

RAIL

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RAIL

OVERVIEW

Texas has the most rail lines of any state with a total of 10,539 miles of track and the most public highway-rail grade crossings with a total of 9,350 crossings. Texas also has 5,692 highway-rail grade crossings and 2,036 highway-rail grade separations. The state is served by three Class I railroads and 49 Class III short line railroads. Texas' short line railroads operate on nearly 2,031 miles of track, providing critical links and serving as last-mile connectors.

In 2005, the Texas Legislature transferred statewide rail planning and safety functions from the Railroad Commission of Texas to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). TxDOT's rail responsibilities focus on the planning and implementation of freight and passenger rail projects and programs, passenger rail development, and management of state-owned rail facilities such as the South Orient Rail Line and NETEX Line. TxDOT's statewide rail safety functions focus on the oversight of both state and federal safety compliance, inspections and operating practices throughout the state. They also include the oversight of rail transit safety.



FREIGHT RAIL IN TEXAS

In 2016, 441 million tons of freight moved by rail in Texas. Rail tonnage statewide is estimated to increase to 668 million tons in 2045. The greatest increase in freight movement is anticipated to be along rail lines connecting Fort Worth and El Paso, Fort Worth and Amarillo and the northeast to southwest line traversing the Texas Panhandle through Amarillo.

While Texas' extensive rail system is an asset to the state, "bottlenecks" along the system, including at-grade highway-rail grade crossings, sections of single-track along double-track lines and bridges with weight and speed restrictions can severely limit freight rail capacity and mobility and limit the efficiency of the system. Connectivity between north-south rail connections in West Texas is also a challenge for freight movement.

Legal Oversight

TxDOT monitors potential rail line abandonments and coordinates the state's involvement in and response to abandonment filings. If a rail line is abandoned due to low

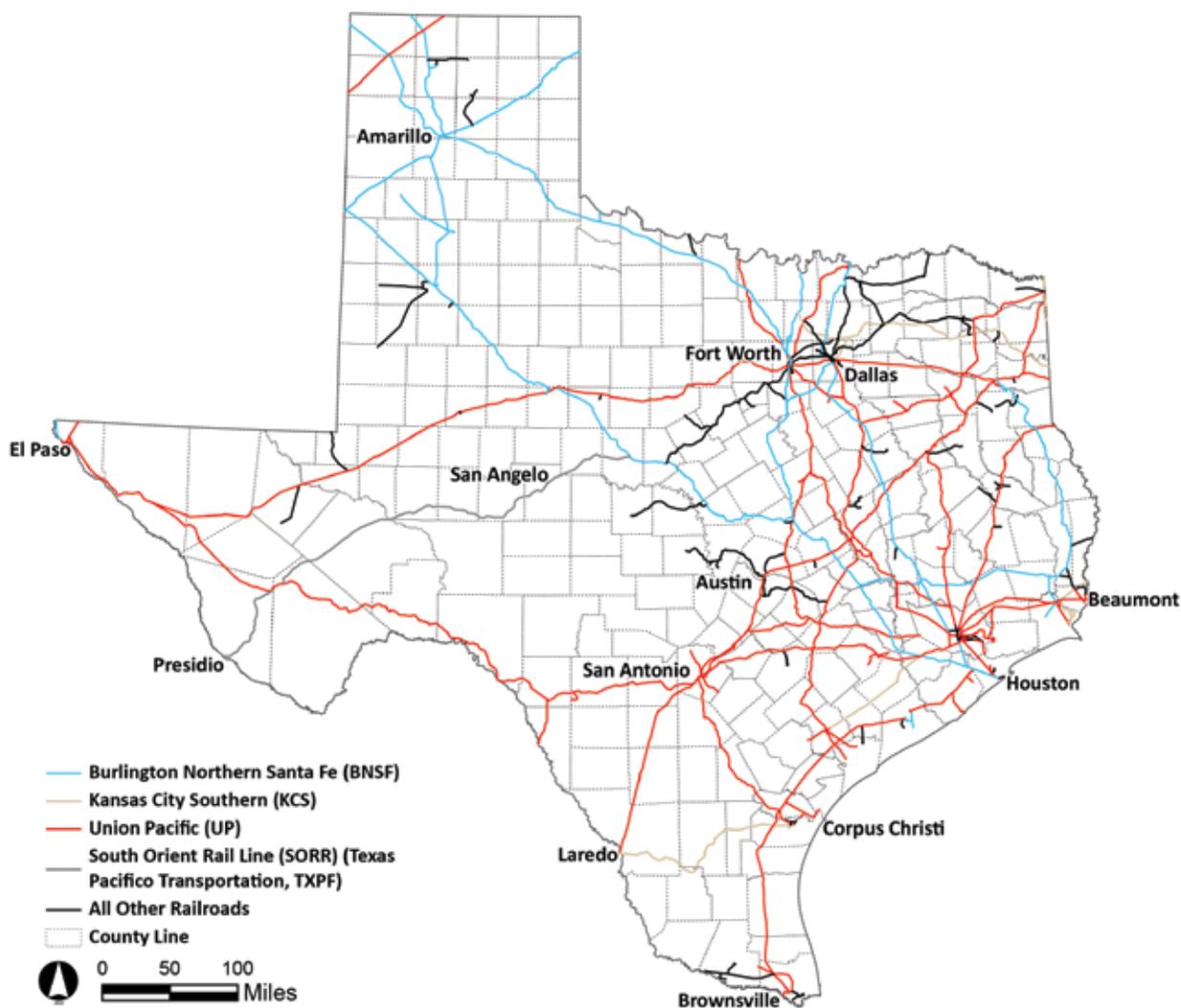
traffic volumes, TxDOT will analyze whether or not the abandoned line could serve the state as a rail facility, future roadway or expansion of an existing road.

TxDOT is responsible for administering lease and operating agreements on state-owned facilities and operating agreements on state-supported passenger routes. TxDOT also manages state and federally funded construction project contracts on both state and privately owned rail facilities such as the South Orient Rail Line in West Texas and Tower 55 located south of Fort Worth.

THE SOUTH ORIENT RAIL LINE

The South Orient Rail Line is a 391-mile long, TxDOT-owned facility that extends from San Angelo Junction, a few miles southwest of Coleman, through San Angelo to Presidio at the Texas-Mexico border. It is one of only seven rail gateways located between the United States and Mexico. The gateway, or Presidio-Ojinaga International Rail Bridge, was constructed to permit interchange with the Ferromex rail system at Presidio, but the bridge structure burned both in 2008 and in 2009. It is scheduled to be rebuilt in 2019.

Texas Rail Network Map



In 2001, TxDOT completed acquisition of the South Orient Rail Line in response to an abandonment application by the prior owners. TxDOT also entered into an initial 40-year lease agreement with Texas Pacifico Transportation, Ltd., for the maintenance and operation of the rail line. The agreement also contains five additional 10-year extensions if agreed to by both TxDOT and Texas Pacifico. At the time, the rail infrastructure was severely deteriorated due to deferred maintenance by the previous owners. Annual carload use along the line averaged only 2,031 between 2001 and 2009.

Late in 2009, TxDOT began the rehabilitation of the line from near Coleman and continuing westward. The ongoing rehabilitation has resulted in a dramatic increase in rail freight traffic. In 2017, annual carloads totaled 43,757. Much of the increased freight is in support of the regional oil and gas industry. Funding for the rehabilitation program has included state, federal and private participation.

TxDOT and Texas Pacifico are developing additional projects to continue the rehabilitation of the South Orient

Rail Line, including the reconstruction of the Presidio-Ojinaga International Rail Bridge, which is anticipated to be completed in late 2019. Reconstruction of the bridge is the first step in opening the Presidio international gateway which may help relieve congestion at the state's other border crossings.

PASSENGER RAIL IN TEXAS

Passenger rail can be categorized as high-speed, intercity, commuter and regional, light rail and trolley and tourism rail. While definitions may vary, high-speed rail is generally considered to be greater than 110 mph on a dedicated track. Intercity rail is primarily used for commuter service and operates at speeds slower than high-speed rail. Commuter and regional rail serve customers on daily trips between suburban and urban areas and may run on freight corridors.

Light rail generally serves commuters but is typically operated within urban areas on dedicated corridors with specialized equipment.



Intercity Passenger Rail

Amtrak is the sole provider of intercity passenger rail service in Texas with three service routes in Texas. These routes serve most major metropolitan areas throughout the state and partner with motor coach bus services to provide connections to other areas not directly served by Amtrak.

Two of the routes are fully funded by Amtrak: (1) the Texas Eagle (San Antonio to Chicago); and (2) the Sunset Limited (Los Angeles to New Orleans). The third route, the Heartland Flyer, is jointly financially supported by TxDOT and the Oklahoma Department of Transportation. The Heartland Flyer provides once-daily service in each direction between Fort Worth and Oklahoma City, with stops in Gainesville, Texas, and four additional Oklahoma cities. Texas' share of the annual subsidy for this route had increased over the years from the original \$1.8 million in 2007 to an estimated \$3.12 million in 2015. For fiscal years 2018 and 2019, TxDOT has limited the state's financial participation to \$2.5 million per year. The Heartland Flyer operates on tracks owned by BNSF Railway.

TxDOT is also conducting the Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study funded by the federal government to evaluate a range of passenger rail service options in an 850-mile corridor from South Texas to Oklahoma City. The study will produce an environmental document and service development plan for the corridor, which can serve as a business prospectus for private investors to develop passenger rail services in the corridor.



Commuter and Regional Rail Service

CapMetro in Austin, 'The T' in Fort Worth, Dallas Area Rapid Transit (or "DART"), Denton County Transportation Authority and Houston METRO all have a rail transit component within their system. The McKinney Avenue Transit Authority has offered trolley service since 1989.

Trinity Rail Express (or "TRE") and Dallas Area Rapid Transit serve customers on routes within the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Dallas Area Rapid Transit operates the nation's longest light rail system (90 miles) providing service to destinations in Dallas, Carrollton, Farmers Branch, Garland, Irving, Plano and Richardson. Riders can access the Dallas Fort-Worth International Airport and downtown Fort Worth through both Dallas Area Rapid Transit and Trinity Rail Express connections. Trinity Rail Express has Dallas County stops at Medical/Market Center and downtown Irving, as well as Tarrant County stops in Richland Hills and at the Fort Worth Intermodal Transportation Center.

CapMetro's 32-mile MetroRail commuter rail line extends from Leander, a suburb north of Austin, to downtown Austin and the Austin Convention Center.

Houston's METRO Rail Red Line light rail service connects downtown Houston to the Houston Medical Center and averages over 26 million boardings per month. Travel time from end-to-end of the line is 50 minutes. MetroRail purple and green lines have recently opened, providing service from downtown to the University of Houston.



High-Speed Rail

Texas has no high-speed passenger rail service. However, a private entity is currently conducting privately-funded federal planning and environmental processes between Dallas and Houston. TxDOT has limited involvement and oversight for this project.



TEXAS RAIL PLAN

In 2016, TxDOT updated the Texas Rail Plan. In accordance with Senate Bill 312 (85th Regular Legislative Session, 2017), TxDOT will have an updated rail plan in early 2019. The plan was developed in conjunction with stakeholders and the Federal Rail Administration to address existing and future passenger and freight rail services in Texas. The main components of the updated rail plan include establishing vision, goals and objectives for the rail system and its integration into the state's multimodal transportation system. Other key components are an inventory of freight and passenger rail infrastructure and an overall needs assessment. The final component, planning for the future, includes developing prioritized strategies to achieve the state's vision, goals and objectives. TxDOT publishes an annual update of the passenger rail portion of the Rail Plan as required by state law.

STATEWIDE RAIL SAFETY

Highway-Rail Safety Improvements

TxDOT administers federal and state programs to improve highway-rail grade crossings by partnering with railroads to install and maintain crossing signals and gates, improve crossing surfaces on state highways, consolidate and close redundant crossings and construct highway-rail grade separations. TxDOT is also responsible for facilitating railroad involvement with TxDOT highway construction projects. TxDOT executes more than 250 agreements with railroad companies per year for safety, maintenance and construction activities involving railroad right of way. State-railroad agreements are executed for individual projects and also by master agreements. TxDOT also administers several programs to improve safety and operations on and around railroad rights of way. TxDOT has begun leveraging federal railroad-highway crossings safety funds and negotiating with the Class I railroads for their cost participation in these safety construction projects.

Funding for the highway-rail safety program includes:

- \$15 million per year – Federal Railroad-Highway Crossing Safety & Signal.
- \$25 million per year – Federal Railroad Grade Separation.
- \$3.5 million per year – State Railroad Grade Crossing Re-planing (Re-Surfacing).
- \$1.1 million per year – State Railroad Signal Maintenance.



Railroad Safety Compliance Inspections

TxDOT railroad investigators are certified by Federal Rail Administration to conduct investigative and surveillance activities to ensure application and interpretation of federal rail safety regulations, orders and standards. State railroad investigators conduct safety compliance inspections of railroad facilities and equipment, as do their Federal Rail Administration railroad inspectors, to establish a uniform body of regulation and enforcement. State railroad investigators monitor compliance with both state and federally mandated safety regulations in the areas of hazardous materials, operating practices, locomotive power and equipment, signal and train control and track conditions.

Since 1982, the State of Texas has supported railroad safety compliance inspection efforts under the Federal Rail Administration State Rail Safety Participation Program. Currently, there are 30 states that participate with the Federal Rail Administration program. State railroad investigators conduct compliance inspections of track, freight car safety standards, safety appliance, locomotives, signals and hours of service. States also perform rail hazmat inspections and ensure that railroads are properly testing, inspecting and maintaining automated warning devices at grade crossings. These devices include flashing lights, gates, bells and related circuitry.

The State Rail Safety Inspection Program is funded by freight railroad companies operating in the state through an annual assessment referred to as the State Rail Safety Program Fee. The amount charged is based on gross ton mile data, which is submitted to TxDOT annually by the railroads.

State Safety Oversight

In 1996, the Federal Transit Authority established the State Safety Oversight program for the purpose of overseeing safety at rail fixed guideway public transportation systems. In 1997, the Texas Legislature designated TxDOT as the administering agency for Texas. Senate Bill 1523 (85th Regular Legislative Session, 2017), brought TxDOT into compliance with additional Federal Transit Authority State Safety Oversight regulations. These additional requirements include development of System Safety Program and Security Plans, on-site reviews, audit programs and annual certifications.

Currently, there are four Rail Transit Authorities subject to the provisions of the State Safety Oversight program in Texas:

1. Dallas Area Rapid Transit.
2. Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County.
3. The Dallas Streetcar.
4. McKinney Avenue Transit Authority.

As the administering agency of the program, TxDOT works with and provides oversight to these authorities to help ensure they meet federal safety standards.



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



VALUES:

People

People are the Department's most important customer, asset, and resource. The well-being, safety, and quality of life for Texans and the traveling public are of the utmost concern to the Department. We focus on relationship building, customer service, and partnerships.

Accountability

We accept responsibility for our actions and promote open communication and transparency at all times.

Trust

We strive to earn and maintain confidence through reliable and ethical decision-making.

Honesty

We conduct ourselves with the highest degree of integrity, respect, and truthfulness.

VISION:

A forward-thinking leader delivering mobility, enabling economic opportunity, and enhancing quality of life for all Texans.

MISSION:

Through collaboration and leadership, we deliver a safe, reliable, and integrated transportation system that enables the movement of people and goods.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- **Deliver the Right Projects** – Implement effective planning and forecasting processes that deliver the right projects on-time and on-budget.
- **Focus on the Customer** – People are at the center of everything we do.
- **Foster Stewardship** – Ensure efficient use of state resources.
- **Optimize System Performance** – Develop and operate an integrated transportation system that provides reliable and accessible mobility, and enables economic growth.
- **Preserve our Assets** – Deliver preventive maintenance for TxDOT's system and capital assets to protect our investments.
- **Promote Safety** – Champion a culture of safety.
- **Value our Employees** – Respect and care for the well-being and development of our employees.



This document is part of an educational series on transportation issues produced by the Texas Department of Transportation. This document, the full Educational Series and other helpful resources can be found online at www.txdot.gov keyword search "State Legislative Affairs".