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RAIL

South Orient Rail Line Rehabilitation Team, Texas Department of Transportation

In 2001, TxDOT acquired the South Orient rail line (SORR), an abandoned, deteriorated 391-mile rail line. In March of 2009, The Texas Transportation Commission approved \$14.09 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA or "stimulus") funds for the rehabilitation of the line from San Angelo Junction to the west side of the city of San Angelo, Texas— a distance of approximately 82 miles. The South Orient Rail Line Rehabilitation Team was tasked with designing, developing, and managing the rehabilitation of the rail line.



After the Team was formed, it partnered with other state, local, and private entities to secure additional funding to cover the cost of their projected scope of work. This scope included replacing over 85,000 crossties with associated ballast and surfacing work, replacing over 52,000 feet of worn rail, replacing 3 bridges and rehabilitating 29 other bridges, and reconstructing 119 at-grade, roadway-rail crossings.

Since rehabilitation began, TxDOT has leased operations on the South Orient rail line to a private company, Texas Pacifico Transportation, LTD. (TXPF). The lease agreement requires TXPF to maintain any section of the line that was rehabilitated by TxDOT in the same condition it was in at the time the project was completed. TxDOT's rehabilitation is therefore a "one-time" investment that will be maintained in perpetuity. The development of a diverse public-private partnership to rehabilitate the SORR has resulted in a revitalized, dynamic freight rail operation in west Texas.

The project provides significant benefits to the state and region in avoided highway impacts, while also serving as an economic development catalyst that has directly created over 100 full-time, rail-oriented jobs to date, as well as numerous construction-related jobs for the duration of the project.

In addition to creating jobs, rehabilitation of the South Orient rail line has helped Texas realize an annual savings of over \$3.5 million with over 17.8 million truck miles avoided. The diversion of this freight from roadway to rail will save the state an estimated \$61 million in pavement damage alone over a 20 year period.