing the Permian Basin MPO's 25-year plan last year, which included pieces of the proposed I-27 and I-14 systems. He praised the recent placement of an I-27 sign near Lubbock, noting the importance of human and financial support to get corridors moving forward. This latest plan, approved by the MPO's board, is about \$3.5 billion over a 25-year period. There are serious safety concerns in the Permian Basin. Mr. Walker noted that Debra Richmond, director of road safety strategic initiatives for the Permian Strategic Partnership, was present. Through the collaboration of TxDOT, Permian Strategic Partnership, and Midland County, a pilot of the Highway Emergency Response Operator (HERO) Program begins this summer, which includes about 100 miles of freeway corridor. The HERO patrol service is tasked with clearing minor crashes from area roadways and assisting motorists in need. Mr. Walker stated that safety, freight movement, and building interstate corridors are a high priority.

Laura Freeland, executive director of the Southern Dallas County Inland Port Transportation Management Association, stated that her organization is just south of downtown Dallas. Loop 9 is opening soon in Southern Dallas County, which will provide a new alternative route for the area. The Inland Port recently held a symposium featuring collaboration and new innovations. Ms. Freeland noted that more information is available at inlandport.org. There is no port authority or government corporation, so there is a need for ideas from others on how to move this forward. ISEE, an autonomous technology company, recently built an autonomous truck yard allowing trucks to drop containers at the warehouse and return to the road quickly, resulting in minimal wait times. I-45 will be an innovation corridor, and the industry will see further automation in warehouses. Southern Dallas County is historically underrepresented. As automation increases, there is the need for higher-level skill sets and technician jobs. The local community college has a free 13-week class for Dallas County residents, which sees high pass rates for the Walmart technical exam with a starting pay of \$34 an hour.

Lauren Garduno, president and CEO of the Ports to Plains Alliance, highlighted three corridors – Ports to Plains, Heartland Expressway, and Theodore Roosevelt Expressway. He noted the need to evolve how we look at interstate planning and funding, as federal funding for interstates has historically been given to high-priority corridors. He added that the three corridors are north-to-south routes that need to be completed to interstate standards. Mr. Garduno stated the need to team with advocates for I-69 and I-14 to get more interstate funding.

Teclo J. Garcia, CEO of the Mission Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and executive director of the Mission Redevelopment Authority, noted appreciation for support from the Texas Transportation Commission and Commissioner Alejandro "Alex" G. Meade III. The city of Mission shares ownership of the Anzalduas International Bridge with McAllen, which continues to see progress. The new inspection facilities for cargo on both sides (Mexico and the United States) will open by the end of the year. The bridge continues to serve passenger traffic from Mexico's interior, and the EDC is working to develop the surrounding area to accommodate vehicles from tourists and business travelers arriving from Monterrey, Mexico. Last year, 3.2 million passenger vehicles crossed, and the EDC wants to grow that number. While crossings have declined due to current instability, the EDC hopes that will rebound over time. Capital projects mixed with typical economic development in the region continue to create positives.

2. Roundtable: Member Updates and State of Freight Discussion- continued

The EDC focuses on job creation, investment creation, and workforce enhancement. Transportation is key to executing the EDC's goals.

Charlie Jenkins, CEO of Port Houston, noted the purpose of Port Houston is to create jobs. The biggest challenge is to maximize that engine for the best value for Texas. All modes are important. Maritime commerce related to the Texas industries of fracking, petrochemicals, and low-cost feed stock is competitive in the marketplace, driving the economy. In 2023, Port Houston grew 5.3%, and 2024 was an even better year. Texas is the No. 1 "waterborne" state in the nation, and that dominance is growing. Port Houston is the No. 1 port in the nation. Dominance in Houston is growing, with growth bigger than any other Texas port. Port Houston does not just serve Houston; it serves the region, the state, and the United States with over a trillion dollars of economic impact. Port Houston is the fastest-growing container port, stemming from all the captive cargo coming from the manufacturing complex and the evolving energy industry. On a good day, Port Houston sees over 16,000 trucks in 11 hours. If parked end-to-end, that is 310 miles of trucks. Recently, vandalism to Comcast shut down the south side of Houston, causing massive backups. If Houston is affected, all of Texas is affected. TxDOT's timeframes to construct roads lag behind the need. Mr. Jenkins added that more investment is needed. Port Houston is planning to use the roads at night, adding costs to the system and supply chain, as well as integration with the freight network. This need to operate at night is to support the projected doubling of port activity over the next seven to eight years. Soon, nighttime work will be as full as the daytime. There is a need for smarter, more effective roadways. There is a need to partner with TxDOT to lessen the economic impact of the port operating at night as well as the day. Potential opportunities to offset costs could include changes with toll collection and heavy loads regulations. Mr. Jenkins concluded by saying the tariffs are short-term changes, and Port Houston is working on a long-term network of infrastructure for the future.

Gerry Schwebel, executive vice president for the Corporate International Division of IBC Bank, stated that the port is a supply chain network, actively engaged in daily trade. Laredo has a new expansion on the railroad bridge and the world trade bridge. In addition, they are working on a private sector logistics platform which includes a 7,000-acre development and \$1.2 billion in private sector investment for smart port technology. The number of trucks per day is 20,000 with 10,000 northbound and 10,000 southbound. Mr. Schwebel noted two central issues regarding supply chain disruptions. The first is language proficiency considerations for truck drivers at the border. Drivers at the border move goods from one side to the other, and many of these drivers are Mexican under a B-1 visa. Under the law, if a law enforcement officer deems a truck driver's English proficiency deficient during a stop, they can place the truck out of service. When this law is heavily enforced and trucks are taken out of service, all our ports of entry experience trade disruptions. The second issue on supply chain disruption regards a specific scenario with a Mexican state that abuts Texas. The Mexican Governor of Nuevo León increased bridge tolls at Laredo by 50%. The central concern is government policy enacted with no dialogue with the private sector. There are discussions at the state and federal level to eliminate the toll increase. Private sector engagement is critical before implementing supply chain disruptions such as tariffs and toll increases at ports of entry. Another area of change is fuel transportation in the Rio Grande Valley and trucks being cited for being overweight. Mr. Schwebel added this is potentially an agenda item for a future meeting.

2. Roundtable: Member Updates and State of Freight Discussion- continued

Chair Emmett concluded the roundtable with the following updates:

- The chair noted the English proficiency challenge raised was new to him, and it was reasonable to consider the difference between truck drivers going between Mexico and Texan border cities compared with the standard needed for truck drivers driving inland.
- Chair Emmett stated that driverless trucks have started operating between Houston and Dallas. The chair requested the committee investigate this development in the future.
- The chair requested that TxDOT provide a recap of the 89th Texas Legislative Session at the next committee meeting and via an email in advance, with interest in updates on funding and tolling.
- Chair Emmett provided an update on the city of Houston's vote to withdraw from the Houston-Galveston Area Council to form their own MPO. The new mayor and the city understand now that the MPO can only be formed if the governor approves it, which is unlikely. The chair noted that community activists' engagement with MPOs with the goal of reaching proportional representation goes against what we know about transportation. The narrative that interstates were built with malintent has been debunked. Transportation planning must consider future unknowns.
- The chair asked Mr. Jenkins for an update on Project 11, part of the expansion of the Houston Ship Channel. Mr. Jenkins responded that it is 85% complete and on budget; the critical parts are complete. Project 12 has been authorized for study by Congress. Project 11 provides infrastructure and was paid for by Port Houston.
- Chair Emmett requested that TxDOT add shipper representation on the committee.

Mayor Gunter recommended that representation from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency be added to the committee as well. She noted that new technology in the customs world could make freight movement more efficient, potentially reducing transportation costs if items can get through customs faster. Customs should explain what they do to support efficiencies in freight movement.

3. Freight & Supply Chain Resilience Plan Update

Andrew A. Canon, director of the freight, trade and connectivity section for TxDOT, opened the presentation by introducing the draft Texas Freight and Supply Chain Resilience Plan (FRP). This critical initiative aims to bolster the Texas Multimodal Freight Network (TMFN), providing a blueprint to fortify the freight system against natural disasters and ensure the seamless flow of goods across the state. Following him, Farideh Dassi, senior transportation planner for TxDOT's freight planning branch and deputy project manager for the FRP, offered a comprehensive overview of the plan. Ms. Dassi highlighted how supply chain disruptions and infrastructure failures severely impact goods delivery, and stressed that the FRP, by introducing the "4Rs" of resilience framework (Robustness, Redundancy, Resourcefulness, and Rapidity), is not a one-time effort but a new, ongoing model for freight resilience planning in Texas. The urgency of this plan is underscored by significant economic losses from past events, such as the \$200-\$300 billion in the 2021 winter storm, making freight resilience vital for Texas, one of the world's largest economies.

3. Freight & Supply Chain Resilience Plan Update- continued

Ms. Dassi further detailed the comprehensive approach of the FRP, which includes establishing plan expectations, best practices, a robust data and analytical framework, and detailed assessments of modal and supply chain resilience. This also involves estimating economic impacts, conducting a thorough resilience needs assessment, prioritizing those needs, and formulating actionable recommendations. A cornerstone of the FRP's development was extensive stakeholder engagement, with Ms. Dassi noting that over 30 meetings were held to gather diverse feedback on critical topics such as funding, infrastructure operations, border efficiency, communication, preparedness, private sector involvement, and targeted improvements.

Michael Williamson, consultant project manager with Cambridge Systematics, then delved into the team's findings regarding modal and supply chain resilience. He explained that the plan's foundation rests on analyzing various transportation modes and supply chains (informed by "Texas Delivers 2050") through the lens of the 4Rs of resilience for identifying needs. Mr. Williamson described the methodology for calculating index scores for potential investments, particularly for highways, where quantitative metrics allowed for segment-level scoring. For other modes, a comparative scoring approach was used due to data availability. Draft maps were presented to illustrate statewide highway resilience, showing higher vulnerability along the coast and in urban areas (robustness), while rural areas revealed concerns regarding alternative options (redundancy) and the ability to rapidly deploy resources (rapidity).

Mr. Williamson noted examples for each of the 4Rs, shown in the slide below.

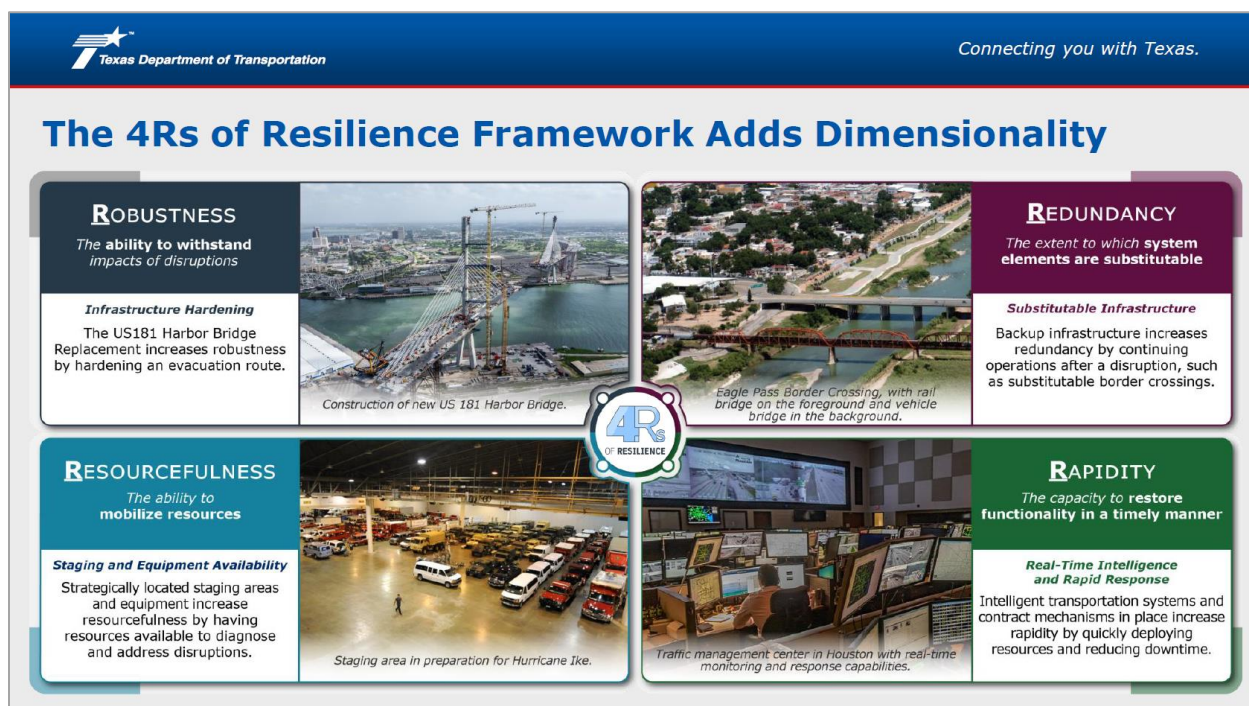


Figure 1. Freight and Supply Chain Resilience Plan Update; slide from TxFAC #43 Presentation.

Mr. Williamson continued by presenting overviews of resilience for other modes, including airports, seaports, border crossings, and railroads, highlighting specific vulnerabilities like limited alternative rail

3. Freight & Supply Chain Resilience Plan Update- continued

options in West Texas, challenges in maintaining seaport access routes, and restrictions on airport diversions due to runway length. The analysis of seven supply chain industries revealed that while major interstates are generally sufficient, three corridors—I-10 between I-20 and San Antonio, I-40 across the Texas Panhandle, and I-69E/US 77 between Brownsville and Corpus Christi—exhibited low resilience scores. He concluded by explaining how the team considered criticality and exclusivity of transportation assets to guide investment decisions toward supporting the least resilient and most critical areas within the TMFN.

Mr. Williamson reviewed an initial map of the Houston area's least resilient and most critical infrastructure areas as shown below.

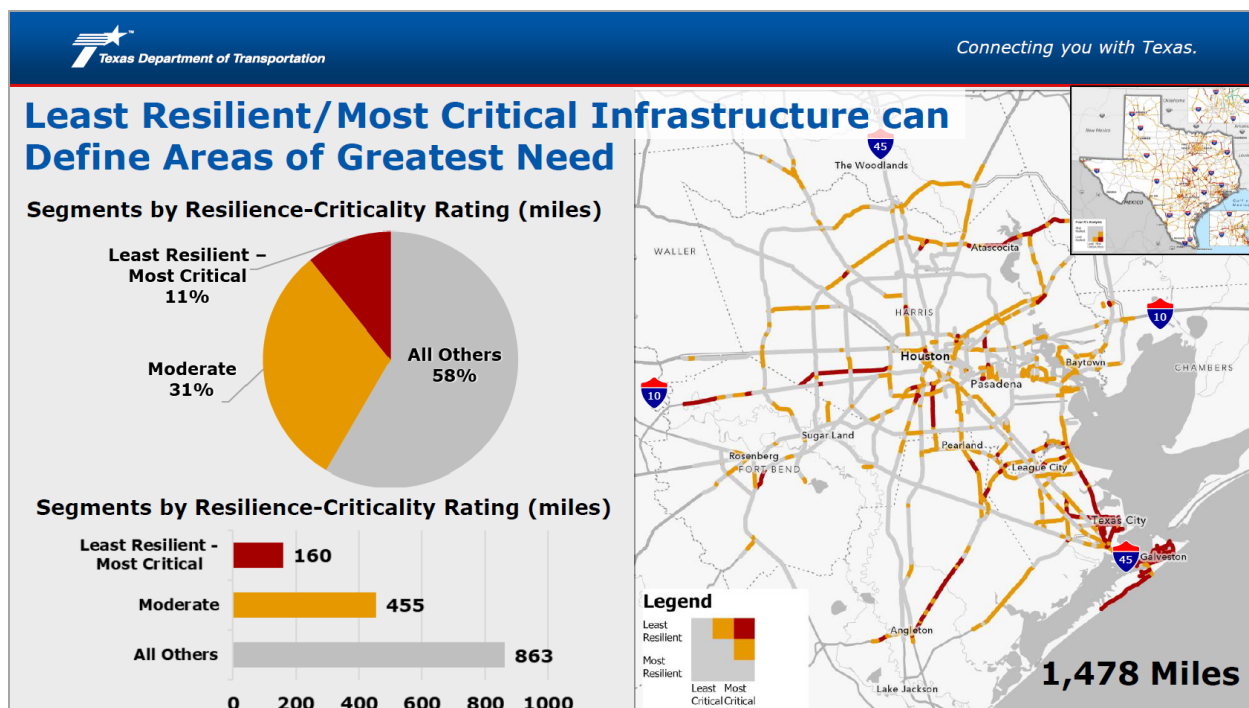


Figure 2. Freight and Supply Chain Resilience Plan Update; slide from TxFAC #43 Presentation.

Chair Emmett questioned the inclusion of Westheimer Road near the Galleria and FM 1960 across Lake Houston in the freight corridor network, citing their insignificance compared to SH 146, which serves Port Houston. Mr. Garduno and the chair agreed that TxDOT might need to reduce the size of the freight corridor network.


The chair requested to review the map and provide comments from Harris County's perspective, asking for a similar review from Laredo representatives to help focus on critical needs. Mr. Graham thanked the chair, stating the plan would be finalized and then comments requested from the committee. He added that the freight network is reviewed every four years, and modifications can begin with the upcoming state freight plan effort.

Mr. Williamson noted that the team is developing information to determine potential system improvement needs. Hannah Santiago, a consultant with Cambridge Systematics, discussed the needs

3. Freight & Supply Chain Resilience Plan Update- continued

assessment and project prioritization process. The team used a process to move from needs to investments, considering criticality, prioritizing freight resilience improvements, and identifying strategies. These strategies included infrastructure hardening, alternative routes, operational improvements, resource allocation, and rapid response and recovery strategies. Investment examples for other modes like rail, aviation, and ports focused on providing real-time information across modes during recovery.

Ms. Santiago reviewed investment examples based on resilience need for highways as shown below.

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Investment Examples based on Resilience Need - Highway			
The type of investment is determined by each resilience need.			
Robustness Vulnerability to climate disruptors	Redundancy Risk of operational failures due to no backup options	Resourcefulness Limited capacity to bring assets to a functional state	Rapidity Limited ability to reduce freight downtime
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flood mitigation projects Drainage improvement Elevating roadway; Slope stabilization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construct alternative or secondary routes Improve and expand evacuation route networks Increase connectivity and access to key supply chain assets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk-based procurement for maintenance equipment and response resources Emergency preparedness plans based on site-specific risk profiles Right-of-way improvements (ROW) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ITS systems deployment IT systems and enterprise improvement
Example: Flood Mitigation Projects: Incorporating bioswales into roadway designs near large freight hubs to manage stormwater runoff and reduce flood-related disruptions.	Example: SH 99 Grand Parkway project adds a third loop as a critical alternative freight corridor to I-10, I-610 and Beltway 8.	Example: Dual-Use Truck Parking and Emergency Staging Areas: Designated spaces that convert to support emergency response and resource staging efforts during disruptions.	Example: Beaumont District TSMO Program Plan: to install more climatized dynamic message signs, CCTV, and road weather information system sensors.

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Figure 3. Freight and Supply Chain Resilience Plan Update; slide from TxFAC #43 Presentation.

The effort to identify freight highway projects and gaps resulted in 904 critical projects already scoped to address resilience within the TxDOT Unified Transportation Program (UTP). These projects meet 15% of resilience needs, primarily focusing on robustness. Gaps remain in operational flexibility, adaptive response, and resourcefulness, with 92% of resourcefulness needs unmet. Localities with gaps include robustness (Odessa, San Antonio, Laredo), redundancy (Amarillo, San Angelo, Yoakum), resourcefulness (El Paso, Austin, San Antonio), and rapidity (Odessa, San Angelo, San Antonio).

Mr. Garduno asked if TxDOT could incorporate the resilience methodology as additional weighting in the UTP project selection process. Humberto "Tito" Gonzalez Jr., director of the Transportation Planning and Programming Division (TPP) for TxDOT, responded that this plan adds another element of priorities for TxDOT to consider.

Mr. Schwebel asked if the plan analyzed import vs. export movement, suggesting prioritization of connections to exporting areas. Mr. Graham replied that the analysis did not specifically prioritize

3. Freight & Supply Chain Resilience Plan Update- continued

imports over exports but examined importance through multiple lenses, utilizing and advancing commodity flow data from the freight plan. Mayor Gunter highlighted the significant amount of product

from West Texas and the lack of alternative safe and reliable routes for trucks out of the Port of Laredo, supporting alternative routes for resilience. Mr. Schwebel added that the proposed I-27 and I-69 could address this need. Mr. Gonzalez Jr. responded that TxDOT's investments in rural Texas have grown, and progress is being made.

Mr. MacDonald inquired about the plan's rollout and noted competing resilience plans from MPOs and the General Land Office. Mr. Graham responded that the team reviewed other agencies' resilience plans and would provide the FRP to the committee for comments to ensure accuracy. Mr. Schwebel asked about local-level review, including workshops with district engineers. Mr. Graham confirmed that interviews were held with local districts as part of stakeholder engagement.

Ms. Espinoza asked about findings on rail disruptions at the border. Mr. Williamson replied that the team looked at several border disruptions, with Oscar Galvis adding that three were related to commercial vehicles, including the 2023 rail crossing closure in Eagle Pass and El Paso. Ms. Espinoza noted Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) experienced a \$1 billion loss during that closure and is concerned about TxDOT rapid recovery after disruptions and their private investment. Mr. Williamson stated additional details are in the draft plan.

Chair Emmett encouraged TxDOT to hold private one-on-one meetings with railroads to facilitate sharing confidential data. The chair also cited the bridge over the barge canal in Victoria as an example of resilience, noting that its failure would require private industry funding for repair. Mr. Schwebel added that government policies, not just infrastructure, can be obstacles, as seen with the Eagle Pass and El Paso closure. Ms. Espinoza reiterated that all industries are affected when railroads cannot move. Mr. Williamson noted that railroad input was included in the plan's stakeholder engagement, and additional feedback from Ms. Espinoza and the committee would be beneficial. Mr. Graham noted that the plan focuses on recommendations TxDOT can implement at intermodal junction points.

The presentation concluded early due to time constraints. Freight resilience recommendations and next steps are available in the presentation and the draft plan, which will be provided to committee members.

4. Truck Parking Action Plans Summary: Far West and Southeast Texas

Kale Driemeier, project development manager for TxDOT's Transportation Planning and Programming Division (TPP), updated on the Texas Truck Parking Action Plans, emphasizing its importance for safety, economic impact, time and money savings, and roadway preservation. He presented data on crash statistics (2018-2022), freight tonnage growth (2014-2019), money lost due to parking shortages, and damage from unauthorized parking, noting these issues diminish TxDOT's assets. Mr. Driemeier reviewed truck parking needs, driven by Federal Hours of Service regulations (10-hour rest, 30-minute break, time off), enforced by electronic logging devices. Additional needs include 2+ hour staging, emergency planning, intermodal access (ports), and border access, stressing awareness of access point operating hours. He outlined TxDOT's efforts, including the 2018 Texas Freight Mobility Plan, the 2020

4. Truck Parking Action Plans Summary: Far West and Southeast Texas- continued

Texas Statewide Truck Parking Study, and the 2024 El Paso, Far West, and Southeast Texas Truck Parking Action Plans, which are TxDOT-led regional plans providing conceptual plans, preliminary cost

estimates, and phasing concepts. He highlighted I-10's national significance as a 2,460-mile corridor requiring rest breaks at Beaumont (east) and El Paso (west).

Brian Comer, a consultant project manager with HNTB, introduced a regional approach to truck parking challenges, highlighting the unique needs of the Houston and Southeast Texas area. As the fifth-largest MSA and a critical hub for ports, energy, distribution, and warehousing, this region is highly susceptible to hurricanes and flooding, yet it lacks public truck parking in the TxDOT Houston District. The Southeast Texas Truck Parking Action Plan was developed through collaboration with maritime ports, warehousing, FEMA, and the energy sector. Houston is the top-ranked U.S. port by tonnage, with Port Beaumont and Port Arthur also vital for military movements. Stakeholder outreach for this plan included 32 meetings and a commercial truck driver survey in December 2023 and April 2024, which underscored the need for truck staging and safe parking due to city restrictions. Feedback indicated that ports like Port Freeport and Port Galveston are actively planning truck parking projects, and industrial parks such as Cedar Port are planning internal staging, with a recognized need for future emergency parking in Houston. Overall, industrial parks require more parking, enhanced security, and amenities.

Mr. Comer then discussed the El Paso and Far West Texas region, the 68th largest MSA, characterized by multiple Texas-Mexico border crossings and specific staging requirements. He stressed the significant demand for truck parking due to lengthy rural interstate stretches without services. The El Paso and Far West Texas Truck Parking Action Plan focuses on critical border connections and safety improvements. Twenty stakeholder meetings for this plan revealed common needs for queuing and staging due to limited shoulder space on rural roads. Concerns regarding the border and Permian Basin included a lack of restrooms, delays from transmigrante traffic at the border, and local road damage caused by high truck volumes in the Permian Basin. Comer pointed out that flooding in both regions leaves drivers without rest area parking during highway closures, and drivers desire community access for amenities. Recommended projects and policies include improving and expanding safety areas, identifying partnerships, and continuing education campaigns, with the city of Pecos requiring infrastructure assistance for private industry land. He also reviewed the I-10 Truck Parking Availability System (TPAS), a partnership across California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, which displays real-time truck parking availability via signs, in-cab systems, and a smartphone app at 37 sites, with projects currently under construction. Opportunity sites identified include the El Paso Airport supporting the proposed 601 Corridor Business development, the city of Pecos aiming for 700 parking spaces in partnership with private industry, the TxDOT-supported city of Presidio site for oversized vehicles with amenities, and the BNSF Railway at U.S. 90 and Grand Parkway utilizing TxDOT right-of-way for overnight and staging parking.

4. Truck Parking Action Plans Summary: Far West and Southeast Texas- continued

Recommended Projects, Policies, Programs, and Technologies

TxDOT-Led

- New truck parking capacity in TxDOT ROW
- Technology
 - TPAS expansion for new sites
 - ConnectSmart
- Truck Parking Guidance
- Education Campaign
- Integrate truck parking into project development process

TxDOT-Supported

- New parking capacity
- Industry-provided truck parking
- Emergency and evacuation staging
- Innovative partnerships
- Manage curbside truck parking

Logos: REAL, connect-as smart, TPAS, Port of Houston, Port Freeport, Port of Beaumont, Port of Arthur, Galveston Wharves 75

Figure 4. Truck Parking Action Plans Summary: Far West and Southeast Texas; slide from TxFAC #43 Presentation.

Ana Ramirez Huerta, technical project manager and planner for the TxDOT Houston District, stated that action plans are customized to district needs and are a call to action. She stressed the importance of freight in Houston and the need for freight parking due to the lack of safety rest areas. The TxDOT Houston District is developing the Regional Express Access Lanes Plan (REAL), a comprehensive plan informed by data to evolve the transportation network. Ms. Ramirez reviewed additional TxDOT-led policies and programs: integrating truck parking into project development, the Strategic Highway Safety Plan, evaluating TxDOT excess right-of-way, and allowing auto-truck parking at existing public facilities during off-hours. She emphasized that truck parking is central to corridor studies and safety, enhancing truck parking areas resolve unsafe queuing, reduce congestion, and improve emissions. The Southeast Texas Truck Parking Action Plan received a \$22 million grant, attributed to deliverables, robust stakeholder engagement, and traffic impact analysis. She discussed a new truck parking capacity example in Angleton, a partnership with the city and Rotary Club, converting an abandoned office into a multipurpose site with EV charging, a visitor center, trails, event staging, carpool/vanpool lots, and a green infrastructure buffer. This multipurpose approach fosters community acceptance, and the project received six letters of support. It can also serve as a weather emergency site. Ms. Ramirez reviewed the preliminary opportunity site at Port Freeport, which would encourage economic growth by addressing a 2-4 hour freight parking window and serving as a pre-clearance area for expedited port access, to be included in the 2026/2027 Port Mission Plan. The site provides ADA-compliant sidewalks, transit choices, and improved public health through trees, with ports being key job creators. She concluded that inter-agency relationships are essential for synergy with ports, promoting safety and economic development. Flexibility is crucial for community consensus, and the Houston District successfully avoided complaints using TxDOT toolkits, the Green Ribbon Program, and adding sidewalks and shared-use paths. Ms. Ramirez reiterated the importance of viewing action plans as a call for action.

4. Truck Parking Action Plans Summary: Far West and Southeast Texas- continued

Connecting you with Texas.

City of Angleton Site

- Innovative location – **abandoned Area Office** to build **31 truck parking**, and other amenities.
- **Other modes:** carpool, vanpool and Park and Ride.
- **Staging for event management:** Proximity to Brazoria County Fairgrounds
- **Partnerships:**





City of Angleton
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Figure 5. Truck Parking Action Plans Summary: Far West and Southeast Texas; slide from TxFAC #43 Presentation.

Mr. Schnautz expressed concern about truck parking availability not being visible until they arrive to the site. Notification about the truck parking site being closed or at capacity needs to be online.

Ms. Ramirez responded and said the city of Angleton uses TPAS, so drivers know when it is open and available.

Chair Emmett stated the projects referenced are great, but noted neither are in Houston. Chair Emmett asked if they sought temporary truck parking at the Northwest Mall in Houston, citing it has been vacant for years. Chair Emmett then questioned if there is any thought to signing a two- or three-year lease for the mall parking lot, noting it would not be permanent.

Ms. Ramirez agreed and said these projects are not in the Houston Metro area. There are two ongoing projects along I-10 in the city of Katy and around I-10 East that are part of the study.

Mr. Comer noted that those projects are at a racetrack and former commercial site. There is a need for dialogue to continue for private companies to set up fencing and cameras at the site. Mr. Comer added that neighbors in the community have concerns about parking areas and expressed a desire to view parking studies that show it can be safe and convenient.

Ms. Espinoza suggested potential parking at the vacant Greenspoint Mall on I-45.

Mr. Comer responded that it was discussed in the plan.

5. Innovations in Freight- Guest Speaker Series: LineHaul Station

Jeff Swenson, founder and CEO of LineHaul Station, discussed the major issues in trucking: low asset utilization and shrinking profits due to rising insurance costs, unsafe parking, and high recruitment expenses. He proposed that resolving these issues requires infrastructure that supports decarbonization and increases efficiency, including ample truck parking and driver services, which would lower freight costs, reduce driver turnover, and encourage industrial growth. Mr. Swenson urged the committee to view truck parking from a return on investment perspective to develop a broader plan and vision.

He highlighted the driver shortage, noting the average retired driver age is 57 with a life expectancy of 61, and young people are rejecting the industry due to rigorous lifestyles and low income. Only 7% of drivers are women. Truck driver compensation is lagging, with company drivers earning \$22 per hour while working over 60 hours per week, and drivers are burdened by short-haul local trips because they are paid by the mile.

LineHaul Station offers solutions including multi-shift relay operations, secure access-controlled hubs, off-peak shuttle freight, extra-wide parking, and a positive driver experience. The goal is a national, member-only shared space terminal network providing critical fleet services and driver amenities across 50+ hubs to connect major markets. While West Memphis has a designed station, Texas will host the largest planned development. The objectives are to be faster, better, and cheaper by ensuring trailers keep moving, only stopping for hand-offs, and maximizing asset utilization through slip seating.

Mr. Swenson acknowledged that such change takes time. LineHaul Station is designed for today and tomorrow, serving as a multipurpose home or satellite terminal. He expressed skepticism about the economics of autonomous trucks and noted electric vehicles are best for local trips. He stressed creating efficiency by using nighttime trips to keep trucks out of local traffic and emphasized that it is a truckers' network, dependent on their usage.

The regional hubs will be 50-acre sites with over 1,000 tractor and trailer spaces, featuring high security, surveillance, full-service repair, and truck washes. The LineHaul Station Outriders Drivers Club, dubbed the "Rig Carlton," aims to provide a better environment for drivers with amenities like a sports lounge, gear shop, and barbershop. Membership includes a code of conduct with a strict one-strike rule for misconduct. Dining options include a rotisserie craft kitchen, coffee and juice bar, and grab-and-go snacks. Entertainment features include billiards, cornhole, digital games, and flying simulators. Project 61 addresses driver health; the club will feature a health and wellness center with a fitness studio, locker rooms, urgent care, and an underground storm shelter.

5. Innovations in Freight- Guest Speaker Series: LineHaul Station- continued



Figure 6. Innovations in Freight- Guest Speaker Series: LineHaul Station; slide from TxFAC #43 Presentation.

The fleet services program focuses on unifying expertise and customer service across the terminal network, with veteran service managers and premier technicians ensuring accurate inspection, maintenance, and repair. Freight relay is a "game changer," increasing asset utilization from 6-7 hours for solo drivers to 18-20 hours, allowing drivers to go home daily, and reducing operating costs by up to 30% (averaging \$2.41 per mile for relay fleets). The interconnected system involves relay stations between cities, secured with fencing, lighting, and surveillance, allowing drivers to drop and hook freight without live meets, ensuring freight movement despite individual driver delays. Hubs are designed to move 1,300 inbound and outbound trucks daily. Mr. Swenson noted that density drives up costs.

5. Innovations in Freight- Guest Speaker Series: LineHaul Station- continued

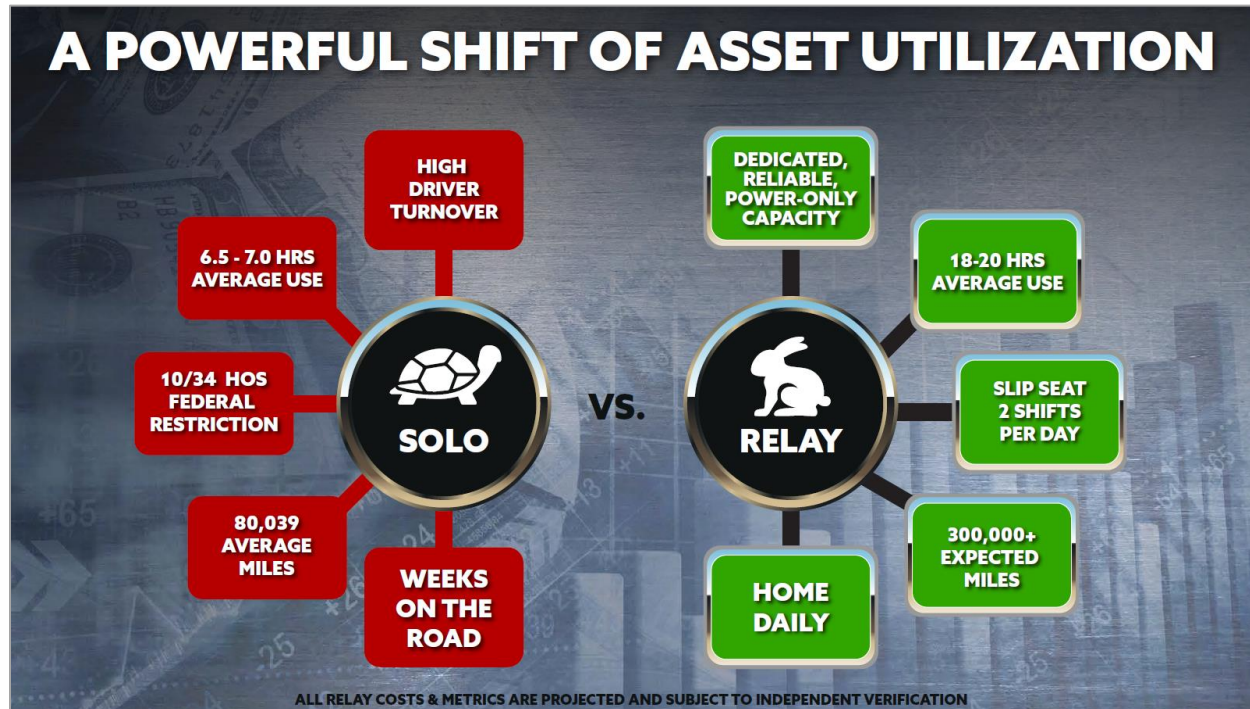


Figure 7. Innovations in Freight- Guest Speaker Series: LineHaul Station; slide from TxFAC #43 Presentation.

LineHaul Station invests in operational efficiency for economic advantage and social responsibility, with decarbonization eliminating deadhead and out-of-route miles. Social responsibility includes safer roads with less congestion and a better quality of life for drivers. Economics remain a hurdle for private sector involvement, as existing terminals average \$85,000 per space, making it difficult to justify spending \$755 million for 5,000 truck spaces when driver earnings are low. Building 50 hubs would require \$4 billion. Mr. Swenson's inspiration is to think differently and move forward, hoping for collaboration. LineHaul Station is currently looking at cities like San Antonio, Von Ormy, and Brookshire.

6. Rural Rail Transportation Districts and their Future

Allan Rutter, senior research scientist and freight analysis program manager for the Texas A&M Transportation Institute, discussed rural rail transportation districts, highlighting their importance for rural areas and their function as political subdivisions of the state government. First authorized in 1981, these districts predate multimodal regional mobility authorities and can be single or multi-county, formed at the county government level by county commissioners.

The original purpose of a rural rail transportation district was to preserve rail infrastructure and service for agricultural transportation and existing industrial customers in rural areas. More recently, their activities have shifted toward rail-based economic development projects. Mr. Rutter noted that multi-county districts require cooperation and regional goal-setting, while single-county districts can be project-specific.

6. Rural Rail Transportation Districts and their Future- continued

Rural rail transportation districts were initially authorized with eminent domain power, allowing them to construct new lines or rehabilitate existing ones, and their rail activities are not subject to direct oversight. These districts can issue revenue bonds to finance acquisitions and construction, requiring them to charge sufficient rents to maintain properties and pay off bonds. They must also be considered in statewide rail planning.

Mr. Rutter detailed various activities of these districts, including studying new lines, applying for federal grants for rehabilitation, fostering economic development through preserving existing spur lines, and trail development.

He presented data on rural rail transportation districts in Texas, revealing a total of 44 districts formed since 1981, comprising 28 single-county and 16 multi-county districts across 91 counties. Examples include passenger rail developments in East Texas through the I-20 Corridor Council, Bexar County's district in South Texas, and the South Orient's early adoption in West and Central Texas. The Heart of Texas Rural Rail Transportation District is actively working to maintain existing short-line rail service. Mr. Rutter categorized the districts as seven active, 29 inactive, and eight unknown, noting that for a district to be considered active, the county must appoint board members. He provided an example of an active district in Rusk County, created in 2008, which maintains freight operations with Blacklands Railroad and received a 2020 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements grant. An example of an inactive district is the Middle Rio Grande district, with only 33 miles of the Gardendale Railroad remaining in La Salle County.

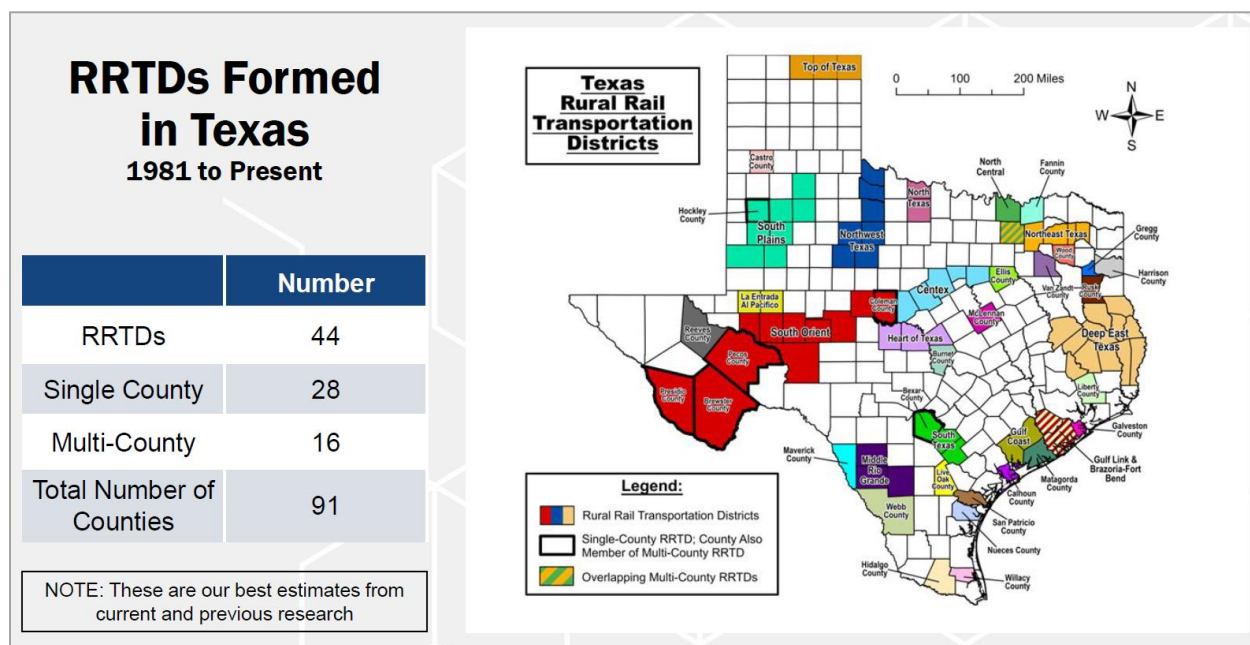


Figure 8. Rural Rail Transportation Districts and their Future; slide from TxFAC #43 Presentation.

Other examples included the Top of Texas Rural Rail Transportation District, which retains right-of-way ownership and collects land lease payments, and is one of the few multi-state districts extending into Oklahoma. The North Texas Rural Rail Transportation District purchased and rail-banked a seven-mile segment. He also discussed the Gulf Link Rural Rail Transportation District, initially formed by Brazoria

6. Rural Rail Transportation Districts and their Future- continued

and Fort Bend Counties for economic development, which was dissolved and re-established as the Brazoria-Fort Bend County Rural Rail Transportation District in 2015. This district ceased operations in 2020 and remains inactive.

Mr. Rutter summarized issues with rural rail transportation districts, including a lack of reporting requirements to agencies like TxDOT, the secretary of state, or the attorney general. This leads to a loss of institutional memory due to inactivity and no dedicated funding source. While active districts work directly with TxDOT, the role of inactive ones is unclear. Furthermore, eminent domain powers are at risk or lost due to 2011 legislation. Mr. Rutter shared the 2013 Rural Rail Transportation District Report, funded by the TxDOT Rail Division, is available online.

Future Role of RRTDs Uncertain

- Active RRTDs work/may work directly with TxDOT Rail Division
- Role/Status of Inactive RRTDs are unknown
- Eminent domain powers of many are at risk/gone due to 2011 legislation
- Potential for passenger rail or other linear transportation options (roads, multipurpose pathways) near urban areas
- Rail-served economic development dependent on RRTDs attracting infrastructure improvement funding

Figure 9. Rural Rail Transportation Districts and their Future; slide from TxFAC #43 Presentation.

Mr. Rutter explained that multi-county rail districts exist because individual counties, like Fort Stockton, want independent initiatives, while single-county districts form for specific projects or developments.

Regarding the continuation of rail district efforts, Mr. Rutter stated that actions are largely a response to railroad property owners' complaints about costs exceeding income, leveraging 1980 provisions allowing property abandonment. Local jurisdictions also seek economic development opportunities.

To reactivate an inactive rural rail transportation district, Mr. Rutter stated that a county judge must appoint individuals to the board. If economic development justifies reactivation, rail banking is used to preserve the property for potential future rail use.

Chair Emmett noted that abandoned rail lines not rail-banked cannot be reactivated. TxDOT should actively understand what rail districts are doing, as some appointed individuals were not involved during

6. Rural Rail Transportation Districts and their Future- continued

the rails' development. These are valuable assets that the committee could reactivate. Liberty County, despite ongoing rail development, was unaware of what a rural rail transportation district was, highlighting that some counties do not know about this valuable economic development tool, especially without a regional mobility authority.

An attendee noted that any rural rail transportation district existing before the 2011 law that did not apply through the secretary of state lost eminent domain powers and would need to reorganize for reactivation.

Chair Emmett emphasized the complication of property rights for adjacent landowners and the necessity for these railroads to meet Class I guidelines due to their ties to Class I freight railroads. Reactivating a rural rail district must begin with TxDOT and then Class I freight railroads to determine the feasibility of a working relationship.

Brad Johnson, a board member of the Northeast Texas Rural Rail Transportation District, commended TxDOT and Mr. Graham for their transportation meeting in Silver Springs, noting Mr. Graham's advocacy for the northeast rail line. He added that House Bill 4662 and Senate Bill 2366 will address inefficiencies.

7. Final Remarks

Brandye Hendrickson, deputy executive director for planning and administration for TxDOT, thanked everyone for attending the meeting and emphasized TxDOT's appreciation for committee members volunteering their time.

Mr. Garduno addressed reviewing how the freight program is structured and administered at the federal level to ease restrictions and provide the agency greater flexibility in its use.

Mr. Canon thanked the committee for their feedback and said he expects further insights at the next committee meeting.

Chair Emmett thanked everyone and adjourned the meeting at 12:18 p.m.