INTRODUCTION

Located in the westernmost part of Texas, the El Paso District encompasses six counties. The El Paso metropolitan area is the only urban area within the district and is a major gateway for road and rail freight coming in and out of Mexico on two road bridges and two rail bridges. In addition, there is a road bridge in Presidio, and the Presidio Rail Bridge is expected to reopen within the next five years with funding from the 2017 FASTLANE Grant program.

POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT

From 2000 to 2010, the district’s population increased by 17.3% while employment increased by 7.9%. Population is heavily concentrated in El Paso County, home to 97% of the district’s residents and 96% of employment. El Paso County is also projected to have significant growth, with more than one million residents by 2030.

The district benefits from increasing trade between the United States and Mexico, and a large portion of trans-border freight passes through the district. El Paso is a center for manufacturing, agriculture and livestock.

FREIGHT TRANSPORTATION ASSETS

With its location on the U.S.-Mexico border, the district plays a strategic role in international trade with seven vehicular international crossings and two rail crossings. Three of the seven crossings allow commercial traffic.

Interstate 10 links El Paso, Hudspeth, Culberson, and Jeff Davis counties with the rest of the state and points west. Brewster and Presidio counties are not served by interstate but have links to I-10 with U.S. Highways 90, 67, and 385. I-10 provides access to Mexico through the 110 spur to the Bridge of the Americas Port of Entry. Additional road ports-of-entry to Mexico are located at the Ysleta-Zaragoza Bridge to the south of central El Paso as well as the Presidio Bridge at the southern terminus of U.S. Highway 67 in Presidio County.

El Paso is served by BNSF and Union Pacific class I railroad lines that cross into Mexico at the Bridge of the Americas. The BNSF lines runs from El Paso to the north into New Mexico, while Union Pacific lines run from El Paso to the east, connecting with the rest of the Texas rail network. In addition, the district is served by the South Orient Rail Line, a Class III railroad owned by TxDOT and leased/operated by Texas Pacifico Transportation. The South Orient had a bridge connection to Mexico at Presidio, but the bridge closed in 2008 due to a fire and is under development for reconstruction.

In addition to road and rail, El Paso International Airport handled over 480 million pounds of air cargo in 2013, ranking as the fourth largest airport in Texas and 43rd in the U.S. by cargo tonnage. With recent investments, the airport has developed air cargo facilities to create the largest fully integrated transportation center on the U.S.-Mexico border. These new facilities are part of a free trade zone that provides deferred or reduced customs.

FREIGHT GENERATORS AND COMMODITIES

The freight generators of the district are clustered around the highway corridors in El Paso. The few freight
generators outside El Paso are found along road and rail lines (in addition to an agricultural and energy sector generator in northern Hudspeth County). There is a diversity of top commodities led by nonmetallic minerals.

**FREIGHT FORECASTS**

The El Paso District’s freight activity is concentrated in El Paso County and is expected to grow steadily over the next 30 years, with all but two counties showing significant growth of freight tonnage over this period.

**Combined Freight Tonnage 2016–2045**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>2016 Tonnage</th>
<th>2045 Tonnage</th>
<th>% Change 2016-2045</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brewster</td>
<td>120,635</td>
<td>285,818</td>
<td>137%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culberson</td>
<td>1,123,176</td>
<td>723,682</td>
<td>-36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso</td>
<td>33,567,333</td>
<td>55,866,640</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hudspeth</td>
<td>320,359</td>
<td>372,510</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff Davis</td>
<td>292,783</td>
<td>564,078</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidio</td>
<td>194,870</td>
<td>461,992</td>
<td>137%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>35,619,157</strong></td>
<td><strong>58,274,720</strong></td>
<td><strong>64%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the re-opening of the Presidio Rail Bridge in the near future, Brewster and Presidio counties are expected to more than double their freight tonnage by 2045. Jeff Davis and El Paso counties are also projected to have strong growth in tonnage.

The 64 percent increase in freight tonnage in the district from 2016 to 2045 illustrates not only the importance of freight movement to the local economy but the need to plan to accommodate this growth on the roads, rail and at border crossings.
Freight Network Infrastructure - EL PASO DISTRICT

Note: Railroad lines are offset from roadways for clarity.
**BORDER FACILITIES/PORTS OF ENTRY (POE)**

Border crossings, or ports of entry, are perhaps Texas’ most strategic asset. The border crossings in El Paso are vital to both the Texas and the nation’s economy. Nearly 73.5 million tons of highway and rail freight crossed the Texas-Mexico border in 2016, valued at more than $318.8 billion. More than 211 million tons of highway and rail freight are projected to cross the international border in 2045. The border crossings in the El Paso District accounted for 20 percent of daily truck volume and 17 percent of all rail traffic between Texas and Mexico.

In 2017, the greatest passage of trucks within the district occurred at the following ports of entry:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Trucks</th>
<th>Bridge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El Paso</td>
<td>509,287</td>
<td>Ysleta-Zaragoza Bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso</td>
<td>269,886</td>
<td>Bridge of the Americas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidio</td>
<td>8,695</td>
<td>Presidio Bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>787,868</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two international vehicular commercial bridges in El Paso proper, the Ysleta-Zaragoza Bridge and Bridge of the Americas, together handled more than 750,000 truck crossings in 2017. El Paso is the second largest road port of entry into Texas after Laredo. The Presidio Bridge, while much smaller by volume, is an important asset for the small communities in Presidio, Brewster, and Jeff Davis counties and the only crossing along the 500-mile stretch of border from El Paso to Del Rio.

**Annual Northbound Commercial Trucks in El Paso District, 2007–2017**

In addition to road border crossings, the district benefits from the two rail bridges — one a BNSF line and the other a UP line. The El Paso rail crossings handled 17 percent of the total Texas international rail crossing volume. In addition, the rail crossing at Presidio, which was the target of two fires in 2008 and 2009, is anticipated to reopen within the next 5 years and should increase economic development for the region.
INTEGRATING FREIGHT INTO THE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS

Congress recognized the importance of freight considerations in the transportation planning process through enactment of SAFTEA-LU on MAP-21 surface transportation legislation. Recognizing that state DOTs and MPOs are largely responsible for planning, programming, and delivering transportation projects, MAP-21 encourages the creation of local freight advisory groups and the development of statewide freight plans.

The National Academies’ Strategic Highway Research Program 2 (SHRP 2) commissioned the development of a guide to integrate freight considerations into highway planning with the objective of making “highway capacity planning more effective through better engagement of the freight industry.”

*Integrating Freight Considerations into the Highway Capacity Planning Process* provides guidance on market-based freight-planning factors and engaging freight stakeholders. Key elements of the engagement process include:

- Utilization of freight advisory committees;
- Interviews and surveys;
- Focus groups;
- Corridor planning;
- NEPA analysis.

In addition, the guide provides a toolkit that covers:

- How to initiate a freight advisory committee; steps include defining the mission, determining the governance structure, developing a potential list of members, and identifying meeting venues.
- How to sustain a freight advisory committee; steps include limiting meeting times, providing refreshments, identifying critical projects, identifying speakers, and communication plans.
- How to leverage existing contacts in your state; steps include outreach to MPOs, DOTs, chambers of commerce, and trucking associations.
- How to find and collaborate with a freight champion; steps include identifying persons from either the public or private sector.
- How to attract and maintain freight stakeholder participation; steps include addressing concerns about confidentiality, focusing on short-term projects, and addressing disparate time frames.
- How to use freight data to support freight outreach; steps include identification of sources, use of proprietary and nonproprietary data, and promoting freight-specific data.

The guide was developed primarily through interviews and case studies collected through discussions with public- and private-sector freight stakeholders across the United States.