



**We have a Texas Rail Plan - Now what?**  
**Kevin Keller - National Director, Intermodal Planning**  
**HDR, Inc.**



# WHO IS the TxDOT Rail Division?

- **Established** in 2009
- **Implements** rail-related policies
- **Analyzes** rail infrastructure and operations
- **Plans and coordinates** rail projects
- **Oversees** rail-highway safety and inspection
- **State liaison** to Federal Railroad Administration
- **Manages** state-owned railroad

# WHAT IS the Texas Rail Plan?

- **Defines** what the system is today
- **Determines** needs for the future
- **Integrates** with other TxDOT plans
- **Includes** stakeholder input —  
*TxDOT wants to hear from you!*



## Texas Rail Plan History:

**2005**First rail  
plan**2019**Last  
update

# DEVELOPING the Texas Rail Plan goals and objectives

## Previous Rail Plan Goals:



**SAFETY:** Reduce rail-related fatalities and serious injuries, especially at at-grade rail crossings.



**ASSET MANAGEMENT:** Achieve a state of good repair of the rail assets, especially those assets owned by TxDOT.



**MOBILITY AND RELIABILITY:** Reduce congestion and improve rail system efficiency, capacity, and performance, including rail freight and passenger travel time reliability.



**MULTIMODAL CONNECTIVITY:** Provide freight and passenger choice by improving the rail system and providing intermodal and multimodal connectivity.



**ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS:** Strengthen Texas' position as a trade and logistics hub and support both existing industries and the attraction of new industries.

# WHY update the Texas Rail Plan?

The federal government requires states to develop, maintain, and update rail plans (49 CFR 266.15).

## Requirements for State Rail Plans:

- Based on a comprehensive, coordinated, and continuing planning process for all transportation services within the state.
- Developed with an opportunity for participation by persons interested in rail activity in the state and adjacent states, where appropriate.

*Section 11315 of the FAST Act (2015) amended the statutory requirements under 49 U.S.C. Chapter 227 pertaining to state rail plan requirements making the updates mandatory every four years instead of the original five years.*

- *Continues to be required by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act/BIL.*

*Inclusion within a state rail plan will be considered by the Federal Railroad Administration for competitive grant programs.*

# WHY update the Texas Rail Plan?

## Additional Reasons for Update:



Gain guidance for future rail priorities from dialogue with stakeholders and the general public.



Assess rail needs and develop a list of potential rail improvement projects.

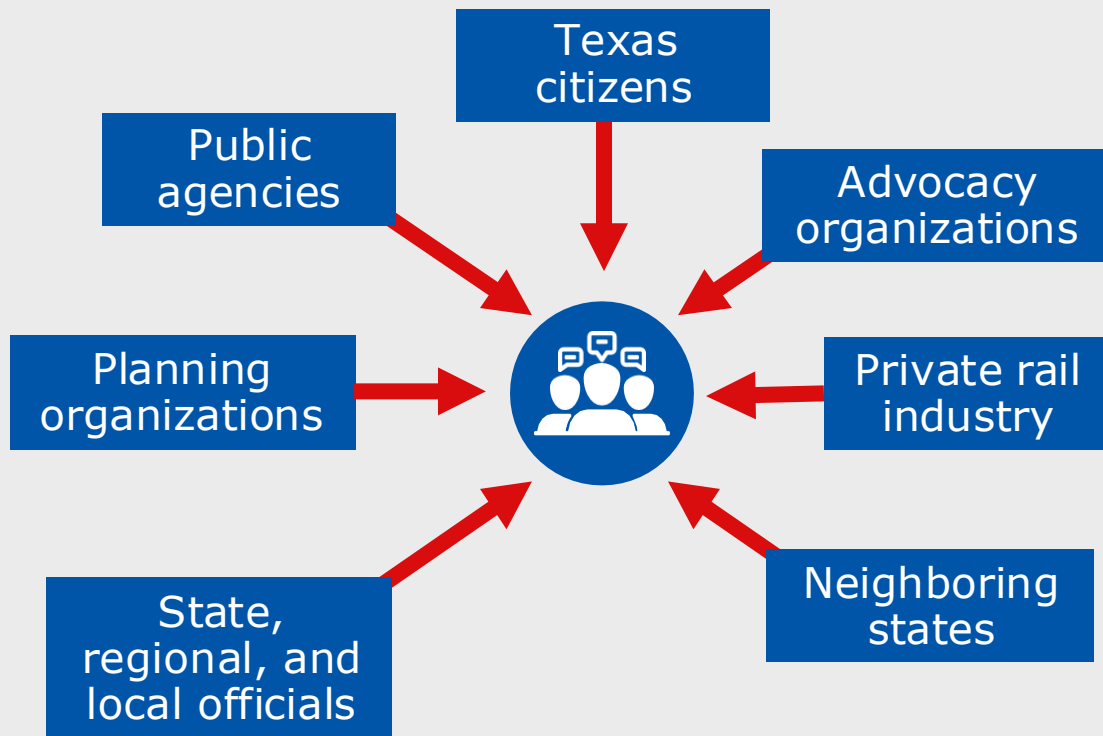


Communicate to the public and decision makers about rail's benefits to Texas and its role within the Texas transportation network.



Understand needs and issues of the rail industry.

# **WHO ARE** the Texas Rail Plan stakeholders?



## Rail Transportation

- Freight Rail
- Passenger Rail



## Freight Systems

- Air
- Waterway
- Freight
- Highway
- Port



## DEFINITIONS

- **TRP:** Texas Rail Plan
- **FRA:** Federal Railroad Administration
- **Class I/Class III/Shortline:** Different "sizes" of freight railroads
- **Intermodal:** The transportation of freight in an intermodal container or vehicle, using multiple modes of transportation
- **Intercity/Commuter Rail:** Designations for passenger rail systems
- **MPO:** Metropolitan Planning Organization
- **Amtrak:** National Railroad Passenger Corporation





# Goals and Objectives

# Goals and Objectives

## Promote Safety

- ▶ The safety goal focuses on TxDOT's efforts to reduce crashes and fatalities through the five "E's" of Evaluation, Engineering, Encouragement, Education, and Enforcement.
- ▶ Objectives include:
  1. Reduce the frequency of crashes and associated impacts for all modes.
  2. Eliminate fatalities and reduce serious injuries on the roadway system.
  3. Improve safety for all users of the transportation system, including VRUs.
  4. Strengthen the security of physical and digital transportation assets.
  5. Improve incident identification and response.

# Goals and Objectives

## Preserve our Assets

- ▶ Proactively keeping Texas roads, bridges, and other infrastructure and technology in good repair protects our investments, lowers risks and costs associated with poor assets, and ensures that the assets Texans interact with are in good condition.
- ▶ Objectives include:
  1. Preserve the integrity and longevity of pavement and bridges to maintain a state of good repair.
  2. Invest in multimodal assets preservation, maintenance, and replacement.
  3. Optimize transportation system management and operations (TSMO).
  4. Maintain transportation assets in the most cost-effective manner.
  5. Enhance resiliency to natural and humanmade risks, both physical and digital.

# Goals and Objectives

## Enhance Mobility

- ▶ Texas' growing population will increase demand for transportation into the foreseeable future, making it essential to address congestion and unreliable travel times.
- ▶ Objectives include:
  1. Mitigate congestion and enable reliable travel times.
  2. Ensure the efficient movement of goods and support a resilient supply chain.
  3. Increase system redundancy.
  4. Improve cross-border travel time reliability.

# Goals and Objectives

## Improve Connectivity

- ▶ Improve multimodal and intermodal connectivity at the local, regional, statewide, national, and international level.
- ▶ Objectives include:
  1. Increase statewide, regional, and local connections that are inclusive and accessible to all, including urban, rural, and border connections.
  2. Increase modal options to enhance alternative transportation.

# Goals and Objectives

## Responsible Stewardship

- ▶ As a state agency, TxDOT must be a good steward of its resources and promote fiscal responsibility by spending efficiently and strategically.
- ▶ Objectives include:
  1. Identify and maintain sustainable funding.
  2. Avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate adverse and/or disproportional impacts to cultural, natural, and historic resources.
  3. Protect vulnerable populations from adverse health risks resulting from air pollution from transportation systems.
  4. Strategically allocate transportation spending across diverse modes, geographies, and social demographics.
  5. Deliver programs and projects efficiently and responsively.

# Goals and Objectives

## Economic Vitality

- ▶ Develop transportation systems that support the movement of people and goods to enhance quality of life and promote personal and statewide economic growth.
- ▶ Objectives include:
  1. Expand and modernize transportation assets to spur economic growth.
  2. Increase access to and support opportunities for jobs, services, and activity centers.
  3. Promote workforce training to support a growing economy and emerging industries.
  4. Ensure the state's multimodal transportation system is supportive of all users, including tourism and leisure travel.
  5. Align with key economic initiatives of the state of Texas.

# FRA guidance FORMAT

## Executive Summary

1. The Role of Rail in Statewide Transportation (Overview)
2. The State's Existing Rail System:
  - i. Description and Inventory
  - ii. Trends and Forecasts
  - iii. Rail Service Needs and Opportunities
1. Proposed Passenger Rail Improvements and Investments
2. Proposed Freight Rail Improvements and Investments
3. The State's Rail Service and Investment Program
4. Coordination and Review

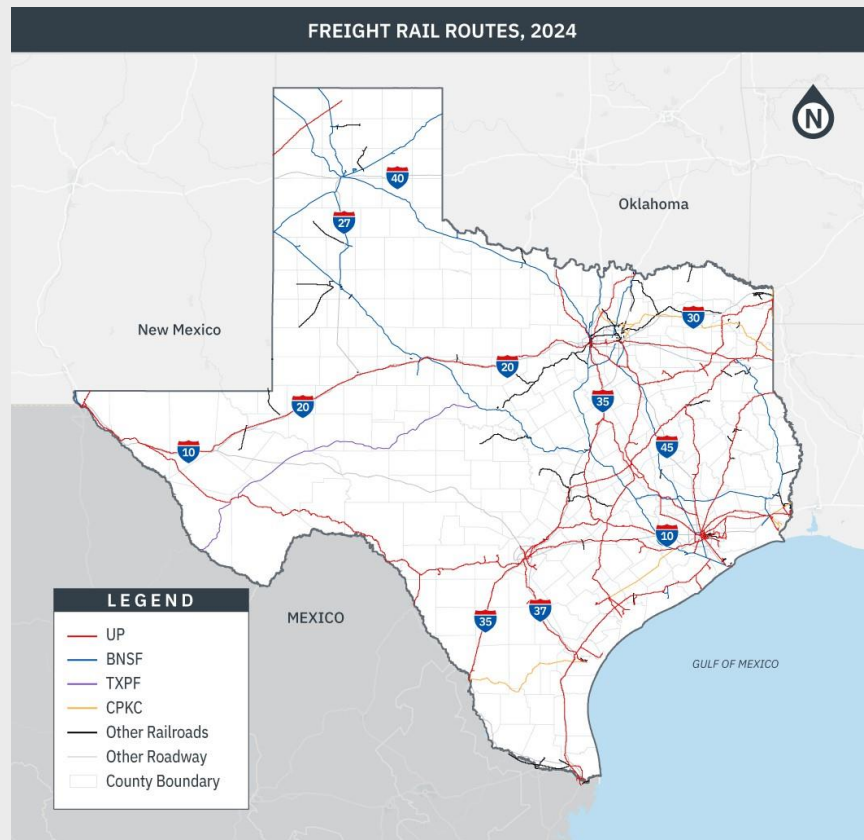
## Technical Appendix





# Freight Rail Projects List Review

# STATEWIDE Freight rail



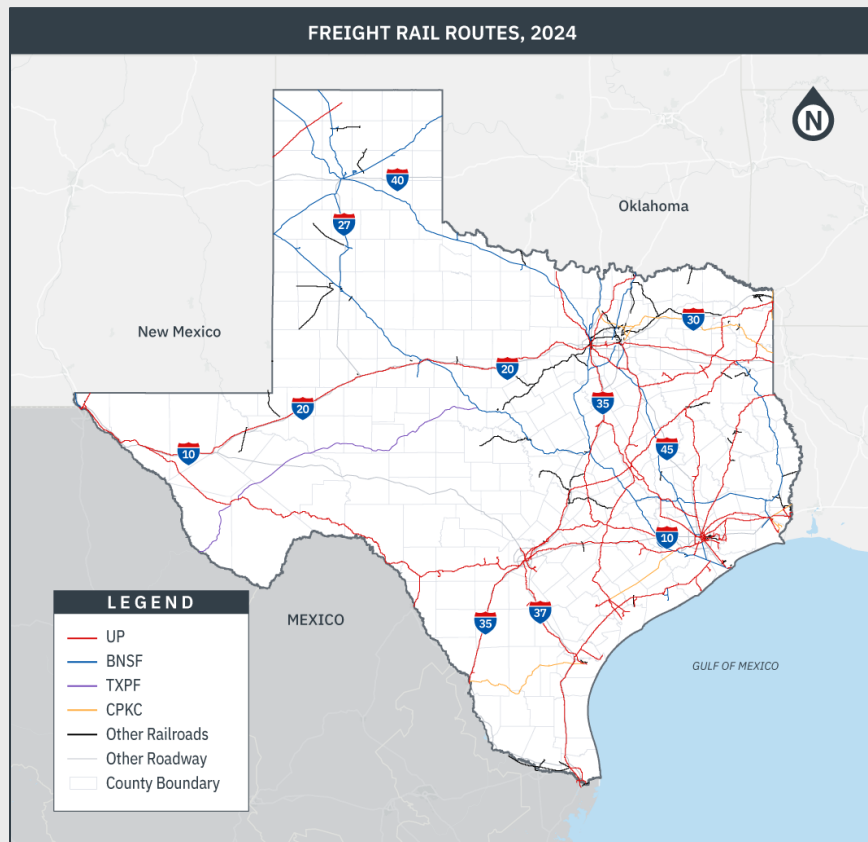
# Freight Rail Interactive Map

**Review the short- and long-range passenger rail projects online:**

<https://www.txdot.gov/content/dam/docs/rail/trp-2024-freight-project-lists.pdf>

**Review the interactive map:**

<https://hdr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/575a344570574c67bf04b63e0b54f4f8>



## Freight Rail Needs/Opportunities



**Freight rail volumes in Texas are growing.**



**Continued growth and investment in:**

- Rail/port terminal facilities and service lanes.
- Domestic intermodal terminal capacity.
- Cross-border capacity and facilities.
- Shortline upgrades to handle industry standard (286k) gross weight freight cars.
- Rail-truck transloads, rail industry parks, industry-specific facilities (e.g., plastics, rock, oil/gas production).



# Passenger Rail Projects List Review

# STATEWIDE Passenger rail



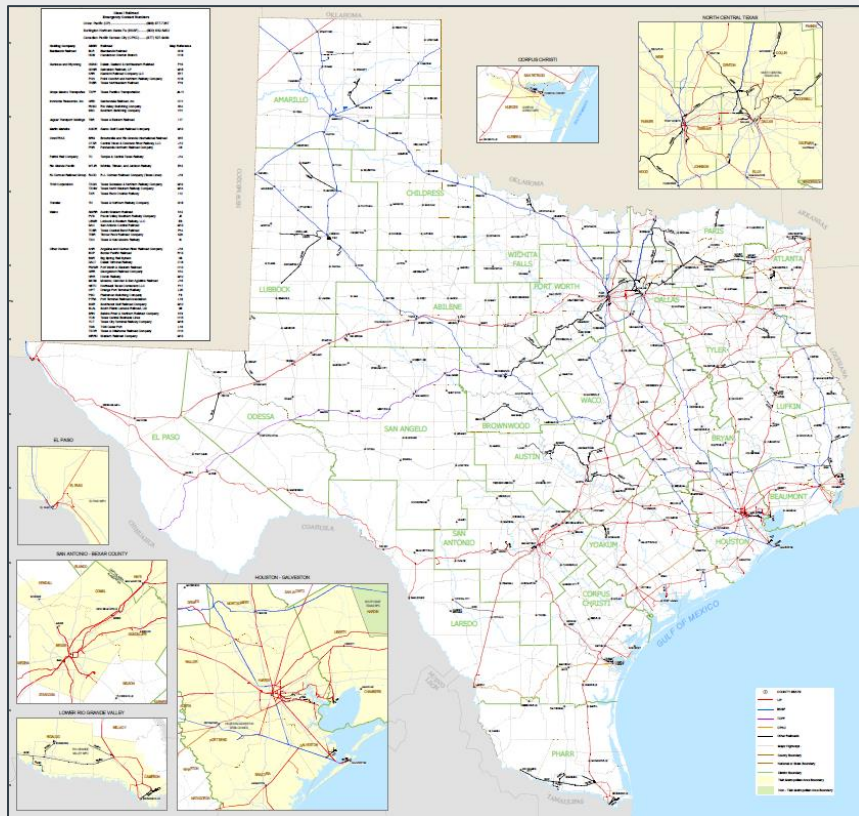
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# Passenger Rail Needs/Opportunities



## **Future investments in intercity passenger and commuter rail driven by:**

- Population and employment growth.
- Road congestion.
- Transit-oriented development opportunities.



## **Expanded passenger rail requires additional rail capacity:**

- Freight rail volumes in Texas are growing.
- More track capacity needed to run passenger trains reliably.



# Corridor identification and development **PROGRAM**

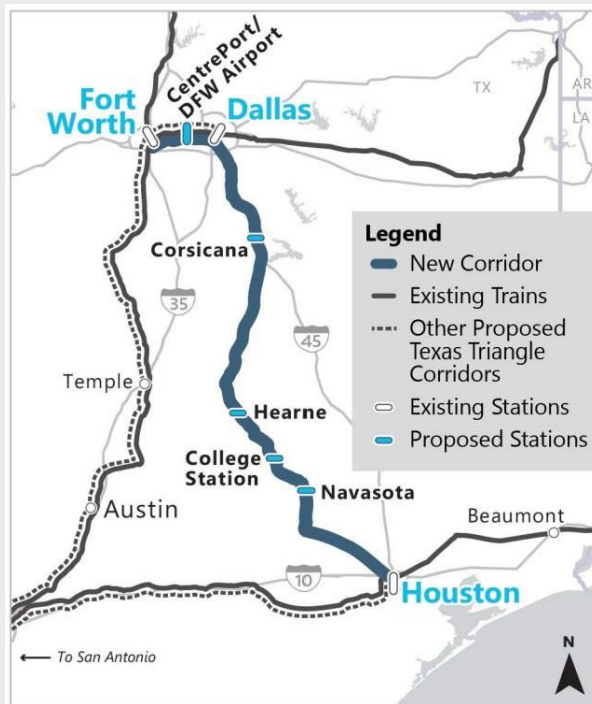
The FRA CID Program funds the service development planning, preliminary engineering, and environmental evaluation of new and expanded intercity passenger corridors.

Corridors in Texas receiving CID awards include:

1. Texas Triangle: Dallas-Fort Worth to Houston Intercity Passenger Rail Corridor (TxDOT)
2. Texas Triangle: Houston to San Antonio Corridor (TxDOT)
3. Heartland Flyer Extension (Kansas DOT)
4. I-20 Corridor Intercity Passenger Rail Service (Southern Rail Commission)
5. Daily Sunset Limited Service (Amtrak)
6. Amtrak Texas High-Speed Rail Corridor (Amtrak)
7. Fort Worth to Houston High-Speed Rail Corridor (North Central Texas Council of Governments)

# Corridor ID program AWARDS

## Dallas-Fort Worth to Houston



## Houston to San Antonio



SOURCE: TxDOT.gov (Corridor Identification and Development Program)

# FRA long- distance service STUDY

The IIJA required FRA to conduct a study to evaluate the restoration of daily intercity passenger service along any:

- Amtrak long-distance routes that were discontinued.
- Amtrak long-distance routes that occur on a nondaily basis.
- Potential new Amtrak long-distance routes.

Proposed network of preferred routes includes the following that serve Texas:

1. Dallas/Fort Worth – Miami
2. Denver – Houston (via Amarillo and Dallas/Fort Worth)
3. Phoenix – Minneapolis/St. Paul (via Amarillo)
4. Dallas/Fort Worth – New York
5. Houston – New York
6. San Antonio – Minneapolis/St. Paul (via Dallas/Fort Worth)
7. San Francisco – Dallas/Fort Worth (via El Paso and Midland)
8. Dallas/Fort Worth – Atlanta (via I-20)
9. El Paso – Billings

# WHAT TxDOT heard

## Top Themes:



Safety



Funding



Reliability



Bottlenecks



Modernization/technology



Economic development



Expanded connectivity

## Other relevant plans:



Connecting  
Texas 2050



Statewide  
Multimodal  
Transit Plan

# WHAT TxDOT heard



## Safety:

- Safe routes to schools
- Resiliency and emergency response
- Priority of grade separations, especially in urban areas



## Funding:

- Leverage federal funding opportunities
- Dedicated state stream for improvements
- Infrastructure investment needed



## Reliability:

- Address congestion
- Consider length of time routes take
- End-to-end/last-mile connections



## Bottlenecks:

- Congestion around the state including the Metroplex, Uvalde, Houston, Beaumont, Eagle Pass
- Bridge condition and low clearances
- Blocked crossings

# WHAT TxDOT heard



## Modernization/ Technology:

- Performance standards
- Technology to identify potential bottlenecks
- Alternative fuel sources



## Economic Development:

- New industrial centers
- Cross-border trade
- Development of supporting uses (i.e., air carriers, amenities)



## Expanded Connectivity:

- Interstate and intercity passenger service
  - Support for multiple routes including Dallas to Austin, Austin to San Antonio, San Antonio to Houston, and Dallas to Houston
  - Connections to border cities
  - Increased service for routes and frequencies, both on existing and new routes
  - Interstate connection from Dallas to Oklahoma to Louisiana along I-20 and I-10, on to New Mexico
  - Opportunity for intra-state trips with fewer stops and higher speeds
- Population centers exist for increased routes
- Coordination between service types so riders can make transfers (i.e., airport, transit hubs)