



REPORT

Border Communication, Trade and Infrastructure

**Report for the
Texas-Mexico Strategic Investment Commission**

**Agustin De La Rosa, Director,
International Relations Office
The Texas Department of Transportation
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INTRODUCTION

The Texas-Mexico border is a national center for travel and trade. It is therefore very important to improve and continue to maintain the current transportation infrastructure in those regions. Accordingly, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), which both administers and participates in many border programs, has committed personnel and revenues to meet the infrastructure needs along the border.

As with any undertaking along the border or across the state, TxDOT evaluates how it meets the goals of reducing congestion, enhancing safety, expanding economic opportunity, improving air quality, and/or increasing the value of our transportation assets.

In order to accomplish these goals, TxDOT is focusing on four strategies for providing transportation to the state: Use all financial tools available to build infrastructure, empower local and regional leaders to solve local and regional transportation problems, increase competitive pressure to drive down the cost of transportation projects, and demand consumer-driven decisions that respond to traditional market forces.

HB 925 from the 79th Legislative Session created the Texas-Mexico Strategic Investment Commission which seeks to expand economic opportunity along the border. Agustin De La Rosa was appointed to represent TxDOT. There are 11 items for discussion on the September 12, 2006 agenda, and items 1-6 and 11 are related to transportation. This report will discuss each of the transportation related items as they relate to communication, trade, and infrastructure.

COMMUNICATION

In order to facilitate transportation planning, TxDOT works diligently to improve communication among federal, state and local governments on both sides of the border.

It is with these regular communications that TxDOT meets **Agenda Item 1:**

Represent government agencies within the Texas-Mexico border region to help reduce regulations by improving communication and cooperation between federal, state, and local governments.

The following is a list of initiatives, programs and other efforts that share the goal of coordinating communication regarding the border region.

U.S.-Mexico Joint Working Committee for Transportation Planning (JWC)¹

Started in 1994 by a Memorandum of Understanding between the two countries to coordinate transportation planning between the United States and Mexico, Texas has participated in the JWC since its inception, and meets twice a year with U.S. and Mexican federal transportation agencies, customs agencies, immigration, public works, as well as border state transportation agencies. In addition to the seminars and studies conducted by the committee, the stable nature of the group has nurtured relationships between representatives of the various agencies, which foster communication.

Positive outcomes include a Border Innovative Finance Workshop, a Border Safety Planning Workshop, and the publication, *Truck Transportation Through Border Ports-of-Entry: Analysis of Coordination System*.

Border Technology Exchange Program (BTEP)²

Started by the JWC, the BTEP helps Texas works closely with its Mexican border state counterparts to exchange infrastructure planning information, to identify each state's technical needs and to establish positive, open communications. In an effort to further the exchange of information, Technology Transfer Centers (T2) have been established in Chihuahua, Nuevo León, Tamaulipas and Coahuila. Training courses and activities such as official visits, planning meetings, technical exchanges, conferences and workshops on transportation-related topics are conducted on an ongoing basis to share technical advancements and expertise, among other things.

Border Governors' Conference³

At the annual Border Governors' Conference, TxDOT participates on the Border Crossings Work Table, which makes recommendations to improve border crossings, and in recent years has recommended promoting the expansion of the Free and Secure Trade and the Secure Electronic Network for Traveler's Rapid Inspection programs and a five-year extension for card validity. The work table also requested that Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) and border-state commercial vehicle inspectors work together, as needed, to establish the best approach for inspections at border crossings in order to minimize dual inspections and streamline the inspection process.

United States – Mexico Binational Bridges and Border Crossings Group⁴

1 <http://www.borderplanning.fhwa.dot.gov/mexico.asp>.

2 <ftp://ftp.dot.state.tx.us/pub/txdot-info/iro/2005iar.pdf>.

3 <http://www.bordergovernorsconference.com/declarations>.

The B&BC, in which TxDOT also participates, meets to discuss *proposed* bridges and border crossings and their related infrastructure. This group also exchanges technical information so that the projects which both federal governments deem beneficial may complete the governments' respective approval processes. Related issues are also discussed, such as toll roads, other infrastructure projects, and operational matters involving existing and future crossings.

*Land Transportation Sub-Committee of the North American Free Trade Agreement (LTSS)*⁵

The North American Free Trade Agreement established the LTSS to help the United States, Canada and Mexico monitor and implement the agreement. The Design, Motor Carrier, and Vehicle Titles and Registration Divisions and the International Relations Office of TxDOT participated in working groups, which, for the most part, finished their charges, and the LTSS is no longer active. Some of the accomplishments of this group include the creation of a side-by-side comparison of vehicle weight and dimension limits for the United States, Mexico and Canada; creation of a motor carrier safety data exchange program; and the publication in English, Spanish and French of the North American Emergency Response Guide regarding hazardous materials.

*Regional Logistics Workshops*⁶

The governors of the 5 states of Texas, Tamaulipas, Nuevo Leon, Coahuila, and Chihuahua signed a Regional Partnership for Progress to promote development of the area covered by those states. A first logistics workshop was held in Monterrey in January 2006, which included federal, state and industry representation. TxDOT Assistant Executive Director for Engineering Operations, Amadeo Saenz, participated in this workshop, highlighting the planned transportation connections that link the area, including the Trans Texas Corridor.

Routine district meetings with Mexican counterparts

The Pharr, Laredo and El Paso Districts have a long history of cooperation with transportation officials in neighboring Mexican states. All three districts have made extensive efforts to work closely and develop productive working relationships with their Mexican neighbors. An important objective is to collaborate on planning and programming for the many transportation projects the department undertakes each year along the border, especially those that involve border crossings.

*Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA)*⁷

4 <ftp://ftp.dot.state.tx.us/pub/txdot-info/iro/2005iar.pdf>.

5 <ftp://ftp.dot.state.tx.us/pub/txdot-info/iro/2003iar.pdf>.

6 <http://www.nemex-tex.org/Region.aspx>

7 http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/spanish/english/mmc_english.htm

TxDOT's Motor Carrier Division (MCD) currently has an employee on loan to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) as part of the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA). He has been working with FMCSA for the past 10 months on border-related issues.

The IPA employee has worked with the FMCSA and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) on integrating FMCSA functionality into CBP's Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) at land border crossings, which will allow international trade participants (including trucking companies) to interact with various government agencies through a single interface. Our employee has also worked with FMCSA on policies and procedures related to the inspection and audit of foreign motor carriers, and on examining the compliance of foreign motor carriers with Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards.

Texas is currently a participant in the federal SSRS (Single State Registration System) program. SSRS requires proof of operating authority issued by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), which, once granted, requires the carrier to register in one of the border states (base state) such as Texas with the SSRS. The SSRS is then linked to the FMCSA database, which provides immediate carrier information for processing SSRS applications.

The federal government recently passed legislation that replaces the SSRS with the Unified Carrier Registration (UCR) Act of 2005. The UCR has established a Board of Directors to create forms, policies and procedures for implementation of this program. MCD has an employee that is participating on the UCR Board of Directors. Currently, the UCR implementation is scheduled for January 1, 2007, but may be delayed until January 2008. At this time we do not know how the implementation of the UCR program will fully impact Mexican carriers.

Border Trade Advisory Committee, Senate Bill 183

Established to define and develop a strategy and make recommendations to the Texas Transportation Commission and the governor for addressing the highest priority border trade transportation challenges, the Border Trade Advisory Committee consists of 30 members, including representatives from the metropolitan planning organizations located along the border, each port of entry, universities that conduct research on transportation or trade issues and local officials.

The committee had their first meeting July 19, 2006 and adopted ten key principles to address initially:

1. Promote ample and expandable transportation trade corridors
2. Effectively coordinate with Mexico to ensure through trade corridors
3. Promote efficiencies at the border
4. Demonstrate statewide, national, and international benefits of trade

5. Optimize operations
6. Develop new ports of entry for use of new technologies
7. Support improvements to the Presidential Permit process
8. Look for policies to stimulate trade at both state and federal levels
9. Promote cooperation and understanding of policies with Mexico
10. Leverage safety and security measures to enhance trade efficiency

The committee has identified strategies, implementation actions, measures, and responsible parties (at the federal, state, and local levels) for each of these principles.

Quarterly Cross Border Infrastructure Meetings

Senate Bill 569 of the 79th Legislature required quarterly meetings between TxDOT and the Mexican border states. While TxDOT participates in numerous meetings every year, special meetings were held to discuss the specific charges of this bill, with a large initial meeting held in Laredo in February 2006. Local transportation officials from the entire border area were invited to meet with U.S. and Mexican federal inspection agencies and TxDOT. Subsequently, meetings were held in TxDOT districts. These meetings resulted in recommendations that are being developed into a plan, with a report available in December 2006. The initial list of issues and problems that have been identified are available on the attached CD.

TRADE

Besides communication, an important part of TxDOT's role along the border is facilitating trade through transportation improvements. Mexico is the United States' second most important trading partner for exports, closely following Canada. Further, it is the nation's third most important trading partner for imports, following Canada and China. Total import and export trade totaled \$290 billion in 2005. Most of this trade with Mexico is transported by truck and crosses the border at Texas ports of entry. In 2005, at Texas border crossings, there were 3.16 million commercial crossings, 46 million private vehicle crossings and 19 million pedestrian crossings from Mexico to Texas.

The subsequent information reflects how TxDOT meets the following agenda items:

Agenda Item 2:

Examine trade issues between the United States and Mexico.

Agenda item 3:

Study the flow of commerce at ports of entry between this state and Mexico, including the movement of commercial vehicles across the border, and establish a plan to aid that commerce and improve the movement of those vehicles.

Border Travel Time Study

Congestion on the roadways leading to and from the international border crossings has many negative impacts, which include lost time, higher fuel consumption, more vehicle emissions, increased accident risk, and greater transportation costs. The Border Crossing Travel Time Study is a targeted assessment of short-term improvement options for passenger and freight flow on roadways within the immediate study area of each international border crossing in order to improve border trade. Based upon travel-time analysis of passenger cars and freight flow, the study will identify and document traffic congestion and operational deficiencies on both the state system and local roadways on the U.S. side, leading to and from the 26 Texas-Mexico international border crossings within the three TxDOT Districts (Pharr, Laredo, and El Paso) that have crossings along the Texas-Mexico border. The study will also identify low cost (short term) improvements that could be implemented within a 5-year time frame. The study results will be provided to TxDOT and to the Border Trade Advisory Committee.

Integration and Consolidation of Border Freight Transportation Data for Planning Applications

The quantity of truck transportation in Texas has increased dramatically since NAFTA. Accurate information on truck volumes and characteristics is critical to the transportation planning and transportation operation activities performed by TxDOT and other agencies. Information for freight transportation, in particular truck-related data, is expensive and difficult to collect, but various agencies located at the Texas-Mexico border already gather information that is used for operation or statistical purposes. This project will identify planning information needs, sort data being collected by various federal, state, and local agencies, and propose an integrated truck-related information system that could be used for planning purposes. The project will also collect and analyze loading characteristics of heavy vehicles associated with cross border trade required for determining infrastructure impacts. The project will be finished in 2007.

International Trade Corridor Plan, Senate Bill 183

The International Trade Corridor Plan was developed in November 2004. The legislation requires that the plan be updated biennially, next occurring on December 1, 2006. The plan is provided to the presiding officer of each house of the legislature, and includes strategies and projects to aid the exchange of international trade using the state's system of multiple transportation modes. It also assigns priorities based on the amount of international trade, measured by weight and value, and addresses implementation of the recommendations of the Border Trade Advisory Committee.

International Registration Plan (IRP)

The Vehicles Titles and Registration Division (VTR) administers the IRP in Texas. For several years, the division has been working with the NAFTA Border State working group, the International Fuel Tax Association (IFTA) and the International Registration Plan (IRP). Together they are developing a plan to include Mexican trucks in the international agreements for when the border is opened to long-haul trucks. The VTR Division was awarded a Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration grant to initiate the activities required to “host” Mexican registrants under the provisions of the IRP.

*General Information on NAFTA and Cross Border Traffic*⁸

This publication provides general information and responds to frequently asked questions on NAFTA and the international movement of commercial motor vehicles. The publication includes sections on the NAFTA Annual Permit, general information on the 72 and 144-Hour Permits, International Motor Carrier information, Motor Carrier Division applications, Oversize/Overweight Permits, additional telephone numbers and addresses for VTR Regional Offices and the Border County Tax Offices, and the MCD One-Stop-Shop Telephone Menu.

*ITS Regional architecture*⁹

Plans for Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) have been developed in many areas of the state, including several parts of the border. Plans are complete for Del Rio, El Paso, Laredo and the Pharr area. Once completed, these systems will help guide traffic by providing dynamic message signs, electronic toll collections and license plate readers at the international bridges.

*FAST, C-TPAT, SENTRI, and ACE*¹⁰

There are several federal programs currently being implemented to expedite border trade and crossing that deal with automating inspection processes. TxDOT will continue to coordinate and cooperate with infrastructure projects where feasible to facilitate programs. Some of the programs being implemented at the southern border include the Free and Secure Trade (FAST), Customs-Trade Partnership against Terrorism (C-TPAT), Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection (SENTRI), and Automated Commercial Environment (ACE).

⁸ http://www.dot.state.tx.us/services/vehicle_titles_and_registration/nafta.htm and http://www.dot.state.tx.us/frequently_asked_questions/nafta.htm.

⁹ <http://www.consystem.com/texas/default.htm>

¹⁰ Customs and Border Protection, FAST and C-TPAT Programs

http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/import/commercial_enforcement/ctpat/fast/us_mexico/

Customs and Border Protection, SENTRI Program

http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/frequent_traveler/sentri.xml

Customs and Border Protection, ACE Modernization Information Systems

<http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/toolbox/about/modernization/>

FAST, C-TPAT and ACE work in unison. FAST lanes allow qualifying commercial trucks to cross in an expedited manner, because they have shown themselves to be low risk. The CBP border crossing wait times web site shows that most trucks using FAST lanes cross much faster than those using other lanes at the same crossings. In order to qualify for a FAST lane, all elements of the supply chain related to the shipment must be C-TPAT certified, including the driver, the trucking company, and the manufacturer. The ACE program allows carriers to submit electronic information about their cargo before they arrive at the point of entry. FAST lanes are operational in Brownsville, Pharr, Laredo, and two in El Paso.

Pre-approved, low-risk frequent non-commercial travelers may use SENTRI lanes. They are currently available in El Paso, and being tested in Hidalgo and Brownsville, while two SENTRI lanes in Laredo are scheduled to open around the beginning of September, 2006. As with the FAST program, the SENTRI program requires all elements to be pre-cleared.

FMCSA OP-1 and OP-2 permitting¹¹

The FMCSA has a web page specifically for Mexican motor carriers (in English and Spanish) giving all of the rules and regulations for operating in the United States. While Mexican trucks are still not allowed to operate beyond the commercial zones, the forms and procedures for operating inland are available on the website. Mexican trucks are subject to the same safety criteria established for U.S. trucks.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Texas has taken a proactive approach to addressing the infrastructure needs along the border. In 1999, the state of Texas made an unprecedented commitment to fund \$1.8 billion in border transportation improvements through 2009. To date, \$1.4 billion has been awarded for those construction projects. However, the costs associated with developing these projects have increased to \$2.9 billion. The Transportation Commission remains strongly committed to fulfilling its pledge to the border, and these projects will be delivered. These and other projects to facilitate trade transportation are detailed in the following report. Beyond this commitment, TxDOT administers many programs that help to improve infrastructure and meet the following agenda items:

Agenda item 4:

Work with federal officials to resolve transportation issues involving infrastructure, including roads and bridges, to allow for the efficient movement of goods and people across the border between Texas and Mexico.

Agenda item 5:

¹¹ http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/español/english/mmc_english.htm

Work with federal officials to create a unified federal agency process to streamline border crossing needs.

Agenda item 6:

Identify problems involved with border truck inspections and related trade and transportation infrastructure.

In the recent past, TxDOT has worked with state, federal and local partners to change regulations so that transportation projects in the entire state, including the border area, can be completed faster. Among these are new financing options that expand transportation funding sources such as the Texas Mobility Fund, Pass-Through Toll Financing, Regional Mobility Authorities, Comprehensive Development Agreements, as well as leveraging existing tax collections using public debt, private sector financing, and tolling.

In addition to these new financing options is the Trans-Texas Corridor (TTC), a proposed multi-modal transportation facility traversing Texas. The TTC concept could include facilities for cars, trucks, passenger rail, freight rail, utility transmission, and connections for intermodal freight. Currently, there are two proposed TTC corridors: TTC-35 from Laredo to North of Dallas-Fort Worth and I-69/TTC from the border to Northeast Texas.

The very first paragraph of the Trans Texas Corridor Plan Report¹² highlights the importance of trade with Mexico and the transportation needed to facilitate that trade.

Draw a north-south line from Mexico City to Chicago. Draw an east-west line from Los Angeles to Miami. The two lines intersect in Texas.

Texas has long been seen as the crossroads of North America, but this concept has never been more relevant as trade between North and South America continues to grow.

Most goods and commodities coming into the United States from Mexico and South America cross the Texas border and move north, sometimes all the way to Canada. The reverse is true for exports. In fact, 79 percent of all U.S.-Mexico trade passes through Texas ports of entry. Under the North American Free Trade Agreement, this international traffic will only increase.

TxDOT held meetings as early as 2002 with the Mexican Federal Ministry of Communications and Transportation, as well as with the four border states of Tamaulipas, Nuevo Leon, Coahuila, and Chihuahua, to explain the concept, and later the plan, for the Trans-Texas Corridor. In June of 2005, TxDOT invited our Mexican counterparts for a meeting on the advancement of plans

¹² Crossroads of the Americas: Trans Texas Corridor Plan Report Summary
http://www.keeptexasmoving.com/publications/files/ttc_report_summary.pdf

for the Trans-Texas Corridor, as well as to get a clear idea of the transportation infrastructure plans on the Mexican side of the border.

As this new system of highways that link Mexico to Texas and beyond is developed and constructed, TxDOT will continue to coordinate with our Mexican counterparts to ensure the best highway linkages possible to foster trade.

Coordinated Border Infrastructure Funding from SAFTEA-LU¹³

In October 2005, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) convened a working group made up of representatives from the TxDOT district offices and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) within 100 miles of the Texas-Mexico border. This working group came to the consensus that the Coordinated Border Infrastructure (CBI) funds should be used within 50 miles of border crossings and that funds should be distributed using the same criteria and formulas used by the Federal Highway Administration.

The Transportation Commission allocated \$200 million to the 3 border districts (El Paso, Laredo and Pharr) in March 2006. Because most of the border crossings are within metropolitan planning area boundaries, the districts are coordinating project selection with the metropolitan planning organizations.

In the El Paso District, two projects to install intelligent transportation systems at the Bridge of the Americas and at the Zaragoza Safety Inspection Station have been identified to let in FY 2007. The Pharr District is looking at using these funds to improve FAST lanes at two different bridges, the Laredo District plans to realign a connecting road and a grade separation, and the El Paso District aims to fund a Clean Border Trade System Demonstration, complete with 30 commercial vehicles equipped with GPS, real time communications, and clean fuel technology.

International Bridge Permits¹⁴

The Transportation Planning and Programming Division (TPP) of TxDOT has the lead responsibility for the state international bridge application process as enacted by the 74th Texas Legislature in 1995 (Senate Bill 1633) and amended by 78th Texas Legislature in 2003 (House Bill 1563). As amended, HB 1653 allows an applicant to concurrently seek approval from the Texas Transportation Commission and the United States. However, if the Commission does not approve construction of the bridge, the applicant shall withdraw the request for approval from the United States. Factors that are considered by the commission related to approval include:

- The facility's potential impacts on the economy of the region, the environment, traffic congestion and free trade.

13 SAFTEA-LU Section 1303 information available at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/cbipintro.htm>

14 <ftp://ftp.dot.state.tx.us/pub/txdot-info/iro/2006final.pdf>.

- Whether the bridge construction is consistent with the state and regional transportation plans.
- Whether the future transportation infrastructure on both sides of the border, at the time the bridge becomes operational, will be of sufficient capacity to support the new structure.
- Whether the revenue generated by the bridge will be sufficient to finance the planning, design, construction, operation and maintenance of the bridge.
- Whether there is support on the Mexican side for the necessary transportation infrastructure.

In making its determination, the commission consults with the following agencies/offices:

- Texas Department of Public Safety
- Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
- Texas Historical Commission
- Texas Department of Agriculture
- Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission
- Office of the Governor
- General Land Office
- Other agencies the Commission deems appropriate

New bridges are being proposed at these locations: Port of Brownsville, Donna, Anzalduas (Hidalgo/Reynosa), Mission, Los Ebanos, Laredo, Guadalupe Tornillo (Fabens). Through the JWC and the Binational Bridges and Border Crossings Group, TxDOT and the FHWA keep up to date on Mexican infrastructure plans regarding the proposed bridges. Information on proposed new bridges is available in the publication *Texas-Mexico International Bridges and Border Crossings Existing and Proposed 2006* on the TxDOT website at <ftp://ftp.dot.state.tx.us/pub/txdot-info/iro/2006final.pdf>.

A new rail bridge has been approved in Laredo, and others are proposed at the Port of Brownsville and Colombia (Laredo).

Border Safety Inspection Facilities (BSIF)

In addition to the infrastructure projects noted above that facilitate federal programs, the biggest state program at the border itself is the BSIF.

TxDOT's primary role regarding BSIFs is in the planning, design, and building of these facilities. Commercial vehicle safety inspections are handled by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) and require modern facilities and equipment, including Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), weigh-in-motion and static scales, and inspection bays.

A Model Port of Entry Study was completed in 2002 by the Center for Transportation Research (CTR) and the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) for TxDOT. This study examined the feasibility of facilitating trade and enhancing inspection responsibilities through an expedited process. Temporary facilities are functional at the following crossings, and permanent facilities are in varying stages of progress:

- **El Paso:** Bridge of the Americas, Zaragoza/Ysleta Bridge
- **Laredo:** Colombia/Solidarity Bridge, World Trade Bridge
- **Lower Rio Grande Valley:** Free Trade Bridge, Camino Real Bridge, Pharr-Reynosa Bridge, Veterans International Bridge

The BSIFs have been functioning for some time now, and according to DPS, the condition of Mexican trucks that cross the border has improved remarkably. The out-of-service rate is about the same as for U.S. trucks.

The Texas Rail Relocation and Improvement Fund

There are several studies considering relocating rail from urban and residential areas. When cars and trains no longer have to cross paths within city centers, many public safety benefits are achieved, including improved air quality, enhanced safety, and reduced congestion. Currently, rail relocations/improvements are being considered or are underway in Brownsville, Cameron County and El Paso.

It is important for the Rail Relocation and Improvement Fund established by the Legislature and approved by voters in 2005 to be capitalized during the upcoming 80th Session. This source of funds will provide money for some of these important rail relocations/improvements.

CONCLUSION

Communication, trade, and infrastructure must be not only sustained along the border, but also improved, a goal to which TxDOT is committed. As **Agenda Item 11** requests recommendations for addressing border challenges, it is worth mentioning a few things that would help improve the agency's border transportation operations.

First, the Rail Relocation Fund must be capitalized. As stated before, this fund will be instrumental in relocating rail lines outside of city centers and improving rail lines where it is not feasible to relocate them. As such, these projects, once a funding source is identified, will provide traffic relief since there will be fewer vehicle/train intersections, improve air quality because there will be fewer idling trains and vehicles, and improve safety, since right now train crossings are very dangerous for both vehicles and pedestrians.

Second, working to curb the purchase and development by speculators of the property adjacent to future highway routes will save the state time and money. Currently, state law prevents

counties from stopping or regulating development around future transportation corridors. This problem has cost state and local governments considerable money in increased right-of-way costs. While cities and counties with larger populations have mechanisms to control this, rural areas do not.

Third, streamlining the environmental process would result in a significant cost savings to the state. SAFTEA-LU created a pilot program for 5 states to take over their own environmental review of highway projects. Texas was one of the states chosen, but state legislation must be passed before it can be used.

Another issue regarding highway right-of-way is advanced acquisition. Generally, TxDOT cannot acquire parcels of land until the environmental work is completed. Obtaining authority for advance acquisition of parcels that are likely needed for a transportation project would avoid inflationary impacts and prevent development of the property, and would only be used when the seller was willing. Property would not be taken through eminent domain.

Finally, the border region would be helped by a reform of the statutes governing utility relocations. Since utilities have a statutory right to be in state right-of-way at no charge, when those utilities have to be relocated to accommodate a state highway improvement, taxpayers must pay for moving the utilities. Oftentimes utility relocations can add significant costs to a highway project, which reform could potentially help to minimize.

For Further Reference

TxDOT Strategic Plan for 2007-2011

http://www.keeptexasmoving.com/publications/files/ttc_report_summary.pdf

Texas International Trade Corridor Plan 2004

See attached CD

Trade Transportation Activities Report 2006

See attached CD

International Activities Report 2006

<ftp://ftp.dot.state.tx.us/pub/txdot-info/iro/2005iar.pdf>

Texas-Mexico International Bridges and Border Crossings Existing and Proposed 2006

<ftp://ftp.dot.state.tx.us/pub/txdot-info/iro/2006final.pdf>

Border Transportation Studies Review

See attached CD

Texas Border Crossing Travel Survey

See attached CD

Quarterly Cross Border Infrastructure Meetings, initial list of issues

See attached CD

TxDOT International Motor Carriers Registration Information

http://www.dot.state.tx.us/services/motor_carrier/checklist.htm

Texas Rail System Plan

http://www.dot.state.tx.us/publications/transportation_planning/FinalRail.pdf.

Non-Interstate System Toll Bridges and Tunnels in the United States (In operation, under construction, and financed as of January 1, 2005)

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohim/tollpage/t1part2.htm>