Post-1945 Bridges in Texas

The world was changing after the end of World War II, and Texas was changing right along with it. Within 20 years after World War II, Texas' population almost doubled. This meant more drivers, and more roads and bridges than ever before. As the Texas Highway Department, now TxDOT, built our one-of-a-kind farm-to-market road, the Highway Department bridge engineers were busy designing bridges that would bring more goods to market, increase access and trade across the Mexico border, and connect coastal communities for the first time.

This fast-paced road construction meant Texas built an average of two new bridges A DAY for 20 years! TxDOT built longer, stronger, and higher bridges than ever before. Bridge engineers created two new bridge types to help in Texas bridge building. The Highway Department led the nation in pioneering new bridge materials, like pre-stressed concrete and neoprene.

Did you know?

- Out of the thousands of bridges built from 1945 to 1965, TxDOT historians found around 100 of them to be significant and eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Preservation. This means that, if TxDOT plans a project with one of those 100 bridges, it must follow the historic preservation process and look for preservation alternatives.

- The Lavaca Bay Causeway is 2.2 miles long! This is one of the bridges TxDOT considers significant. Built in 1961, the Causeway was the longest bridge in Texas at the time it was built. The causeway rises 45 feet above the bay, so traffic never has to stop for ships and boats.

- Have you ever driven through an area where many bridges cross one another when highways come together? Though it is common today, that was a sight to see in the 1950s! One of the first types of these intersections, called multi-level interchanges, was at US 84 and US 77 in Waco. These interchanges kept traffic moving!

- Texas and Mexico designed a bridge together in 1965. Engineers from both governments worked together to build this bridge (US 281 in the United States) over the Rio Grande. They even split the costs because they knew it would be good for business.

Looking for more?

TxDOT partnered with the Texas Historical Commission to share stories of these post-World War II bridges. Learn about bridge technology and the growth of Texas here.

Take learning even further! TxDOT developed education activities that help elementary and middle school students understand bridge construction. Check them out here!