



FEDERAL HIGHWAY  
ADMINISTRATION  
TEXAS DIVISION

# State of Texas Border Partnership E-Newsletter

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## ASCE Report Card Estimates Infrastructure Needs at \$2.2 Trillion in the U.S.

WASHINGTON, Jan. 28, 2009-(AP) America's roads, public transit and aviation have gotten worse in the past four years. Water and sewage systems are dreadful. The basic physical backbone of American society is barely above failing, a report by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) says.

It'll cost \$2.2 trillion to fix America's ailing infrastructure, according to highlights of a report being released early, just as the House of Representatives [readies its first vote](#) on President Barack Obama's call for a massive economic stimulus spending package.

The country's roads, dumps, dams, bridges, schools and rail systems need lots of that money, say the engineers, who would get a piece of the pie in working on the repairs. Government officials are already aiming billions of dollars at those physical needs as part of what at the moment is a \$825 billion economic stimulus package. But the engineers say that's not enough.

Overall, the [American Society of Civil Engineers](#) gives the U.S. physical backbone for everything from schools and parks to dams and levees a D. That's the same overall grade as the last time the group gave a report, in 2005, but it really is slipping from a "high D" to a "low D," said report chairman Andrew Herrmann.

Herrmann, an engineer with the New York firm Hardesty & Hanover, said his group is issuing the highlights of the report - the full document won't be out until late March - "to be relevant ... investing in our infrastructure will create jobs." Of the 15 areas the engi-

neers looked at, three got worse and only one got better. The three that worsened were all transportation oriented: aviation dropped from a D+ to a D; so did public transit; and America's intricate roadway system potholed from a D to a D-. Only the energy system improved, from a D to a D+.

In 2005, the engineers said it would cost what would be \$1.7 trillion in current dollars to fix what's broken. Now the pricetag is up to \$2.2 trillion. "That just goes to show that waiting has cost money," Herrmann told The Associated Press on Tuesday evening. "We haven't made any progress in four years. If my kid came home with 11 Ds and 4 Cs, I know I wouldn't be happy."

America's solid waste system was the only C+ on the report card. Bridges got a C; parks and rail systems managed C-. The only D+ plus was for energy. Solid Ds went to aviation, dams, hazardous waste, schools and public transit. The worst grades, D-, went to drinking water, inland waterways, roads and sewage systems.

"That absolutely makes sense," said Granger Morgan, head of Carnegie Mellon University's engineering and public policy program and an expert who wasn't part of the 28-engineer panel that handed out the grades. Morgan said just traveling the world shows that American infrastructure, especially in transportation, "is certainly not in the same league as parts of the developing world and parts of Europe."

For additional information on the ASCE Report Card please see the following web-link: <http://www.asce.org/asce.cfm>

## TSA Completes Background Checks on Over One Million Truckers

WASHINGTON - The Transportation Security Administration announced today the completion of over one million fingerprint-based background checks on truck drivers required to carry a Hazardous Material Endorsement (HME) on a commercial driver's license. Since starting operations almost four years ago, the HME Threat Assessment Program has completed a review of 1,015,660 applications and approved more than one million.

"Truckers are another set of eyes on the road and are part of the security network," said TSA Deputy Administrator Gale Rossides. "They play a vital role in keeping our freeways, streets, counties and cities safe."

Applicants who initially may not meet the eligibility requirements can take advantage of a robust redress program without losing their HME in the process. TSA rules give states the flexibility to extend HMEs for drivers whose background assessments are still pending, providing applicants the opportunity to continue to work should they request an appeal or waiver. Applicants that are disqualified by TSA may seek a review by

the U.S. Coast Guard Advocate Law Judge. Some examples of shipments classified as hazardous materials include gasoline, explosives, radioactive and infectious substances, propane, chlorine, acids, ammonia and other poisonous gases. Drivers must renew the TSA background assessment at least every five years, although a state may require renewals that are more frequent.

More information about the program, how to apply, and a full list of eligibility criteria can be found at [www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov). To apply for a TSA background assessment, please visit [www.hazprints.com](http://www.hazprints.com) or call 1-877-429-7746.

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## October surface trade with Canada and Mexico fell 2.1 percent from last year

The Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) reported last month that surface transportation trade between the United States and its North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) partners Canada and Mexico was 2.1 percent lower in October 2008 than in October 2007, reaching \$72.7 billion.

The value of U.S. surface transportation trade with Canada and Mexico rose 1.2 percent in October from September. Month-to-month changes can be affected by seasonal variations and other factors. Surface transportation consists largely of freight movements by truck, rail and pipeline.

About 88 percent of U.S. trade by value with Canada and Mexico moves on land. The value of U.S. surface transportation trade with Canada and Mexico in October was up 38.8 percent compared to October 2003, and up 74.9 percent compared to October 1998, a period of 10 years. Imports in October were up 75

percent compared to October 1998, while exports were up 74.8 percent. U.S.-Mexico surface transportation trade totaled \$27.9 billion in October, up 5.1 percent compared to October 2007. The value of imports carried by truck was 5.9 percent lower in October 2008 than October 2007 while the value of exports carried by truck was 18.4 percent higher.

Texas led all states in surface trade with Mexico in October with \$9.0 billion. The BTS TransBorder Freight Data are a unique subset of official U.S. foreign trade statistics released by the U.S. Census Bureau. New data are tabulated monthly and historical data are not adjusted for inflation. October TransBorder numbers include data received by BTS as of December 17.

The news release and summary tables can be found at [www.bts.gov](http://www.bts.gov). More information on TransBorder Freight Data and data from previous months are posted on the BTS website at:

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## US-Mexico border fence almost complete

WASHINGTON (AP) — The fence along the U.S.-Mexico border is mostly finished. Customs and Border Protection spokesman Lloyd Easterling says that 601 miles of the project had been completed as of a week ago.

Easterling says 69 miles of the fence still must be built to meet the goal set during the Bush administration. In December, then President-elect Barack Obama said he wanted to evaluate border security operations before he considers whether to finish building the fence under his administration.

Easterling said the Obama White House has not told Homeland Security to stop building the fence. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano has said a fence alone will not stop illegal immigration along the 2,000-mile border. About half of the fence has been built in Arizona, where Napolitano was governor.

The overall plan for security on the Southwest border — set by the Bush administration — includes additional Border Patrol agents, more enforcement of immigration laws, the fence and a high-tech "virtual fence" using surveillance technology.

At her Senate confirmation hearing, Napolitano said there is a role for fencing around urban areas. "It helps prevent those who are crossing illegally from blending immediately into a town population," Napolitano told senators.

Officials have said the border security improvements — like the fence — are working, and fewer people are trying to illegally cross from be attributed to economic Mexico into the United States. Some of that can be attributed to economic woes and fewer jobs in the U.S.

The fence has been controversial since its inception and has faced several lawsuits, none successful so far.

Congress authorized the fence in 2005 to help secure the border and slow illegal immigration. Lawmakers also gave the Homeland Security secretary the power to waive federal laws, such as environmental protections, when erecting the fence. Obama, as a senator, voted for the project.

Congress has set aside \$2.7 billion for the fence since 2006. There's no estimate how much the entire system — the physical fence and the technology — will cost to build, let alone maintain.

The Sept. 11 terrorist attacks revived the immigration debate and advanced the idea of a border fence. Intelligence officials have said gaps along the Southwestern border could provide opportunities for terrorists to enter the country.

Boeing Co. has the contract for the technology portion of the fence, as well as for some construction work. The company's contract for the technology expires this year.

For additional information, please see the following website: [http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5jE\\_bOUpQb6MxrxSQno3N6gEdY-MAD95VN7G00](http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5jE_bOUpQb6MxrxSQno3N6gEdY-MAD95VN7G00)

## Dept of Homeland Security will not postpone requirements for maritime cargo carriers and importers

Washington – The U.S. Department of Homeland Security confirmed late last month that it will not extend the effective date for new information requirements on maritime cargo destined for the United States.

The Importer Security Filing and Additional Carrier Requirements interim final rule, scheduled to go into effect on January 26, 2009 now requires maritime cargo carriers and importers to submit additional data to U.S. Customs and Border Protection before vessels are permitted entry into the country.

The determination not to postpone the January 26 effective date was made after consideration of the factors set forth in the memorandum from the director of the Office of Management and Budget, "Implementation of Memorandum Concerning Regulatory Review," dated January 21.

The decision was based in large part on the fact that the rulemaking process was procedurally adequate; that a 75-day public comment period was already provided to respond to the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking; and, that this Interim Final Rule is now subject to an additional six-month public comment period.

The January 26 effective date will also allow CBP to work with industry on testing and improving the systems of this important security initiative during the structured review and delayed enforcement period which ends a year later on January 26, 2010.

This additional information will be critical to enhancing the department's ability to identify and stop dangerous goods from entering our nation, and CBP will continue to welcome input from the regulated industry.

For additional information, please visit the CBP Trade Web site. ( [Trade](#) ) Questions may be sent to [Security\\_Filing\\_General@cbp.dhs.gov](mailto:Security_Filing_General@cbp.dhs.gov).

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection is the unified border agency within the Department of Homeland Security charged with the management, control and protection of our nation's borders at and between the official ports of entry. CBP is charged with keeping terrorists and terrorist weapons out of the country while enforcing hundreds of U.S. laws.

For additional information, please see the following web-link: [http://www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/newsroom/news\\_releases/01262009.xml](http://www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/newsroom/news_releases/01262009.xml)

## Motorists' habits spur call for gas tax increases

WASHINGTON (AP) — Motorists are driving less and buying less gasoline, which means fuel taxes aren't raising enough money to keep pace with the cost of road, bridge and transit programs.

That has the federal commission that oversees financing for transportation talking about increasing the federal fuel tax.

A 50% increase in gasoline and diesel fuel taxes is being urged by the commission to finance highway construction and repair until the government devises another way for motorists to pay for using public roads.

The National Commission on Surface Transportation Infrastructure Financing, a 15-member panel created by Congress, is the second group in a year to call for increasing the current 18.4 cents a gallon federal tax on gasoline and the 24.4 cents a gallon tax on diesel. State fuel taxes vary from state to state.

In a report expected in late January, members of the infrastructure financing commission say they will urge Congress to raise the gas tax by 10 cents a gallon and the diesel tax by 12 cents to 15 cents a gallon. At the same time, the commission will recommend tying the fuel tax rates to inflation.

The commission will also recommend that states raise their fuel taxes and make greater use of toll roads and fees for rush-hour driving.

Although the cost of gasoline has dropped dramatically in recent months, such tax increases could be politically treacherous for Democratic leaders in Congress. A gas tax hike was one of the reasons they lost control of the House and Senate in the 1994 elections. President-elect Barack Obama has expressed concern about raising fuel taxes in the current economic climate.

But commission members said the government must find more road and bridge building money somewhere.

"I'm not excited about a gas tax increase, but the reality is our current gas tax doesn't pay for upkeep of the system we have now," said Adrian Moore, vice president of the Reason Foundation, a libertarian think tank in Los Angeles, and a member of the highway revenue commission.

"We can either let the roads go to hell or we can pay more." The dilemma for Congress is that highway and transit programs are dependent for revenue on fuel taxes that are not sustainable. Many Americans are driving less and switching to more fuel-efficient cars and trucks, and a shift to new fuels and technologies like plug-in hybrid electric cars will further erode gasoline sales.

According to a draft of the financing commission's recommendations, the nation needs to move to a new system that taxes motorists according to how much they use roads. "Most if not all of the commissioners have a strong belief and commitment that we need a fundamental transformation of the current system," said commission chairman Robert Atkinson, president of the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, a technology policy think tank in Washington.

A study by the Transportation Research Board of the National Academies estimated that the annual gap between revenues and the investment needed to improve highway and transit systems was about \$105 billion in 2007, and will increase to \$134 billion in 2017 under current trends.

Projected shortfalls in revenue led the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission, in a report issued in January 2008, to call for an increase of as much as 40 cents a gallon in the gas tax, phased in over five years.

Charles Whittington, chairman of the American Trucking Associations, which supports a fuel tax increase as long as the money goes to highway projects, said Congress may decide to disguise a fuel tax hike as a surcharge to combat climate change.

Transportation is responsible for about a third of all U.S. carbon emissions created by burning fossil fuels. Traffic congestion wastes an estimated 2.9 billion gallons of fuel a year. Less congestion would reduce greenhouse gases and dependence on foreign oil.

"Instead of calling it a gas tax, call it a carbon tax," Whittington said.

Bottlenecks around the nation cost the trucking industry about 243 million lost truck hours and about \$7.8 billion per year, according to the commission. See additional at website: [http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090102/ap\\_on\\_go\\_ot/gas\\_tax](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090102/ap_on_go_ot/gas_tax)



## U.S. and Canadian railroads end 2008 with a thud, AAR traffic data shows

At the end of 2008, which included Christmas, freight traffic remained down for U.S. railroads. For the period ending Dec. 27, their carloads dropped 21.8 percent to 124,061 units and intermodal volume fell 21.7 percent to 200,365 units compared with totals from the end of December 2007 according to the [Association of American Railroads](#).

Through 52 weeks, U.S. roads originated 16.6 million carloads, down 2.2 percent, and 11.5 million containers and trailers or containers, down 4.2 percent year over year. Total volume decreased 1.2 percent to an estimated 1.73 trillion ton-miles.

Canadian railroads had a tough last week, too. Their carloads totaling 39,999 units declined 25.7 percent and intermodal volume totaling 20,621 units plummeted 35.5 percent vs. totals from 2007's last week. Through 52 weeks, Canadian railroads' carloads decreased 6.3 percent to 3.8 million units, but intermodal volume rose 1.4 percent to 2.5 million units compared with full-year 2007 data.

On a combined cumulative-volume basis through 52 weeks, reporting U.S. and Canadian railroads originated 20.3 million carloads, down 3 percent, and 14 million containers and trailers, down 3.3 percent year over year.

In Mexico, Kansas City Southern de México S.A. de C.V. reported weekly carloads totaling 6,138 units, down 21.7 percent, and weekly intermodal volume totaling 2,616 units, down 5.9 percent. Through 52 weeks, the railroad's carloads decreased 7.9 percent to 520,364 units, but intermodal volume rose 6.6 percent to 260,399 units compared with 2007 totals.

Ferrocarril Mexicano S.A. de C.V. reported weekly carloads totaling 7,922 units, down 24 percent, and intermodal volume totaling 1,541 units, down 12.9 percent. Through 52 weeks, the road's carloads increased 3.1 percent to 641,898 units, but intermodal volume dropped slightly (by 0.2 percent) to 147,070 units vs. 2007 totals. See web link for additional information: <http://www.progressiverailroading.com/news/article.asp?id=19221>

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## BTS Releases Pocket Guide to Transportation (2009)

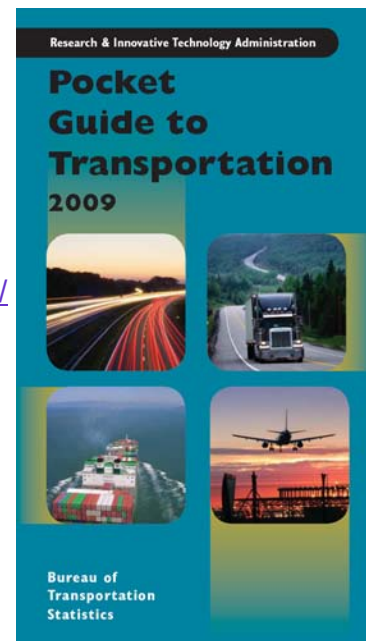
The Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), a branch of the U.S. DOT Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA), has published the *Pocket Guide to Transportation 2009* – a 50-page quick reference guide to informative transportation data. The 12th annual Pocket Guide covers data on the transportation system, transportation safety and security, mobility, transportation and the economy, and transportation and the environment.

To order a copy of the *Pocket Guide to Transportation 2009*, contact BTS by phone at 800-853-1351, by e-mail at [ritainfo@dot.gov](mailto:ritainfo@dot.gov) or by mail sent to Product Orders, RITA/Bureau of Transportation Statistics, USDOT, 1200 New Jersey Ave., S.E., Room E36- 109, Washington, DC 20590.

This free guide can also be obtained by going to the BTS website at [www.bts.gov](http://www.bts.gov) and ordering copies using the "Bookstore" link. Contact : Dave Smallen: 202-366-5568.

To download a free copy of this BTS publication, please see the following website for additional information:

[http://www.bts.gov/press\\_releases/2009/dot008\\_09/html/dot008\\_09.html](http://www.bts.gov/press_releases/2009/dot008_09/html/dot008_09.html)



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### Famous Quote of the Day:

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?' "

--[the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.](#)

Nobel Peace Prize laureate  
and civil rights activist

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Information provided is a compilation from other news and on-line media sources, any information relayed is based upon the accuracy of the information provided by other news gathering organizations and does not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the Federal Highway Administration or the State of Texas Border Partnership Working Group.

## Available Data Sources for Intermodal Border and Freight Transportation Planning Purposes

The FHWA HQ's Office of Freight Management and Operations has created a "one-stop" shopping website for various freight-related data that may be used as part of the metropolitan and statewide planning processes within your State DOT or metropolitan planning area.

The web-link shown below includes hot links to other Federal agencies databases and includes data from the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (Commodity Flow Survey, Transborder Surface Trade Data), the Highway Performance Monitoring System, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Transearch Freight Market Data, U.S./Mexico and Canadian Crossing

Data Statistics, the U.S. Maritime Commission (Port-Related Data), the Surface Transportation Board, the American Association of Railroads (Class I and Regional Rail Traffic Data), and other vital sources of freight-related data and statistics that may serve to improve the quality of your State and local freight and intermodal planning efforts.

For additional information, please see the following FHWA website:

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/freightplanning/data.htm>

## North American Freight Flows Conference: Understanding Changes and Improving Data Sources

TRB is sponsoring the North American Freight Flows Conference: Understanding Changes and Improving Data Sources on September 16-17, 2009, in Irvine, California.

The conference is designed to explore challenges and identify new ideas concerning the availability and application of data for program evaluation, policy formation, and business decision making associated with North American transborder flows.

The meeting will also assess recent changes in the freight transportation environment and identify emerging research needs.

For additional information, please see: [http://www.trb.org/news/blurb\\_detail.asp?id=9836](http://www.trb.org/news/blurb_detail.asp?id=9836)

### Freight Definition of the Month

**Class I railroads**— Railroads earning adjusted annual operating revenues for three consecutive years of \$250,000,000 or more as defined by the Surface Transportation Board (STB).

Currently there are nine railroads in North America that are classified as Class I, seven of which operate in the United States (including: BSNF, Union Pacific, Kansas City Southern Railway, and Norfolk Southern Railway, among others).

