Rural Rail Transportation Districts (RRTDs) Update

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INTRODUCTION

This report describes the findings of an examination of the activities and formation of rural rail transportation districts (RRTDs) within Texas that have taken place since the conclusion of a previous series of reports on RRTDs by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) for the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) between 2000 and 2002. Those reports, developed under TxDOT Project 0-4007: Rural Rail Transportation Districts in Texas, identified both strengths and weaknesses associated with RRTDs and suggested a framework through which TxDOT could work more effectively with RRTDs throughout the state.

This report consists of an update of interim reports previously submitted to TxDOT as part of Task 3 and Task 5 of this project. This final report, submitted in accordance with Task 8 of the project, incorporates material from TxDOT reviews of the interim reports and new content from subsequent project tasks. This report includes findings from the following tasks:

- Task 1: Identify and Document Status of RRTDs in the State of Texas,
- Task 2: Review of Existing RRTD Statutes/Recommend Suggested Changes,
- Task 4: Mapping of RRTD Boundaries and Physical Infrastructure, and
- Task 7: Monitor 2013 Texas Legislative Session Activities.

A presentation summarizing the findings of this project, prepared in accordance with Task 6 of the project, is also being submitted with this final report.

STATUS OF RRTDS IN TEXAS

RRTD Inventory

Table 1 shows the number of RRTDs in Texas as of June 2013. As of the completion of Project 0-4007 in 2002, 20 RRTDs had been formed in the state. Since 2002, 22 RRTDs have been formed, bringing the total number of RRTDs in the state to 42. The number of counties participating in an RRTD has also increased, from 70 as of 2002 to 95 (37 percent of Texas’ 254 counties) as of June 2013. As shown in Table 1, a majority of the RRTDs created since 2002 (20 of the 22) are single-county districts, reflecting growth in single-county RRTDs following a change in the statutes allowing single-county RRTDs to form that was adopted in 1997.
Table 1: Number of RRTDs in Texas (June 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of RRTDs</th>
<th>Formed prior to 2002*</th>
<th>Formed since 2002</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of RRTDs</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single-County RRTDs</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multi-county RRTDs</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Participating Counties</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>95</td>
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*RRTDs prior to 2002 as documented in the Project 0-4007 series plus the pre-existent/inactive South Plains and Middle Rio Grande RRTDs.

Figure 1 displays a map showing the 42 RRTDs known to have been created in Texas. The distribution of participation among the 95 counties participating in an RRTD is as follows:

- 67 counties participating as members of a multi-county RRTD;
- 21 counties participating as a single-county RRTD;
- 6 counties participating as members of a multi-county RRTD and that also have created a single-county RRTD; and
- 1 county (Collin County) participating as a member of multiple multi-county RRTDs.

Figure 1: Map of Rural Rail Transportation Districts (RRTDs) in Texas (June 2013)
Table 2 summarizes information from each of the districts and characterizes the status of each specific RRTD across five factors—number of counties, names of member counties, date/year formed, primary formation motivation, and current board status.

Appendix A contains a one-page summary profile and map for each RRTD listed in Table 2 as well as additional details on the history, current status, and activities of each RRTD.

**Motivation for Forming RRTDs**

Project 0-4007 identified several motivations cited by counties for the formation of RRTDs. Such motivations included the following:

- **Abandonment:** The RRTD was formed in response to proposed abandonment of a railroad line within the RRTD’s jurisdiction, generally for the purpose of opposing the abandonment and preserving the line for future use.

- **Economic Development:** The RRTD was formed to promote economic development within the RRTD jurisdiction, including construction of railroad spur lines to single industries, larger multi-parcel industrial parks, or construction of new railroad lines to promote alternative (i.e., “dual”) rail service.

- **Passenger Rail:** The RRTD was formed largely to promote establishment of passenger rail service.

In general, multi-county RRTDs have been formed largely to prevent abandonment or encourage preservation of lines through a region, while single-county RRTDs have been formed to promote economic development projects within that county or at a specific site within that county.

Among the 42 RRTDs identified in this report, 15 (36 percent) were formed primarily in response to the threat of rail line abandonment, 19 (45 percent) were formed to promote economic development, 4 (10 percent) were formed for multiple reasons, and at least one RRTD was created primarily for promoting improved passenger rail service. The primary motivation for RRTD formation was not conclusively identified for three RRTDs.

Measuring progress of RRTDs toward outcomes related to their original motivation for forming is difficult based on the limited information available regarding RRTD activities. Many examples of RRTDs that were successful in opposing abandonment or promoting economic development were documented in Project 0-4007. Appendix A provides several recent examples of RRTDs that demonstrated progress toward achieving particular outcomes relative to the primary motivation for forming the RRTD. In some cases, the RRTDs are pursuing projects or initiatives not related to the primary motivation for forming—such cases are also noted in this section. In other cases, the RRTD was never able to achieve progress toward the desired outcomes due to external factors, most notably the cancellation of a particular project or development initiative, or the resolution of a transportation-related matter (such as the establishment of dual service) with limited or no action on behalf of the RRTD.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Number of Counties</th>
<th>Counties</th>
<th>Year Formed</th>
<th>Motivation for Forming</th>
<th>Current Board Status**</th>
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<td>Bexar County*</td>
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<td>Bexar</td>
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<td>San Jacinto, Shelby, Trinity, and Tyler</td>
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<td>District</td>
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<td>Counties</td>
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<td>Motivation for Forming</td>
<td>Current Board Status**</td>
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</table>

* County is a member of more than one RRTD.

**Active—board in place, meet regularly; Semi-active—board in place, do not meet regularly, could act if reason arises; Inactive—no recent activity, board members not current/would need to be selected and appointed.
Current Status of RRTD Board

For each RRTD listed in Table 2, TTI researchers attempted to ascertain the current status of the RRTD board of directors. RRTD boards of directors were characterized as active, semi-active, or inactive based on (1) if the RRTD has an appointed board with regular meetings (active) and (2) whether a board was actually appointed but has no regular meetings (semi-active). Among the 42 RRTDs identified in this report, 13 (31 percent) have an active board of directors, 8 (19 percent) have a semi-active board of directors, and 20 (48 percent) have an inactive board of directors. The current status of the board of directors was not able to be conclusively identified for one RRTD.

Disputed RRTDs

The 42 RRTDs listed in Table 2 represent the RRTDs for which TTI researchers could conclusively verify that the RRTD had been created by a county commissioners court via court records or another credible source. Some sources, most notably the June 2011 Rail Planning Authority in Texas report from the Center for Transportation Research (CTR) at The University of Texas at Austin, identified three counties in which an RRTD was thought to have been formed. These counties included:

- Cass County,
- LaSalle County, and
- Val Verde County.

However, TTI researchers were unable to verify that RRTDs were formed in these counties. In one instance, Cass County, TTI researchers were able to verify that the RRTD in fact did not officially form although it was planned at the time of the CTR report. Three counties previously shown as members of multi-county RRTDs or as having single-county RRTDs (Hardin County, Somervell County, and Val Verde County) on maps produced by the Texas Legislative Council for the (now defunct) Texas Association of Rail Districts have been removed from Figure 1 based upon information found during the course of this project. Those counties either never joined the larger districts or failed to adopt resolutions forming a single-county RRTD.

RECENT RRTD ACTIVITIES

This section provides examples of notable RRTD activities that have taken place since Project 0-4007 as verified by TTI researchers.

Railroad Right-of-Way/Rail Line Ownership Activities

One of the most important powers of an RRTD is the ability to own railroad right-of-way (ROW) and/or infrastructure. Many RRTDs have used this power to purchase railroad ROW that is threatened with abandonment or otherwise preserve ROW for future use. Some recent examples of RRTD ownership or leasing of railroad ROW and infrastructure include:

- The Fannin County RRTD finalized two leases for separate segments of rail line connecting Bonham and Paris totaling approximately 35 miles. The leases were executed
through a series of agreements among the RRTD, TxDOT (33.5 miles in 2006), and the Bonham Economic Development Corporation (BEDCO) (1.28 miles in 2012). The RRTD is currently looking for an operator of the line and funding to support improvements.

- In May 2010, the Rusk County RRTD purchased an approximately 14-mile rail line known as the Henderson-Overton Branch. Union Pacific (UP) had petitioned to abandon the line before the RRTD purchased the line for $1.026 million. Freight service was restored to the line through a short line operator (Blacklands Railroad) in June 2010.
- The Top of Texas RRTD was formed in 2006 to prevent the abandonment of a railroad line through the three RRTD counties. The RRTD was able to negotiate a deal to gain fee-simple ownership of the 90-mile ROW, while the former railroad owner was able to salvage the rail materials. The agreement allowed the businesses along the line to retain their leases, and the RRTD collects lease payments as income. The RRTD board is actively marketing the ROW for electric transmission lines or other opportunities.

Other Railroad-Related Activities

Railroad-related activities undertaken by RRTDs are not limited to the purchase of railroad ROW or other railroad line ownership activities. Many RRTDs have actively pursued other railroad-related projects and proposals. Recent examples of these activities include:

- The Galveston County RRTD commissioned a feasibility study in June 2013 of a new freight rail and highway bridge from Galveston Island to Pelican Island where a rail loop is being considered to allow construction/operation of a bulk cargo facility. The feasibility study is to be completed by 2014.
- The La Entrada Al Pacífico RRTD has proposed a north-south rail line between Seagraves (on the West Texas and Lubbock Railroad), through Midland-Odessa and further south to interchange with the South Orient Railroad/Texas Pacifico line at McCamey. A 2008 TxDOT-commissioned study found that traffic would not support such a line; however, the recent shale oil and gas development in the Permian Basin has likely increased that potential traffic level. The RRTD has subsequently commissioned Cambridge Systematics to conduct an updated feasibility study of this proposed line, but the results of this study have not been released as of June 2013.
- The Liberty County RRTD has proposed a 32-mile railroad line connecting the CMC Industries rail yard (located west of Liberty) with the BNSF Railway rail yard in Cleveland. The line proposed by the RRTD is similar to a proposed bypass line (Planning Case 4) evaluated as part of the TxDOT Houston Region Freight Rail Study in 2007. The RRTD corresponded with the Surface Transportation Board (STB) in early 2008 regarding environmental studies for the proposed line, but the current status of this project is unknown.
- The Northeast Texas (NETEX) RRTD has been actively pursuing funds to pay for rehabilitation of its 65.6-mile line. The RRTD submitted applications requesting almost $10 million from the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) II and TIGER III programs for rehabilitation activities, but the applications were not selected for funding. The RRTD (through its operator Blacklands Railway) is currently seeking a $4 million loan from the Federal
Railroad Administration (FRA) Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) program to rehabilitate a portion of the line.

- Since 2008, the Nueces County and San Patricio County RRTDs have been actively working with the Port of Corpus Christi on projects related to rail access to the La Quinta container terminal project. The Nueces County RRTD is also examining the potential for a major inland port project in Robstown.
- In July 2008, the Pecos County RRTD sent an unsolicited proposal to TxDOT to purchase the South Orient Railroad (SORR). In the proposal, the RRTD indicated that it was attempting to bring about timely improvements to the SORR and promote industrial development in Pecos County. TxDOT evaluated the proposal and rejected it. Findings of a study indicated that preserving state ownership of the SORR was in the best interests of the state.

Economic Development Activities

Many RRTDs are active in pursuing projects to support economic development activities in the district county(ies). While many RRTD projects have positive outcomes toward general economic development for the county(ies), others are specifically focused on economic development activities at specific sites, such as new industrial parks or preservation or construction of rail spurs to single industries. Recent examples of economic development activities undertaken by RRTDs include:

- The Ellis County RRTD has been active in enhancing the rail transport capabilities of the Railport industrial park adjacent to the BNSF Railway line in Midlothian, which opened in 2004. Recently, the RRTD undertook several track work projects to eliminate flooding issues and move storage tracks to accommodate a second entrance to the park.
- In 2011, the Liberty County Rural Rail District #1 received $15,000 from the Liberty Community Development Corporation for a feasibility study on the acquisition, construction, and rehabilitation of a 1.8-mile railroad spur line within the City of Liberty connecting several local industries to the UP mainline.
- The Presidio County RRTD, in conjunction with several other organizations, is conducting a feasibility study for a transloading facility near the U.S.-Mexico border in Presidio. A grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration for $65,000 was awarded in October 2012 to support this study.
- The Reeves County RRTD formed in 2010 to assist with the development of transportation infrastructure associated with the Montane Logistics Industrial Park, a proposed 500-acre industrial park near Pecos. However, the status of the industrial park development is not known as of February 2013.

Non–Railroad-Related Activities

In addition to railroad-related activities and economic development initiatives, some RRTDs have been active in other areas, such as the following:

- One notable example is the North Texas RRTD in Archer and Wichita Counties. In August 2009, the North Texas RRTD received a $33,641 grant from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for improvements to the Wichita Valley Railway Daylight Trail, a
proposed 6-mile trail created from an abandoned railroad line acquired by the RRTD in the late 1990s. The trail is proposed to run from southwest Wichita Falls to Holliday.

- The NETEX RRTD has been working with a private company, Public Werks, Inc., on a potential project to develop a toll road between Wylie and Lavon adjacent to 23 miles of abandoned ROW controlled by the district. A memorandum of understanding between the district and Public Werks was signed in January 2012, and the RRTD board authorized further action on this project in January 2013. In June 2013, the North Central Texas Council of Governments announced that a Feasibility Study examining transportation options for the “Blacklands Corridor” along the NETEX preserved ROW would begin soon.

Interaction with Other Special Districts

All special districts, including RRTDs, are created to serve a specific function and purpose as defined by state statute. Texas state laws allow for several different types of special districts to provide counties with the tools they need to effectively plan, finance, construct, and/or operate transportation infrastructure. RRTDs are one type of special district; many RRTDs have formed partnerships or otherwise collaborated with other special districts or other governmental organizations. Recent examples are as follows:

- Several RRTDs in northeast Texas, including Gregg County RRTD, Harrison County RRTD, and Wood County RRTD, have turned their projects over to the Northeast Texas Regional Mobility Authority (NETRMA) to be included as part of the NETRMA rail planning activities for the region.
- The Deep East Texas Council of Governments (COG) reported to TTI researchers that the COG is essentially performing the functions of the Deep East Texas RRTD in preserving rail spurs and other rail infrastructure.
- For its meetings during the first year of its existence, the Hidalgo Commuter Rail District board had a regular agenda item for updates/discussion of the Hidalgo County RRTD. However, recent agendas have not included this item.

RRTD Asset Ownership beyond RRTD Boundaries

Changes to the original RRTD statutes allow RRTDs to own rail infrastructure beyond the boundaries of the counties that make up the district. To date, there has been only one known occurrence. As stated above, the Top of Texas RRTD recently negotiated a deal to gain fee-simple ownership of the 90-mile ROW of the abandoned Southwestern Railroad between Spearman, Texas, and Shattuck, Oklahoma, while the former railroad owner was able to salvage the rail materials. The RRTD now owns the entire former ROW, including the segment of the ROW within Oklahoma, which provided the only Class I rail connection for the remaining line at the time of abandonment. The RRTD board is actively marketing the ROW for other uses such as for electric transmission lines or other opportunities, in addition to preserving the leases of existing businesses and other tenants along the line. Although Texas statutes allow for RRTD ownership outside of district boundaries, the ownership of property by a subdivision of Texas state government in another state raises some questions.
A Top of Texas RRTD official, when interviewed for this project, did not see any immediate problems with the ownership of ROW outside Texas state boundaries. He stated that many cross-border business and social transactions take place between the counties in that region and the adjoining states of Oklahoma and New Mexico routinely. Kansas is also nearby, resulting in travel to these other states routinely for business or shopping. Because the Oklahoma segment of the ROW provides the only immediately viable link to the Class I rail system should rail service be restored in these three counties, it was wise to keep the entire ROW intact. Should the RRTD divest itself of the ROW to the individual counties at some point in the future, the RRTD would need to determine how best to dispose of the ROW within Oklahoma or, if sold, how to distribute the profits from sale of that segment among the RRTD member counties.

REVIEW OF RRTD STATUTES/RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Task 2 of this contract was to review the current RRTD statutes and to make recommendations regarding changes that might improve TxDOT’s ability to “be cognizant of and coordinate RRTD activities regarding rail transportation” per the contract provisions. TTI completed a review of Texas Transportation Code Chapter 172 regarding single- and multi-county RRTDs, as well as the chapters associated with similar freight rail districts (Chapter 171), intermunicipal commuter rail districts (Chapter 173), and commuter rail districts (Chapter 174) to evaluate any differences among the statutes. Past research has also examined state statutes governing regional mobility authorities, which also have the power to fund rail infrastructure improvements. TTI also reviewed Minute Order 112598 of the Texas Transportation Commission passed February 24, 2011. This minute order updated several sections of the existing Transportation Code regarding RRTDs (such as describing the approval process for an RRTD to abandon any of its existing track) and coincided with a broader, general update of all rail statutes at the state level to make “non-substantive” changes in the preceding legislation. As a result, several observations regarding remaining changes that might be needed were made.

Changes in State Rail Planning Needs over the Past Decade

The first observation is that several factors have effectively changed the rail planning needs of the state since the time the previous reports on RRTDs were completed in 2002. The economic recovery of the freight rail industry since about 2003 has greatly impacted the need for additional coordinated planning between government and private railroads. More and more rail infrastructure capacity is needed and public-private partnerships (PPPs) between private railroads and public-sector agencies have begun to be more prevalent in addressing necessary rail infrastructure upgrades to meet this new demand. Shifting freight to rail can relieve traffic congestion on the nation’s highways by keeping freight shipments on rail as long as possible or by diverting some existing truck trips to rail. Overall efficiency and safety of the transportation system can also be increased by keeping freight movements separate from general, passenger traffic on roadways. At the same time, many regions of the state that were once rural and surrounded urban centers have experienced rapid increases in population—becoming attractive locations for so-called “bedroom communities”—with citizens seeking rail transportation options to commute to and from the urban centers.
Changes in rail planning activity at all governmental levels, changes in rail activity patterns/needs in specific regions of the state, and growth in population/economic development patterns have all impacted the need for RRTDs and their activities to be better coordinated on a statewide level, such as the following:

1. **Changes in rail planning activity at all governmental levels:** In the past several years, rail planning activities have increased at all levels of government. FRA is currently continuing to develop a National Rail Plan—the first of its kind in the United States—that will lay out goals for both freight and passenger rail systems on a nationwide basis. TxDOT’s rail planning activities have also increased dramatically over the past decade. TxDOT reorganized to create the TxDOT Rail Division in late 2009, and the following year TxDOT issued its most comprehensive state rail plan to date. Opportunities for local/regional rail service have also increased, meaning that local officials need to be more attuned to and involved in planning for rail service in their respective areas.

2. **Changes in rail activity patterns/needs in specific regions:** The current boom in potential rail activity in several regions of the state associated with the production of oil and natural gas from shale regions has restored the need for rail service in many of the areas where rail was being abandoned over the past two decades. The Barnett Shale in north central Texas, the Haynesville Shale in east Texas and western Louisiana, the Eagle Ford Shale in south and south central Texas, and the Permian Basin in west Texas have greatly increased the need for rail service to deliver drilling materials and frac sand to these areas, and to transport crude oil and other chemical products out of these regions. Another example would be increased activity around the state’s port regions as a result of increased business activity or shifts in global freight patterns that are occurring or that may increase with the widening of the Panama Canal in the next few years.

3. **Changes in population/economic development patterns:** Texas’ population continues to grow, and the positive business climate of the state continues to attract many businesses to relocate to this state. Many of these businesses use, or could use, freight rail to move their products or to receive raw materials. Population growth in the largest urban areas of the state has also led to urban sprawl patterns that are leading once-rural areas around these cities to house more and more people that commute into the city on a daily basis. Abandoned or low-traffic-density rail lines in these areas could one day be needed to provide commuter or regional rail service to and from the most populated centers of the state. In both cases, RRTDs could prove vital in preserving rail infrastructure or ROWs that could be used for both freight and passenger travel in the future.

**Legislative Actions that Have or May Impact TxDOT/RRTD Interaction**

A second observation is that several recent legislative actions have impacted the ability of RRTDs to carry out their functions or TxDOT to assist them in doing so. The most prominent recent examples are:

- **SB18 of the 82nd Legislature:** This bill required all state entities with eminent domain power to file with the state comptroller by December 31, 2012, or lose this power
effective on September 1, 2013. As of June 2013, the following six RRTDs were listed as having filed the appropriate paperwork with the state comptroller’s office prior to the deadline:

- Cen-Tex Rural Rail Transportation District,
- La Entrada Al Pacifico Rural Rail District,
- Liberty County Rural Rail Transportation District #1,
- Matagorda County Rail Transportation District,
- Northeast Texas Rural Rail Transportation District, and
- Rusk County Rural Rail District.

All submissions for SB18 have been posted to the comptroller’s website (http://www.window.state.tx.us/sb18compliance/lists.php). Those RRTDs that did not submit, will lose their eminent domain powers on September 1, 2013 according to the provisions of SB18.

Loss of eminent domain power would be a major blow to the powers of existing RRTDs and severely limit their effectiveness. A legislative remedy for those RRTDs that were either inactive or not informed of the need to file by the deadline in December 2012 may be necessary in the future for non-compliant RRTDs to exercise this power. Alternatively, a RRTD would have to be reformed as a new RRTD to use authorized eminent domain powers as the SB18 restriction does not apply to entities created after the SB18 filing deadline.

- **HB2660 of the 80th Legislature:** This bill authorized the Governor’s Office to make Texas Enterprise Fund economic development grant funds available to TxDOT to assist RRTDs in rural rail development although no additional money for this purpose was allocated. As a result, grants have not been made to RRTDs under this provision. Should funding specifically for this purpose be authorized, TxDOT would need to have a method for selecting appropriate projects from among the many planned throughout the state.

**Seeking an Appropriate Role for TxDOT/RRTD Interaction**

The third observation is that TxDOT must determine the role that is necessary for it to effectively coordinate the activities of the state’s RRTDs and incorporate these activities into its responsibility for statewide rail planning. There appear to be three different scenarios for the level of interaction available to TxDOT’s Rail Division. Differing steps and, in some cases, appropriate legislative action would be needed to carry out the associated actions to effect these changes. The “Conclusions and Recommendations” section of this report offers the TTI research team’s recommendations on potential roles for the TxDOT Rail Division’s relationship with RRTDs.

**RRTD MAPPING**

Task 4 of this contract was to prepare maps of RRTDs using geographic information systems (GIS) mapping tools. The maps generated as part of Task 4 are included with the individual
RRTD profiles found in Appendix A of this report. The maps include the RRTD boundary, major cities, railroad lines, other infrastructure, and (to the extent possible) location(s) of specific project(s) where the individual RRTD has been involved.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions: Current Status and Roles of RRTDs in Texas

As of June 2013, 42 RRTDs have been identified as officially formed in Texas, with a total of 95 counties participating in at least one RRTD. A majority (28) of the 42 RRTDs are single-county districts, with 20 such districts formed since TTI last reported to TxDOT on RRTDs in 2002. Promoting economic development opportunities and opposing proposed rail line abandonment within the RRTD jurisdiction are identified as the primary motivations for forming an RRTD. While the progress of RRTDs toward these original motivations is difficult to assess, a number of RRTDs have been successful at stimulating new industrial developments or preserving rail corridors threatened with abandonment.

Recommendations: TxDOT Role in RRTD Activities

At the present time, active involvement of the TxDOT Rail Division in RRTD activities is generally limited to the RRTDs in which TxDOT has previously contributed to a rail line purchase/lease agreement, feasibility study, or similar action. Examples of this would be interaction with the RRTDs along the South Orient line owned by the state, the NETEX RRTD where the state has an underlying financial interest in the ROW, and the Fannin County RRTD, which is currently leasing rail assets from TxDOT. In order to more fully incorporate the activities of RRTDs into statewide rail planning, there are generally three potential levels of oversight/involvement for TxDOT as it relates to RRTDs.

Table 3 outlines three potential roles for the TxDOT Rail Division to interact with RRTDs, should the Rail Division consider additional levels of involvement.

Recommendations: Suggested Legislative and Administrative Actions

Several suggested legislative or administrative actions are recommended based upon the findings of this IAC, as follows:

- After determining the level of desired TxDOT interaction with RRTDs, craft a series of appropriate/necessary legislative initiatives to change current RRTD statutes or implement internal administrative changes within TxDOT at the commission level to implement that level of interaction.
Table 3: Potential Roles for TxDOT-RRTD Interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TxDOT Control/Direction of RRTD Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TxDOT’s Rail Division would seek legislative and/or administrative changes to allow it to directly control or organize the activities of the RRTDs as part of its broader statewide rail planning responsibilities. A method for RRTDs to routinely report on activities to TxDOT and for TxDOT Rail Division staff to interact with local RRTD boards would also need to be implemented. Additional staff to handle this role might also be required. Requiring new RRTDs to seek Transportation Commission permission to form, similar to the process required of regional mobility authorities, might also be a provision of this level of interaction.</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TxDOT Liaison with RRTD Activities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TxDOT’s Rail Division would take an active role in creating a direct liaison role with local RRTDs. TxDOT staff might act as an ex-officio member of each board to provide advice and information based upon experience and knowledge of other rail projects taking place in the region or across the state. Formalization of the process under which RRTDs would notify and plan their meeting times/locations would be needed at this level of interaction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>TxDOT Awareness of RRTD Activities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TxDOT’s Rail Division would receive minutes from all RRTD board meetings and periodic updates from RRTD boards on activities as information only. The information exchange would allow TxDOT to offer or refer services or provide funding opportunity information to the RRTDs. This limited role would still allow information on RRTD projects to be included in updates to the state rail plan; however, TxDOT would not exercise any operational control over the RRTDs or their activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Implement the changes to RRTD statutes recommended previously in TxDOT Report 0-4007-2, *Texas Rural Rail Transportation Districts: New Roles and Relationships*, in 2002 regarding the development of a framework for TxDOT to interact with RRTDs. Many of the same issues still exist within current statutes and the Transportation Code. Appendix B of this report lists specific suggestions for legislative action that were recommended by previous work under TxDOT Project 0-4007, and that were not corrected by the general cleanup of rail statutes by the 74th legislature in 2009 and subsequent adoption of Transportation Code changes by Texas Transportation Commission Minute Order in February 2011. Appendix B also updates the names of agencies to the current agencies responsible for the appropriate action.

- The TxDOT Rail Division should limit its involvement in RRTD activities to the minimum level necessary to fulfill its statewide rail planning and coordination responsibilities without limiting local RRTD board initiative or control of local projects. Several RRTD boards have been successful over time in developing new customers and building new infrastructure with the assistance of an active short line operator. Such local control is one of the reasons RRTDs were originally created. Direct involvement of a state-level agency and related procedures may, in some cases, hinder the ability of the RRTD and its operator to complete some projects.
• Develop new recommendations regarding new rail funding possibilities that may have occurred with changes in state and national rail planning and PPP activities that may not have existed when statutes were written.
Appendix A: RRTD Summary Profiles
The Bexar County RRTD was formed to ensure that competitive rail service could be provided to the proposed site of a new Toyota Motor Company manufacturing site in South Bexar County in order to attract that development. The RRTD examined several potential routes to link the site, served by the adjacent UP line, to a nearby BNSF line. The preferred route submitted by the RRTD board to the Surface Transportation Board was a distance of 6.64 miles across the UP Corpus Christi Subdivision to link to BNSF. RRTD plans to move forward with environmental clearance of the proposed route and the commitment of state funding in order to accomplish construction of the line was ultimately enough of a reality to result in both Toyota selecting the site over those in other states and to lead UP to agree to allow BNSF to serve the site over its existing rail line in the area. Since that time, little or no activity by the RRTD has been reported.
Bexar County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation

- Year Created – 2002
- Circumstances – Formed to facilitate attracting the Toyota manufacturing plant to San Antonio by making plans for constructing an alternate rail service line

Composition

- Counties (1) – Bexar County
- Board Members – N/A; Board Inactive
- Point(s) of Contact – Nelson Wolff, Bexar County Judge, (210) 335-1326, nwolff@bexar.org
- Website – None

Current Status

- Board Activity – Inactive
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – N/A
- Future Activities – N/A

History

The Bexar County RRTD was formed to ensure that competitive rail service could be provided to the proposed site of a new Toyota Motor Company manufacturing site in South Bexar County in order to attract that development. The RRTD examined several potential routes to link the site, served by the adjacent UP line, to a nearby BNSF line. The preferred route submitted by the RRTD board to the Surface Transportation Board was a distance of 6.64 miles across the UP Corpus Christi Subdivision to link to BNSF.\(^1\) RRTD plans to move forward with environmental clearance of the proposed route and the commitment of state funding in order to accomplish construction of the line was ultimately enough of a reality to result in both Toyota selecting the site over those in other states and to lead UP to agree to allow BNSF to serve the site over its existing rail line in the area. Since that time, little or no activity by the RRTD has been reported.

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Brewster County RRTD

The Brewster County RRTD was formed in 2003 to encourage and promote rail-served economic development along the existing South Orient rail line. According to TxDOT's May 2005 Annual Inspection report for the line, the Brewster County Rail District “continues to express support for freight movements on the South Orient line, and hopes to prevent increased traffic over the highways in Alpine and other areas of the county by increasing rail capacity.” Activities in recent years have decreased following the departure of some key board members. Contact with the Brewster County judge’s office in early 2013 confirmed that the board was inactive. The assistant to the county judge states that the RRTD “still exists” but “hasn’t really met in several years.”
Brewster County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation

- Date Created – 2003
- Circumstances – Promote economic development along South Orient line

Composition

- Counties (1) – Brewster County
- Board Members – not currently appointed
- Point(s) of Contact – Conrad Arriola, Assistant to Brewster County Judge Val Beard
- Website – None

Current Status

- Board Activity – Inactive
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – N/A
- Future Activities – None planned at this time

History

The Brewster County RRTD was formed in 2003 to encourage and promote rail-served economic development along the existing South Orient rail line. According to TxDOT’s May 2005 Annual Inspection report for the line, the Brewster County Rail District “continues to express support for freight movements on the South Orient line, and hopes to prevent increased traffic over the highways in Alpine and other areas of the county by increasing rail capacity.” Activities in recent years have decreased following the departure of some key board members. Contact with the Brewster County judge’s office in early 2013 confirmed that the board was inactive. The assistant to the county judge states that the RRTD “still exists” but “hasn’t really met in several years.”
With the development of passenger rail service over the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Capital Metro)-owned rail corridor on the line preceding the freight-rail served businesses in Burnet County, local representatives sought to ensure continued freight services on the line to and from the granite quarries and other businesses located in Burnet County at the north end of the line. In October 2007 Capital Metro contracted with Watco Companies as the Austin Western Railroad (AWRR) to operate freight service along their line/ROW that stretches 155 miles on both sides of Austin between Llano and Giddings. The AWRR also operates a 6.4 mile branch in Burnet County extending from Fairland to Marble Falls. In March 2010 Capital Metro began operating the 32-mile Metro Rail passenger rail service during the day, with freight operating at night. No involvement by the district occurred during these events, and indications are that the district ceased activity following the secured freight service.
Burnet County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – June 2000
- Circumstances – Formed to preserve freight rail service to Burnet County when previous operator threatened abandonment

Composition
- Counties (1) – Burnet County
- Board Members – N/A; Board Inactive
- Point(s) of Contact – Clyde Waters (830) 598-8898; Recent CTR report also lists Christa Bromley, City of Burnet, cbromley@cityofburnet.com
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity – Inactive
- Recent Activities – In October 2007 Capital Metro contracted with Watco Companies, Inc. (Watco) as the Austin Western Railroad (AWRR) to operate freight service along their line/ROW that stretches 155 miles on both sides of Austin between Llano and Giddings.\footnote{Union Pacific Railroad. “Austin Western Railroad AWRR #71.” \textit{Short Line Railroad Profiles}. Online. Available: \url{http://www.uprr.com/customers/shortline/lines/awrr.shtml}. Accessed: January 25, 2013.} The AWRR also operates a 6.4 mile branch in Burnet County extending from Fairland to Marble Falls.\footnote{Watco Companies, Inc. “Austin Western Railroad.” Online. Available: \url{http://www.watcocompanies.com/railroads/awrr/awrr%20main%20page.htm}. Accessed: January 25, 2013.} In March 2010 Capital Metro began operating the 32-mile Metro Rail passenger rail service.\footnote{Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Capital Metro). “Data and Statistics.” Online. Available: \url{http://www.capmetro.org/stats/}} In order to accommodate both passenger and freight operations over the portion of line with both, the services are temporally separated. That is, the passenger operations consist of a 12-hour window during the day and the freight operations operate during the remaining evening and night hours. Watco indicates that the AWRR ships almost 49,000 carloads annually. No involvement by the rail district occurred during these events.
- Future Activities – None

History
With the development of passenger rail service over the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Capital Metro)-owned rail line on the line inside of the freight-rail served businesses in Burnet County, local representatives sought to ensure continued freight services on the line to and from the granite quarries and other businesses located in Burnet County at the north end of the line.
A major chemical facility located in Seadrift that was serviced exclusively by one railroad ("a captive shipper") investigated the possibilities of constructing a build-in line in order to have two railroads serve the facility competitively. This would potentially reduce the shipping costs associated with rail shipments from the facility. The Calhoun County RRTD was originally developed as a possible vehicle for the construction of this line between Seadrift and Kamey. Ultimately, the BNSF Railway moved forward with the project without the participation of the RRTD. BNSF Railway (BNSF) received approval from the Surface Transportation Board (STB) in September 2001 to construct a 7.8 mile line segment between Kamey and Seadrift. The Dow Chemical Company and BNSF celebrated the opening of this line on July 9, 2003. The board is in place and designated as semi-active.
Calhoun County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation

- Date Created – December 1999
- Circumstances – Formed as possible vehicle for the construction of a build-in line for rail service competition

Composition

- Counties (1) – Calhoun County
- Board Members – Board is regularly re-appointed
- Point(s) of Contact – Calhoun County Judge Mike Pfeifer (361) 553-4600
- Website – None

Current Status

- Board Activity – Semi-Active: Board remains appointed; County Judge contacts board members occasionally; Could be active with reason/project
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – BNSF Railway (BNSF) received approval from the Surface Transportation Board (STB) in September 2001 to construct a 7.8 mile line segment between Kamey and Seadrift. The Dow Chemical Company and BNSF celebrated the opening of this line on July 9, 2003.
- Future Activities – County Judge indicates that there may be need to develop rail spurs to available land with no current rail service.

History

A major chemical facility located in Seadrift that was serviced exclusively by one railroad (“a captive shipper”) investigated the possibilities of constructing a build-in line in order to have two railroads serve the facility competitively. This would potentially reduce the shipping costs associated with rail shipments from the facility. The Calhoun County RRTD was originally developed as a possible vehicle for the construction of this line between Seadrift and Kamey. Ultimately, the BNSF Railway moved forward with the project without the participation of the RRTD.

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According to previous reports, in 2006 BNSF was in discussions to work with the Castro County RRTD to acquire 41 miles of rail line to serve a new ethanol facility in Dimmitt. TTI contact with the current county judge in late 2012 confirmed that the ethanol plant project did not materialize and the RRTD is currently inactive.
Castro County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – 2006
- Circumstances – Formed to facilitate BNSF connection to new ethanol facility.

Composition
- Counties (1) – Castro County
- Board Members – N/A; Board Inactive
- Point(s) of Contact – Carroll Gerber, Castro County Judge, (806) 647-4451
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity – Inactive
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – N/A
- Future Activities – None planned at this time

History
According to previous reports, in 2006 BNSF was in discussions to work with the Castro County RRTD to acquire 41 miles of rail line to serve a new ethanol facility in Dimmitt. TTI contact with the current county judge in late 2012 confirmed that the ethanol plant project did not materialize and the RRTD is currently inactive.
Cen-Tex RRTD

**Legend**

- RRTD Boundaries
- County in Multiple RRTDs
- County Boundaries
- BNSF
- RRRTD Ownership/Lease
- Major Highways
- KCS
- Abandoned Lines
- County Seats
- UP
- All Other Railroads

**Year Created:** 1990  
**Current Status:** Active  
**Type:** Multi-County  
**Counties (5):** Brown, Comanche, Erath, Hood, Johnson  
**Motivation for Forming:** Abandonment  
**Asset Ownership:** Ownership/Operating Rights for Fort Worth and Western Railroad

The Centex RRTD formed to preserve rail service along a line between Fort Worth and Brownwood that was threatened with abandonment. Centex Limited Partnership and the Centex RRTD acquired the line in 1990. Under the agreement, the RRTD acquired existing rights to the ROW underlying the railroad, but the Centex Limited Partnership acquired ownership of all the infrastructure and the rail service operating rights. In December 1998 the Fort Worth and Western Railroad (FWWR) acquired rights to the rail infrastructure and operations from the Centex Limited Partnership through a long-term lease agreement that includes an option to purchase the right-of-way from the RRTD. The RRTD currently supports efforts of the FWWR to develop additional business along the line and is actively looking for appropriate projects. The RRTD board is active in meeting monthly and conducting needed business interactions with government agencies and private firms to protect rail service within their district.
Cen-Tex RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – 1990
- Circumstances – Formed to prevent abandonment and loss of freight rail service along a multi-county rail line from the Fort Worth area to the southwest

Composition
- Counties (5) – Brown, Comanche, Erath, Hood, and Johnson Counties
- Board Members – Board is in place and current; One member per county appointed by respective Commissioner’s Court
- Point(s) of Contact – David P. Olhausen, Cen-Tex RRTD Board Member
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity – Active: Meets regularly
- Asset Ownership – Acquired ownership of the rail right-of-way. Ownership of the infrastructure and the rail service operating rights belong to Fort Worth and Western Railroad
- Recent Activities – Support of new business location along line in Brown, Hood, and Johnson Counties; Involved in working on rail/highway safety related to a bypass in Cresson; Restoration and remodeling of Comanche Depot; Support of rail service to oil-related businesses in Permian Basin/West Texas
- Future Activities – Website development underway and should be up in a “couple of months”; Supporting rebuilding/re-opening of Presidio rail bridge

History
The Centex RRTD formed to preserve rail service along a line that was threatened with abandonment. The line between Fort Worth and Brownwood had been operated by the ATSF, but financial losses and insufficient business along the line led them to seek to sell the line. Centex Limited Partnership and the Centex RRTD acquired the line in 1990. Under the agreement, the district acquired existing rights to the right-of-way underlying the railroad, but the Centex Limited Partnership acquired ownership of all the infrastructure and the rail service operating rights. In December 1998 the Fort Worth and Western Railroad (FWWR) acquired rights to the rail infrastructure and operations from the Centex Limited Partnership through a long-term lease agreement that includes an option to purchase the right-of-way from the RRTD. FWWR conducts freight operations over the line and is responsible for maintenance of the rail infrastructure.

The RRTD currently supports efforts of the FWWR to develop additional business along the line and is actively looking for appropriate projects. The FWWR benefits from public ownership of the ROW by the Cen-Tex RRTD. The RRTD board is active in meeting monthly and conducting needed business interactions with government agencies and private firms to protect rail service within their district as evidenced by recent filings with the comptroller regarding SB18 compliance and with the EPA regarding proposed expansion of the DFW Ozone Non-Attainment area into Hood County.
The Coleman County RRTD was created in 2008 but has been inactive since that time. Originally, it was formed to support economic development along the South Orient line, but that project did not materialize. In late 2012 and early 2013, the Coleman EDC has taken action to acquire some property near the intersection of the South Orient/Texas Pacifico and the BNSF with plans on developing a rail-served project. The EDC contact states that a potential meeting of the Coleman County RRTD could occur in March 2013 or soon after to support this new project.
Coleman County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – 2008
- Circumstances – Economic Development along South Orient Line

Composition
- Counties (1) – Coleman County
- Board Members – N/A; Board Inactive
- Point(s) of Contact – Judge Joe D. Watson, Coleman County Judge, (325) 625-4218, county.judge@yahoo.com and Bob Turner, Coleman County EDC, (325) 625-2163
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity – Inactive
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – N/A
- Future Activities – N/A

History
The Coleman County RRTD was created in 2008 but has been inactive since that time. Originally, it was formed to support economic development along the South Orient line, but that project did not materialize. In late 2012 and early 2013, the Coleman EDC has taken action to acquire some property near the intersection of the South Orient/Texas Pacifico and the BNSF with plans on developing a rail-served project. The EDC contact states that a potential meeting of the Coleman County RRTD could occur in March 2013 or soon after to support this new project.\(^7\)

\(^7\)Bob Turner, Phone conversation with TTI, February 21, 2013.
Deep East Texas RRTD

Year Created: 1993
Type: Multi-County
Motivation for Forming: Abandonment
Asset Ownership: None

Current Status: Inactive
Counties (12): Angelina, Houston, Jasper, Nacogdoches, Newton, Polk, Sabine, San Augustine, San Jacinto, Shelby, Trinity, Tyler

Two major potential rail line abandonments in the area drove the creation of this multi-county rail district. The Southern Pacific (SP) line between Dolan and Loeb was abandoned, but the BNSF (ATSF) line remained in service. BNSF Railway currently leases operations in the rail district area to the Timber Rock Railroad (TIBR). No other rail concerns have occurred since the rail line abandonments that drove the creation of the district until a recent concern in which UP was no longer going to provide rail service over the spur to a rail tie manufacturing company. This issue was brought to the attention of the Deep East Texas Council of Government in January 2013. The issue appears to be resolved with UP agreeing to move the rail tie company’s shipments by truck to a transloading facility. The Deep East Texas COG was actively involved in the original rail district activities and continues to monitor rail issues in the region.
Deep East Texas RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation

- Date Created – 1993 and 1994
- Circumstances – Formed to prevent abandonment of two separate Class I railroad lines that totaled over 200 miles

Composition

- Counties (12) – Angelina, Houston, Jasper, Nacogdoches, Newton, Polk, Sabine, San Augustine, San Jacinto, Shelby, Trinity, and Tyler Counties
- Board Members – N/A; Board Inactive
- Point(s) of Contact – Rusty Phillips, Regional Services Director, Deep East Texas Council of Government, (409) 384-5704 Ext. 5262, rphillips@detcog.org; CTR lists Bob Bashaw, DETCOG Regional Planner, bob.bashaw@detcog.org
- Website – None

Current Status

- Board Activity – Inactive
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – Mr. Rusty Phillips called TTI in January 2013 stating that a local rail tie company near Garrison, TX, was told by UP that they would no longer serve the company due to safety concerns with the grade crossing on the spur to company. Mr. Phillips indicated that he was calling because the Deep East Texas Council of Government “is” the rail district and was seeking rail district advice from TTI. The Council of Governments is concerned about losing a business in the area. A newspaper article on February 11, 2013 indicates that there was a temporary resolution related to this issue. Mr. Phillips indicates that UP has agreed to pay for the rail tie company’s shipments to a transloading facility. Mr. Phillips indicated that no other rail concerns had occurred since the rail line abandonments that drove the creation of the district until the recent spur service concern.
- Future Activities – None stated but recent activities indicates that the Deep East Texas Council of Governments is willing to use the district for preserving spur lines/industrial leads

History

Two major potential rail line abandonments in the area drove the creation of this multi-county rail district. The Southern Pacific (SP) line between Dolan and Loeb was abandoned, but the BNSF (ATSF) line remained in service. BNSF Railway became the operator after merger between BN and ATSF. BNSF Railway currently leases operations in the rail district area to the Timber Rock Railroad (TIBR).

The Ellis County Rural Rail District was formed to enhance the rail transportation capabilities of a new industrial park known as Railport, which located adjacent to the BNSF line in Midlothian. The original plan was to construct rail within the park but also build out a new line to also connect with UP in order to provide dual service within the park. Agreements amongst BNSF, UP, Ellis County, the RRTD, and Midlothian’s EDA provide for track access, haulage, switching, and reciprocal exchange between BNSF, UP, and the RRTD with respect to rail service at Railport. The 1,700-acre Railport industrial park was opened in 2004. In order to maintain good condition of the rail, the district has recently worked to eliminate flooding issues by modifying the slope of portions of the rail bed and moved storage tracks in order to allow for a second entrance into the park. The district board is active and meets monthly.
Ellis County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – August 1998
- Circumstances – Formed to facilitate rail service for the RailPort industrial park

Composition
- Counties (1) – Ellis County
- Board Members – Board is comprised of 5 members: one from each Ellis County precinct and one from the County Judge. The meetings are regularly attended by representatives of BNSF Railway, the Midlothian Development Agency (MDA), and Texas Industries (TXI), owner of Railport.
- Point(s) of Contact – Charlie Morton chmorton@airmail.net
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity – Active: meet monthly
- Asset Ownership – The Midlothian Development Authority owns the right-of-way through Railport. The district constructed and maintains the rail infrastructure.
- Recent Activities – The Railport industrial park recently opened a second entrance to the park. The entrance was to be located where multiple storage tracks existed. The rail district moved the storage tracks in order to facilitate a safer, more operationally efficient, crossing for both the roadway and rail users. This project cost an approximately $900,000 to complete, according to Mr. Charlie Morton. Mr. Morton also indicates that there have made several track improvements to reduce the slope on the sides of the track and to address a potential subsidence issue at a location where a stock pond was adjacent to the rail bed. The rail district receives funding from BNSF, with the marketing for the industrial park done by the owner, TXI. Mr. Morton would like a copy of the report when complete in order to gain knowledge related to rail districts.
- Future Activities – Mr. Morton indicates that a new tenant to Railport will utilize rail service. Additionally, a new US 67 bypass will be completed shortly that will grade separate the traffic over one of the Railport entrances, which will improve safety and access to the park.

History
The Ellis County Rural Rail District was formed to enhance the rail transportation capabilities of a new industrial park known as Railport, which located adjacent to the BNSF line in Midlothian. The original plan was to construct rail within the park but also build out a new line to also connect with UP in order to provide dual/competitive service within the park. Agreements amongst BNSF, UP, Ellis County, the RRTD, and Midlothian’s EDA provide for track access, haulage, switching, and reciprocal exchange between BNSF, UP, and the RRTD with respect to rail service at Railport. The 1,700-acre Railport industrial park was opened in 2004. The TXI website for Railport shows Target, Toys R Us, and Kehe Food Distributors, along with American National Power as major tenants in the park.
The Fannin County RRTD was formed to maintain freight rail service between Bell and Paris that runs through Bonham. The State of Texas, through TxDOT, purchased the 33.5 miles of track between Bonham and Paris and leased it to the Fannin County RRTD in 2006. An additional 1.28 miles, required to connect the 33.5 mile-segment to the existing operating freight railroad in Bonham, was purchased by TxDOT, through the Bonham Economic Development Corporation, in 2011. The rail district signed a lease with TxDOT in 2012 to operate the additional 1.28 miles of track to connect Bonham to the remaining 33.5 miles east of Bonham already leased from TxDOT. The rail district received an USDA grant, in which they purchased rail ties. The rail district is looking for an operator of the line, including the potential operation of a steam engine-powered tourist train operating over eight miles of track, and additional funding to support improvements to the line.
Fannin County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – November 8, 1999
- Circumstances – Formed to prevent abandonment

Composition
- Counties (1) – Fannin County
- Board Members – Board is comprised of seven board members, according to Mr. Taylor.
- Point(s) of Contact – Glenn Taylor (903) 227-1891
- Website – http://www.co.fannin.tx.us/ips/cms/countyinfo/ruralrail.html

Current Status
- Board Activity – Active: meet monthly
- Recent Activities – The State of Texas, through TxDOT, purchased 33.5 miles of track between Bonham and Paris and leased it to the Fannin County RRTD in 2006. An additional 1.28 miles, required to connect the 33.5 mile-segment to the existing operating freight railroad in Bonham, was purchased by TxDOT, through the Bonham Economic Development Corporation, in 2011. The rail district signed a lease with TxDOT in 2012 to operate the additional 1.28 miles of track to connect Bonham to the remaining 33.5 miles east of Bonham already leased from TxDOT. Mr. Taylor indicates the entire line is in bad shape and requires extensive rehabilitation. The 2011 CTR review of Texas rail authority states that the district received a USDA grant. A news article from November 2012 provides a picture of new rail ties, courtesy of that grant. Additionally, Mr. Taylor indicated they had applied for a US DOT TIGER grant.
- Future Activities – The rail district is looking for an operator of the line and funding to support improvements to the line. One possibility under evaluation is to get a steam engine-power tourist train operating over eight miles of line that would go through Bonham. The district has been in talks with a person in Florida that performs that type of service. In addition to tourism interest, Mr. Taylor feels that an operating steam train could attract movie productions.

History
The Fannin County RRTD was formed to maintain the freight rail service between Bell and Paris that runs through Bonham. The line between Bonham and Paris was in poor shape and was to be abandoned. Recent activities of the RRTD have included cooperation with TxDOT to purchase additional track to connect the line with the existing Class I freight service in Bonham.

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The Galveston County RRTD was formed in August 2012 to support a planned bulk commodity movement/rail development project on Pelican Island. According to the president of the RRTD board, funding for the activities of the RRTD were supposed to come from the sponsors of this project. In January 2013, Mr. John Helsley reported to the Port of Galveston that the project partnership had not materialized and the project was not likely to go forward. In February 2013, the RRTD president, Mr. Ford stated that the RRTD’s goals would likely be changing to support other needed rail projects in the county such as rail spurs or improvements to the rail infrastructure serving existing manufacturing plants. In June 2013, the Galveston County RRTD began a feasibility study funded by private sector partners to study replacement of the existing highway bridge to Pelican Island with a new joint freight rail/highway bridge to facilitate development of rail cargo and cruise passenger terminal on Pelican Island.
Galveston County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – August 2012
- Circumstances – Created to facilitate the development of new business associated with the Texas, Mexico, and Pacific Railroad plan to construct rail service from Pelican Island to the Mainland

Composition
- Counties (1) – Galveston County
- Board Members – Five board members with terms expiring in July 2014
- Point(s) of Contact – John W. Ford, john@johnfordjewelers.com, (409) 740-1463
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity – Active
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – District recently formed
- Future Activities – Support economic development opportunities for the county

History
No significant activities to date. The Galveston County RRTD was formed in August 2012 to support a planned bulk commodity movement/rail development project on Pelican Island with potential rail connections to either across Galveston Bay to the Texas City area or to Galveston Island as envisioned by the Texas, Mexico, and Pacific Railroad (TM&P) headed by Mr. John Helsley. According to the president of the RRTD board, funding for the activities of the RRTD were supposed to come from the sponsors of the TM&P project. In January 2013, Mr. Helsley reported to the Port of Galveston that the TM&P project partnership had not materialized and the project was not likely to go forward. When interviewed in February 2013, the RRTD president, Mr. Ford stated that the RRTD’s goals would likely be changing to support other needed rail projects in the county such as rail spurs or improvements to the rail infrastructure serving existing manufacturing plants. In June 2013, the Galveston County RRTD began a feasibility study funded by private sector partners to study replacement of the existing highway bridge to Pelican Island with a new joint freight rail/highway bridge to facilitate development of rail cargo and cruise passenger terminal on Pelican Island.
The Gregg County RRTD was formed to develop an industrial park at the foreign trade zone that surrounds the East Texas Regional Airport with rail connection to downtown Longview. In addition, the rail district, in conjunction with other East Texas rail districts supports higher speed passenger rail service between Dallas and Shreveport. The President of the RRTD board states that the board formally turned over development of their primary project discussed above to the efforts of the Northeast Texas RMA (NET-RMA) Rail Committee in 2008 as part of their regional rail project prioritization in coordination with several other single-county RRTDs in the NET-RMA region.
Gregg County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – January 2006
- Circumstances – Formed for the development of an industrial park; Also interested in higher speed passenger rail service

Composition
- Counties (1) – Gregg County
- Board Members – Board is in place
- Point(s) of Contact – Mr. Griff Hubbard, (903) 757-5734, hubb09552@amtrak.com
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity – Semi-active; meet on as-needed basis
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – N/A
- Future Activities – Unknown

History
The Gregg County RRTD was formed to develop an industrial park at the foreign trade zone that surrounds the East Texas Regional Airport with rail connection to downtown Longview. In addition, the rail district, in conjunction with other East Texas rail districts supports higher speed passenger rail service between Dallas and Shreveport. The President of the RRTD board states that the board formally turned over development of their primary project discussed above to the efforts of the Northeast Texas RMA (NET-RMA) Rail Committee in 2008 as part of their regional rail project prioritization in coordination with several other single-county RRTDs in the NET-RMA region.
The Gulf Coast RRTD was formed in an effort to maintain freight rail service along the Southern Pacific Railroad line between Rosenberg in Fort Bend County and Victoria in Victoria County. The 85-mile line segment was abandoned, with the majority of the line pulled up and sold for its salvage value. However, the remaining rail line and right-of-way was sold to the Texas Mexican Railway (now Kansas City Southern Railroad). KCS reconstituted the line in 2009 and utilizes the line for their international movements to and from Mexico.
Gulf Coast RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation

- Date Created – 1993 and 1994
- Circumstances – Formed to prevent the abandonment of a rail line

Composition

- Counties (2) – Jackson and Wharton Counties
- Board Members – N/A; Board Inactive
- Point(s) of Contact – Chandra Spenrath, Executive Director El Campo CDC
- Website – None

Current Status

- Board Activity – Inactive
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – KCS reconstituted the line in 2009 and utilizes the line for their international movements to and from Mexico. The district is not active, according to the CTR report.
- Future Activities – N/A

History

The Gulf Coast RRTD was formed in an effort to maintain freight rail service along the Southern Pacific Railroad line between Rosenberg in Fort Bend County and Victoria in Victoria County. The 85-mile line segment was abandoned, with the majority of the line pulled up and sold for its salvage value. However, the remaining rail line and right-of-way was sold to the Texas Mexican Railway (now Kansas City Southern Railroad).
Gulf Link RRTD

The district was formed to address rail service option to a group of chemical processing plants and Port Freeport. The concept was to construct a 25-mile rail line that would connect to the BNSF line northwest out of Galveston, which would provide a second shipping option from the already existing service by UP. That project was never developed and remains as a concept idea. The current rail service has been enhanced with UP Railroad recently investing $20 million on a new bridge and track serving the chemical companies and Port Freeport. The rail district board remains in place and is designated as semi-active.
Gulf Link RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – 1998
- Circumstances – Formed as possible vehicle for the construction of a build-in line for rail service competition

Composition
- Counties (2) – Brazoria and Fort Bend
- Board Members – In place
- Point(s) of Contact – Mike Wilson, Port Freeport, (979) 233-2667 Ext. 4325
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity – Semi-active; Board could become active for viable opportunity
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – Mr. Wilson states that the rail district was formed in collaboration between the two counties and the port. He indicates the concept to build a line to receive dual rail service is on hold. That type of business decision will require significant evaluation and assured returns before it would be consummated, which represents a big hill to overcome. The current rail service has been enhanced with UP Railroad recently investing $20 million on a new bridge and track serving the chemical companies and Port Freeport.
- Future Activities – Port Freeport is experiencing growth and has current plans to expand their rail capacity on the port property, including tracks to the new Velasco deep water intermodal terminal and five unit train capacity tracks at the new multi-modal facility. The port has also received approval on a channel deepening and widening project.

History
The Gulf Link RRTD formed to address rail service options to a group of chemical processing plants. The concept was to construct a 25-mile rail line that would connect to the BNSF line northwest out of Galveston, which would provide a second shipping option from the already existing service by UP. No rail lines have been constructed since the district was formed.
Harrison County RRTD

The district met for approximately one year according to the CTR report before the county joined the Northeast Texas RMA, which, combined with several other rail districts, is pursuing projects of interest by the Harrison County RRTD. Former County Judge Richard Anderson stated to TTI that all of the RRTDs projects, which mainly were in support of passenger rail service for East Texas, had been taken over by the East Texas Corridor Council a part of the current passenger rail study or the NET-RMA as part of their rail planning efforts.
Harrison County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – November 2005
- Circumstances – Formed to provide support for passenger rail service through East Texas

Composition
- Counties (1) – Harrison County
- Board Members – N/A; Board Inactive
- Point(s) of Contact – Richard Anderson, former Harrison County Judge
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity – Inactive
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – N/A
- Future Activities – N/A

History
The district met for approximately one year according to the CTR report before the county joined the Northeast Texas RMA, which, combined with several other rail districts, is pursuing projects of interest by the Harrison County RRTD. Former County Judge Richard Anderson stated to TTI that all of the RRTDs projects, which mainly were in support of passenger rail service for East Texas, had been taken over by the East Texas Corridor Council a part of the current passenger rail study or the NET-RMA as part of their rail planning efforts.
Hidalgo County RRTD

In June 2009, the Hidalgo County Commissioner's Court unanimously approved the creation of an RRTD. Several Hidalgo County Commuter Rail District Board meeting agendas from 2009 listed an item for the rural rail district to discuss activities and other rail projects. More recent Commuter Rail District agendas do not include this item. Hidalgo County was part of discussions in 2001 to form a multi-county district with the surrounding counties, but that district was not approved by all members.
Hidalgo County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – 2009
- Circumstances – Formed related to a rail project in county

Composition
- Counties (1) – Hidalgo County
- Board Members – N/A; Board Inactive
- Point(s) of Contact – Ramon Garcia, Hidalgo County Judge, (956) 318-2600, countyjudge@co.hidalgo.tx
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity – Inactive
- Asset Ownership – N/A
- Recent Activities – N/A
- Future Activities – N/A

History
The June 2, 2009 Hidalgo County Commissioner’s Court unanimously approved the creation of an RRTD. Several Hidalgo County Commuter Rail District Board meeting agendas from 2009 listed an item for the rural rail district to discuss activities and other rail projects. More recent Commuter Rail District agendas do not include this item. Hidalgo County was part of discussions in 2001 to form a multi-county district with the surrounding counties, but that district was not approved by all members.
The Hockley County RRTD was formed in 2003 to promote rail-served business relocation and continued preservation of existing rail lines in the area. The West Texas & Lubbock Railroad (WTL) (formerly the Seagraves, Whiteface, and Lubbock Railroad) has two lines which serve the county. At the time the RRTD was formed, the viability of these lines was in question. Since that time, the WTL has become a subsidiary of Iowa Pacific Holdings (a well-established, national holding company for shortline freight railroads). The City of Levelland has also worked closely with WTL to create the Levelland Industrial Rail Park on city-owned land adjacent to the WTL mainline through the city. In discussions with the economic development personnel with the city of Levelland in both late 2012 and early 2013, they confirmed that the Hockley County RRTD was inactive at this time.
Hockley County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation

- Date Created – August 2003
- Circumstances – Formed to promote economic development

Composition

- Counties (1) – Hockley County
- Board Members – N/A; Board Inactive
- Point(s) of Contact – Shawn Kirkpatrick, City of Levelland Director of Economic Development, (806) 894-0113, skirkpatrick@levellandtexas.org
- Website – None

Current Status

- Board Activity – Inactive
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – N/A
- Future Activities – N/A

History

The Hockley County RRTD was formed in 2003 to promote rail-served business relocation and continued preservation of existing rail lines in the area. The West Texas & Lubbock Railroad (WTL) (formerly the Seagraves, Whiteface, and Lubbock Railroad) has two lines which serve the county. At the time the RRTD was formed, the viability of these lines was in question. Since that time, the WTL has become a subsidiary of Iowa Pacific Holdings (a well-established, national holding company for shortline freight railroads). The City of Levelland has also worked closely with WTL to create the Levelland Industrial Rail Park on city-owned land adjacent to the WTL mainline through the city. In discussions with the economic development personnel with the city of Levelland in both late 2012 and early 2013, they confirmed that the Hockley County RRTD was inactive at this time.
La Entrada Al Pacifico RRTD

The La Entrada al Pacifico (LEAP) RRTD aims to improve rail freight transportation in the La Entrada al Pacifico corridor that stretches from the port of Topolobampo on the Mexican coast of the Gulf of California to the west Texas plains, via Presidio and Midland-Odessa. TxDOT sponsored a 2008 study by Cambridge Systematics which examined the feasibility of a new construction north-south rail connection between Seagraves and McCamey on the South Orient/Texas Pacifico line via the Midland-Odessa region. An RRTD board member confirmed that the district continues to propose to construct a North-South rail connector between Seagraves on the West Texas and Lubbock Railroad through Midland-Odessa, continuing to an interchange with the South Orient Railroad at McCamey. A new feasibility study has only recently been completed by Cambridge Systematics for the RRTD (this time without direct TxDOT involvement) and results have not been made public as of February 2013.
La Entrada Al Pacifico RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation

- Date Created – 2002
- Circumstances – Formed to promote economic development through the construction of new rail infrastructure to enhance existing rail connections

Composition

- Counties (2) – Ector and Midland Counties
- Board Members – Board is in place
- Point(s) of Contact – Mr. Buddy Sipes, Board Member, (432) 686-9466
- Website – None

Current Status

- Board Activity – Active; monthly meetings
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – New feasibility study recently completed by RRTD and Cambridge Systematics regarding restoration of rail service between Midland- Odessa area and Seagraves; Updates 2007 study undertaken by LEAP RRTD and Cambridge Systematics in concert with TxDOT
- Future Activities – Develop/Support shale oil business development in the Permian Basin/West Texas

History

The La Entrada al Pacifico (LEAP) RRTD aims to improve rail freight transportation in the La Entrada al Pacifico corridor that stretches from the port of Topolobampo on the Mexican coast of the Gulf of California to the west Texas plains, via Presidio and Midland-Odessa. TxDOT sponsored a 2008 study by Cambridge Systematics, Permian Basin Rail Connection: Economic & Financial Feasibility Study, which examined the feasibility of a new construction north-south rail connection between Seagraves and McCamey on the South Orient/Texas Pacifico line via the Midland-Odessa region.

A January 2013 TTI interview with RRTD board member confirmed that the district continues to propose to construct a North-South rail connector between Seagraves on the West Texas and Lubbock Railroad through Midland-Odessa, continuing to an interchange with the South Orient Railroad at McCamey. A new feasibility study has only recently been completed by Cambridge Systematics for the RRTD (this time without direct TxDOT involvement) and results have not been made public as of February 2013. Plans to develop the line to serve these industries are progressing according to Mr. Sipes. Additional noted activity includes pursuing a transloading facility with the help of UP and has begun feasibility studies for an additional rail link to the Summit Power energy facility near Pennwell.
Liberty County RRTD #1 was formed in 2007 to support improvements to rail infrastructure within the county and to spur economic development along new and existing rail lines. The RRTD has supported two major initiatives since its creation. The first was the development of a 32 mile rail bypass route from the CMC rail yard west of Dayton northward to connect to the BNSF and/or UP to the east of Cleveland. The second project considered by the RRTD was in 2011 when a 1.8 mile spur line in the City of Liberty was potentially going to be abandoned and an associated at-grade crossing removed by TxDOT across a major FM road. The RRTD received $15,000 from the City of Liberty to study preservation of the line to keep rail service to current and potential future businesses along the spur. TxDOT interest in closing the grade crossing has since waned according to city officials.
Liberty County RRTD #1: Details, History, & Activities

Creation

- Date Created – 2007
- Circumstances – Formed to improve rail infrastructure for economic development purposes

Composition

- Counties (1) – Liberty County
- Board Members – Board members are currently in place
- Point(s) of Contact – Stephen Robinson; Allen, Boone, Humphries, and Robinson, LLP; Attorney for Liberty County Rural Rail Transportation District #1, (713) 860-6400, srobinson@abhr.com
- Website – None

Current Status

- Board Activity – Semi-active
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – The district applied for a TIGER grant for a grade separated interchange near the City of Dayton on US 90 but was unsuccessful. The district is negotiating with the City of Liberty and UP on a spur project to serve Liberty’s industrial complex south of US 90.
- Future Activities – Continue to support economic development through rail projects in the county and pursue grant options for the US 90 grade separation near Dayton.

History

Liberty County RRTD #1 was formed in 2007 to support improvements to rail infrastructure within the county and to spur economic development along new and existing rail lines. The RRTD has supported two major initiatives since its creation. The first was the development of a 32 mile rail bypass route from the CMC rail yard west of Dayton northward to connect to the BNSF and/or UP to the east of Cleveland. This route would have connected the UP Lafayette Sub and Baytown Branch to the BNSF Conroe Sub (and potentially also the UP Lufkin Sub with a 2.1 mile extension) allowing for several trains daily to avoid having to go into the Houston area in order to change subdivisions. The second project considered by the RRTD was in 2011 when a 1.8 mile spur line in the City of Liberty was potentially going to be abandoned and an associated at-grade crossing removed by TxDOT across a major FM road. The RRTD received $15,000 from the City of Liberty to study preservation of the line to keep rail service to current and potential future businesses along the spur. TxDOT interest in closing the grade crossing has since waned according to city officials.
The Live Oak County RRTD originally formed to assist the Valero Three Rivers Refinery near Three Rivers, Texas construct a rail storage facility. Valero eventually cancelled the project at that time. No RRTD activities have taken place since that project was cancelled according to an interview with the Live Oak County Judge in February 2013.
Live Oak County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – April 2003
- Circumstances – Formed to assist in constructing rail storage facility for economic development purposes

Composition
- Counties (1) – Live Oak County
- Board Members – Not current
- Point(s) of Contact – Live Oak County Judge Jim Huff, (361) 449-2733 x1002
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity – Inactive
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – N/A
- Future Activities – None at this time

History
The Live Oak County RRTD originally formed to assist the Valero Three Rivers Refinery near Three Rivers, Texas construct a rail storage facility. Valero eventually cancelled the project at that time. No RRTD activities have taken place since that project was cancelled according to an interview with the Live Oak County Judge in February 2013.

In late 2012, Live Oak Railroad, a private venture announced plans to open a rail storage yard on private property in the Three Rivers area just north of the UP line. The facility is to open by June 2013. Contacts with Live Oak Railroad officials confirmed that there was no involvement of the RRTD in this project.
The Matagorda County RRTD was formed originally as a potential mechanism to provide rail service to a new conceptual industrial park in the county, along with several other economic development-related projects in the county. None of those projects came to fruition, but the district board remains in place and could become active again if a new project or concern arises in the county.
Matagorda County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – February 2001
- Circumstances – Formed for economic development purposes

Composition
- Counties (1) – Matagorda County
- Board Members – Board is appointed and reappointed; most members are industry or economic development representatives
- Point(s) of Contact – Owen Bludau, Executive Director, Matagorda County EDC (979) 245-8913 obludau@co.matagorda.tx.us; Considers himself official record keeper of district.
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity – Semi-Active: Board remains appointed but have not had an active project in over 8 years; Could become active with new project or if other reason emerges
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – None
- Future Activities – N/A

History
The Matagorda County RRTD was formed originally as a potential mechanism to provide rail service to a new conceptual industrial park in the county, along with several other economic development-related projects in the county. It does not appear that any of these projects came to fruition.
The Maverick County RRTD formed to address crossing issues in the city of Eagle Pass, along with other economic development projects. One reference from 2003 states that the district was formed to redevelop the activities of a “former district that never got going.” More recent focus was on rail crossing issues in Eagle Pass although no current projects for the RRTD are known.
Maverick County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – 2003
- Circumstances – Formed to address crossing issues and economic development in Eagle Pass

Composition
- Counties (1) – Maverick County
- Board Members – N/A; Board Inactive
- Point(s) of Contact – Celestino Hernandez, TxDOT (former Eagle Pass City Planner), (830) 773-2617
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity – Inactive
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – N/A
- Future Activities – None planned at this time

History
The Maverick County RRTD formed to address crossing issues in the city of Eagle Pass, along with other economic development projects. One reference from 2003 states that the district was formed to redevelop the activities of a “former district that never got going.” More recent focus was on rail crossing issues in Eagle Pass although no current projects for the RRTD are known.

The McLennan County RRTD was formed in 2003 to promote general economic development projects within the county. The RRTD board members continue to be appointed regularly as terms expire so that the board can be ready to meet should a project emerge, however no projects are planned at this time. The RRTD board has not met for approximately three years as of February 2013.
McLennan County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation

- Date Created – 2003
- Circumstances – Economic Development

Composition

- Counties (1) – McLennan County
- Board Members – Current Appointments; on stand-by if needed
- Point(s) of Contact – George "Jed" Walker, RRTD Board Member and Chair of Waco Transportation Committee, (254) 714-1402
- Website – None

Current Status

- Board Activity – Semi-active
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – N/A
- Future Activities – None planned at this time

History

The McLennan County RRTD was formed in 2003 to promote general economic development projects in within the county. The RRTD board members continue to be appointed regularly as terms expire so that the board can be ready to meet should a project emerge, however no projects are planned at this time. The RRTD board has not met for approximately three years as of February 2013.
The Middle Rio Grande RRTD was formed in 1987 to prevent the abandonment of approximately 175 miles of rail line. The UTSA library maintains papers for Arcenio Garcia, former La Salle County Commissioner, which includes the Article of Incorporation of the district and also an US EDA grant application. Based on these documents, the district, also referred to as the Wintergarden RRTD in the EDA application, was planning to use the EDA grant to purchase the rail line and lease the rail service to a short line railroad. The rail line was purchased from Missouri Pacific by Iron Horse Resources, which maintained operation as the Crystal City Railroad until the Del Monte plant stopped using rail in 1995. The line was abandoned, with the exception of a one-mile segment off the UP line, now known as the Gardendale Railroad. Because of the Eagle Ford Shale oil and gas formation activity, the Gardendale railroad has become a large interchange yard with over 80,000 feet of track.
**Middle Rio Grande RRTD: Details, History, & Activities**

**Creation**
- Date Created – 1987
- Circumstances – Formed to preserve freight rail service

**Composition**
- Counties (3) – Dimmit, La Salle, and Zavala
- Board Members – N/A; Board Inactive
- Point(s) of Contact – Joe Luna, Zavala County Judge, (830) 374-3810
- Website – None

**Current Status**
- Board Activity – Inactive
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – An April 2012 article for the San Antonio Express News reported on the recent growth of the Gardendale Railroad because of the oil and gas activities in the region. The Gardendale Railroad is a small spur off the UP railroad and remains the only part of an abandoned railroad that stretched west, then north to Uvalde and east, then north to connect to the UP line between San Antonio and Corpus Christi. The article reports that the Crystal City Railroad owned the track to the Del Monte plant. It indicates that Iron Horse Resources, owner of the Gardendale Railroad, purchased the track in 1990 and that most of the line was abandoned after Del Monte stopped using rail in 1995.11 Because of the Eagle Ford Shale oil and gas formation activity, the Gardendale railroad has become a large interchange yard where they trade cars daily with UP. Gardendale reported in the article that they went from 1,600 feet of track to 80,000 feet of track over the past several years and are planning for an additional 25,000 feet in the year to come.12 In a discussion with Mr. Matt Cundiff with Iron Horse Resources, owner of the Gardendale Railroad, he indicated that Iron Horse purchased the line directly from the Missouri Pacific Railroad without the assistance of the rail district.
- Future Activities – N/A

**History**
The Middle Rio Grande RRTD was formed in 1987 to prevent the abandonment of approximately 175 miles of rail line. The UTSA library maintains papers for Arcenio Garcia, former La Salle County Commissioner, which includes the Article of Incorporation of the district and also an US EDA grant application. Based on these documents, the district, also referred to as the Wintergarden RRTD in the EDA application, was planning to use the EDA grant to purchase the rail line and lease the rail service to a short line railroad. There was later discussion by La Salle County to form a single-district RRTD but the district was never formed, according to the current County Judge, Joel Rodriguez.

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The North Central RTD was formed to address potential abandoned of a rail line owned by UP that traversed the two counties. The line was leased by UP to the Dallas, Garland and Northeastern Railroad (DGNO). Later DART purchased the line as part of a wide-area purchase of rail lines for potential future passenger rail services. With secured freight service along the line the district became inactive.
North Central RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – 1995
- Circumstances – Formed to prevent abandonment of a rail line

Composition
- Counties (2) – Collin and Grayson Counties
- Board Members – N/A; Board Inactive
- Point(s) of Contact – Van Price, Grayson County Legal Counsel to the Commissioner's Court (903) 813-4258
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity – Inactive
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – Collin County was added to the Northeast Texas RRTD in 2005. Mr. Van Price with Grayson County indicates that he has been there ten years and has never heard mention of the North Central RRTD.
- Future Activities – N/A

History
The North Central RTD was formed to address potential abandoned of a rail line owned by UP that traversed the two counties. The line was leased by UP to the Dallas, Garland and Northeastern Railroad (DGNO). Later DART purchased the line, plus several others in the area. The RRTD is inactive and Collin County joined the active NETEX RRTD in 2005.
North Texas RRTD

Year Created: 1995          Current Status: Active
Type: Multi-County          Counties (2): Archer, Wichita
Motivation for Forming: Abandonment
Asset Ownership: RRTD owns approximately 7 miles of abandoned ROW proposed for multi-use trail.

The North Texas RRTD was formed in 1995 and 1996 to combat the potential loss of rail service and abandonment of the rail line from Wichita Falls in Wichita County southwest along US 82 through Archer County. The line was abandoned, but the district was able to purchase and rail bank a seven-mile segment. They received a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department National Recreation Trail Grant of $33,641 in 2009 for trail improvements, including parking, benches, and signs. The board consists of four members and is active.
North Texas RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation

- Date Created – 1995 and 1996
- Circumstances – Formed to prevent the abandonment of a rail line

Composition

- Counties (2) – Archer and Wichita Counties
- Board Members – Board consists of four members, two from Archer and two from Wichita
- Point(s) of Contact – Lisa Gunnell (940) 696-0296 [indicates leaving board this year]; Charles Finnell (512) 458-3848 cell phone
- Website – None

Current Status

- Board Activity – Active
- Asset Ownership – District acquired approximately 7 miles of right-of-way of the abandoned rail line. It begins at around Sisk Road in Wichita County, stretches southwest, and terminates in the City of Holliday, in Archer County. They are using an acquired grant from the Texas Parks and Wildlife to make trail-use improvements. Access points to the trail include Sisk Road, Turkey Ranch Road, and in Holliday.
- Recent Activities – Ms. Lisa Gunnell indicates that they have recently put in places at several locations along the trail for cars to park and access the trail. She says they have a lease agreement with the City of Holliday, who does the mowing of the right-of-way in the city. One board member passed away in Fall 2012.
- Future Activities – It appears future activities will continue to revolve around enhancing the trail.

History

The North Texas RRTD was formed to combat the potential loss of rail service and abandonment of the rail line from Wichita Falls in Wichita County southwest along US 82 through Archer County. The line was abandoned, but the district was able to purchase and rail bank a seven-mile segment. They received a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department National Recreation Trail Grant of $33,641 in 2009 for trail improvements, including parking, benches, and signs. The grant announcement mentions the trail is part of the Wichita Valley Railway Daylight Trail project.

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NETEX used a 1995 $2 million legislative appropriation to purchase the 31 mile SP line from Simtrott to five miles west of Sulphur Springs. In September 2000, NETEX purchased (fee simple) an additional 35 miles of UP track to the western Titus county line near Winfield using a $1.5 million grant from USDA. In 2001, the legislature directed TxDOT to spend $300,000 to purchase an additional 23.5 miles of SP ROW between Simtrott and Wylie. NETEX submitted unsuccessful TIGER grant applications in both FY 2011 and FY 2012. Blacklands Railroad (BLR) is leading an application currently for a $4 million federal RRIF loan that would be used to rehabilitate the eastern end of the line to Ridgeway up to FRA Track Class 2 status.
Northeast Texas RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation

- Date Created – July 1994; Collin County added in 2005
- Circumstances – Formed to prevent abandonment and maintain freight rail service of a line owned by SP.

Composition

- Counties (5) – Collin, Franklin, Hopkins, Hunt, and Titus Counties
- Board Members – regularly appointed and reappointed
- Point(s) of Contact – Dr. Jason Lee Davis, TAMU Commerce, (903) 468-8682, Jason.Davis@tamuc.edu
- Website – http://orgs.tamuc.edu/netex/

Current Status

- Board Activity – Active; Meet bi-monthly in odd-numbered months or more often if necessary to support any on-going projects/RRTD business
- Asset Ownership – State of Texas, through TxDOT, purchased in 1995 31 miles of track in which NETEX maintains all operating rights and decisions; Acquired additional 35 miles in 2000; TxDOT purchased 23.5 miles of right-of-way in 2001
- Recent Activities – Collin County was added in 2005; Negotiated long-term (10-year) operations contract with Blacklands Railroad enabling better planning/funding application status for NETEX-owned lines.
- Future Activities – Rehabilitation of existing lines; Re-development of abandoned ROW to Wylie

History

In 1995 the legislature appropriated $2 million for the purchase of 31 miles of SP line from Simtrott, west of the city of Greenville to a point five miles west of Sulphur Springs. These appropriated general revenue funds provided the only revenue source for this purchase. The State, through TxDOT, maintains a security interest on this 31 miles of track equal to the amount of state funding appropriated by the legislature; however, all operating rights and decisions have been granted to the NETEX RRTD.

In September 2000, the NETEX RRTD purchased an additional 35 miles of track from UP that connected the former eastern end of track, just west of Sulphur Springs, east to the western Titus county line near Winfield. Funds for this purchase came from a $1.5 million Rural Economic Development Grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. NETEX owns this portion of the rail line in fee simple interest.

In May 2001, the 77th Legislature passed an appropriations bill rider number 62, directing TxDOT to allocate $300,000 of its appropriated funds to purchase and preserve 23.5 miles of former SP right-of-way between Simtrott and Wylie, Texas, adjoining to the current NETEX holdings. (The Interstate Commerce Commission had authorized this piece of railroad for abandonment in November 1994. At that time, NETEX attempted to purchase the abandoned railroad from SP, but SP sold the line to A&K Materials in May 1995, who removed the tracks and sold the materials for their salvage value.)

NETEX submitted U.S. DOT TIGER grant applications for both FY 2011 and FY 2012 but did not receive any funding. Currently, the Blacklands Railroad (BLR) is leading an application for a $4 million federal RRIF loan from the FRA that would be used to rehabilitate the eastern end of the line to Ridgeway up to FRA Track Class 2 status. NETEX has negotiated a long-term (10 year) operating contract with BLR which will help facilitate such funding applications. The BLR has won rail industry JAKE awards for safety for the past several years and won the 2011 Railway Age national Shortline Railroad of the Year award.
Northwest Texas RRTD

**Year Created:** 1993

**Current Status:** Inactive

**Type:** Multi-County

**Counties (7):** Fisher, Foard, Hardeman, Haskell, Jones, Knox, Stonewall

**Motivation for Forming:** Abandonment

**Asset Ownership:** None

The Northwest Texas RRTD was formed to prevent the abandonment of the “North Orient” rail line, consisting of 150 miles of track between Sweetwater and the Oklahoma border. The line was abandoned and track removed in 1995. Portions of the right-of-way were purchased by TxDOT for roadway expansion.
Northwest Texas RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – 1993
- Circumstances – Formed to prevent the abandonment of a 150-mile rail line corridor

Composition
- Counties (7) – Fisher, Foard, Hardeman, Haskell, Jones, Knox, and Stonewall
- Board Members – N/A; Board Inactive
- Point(s) of Contact – Dale Spurgin, Jones County Judge, (325) 823-3741, Dale.Spurgin@co.jones.tx.us
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity – Inactive
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – None
- Future Activities – N/A

History
The Northwest Texas RRTD was formed to prevent the abandonment of the “North Orient” rail line, consisting of 150 miles of track between Sweetwater and the Oklahoma border. The line was abandoned and track removed in 1995. The 2011 CTR report states that the right-of-way was purchased by TxDOT for the construction of a four-lane divided highway. This was actually purchase of sections of ROW by TxDOT to expand the existing roadway that paralleled the facility.
The Nueces County RRTD was formed in May 2001 to address rail issues throughout the county and act as an avenue for financing and creating public-private partnerships for economic development. The board has been active since 2008, looking at projects in the county as well as looking at projects in conjunction with the San Patricio County RRTD. The Nueces County RRTD and the San Patricio County RRTD are working in conjunction on matters related to the Port of Corpus Christi, including rail access to the La Quinta container terminal project. The district is participating in an investigation into a major inland port project in Robstown where the district could be used for the rail infrastructure in the park.
Nueces County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – May 2001
- Circumstances – Formed to promote economic development activity

Composition
- Counties (1) – Nueces County
- Board Members – Board consists of seven members and a non-voting member acting as secretary
- Point(s) of Contact – Tyner Little, Nueces County Judge’s Office, (361) 888-0878, tyner.little@co.nueces.tx.us.
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity – Active: meet mostly monthly
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – Mr. Tyner Little has been secretary for the district since inception and indicates that the district went dormant around 2005/2006. County Judge Loyd Neal caused a resurgence of interest and the board has been active since 2008. The Nueces County RRTD works closely with the San Patricio County RRTD on matters related to the Port of Corpus Christi, including rail access to the La Quinta terminal project. The Commissioner’s Court in 2010 expanded the number of board members from five to seven.
- Future Activities – A major project identified is a project in Robstown called the Inland Ports of the Americas, which would be located adjacent to the airport and could provide rail access from UP, BNSF, and KCS. Mr. Little indicates that the district could be used for the rail infrastructure in the park.

History
The Nueces County RRTD was formed to address rail issues throughout the county and act as an avenue for financing and creating public-private partnerships for economic development. The RRTD is currently active in developing an inland port near Robstown that would serve three Class I railroads.
The district was formed to assist in the rehabilitation of the South Orient rail line for economic purposes. Working with the Pecos County EDC, the Pecos County RRTD has been active in attempting to secure funds to improve the South Orient rail line. In a July 7, 2008 letter and unsolicited proposals by the district to TxDOT, and included in TxDOT’s report The Feasibility of Selling the South Orient Railroad, the district indicates it is “attempting to bring about timely improvements to the South Orient Railroad so it can serve existing industrial expansion in Pecos County and serve as a catalyst for future regional economic development.” In the letter, the district indicates it aggressively markets the rail service in the region. Currently, the area is very busy with oil and gas-related activity, most notably for the railroad is the shipping of frac sand used in the exploration.
Pecos County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation

- Date Created – 2002
- Circumstances – Formed to assist in the rehabilitation of the South Orient rail line for economic development purposes.

Composition

- Counties (1) – Pecos County
- Board Members – Board is appointed and in place
- Point(s) of Contact – Doug May, Pecos County Economic Development Corporation, (432) 336-2264, edc@fortstockton.org
- Website – None

Current Status

- Board Activity – Active: meets as needed
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – Working with the Pecos County EDC, the Pecos County Rural Rail District (PCRRD) has been active in attempting to secure funds to improve the South Orient rail line.
- Future Activities – The rail district, in conjunction with the EDC, will continue to actively pursue economic development and line improvement activities.

History

In a July 7, 2008 letter and unsolicited proposals by the district to TxDOT, and included in TxDOT’s report The Feasibility of Selling the South Orient Railroad, the district indicates it is “attempting to bring about timely improvements to the South Orient Railroad so it can serve existing industrial expansion in Pecos County and serve as a catalyst for future regional economic development.”\(^\text{14}\) The unsolicited proposals included an option where Texas maintains ownership of the South Orient Railroad and an option where the state would sell the line. In the letter, the district indicates it aggressively markets the rail service in the region.

Mr. Doug May with the Pecos County EDC indicates that the area is very busy with oil and gas industry activity. He indicates that all the properties are filled in the county, mostly with frac sand operations used in oil and gas exploration. He also espoused the fact that the Texas Pacifico Railroad is much more aggressive now than in the past.

One major issue in the area is the international bridge, which burned down several years ago. The PCRRD 2007 letter indicates that much of the traffic along the South Orient rail line is not related to the international bridge. Mr. May mentioned the bridge was important and indicates that the governor’s office and Mexico entities are working on facilitating the reconstruction of the bridge.

Presidio County RRTD

The district was formed to assist in the rehabilitation of the South Orient rail line for economic purposes, especially in relation to international movements across the Presidio-Ojinaga international crossing. The rail district, in conjunction with the West Texas Economic Development District (WTEDD) received an Economic Adjustment Assistance grant from the Economic Administration (EDA) in October 2012 for $65,000. The focus of the study is the feasibility determination of the constructing a transloading facility near the border in Presidio. The facility would capture cross-border trucks before they traverse through the Big Bend area toward the Midwest. The truck impact on the environment within the Big Bend region is a concern and reason cited by local people for investigating the transfer of shipments from truck to rail at the border.
**Presidio County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities**

**Creation**
- Date Created – 2002
- Circumstances – Formed to increase rail traffic over the South Orient rail line and international bridge for economic development purposes

**Composition**
- Counties (1) – Presidio County
- Board Members – Consists of five members; meet monthly
- Point(s) of Contact – Raul Gonzalez, Regional Services Planner, Rio Grande Council of Government, (915) 533-0998; Manuel Fausett, Secretary of RRTD, mfausett@presidioisd.net
- Website – None

**Current Status**
- Board Activity – Active
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – In February 2008 a portion of the international rail bridge between Presidio and Ojinaga burned, followed by an additional fire in March 2009, which destroyed the U.S. portion of the bridge blocking traffic over the bridge. The rail district, in conjunction with the West Texas Economic Development District (WTEDD) received an Economic Adjustment Assistance grant from the Economic Administration (EDA) in October 2012. A February 2013 article indicates that the grant is for $65,000, which is combined with an additional $13,000 from the Municipal Development District of Presidio and an in-kind donation of roughly $15,000 worth of Presidio County's staff time. The focus of the study is the feasibility determination of the constructing a transloading facility near the border in Presidio. The facility would capture cross-border trucks before they traverse through the Big Bend area toward the Midwest. Mr. Raul Gonzalez with the Rio Grande Council of Government discussed the truck impact on the environment within the Big Bend region as a concern and reason portrayed by local people for reason to investigate the transfer of shipments from truck to rail at the border.
- Future Activities – The feasibility study provides a basis in which to further encourage increased rail traffic over the South Orient rail line that connects between the Presidio-Ojinaga international bridge and Fort Worth.

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Year Created: 2010  
Current Status: Inactive  
Type: Single-County  
Counties (1): Reeves  
Motivation for Forming: Economic Development/Industrial Park  
Asset Ownership: None

The Reeves County RRTD was formed to support economic development of Montane Logistics Industrial Park and expansion of the Pecos Valley Southern Railway (PVS) to serve it in 2010. The Reeves County Commissioners Court failed to appoint a board for the RRTD in July 2010 according to the current EDC director. Changes in county leadership due to lost elections by those officials supporting the RRTD formation and departure of the EDC director at about the same time were also described as reasons behind the failure of the RRTD becoming active.
Reeves County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – 2010
- Circumstances – Support economic development projects in the county

Composition
- Counties(1) – Reeves County
- Board Members – Formed; Board was not appointed in July 2010 by Commissioners Court
- Point(s) of Contact – Mr. Bill Oglesby, Reeves County Economic Development Council, (432) 445-9960, boglesby@cityofpecos.com
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity – Inactive
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – Supporting infrastructure needs for development of the 500-acre Montane Logistics Industrial Park and expansion of the Pecos Valley Southern Railway
- Future Activities – continued support of economic development projects

History
The Reeves County RRTD was formed to support economic development of Montane Logistics Industrial Park and expansion of the Pecos Valley Southern Railway (PVS) to serve it in 2010. The Reeves County Commissioners Court failed to appoint a board for the RRTD in July 2010 according to the current EDC director. Changes in county leadership due to lost elections by those officials supporting the RRTD formation and departure of the EDC director at about the same time were also described as reasons behind the failure of the RRTD becoming active.\(^\text{17}\)

\(^{17}\) Bill Oglesby phone message to TTI, February 21, 2013.
The Rusk County Rural Rail District was formed in 2008 to prevent the abandonment of the 15 mile rail spur line between Overton and Henderson by UP. Since taking over operation of the branch, the line saw approximately 1,600 carloads in 2010, 2,800 carloads in 2011, and down some to 1,200 carloads in 2012 due to a drop in frac sand activity in Haynesville Shale. RRTD is also developing plans/environmental clearance for building a 15 mile, $150 million spur line that would extend to the BNSF railroad and Luminant Power Plant in the western part of the county known as the “RCRRD West Corridor.” One public meeting on the project has been held with another in the planning stages. Local contact also mentioned possible development of a refinery operation in the northern part of Rusk County that might require rail service in the future.
Rusk County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – 2008
- Circumstances – Formed to prevent rail line abandonment

Composition
- Counties (1) – Rusk County
- Board Members – Board is in place
- Point(s) of Contact – John Cloutier
- Website – http://ruskcountyrail.org/

Current Status
- Board Activity – Active
- Asset Ownership – Acquired the 15-mile spur
- Recent Activities – The line segment was purchased in May 2010 and the operation of the line is leased to Blacklands Railroad (BLR); abandoning last mile of track in Henderson that had been paved over/used as city street for decades despite railroad ownership
- Future Activities – Continued increase in carloadings; Further development and promotion of the industrial park as an inland port serving flows to and from the Port of Houston; Frac sand to the Haynesville Shale play

History
The Rusk County Rural Rail District was formed in 2008 to prevent the abandonment of the 15 mile rail spur line between Overton and Henderson by UP. Since taking over operation of the branch, the line saw approximately 1600 carloads in 2010, 2800 carloads in 2011, and down some to 1200 carloads in 2012 due to a drop in frac sand activity in Haynesville Shale. RRTD is also developing plans/ environmental clearance for building a 15 mile, $150 million spur line that would extend to the BNSF railroad and Luminant Power Plant in the western part of the county known as the “RCRRD West Corridor.” One public meeting on the project has been held with another in the planning stages. Mr. Cloutier also mentioned possible development of a refinery operation in the northern part of Rusk County that might require rail service in the future.
The San Patricio County RRTD formed in 2002 largely for economic development purposes, but also with concern for rail line abandonment. These two major issues remain the focus of the district at this time. The San Patricio district considers itself very busy with rail issues in the area. From an economic development standpoint, the district is working with the Port of Corpus Christi, often in conjunction with the Nueces County RRTD, to promote improved rail access to the ports, especially for the La Quinta project. Additionally, the district would like to see rail improvements through Odem and envisions developing a situation where multiple rail carriers serve local customers, instead of only UP. The district is also concerned with potential loss of rail spurs in the area, including one in Mathis. They work closely with the Nueces County RRTD and assist Aransas County with rail issues.
San Patricio County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation

- Date Created – December 2002
- Circumstances – Formed largely for economic development purposes; Also rail line abandonment a concern in county

Composition

- Counties (1) – San Patricio County
- Board Members – Boards consists of 10 members: Tom Ballou (President), John Barrett, Sid Brough, Tom Curlee, Roy DeBolt, John Green, Hon. Billy Huerta, Jim Paxton, Erich Schneider, and Kay Whatley
- Point(s) of Contact – Lynn Spencer, Executive Director, San Patricio Economic Development Corporation, (361) 777-2368, lynn@sanpatricioedc.com
- Website – None

Current Status

- Board Activity – Active; meet regularly
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – The San Patricio district considers itself very busy with rail issues in the area. From an economic development standpoint, the district is working with the Port of Corpus Christi, often in conjunction with the Nueces County RRTD, to promote improved rail access to the ports, especially for the La Quinta project. Additionally, the district would like to see rail improvements through Odem and envisions developing a situation where multiple rail carriers serve local customers, instead of only UP. The district is also concerned with potential loss of rail spurs in the area, including one in Mathis. They work closely with the Nueces County RRTD and assist Aransas County with rail issues. Ms. Lynn Spencer is the new Executive Director of the San Patricio County EDC and inherits the position’s activities with the rail district.
- Future Activities – Ms. Lynn Spencer expects the area to continue to grow economically, which translates into continued efforts to support maintaining and expanding rail services in the area.

History

Ms. Lynn Spencer is unaware of the specific purpose for developing the rail district, but believes it was a combination of economic development and rail line abandonment concerns in the area.
The SORRTD formed to prevent abandonment of the ATSF South Orient line between San Angelo Junction in Coleman County and Presidio on the Mexican border. This line was one of only five rail crossing locations between Texas and Mexico and one of only eight between the U.S. and Mexico. State appropriations to preserve the line ultimately resulted in state ownership of the line in 2001. Texas Pacifico (TXPF) provides freight rail service over the line under lease to TxDOT. A fire destroyed the international bridge in 2007 and since then no international movements have occurred. Rail operations have greatly increased in recent years due to increased oil and gas production in the area and joint investment by TxDOT and TXPF.
South Orient RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – 1991
- Circumstances – Formed to prevent rail line abandonment

Composition
- Counties (11) – Brewster, Coleman, Crane, Crockett, Irion, Pecos, Presidio, Reagan, Runnels, Tom Green, and Upton Counties
- Board Members – N/A; Board Inactive
- Point(s) of Contact – Mike Brown, Tom Green County Judge, (325) 653-3318, Mike.Brown@co.tom-green.tx.us
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity – Inactive
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – Recent rehabilitation projects by TxDOT and operations by Texas Pacifico have resulted in little or no activity by the RRTD along the line. Several individual member counties have formed single-county districts to better promote local projects
- Future Activities – none known at this time

History
In 1991, as part of a complex agreement in which TxDOT provided a $3 million from a state general revenue appropriation and the South Orient Railroad Company, Ltd. (SORC) provided $2.5 million, the SORRTD acquired the installed rail infrastructure on the roadbed (subject to a $2.52 million security interest held by TxDOT if the line were ever to be abandoned and a $5000 purchase option held by the SORC). TxDOT received the ATSF’s existing ownership rights to the right-of-way underlying the rail line for $480,000. The SORC acquired ownership of both ATSF’s common carrier obligation and “permanent” easement to operate a freight rail business along the line. SORC also quickly executed a $5,000 option to purchase certain non-railroad real estate adjacent to the railroad and its right-of-way.

SORC began limited train operations over the line in 1992 and tried for several years to make it profitable with little success even though SORC also operated the line owned by the CENTEX RRTD all the way to Fort Worth. In June 1998, SORC decided to file with the STB for abandonment permission. SORRTD opposed the abandonment but had been largely inactive prior to the abandonment. The STB ultimately allowed only a discontinuance of operations over most of the line instead of full abandonment.

In 1999, the 76th Legislature passed a $6 million appropriation directing TxDOT to purchase the South Orient line. In March 2001, TxDOT, SORC, Grupo Mexico, and SORRTD reached an agreement that granted TxDOT ownership of the track structures from SORRTD and the outstanding $5000 purchase option held by SORC was extinguished. A U.S. subsidiary of Grupo Mexico, Texas Pacifico Transportation, received a 40-year lease (with five ten-year extension options) to operate trains over the line in exchange for contributing an additional $3.5 million to meet SORC’s $9.5 million asking price.

Texas Pacifico (TXPF) began operating over the line in 2001. Operations have greatly increased in recent years due to increased oil and gas production in the area, however, fire destroyed the international bridge in 2007 and another major bridge in 2008, so no international movements can take place. TxDOT and TXPF are currently working to seek funds to restore international bridge traffic and associated freight opportunities. Despite all this activity on the South Orient line, the SORRTD remains inactive at this time.
South Plains RRTD

Year Created: 1988
Type: Multi-County

Current Status: Inactive
Counties (8): Crosby, Dawson, Floyd, Gaines, Hockley, Lubbock, Lynn, Terry

Motivation for Forming: Abandonment
Asset Ownership: None

The South Plains RRTD was formed to preserve freight rail service in the area of Lubbock, where multiple rail lines spoke out of and was known as the “Lubbock Cluster.” The only mention of district found during the investigation is a report by TTI that examined the viability of the Seagraves, Whiteface and Lubbock Railroad Company published in August 1995. The TTI report identified a South Plains RRTD study performed to examine the “Lubbock Cluster” lines in order to preserve the freight rail service that served the agriculture community in the area. The lines of focus in the TTI report remain in operation today by the West Texas & Lubbock Railroad (WTLR), but several other low-density lines were abandoned.
South Plains RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – July 1988
- Circumstances – Formed to preserve freight rail service on line planned for abandonment

Composition
- Counties (8) – Crosby, Dawson, Floyd, Gaines, Hockley, Lubbock, Lynn, and Terry
- Board Members – N/A; Board Inactive
- Point(s) of Contact – Tom Head, Lubbock County Judge, (806) 775-7950, thead@co.lubbock.tx.us
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity – Inactive: stated as “disbanded”
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – None
- Future Activities – N/A

History
The South Plains RRTD was formed to preserve freight rail service in the area of Lubbock, where multiple rail lines spoke out of and was known as the “Lubbock Cluster.” The only mention of district found during the investigation is a report by TTI that examined the viability of the Seagraves, Whiteface and Lubbock Railroad Company published in August 1995. The TTI report identified a South Plains RRTD study performed to examine the “Lubbock Cluster” lines in order to preserve the freight rail service that served the agriculture community in the area. A generalization of the 1989 report findings is that the lines of concern had high acquisition costs, high rehabilitation costs, and low traffic density. These conditions would make it very difficult to operate rail services over the lines at an adequate level to maintain a financially viable service over time. The lines of focus in the TTI report remain in operation today by the West Texas & Lubbock Railroad (WTLR), but several other low-density lines were abandoned. The 2011 CTR report states that the district disbanded pursuant to district rules at the time when a private short line rail took over rail service in the area. Hockley County has subsequently formed a single-county RRTD.

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The South Texas RRTD formed to in order to prevent the abandonment of a line that stretched between San Antonio and Corpus Christi. The SP line was abandoned before the RRTD could be formed and the railroad made arrangements to remove the rail. UP still owns portions of the line despite selling much of the parcels to surrounding land owners. There is a current effort to extend the UP line where it currently begins the abandonment near the Bexar-Wilson County line. The new development would extend the current line about a quarter mile along UP-owned right-of-way where it will be utilized for a new 300-acre industrial park dedicated to oil and gas activities in the region.
South Texas RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – Early 1990s
- Circumstances – Formed to prevent abandonment of a rail line

Composition
- Counties (3) – Bexar, Karnes, and Wilson Counties
- Board Members – N/A; Board Inactive
- Point(s) of Contact – Hugh “Trip” Ruckman, III, Karnes County National Bank, (830)780-3317
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity – Inactive
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – According to the Wilson County Emergency Planning Coordinator, there is a current effort to extend/rebuild the UP (former SP) line from San Antonio, which now ends just south of Elmendorf, about a quarter mile where it will be utilized for a new 300-acre industrial park dedicated to oil and gas activities in the region.
- Future Activities – N/A

History
The South Texas RRTD formed to in order to prevent the abandonment of a line that stretched between San Antonio and Corpus Christi. The SP line was abandoned before the RRTD could be formed and the railroad made arrangements to remove the rail. It was previously reported that the RRTD was able to gain ownership of some right-of-way, but Mr. Trip Ruckman indicates that was not the case. He indicates that UP remains owner of some sections of the line but sold many of the parcels to surrounding land owners. Mr. Ruckman also indicates that with all the oil and gas activities that the line would be a valuable asset if it had remained in place.
Top of Texas RRTD

The Top of Texas RRTD was formed in 2006 to oppose abandonment of a 90-mile rail corridor between Spearman through all three District counties across the state line into Oklahoma. The RRTD was able to acquire fee-simple ownership of the ROW and all existing leases while the former railroad owner was able to salvage the rail materials. The RRTD collects lease payments from existing leases as income and are actively seeking additional markets to develop business along the ROW. Power companies are also a target for the RRTD for transmission line ROW connecting to wind farms being developed in the region. Because of the line’s length and current conditions, it is unlikely that rail operations on the line will be restored in the current economic climate.
Top of Texas RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – 2006
- Circumstances – Formed to prevent the abandonment of the freight rail line

Composition
- Counties (3) – Hansford, Lipscomb, and Ochiltree Counties
- Board Members – Board maintains three members appointed for each county
- Point(s) of Contact – Clay Schnell, RRTD Board President, (806) 659-5565
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity – Active; meet as needed
- Asset Ownership – Acquired 90 miles of right-of-way
- Recent Activities – RRTD received ownership of the ROW in fee simple following abandonment of the line by the Southwestern Railroad
- Future Activities –

History
The district formed to acquire 90 miles of rail corridor through the district’s three counties and on to Shattuck, OK where the line connected to the Class I system. According to Mr. Schnell, the railroad was built in the 1920’s and remained only marginally profitable prior to abandonment. Cost of shipping by rail was approximately equal to shipping by truck along the line, so several businesses were shipping by truck instead. When a railroad bridge burned, the cost to repair for the railroad was too great and Southwestern decided to abandon the line. Many businesses and other tenants were leasing property from the railroad along its line when the abandonment occurred.

Leadership of the RRTD at that time was able to negotiate a deal with the railroad to gain fee-simple ownership of the ROW and all the existing leases while the railroad was able to salvage the rail materials. This action allowed the businesses and other tenants along the line to retain their leases and the RRTD collects their lease payments as income. ROW-owned is approximately 100 feet wide along most of the corridor outside the cities and wider in town/former station areas (approximately 600 feet wide in the city of Spearman, for example).

The board remains active in seeking a market to sell or develop business along the ROW owned by the district. Leases within towns to businesses and also leasing of some ROW for farm operations in the countryside have been approved by the RRTD board. The district has spoken with several power companies interested in using portions of the right-of-way for electric transmission lines, given the recent wind farm developments in the extreme north Texas region. The RRTD also considers pipeline crossing requests to cross the ROW. Long term, the RRTD may keep the existing ownership/leases or may deed the property back to the individual counties.

When asked about ownership of the section of ROW in Oklahoma, Mr. Schnell did not see an issue with it. It was part of the railroad abandonment and would be the only reasonable connection to the U.S. Class I railroad system should rail service ever be restored to the RRTD member counties along this line. Potential rail connections to the west from Spearman within Texas are much longer distance and over lines that have long been abandoned making restoration more difficult and likely more costly. Restoration of this rail line to operations is unlikely given the current economic conditions in the three counties making up the RRTD or until trucking costs are no longer competitive.
Year Created: 2005  
Current Status: Semi-Active  
Type: Single-County  
Counties (1): Van Zandt  
Motivation for Forming: Economic Development/Passenger Rail  
Asset Ownership: None

The Van Zandt County RRTD is currently semi-active but appointments to its board remain current allowing for new business opportunities for emerging opportunities to re-activate the board. The RRTD currently meets only once a year. Activity decreased approximately three years ago when some projects such as some work west of Wills Point, TX, an extension of a siding for Amtrak, and quiet zone projects were dropped. Some of this was linked to the failure of one of the active board members to be re-elected as mayor and other changes in city governor in that city according to a TTI interview with the board president. The RRTD is currently in "sleep mode" according to the Board President but still supports NET COG and East Texas Corridor Council efforts regarding passenger rail studies in the corridor.
Van Zandt County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – March 2005
- Circumstances – Formed to promote passenger rail through East Texas

Composition
- Counties(1) – Van Zandt County
- Board Members – Board is in place
- Point(s) of Contact – Vic Wetherholt, RRTD Board President, (903) 567-2899
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity – Semi-Active; board remains appointed/new members, but does not meet regularly; has met once yearly for last three years
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – N/A
- Future Activities – N/A; as needed

History
The Van Zandt County RRTD is currently semi-active but appointments to its board remain current allowing for new business opportunities or emerging projects to re-activate the board. The RRTD currently meets only once a year. Activity decreased approximately three years ago when some projects such as some work west of Wills Point, TX, an extension of a siding for Amtrak, and quiet zone projects were dropped. Some of this was linked to the failure of one of the active board members to be re-elected as mayor and other changes in city governor in that city according to a TTI interview with the board president. The RRTD is currently in “sleep mode” according to Mr. Wetherholt but still supports NET COG and East Texas Corridor Council efforts regarding passenger rail studies in the corridor.
The Webb County RRTD was formed in February 2003 in order to promote economic development in the county. Early goals of the district were to create an “alliance with Bexar and Nueces Counties” and their rail districts to create a “Golden Trade Triangle” that would potentially alleviate truck gridlock in Laredo, and provide a regional approach to economic development that “would strengthen a possible emerging industrial region of South Texas and Northern Mexico.” Much of this activity was at the time of the development of the Toyota Motor Plant in Bexar County and Webb County’s efforts were focused largely on improving the rail access by adding a double track rail bridge adjacent to the Camino-Columbia Bridge west of Laredo in order to move rail operations by UP out of downtown. An RRTD Director stated that UP had not been supportive of moving their operations to the Camino-Columbia corridor as desired by the RRTD, but had been supporting another alternate route to the east of Laredo.
Webb County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation

- Date Created – 2003
- Circumstances – Economic Development and Rail Bypass for Downtown

Composition

- Counties (1) – Webb County
- Board Members – non-current appointments but board is in-place
- Point(s) of Contact – Mr. Leroy Medford, RRTD board member and Assistant to County Judge, (956) 523-4600
- Website – None

Current Status

- Board Activity – Semi-active; Board members are available if need be.
- Asset Ownership – None
- Recent Activities – N/A; Inactive for about 1.5 years
- Future Activities – None planned at this time

History

The Webb County RRTD was formed in February 2003 in order to promote economic development in the county. Early goals of the district were to create an “alliance with Bexar and Nueces Counties” and their rail districts to create a “Golden Trade Triangle” that would potentially “alleviate truck gridlock in Laredo, and provide a regional approach to economic development” that “would strengthen a possible emerging industrial region of South Texas and Northern Mexico.” Much of this activity was at the time of the development of the Toyota Motor Plant in Bexar County and Webb County’s efforts were focused largely on improving the rail access by adding a double track rail bridge adjacent to the Camino-Columbia Bridge west of Laredo in order to move rail operations by UP out of downtown.

FHWA and TxDOT records show that the RRTD filed seeking a presidential permit to construct the rail bridge, but the permit application status has been stalled for a number of years. FHWA lists the permit’s status as waiting on the Webb County RRTD to respond to questions. TTI’s interview with a member of the RRTD board indicated that the board had been relatively inactive for the past one and one-half years as a result of several events. Primarily, the board member noted that the project had always been a joint project with partners in Nuevo Leon, specifically the economic development group CODEFRONT, to develop rail service on both the U.S. and Mexican sides of the border. Mr. Medford stated that CODEFRONT’s interest in development of the rail bridge had waned in the past two years. Additionally, he stated that UP had not been supportive of moving their operations to the Camino-Columbia corridor as desired by the RRTD, but had been supporting another alternate route to the east of Laredo.
The Willacy County RRTD was thought to have formed in 2007. The most recent Texas State Rail Plan shows the Willacy County RRTD in a map provided by the Texas Legislative Council. A 2011 report from the Center for Transportation Research at the University of Texas at Austin indicates that this RRTD was never officially formed. TTI researchers have contacted county officials and are still awaiting response.
Willacy County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – 2007
- Circumstances –

Composition
- Counties(1) – Willacy County
- Board Members – N/A; Board Inactive
- Point(s) of Contact – Marvin Quinney, Willacy County Judge, (956) 689-3393
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity –
- Asset Ownership –
- Recent Activities –
- Future Activities –

History
The Willacy County RRTD was thought to have formed in 2007. The most recent Texas State Rail Plan shows the Willacy County RRTD in a map provided by the Texas Legislative Council. A 2011 report from the Center for Transportation Research at the University of Texas at Austin indicates that this RRTD was never officially formed. TTI researchers have contacted county officials and are still awaiting response.
Wood County RRTD

The Wood County RRTD was created largely to support the NET RMA rail projects planning process and also to support passenger rail studies promoted by the East Texas Corridor Council. No recent activities are reported. The current county judge states that the only activities of the RRTD that are on record are formation of the RRTD in September 2005 with the board made up of the sitting members of the commissioner’s court at that time and a resolution passed by the district in October 2005 requesting letters be sent to the sitting U.S. Representative and U.S. Senators requesting $900,000 in earmark funding to the district. Copies of the letters are also on file with the county.
Wood County RRTD: Details, History, & Activities

Creation
- Date Created – 2005
- Circumstances – Formed to support freight and passenger rail projects in East Texas

Composition
- Counties(1) – Wood County
- Board Members – N/A; Board Inactive
- Point(s) of Contact – Celia Boswell, former Mineola mayor and Chair of NET RMA Rail Committee, csbmineola@suddenlink.net; County Judge Bryan Jeanes bjeanes@co.wood.tx.us
- Website – None

Current Status
- Board Activity – Inactive; Cooperating with NET RMA
- Recent Activities – N/A
- Future Activities – N/A

History
The Wood County RRTD was created largely to support the NET RMA rail projects planning process and also to support passenger rail studies promoted by the East Texas Corridor Council. No recent activities are reported. The current county judge states that the only activities of the RRTD that are on record are formation of the RRTD in September 2005 with the board made up of the sitting members of the commissioner’s court at that time and a resolution passed by the district in October 2005 requesting letters be sent to the sitting U.S. Representative and U.S. Senators requesting $900,000 in earmark funding to the district. Copies of the letters are also on file with the county.
Appendix B: Updated Recommendations from TxDOT Report 0-4007-2
(Updated to Reflect Sections of Current Transportation Code and Current Agency Names)
Introduction

This appendix incorporates the changes recommended by TTI in TxDOT Report 0-4007-2 in 2002, but references to statute sections have been updated to current Transportation Code Chapter 172 references. Names of the appropriate state agencies involved have also been updated to reflect current status.

Recommended New Provisions (Updated from 0-4007-2)

- Recommend that all RRTDs be required to report their formation to TxDOT’s Rail Division immediately upon passage of the resolution creating the RRTD by the commissioners court(s) of the county or counties that comprise the district. The legislation establishing this provision should also require that existing RRTDs register with TxDOT by providing basic information on their current status and activities.

- Recommend that the references to the “Texas Transportation Institute (TTI)” be updated to “Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI)” to reflect the name change adopted by the agency in 2012. Also recommend that it be made clearer in the statute that TTI can provide information and advice under contract with RRTDs.

- Recommend that several sections of the current statute be rewritten to make the rules for both single-county and multi-county districts consistent. Because single-county districts were authorized by amendments in 1997 to the 1981 statutes allowing only multi-county districts, several numbering and rule differences exist that call for a general cleanup of statute language to make it more straightforward and clear. Other provisions of the current statutes are out of date or no longer needed and should be removed. (Note: Some of these changes were taken care of in the general, non-substantive cleanup of all state rail regulations passed during the 81st session and later corrected in the Transportation Code by TxDOT Commission Minute Order in 2011. The remaining recommended changes are outlined more clearly in the next section.)

- Recommend that the legislature consider the creation of state incentives encouraging industrial development along rural, short line railroads in areas of the state that are currently underdeveloped or that have higher unemployment rates. Such programs could aid in creating development opportunities and provide an opportunity for TxDOT to work in cooperation with the Governor’s Office Economic Development and Tourism Division (EDT) and other state agencies to grow rail-served business in the state.

- Recommend renumbering of sections and subsections following adoption of recommended changes.
Recommended Changes to Existing Texas Transportation Code, Title 5, Subtitle 1, Chapter 172 (Updated from 0-4007-2 Recommendations)

Section 172.052: Creation of District by More than One County
General: Suggest combining Section 172.052 rules for multi-county districts and Section 172.053 for single-county districts into a common set of regulations for all RRTDs. Consider revision of statutes allowing RRTDs to dissolve only when joining to form a larger RRTD in order for a long inactive RRTD to sunset.

Section 172.053: Creation of District by One County
General: Suggest combining Section 172.052 rules for multi-county districts and Section 172.053 for single-county districts into a common set of regulations for all RRTDs. Consider revision of statutes allowing RRTDs to dissolve only when joining to form a larger RRTD in order for a long inactive RRTD to sunset.

Section 172.054: Notice of Creation
As noted above, TxDOT, as the state’s transportation planning agency, should be the primary agency notified upon RRTD formation. Notification of TTI upon district formation could continue in order for the RRTD to be made aware of the contract services that TTI can provide related to rail planning and economic development and background information on RRTD history and best practices.

Section 172.102: Terms
General: Suggest strengthening provisions for reappointment of RRTD board members to ensure that there are no gaps in board membership. These gaps have led to extreme inactivity on many of the existing RRTD boards. Many county commissioners courts have failed to renew appointments on a regular basis.

Section 172.107: Meetings; Notice
Recommend changing the requirement for a monthly meeting to quarterly or on an “as-needed by RRTD business” meeting schedule. This would relieve many districts that have no assets and little business from meeting monthly just to fulfill statutory requirements, post an agenda each month with no business items, or, conversely, choose not to meet in violation of the present statutes. Those RRTD boards whose business levels or ownership responsibilities require it could continue to meet on a more frequent monthly or bi-monthly basis, but many of the existing RRTDs have no current projects and little or no reason to meet monthly.

Section 172.201: General Authority over Rail Facilities
Consider provisions that would better define the limits of RRTD ownership of rail lines outside the RRTD boundaries. Specifically, the ownership of RRTD assets outside Texas should be addressed.