



FEDERAL HIGHWAY
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Mexico plans big splash with new Baja port

Punta Colonet, Mexico- Mexico's government is preparing to open bidding on the largest infrastructure project in the nation's history, a \$4-billion seaport that could transform this farming village into a cargo hub to rival the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. If completed as planned by 2014, the port would be the linchpin of a new shipping route linking the Pacific Ocean to America's heartland. Vessels bearing shipping containers from Asia would offload them here on Mexico's Baja peninsula, about 150 miles south of Tijuana, where they would be whisked over newly constructed rail lines to the United States.

The massive development, which is to be privately funded, is attracting interest from heavyweights such as Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim Helu. The world's second-richest man is part of a consortium planning an "aggressive" run at the project, according to Miguel Favela, general director of Mexican operations for cargo terminal operator MTC Holdings of Oakland.

Favela said MTC had teamed up with Slim's IDEAL infrastructure company and Mexican mining and railroad giant Grupo Mexico in an effort to nab the 45-year concession. Mexico's transportation secretariat will release the request for proposal in June and hopes to select a winner by summer 2009, Subsecretary Manuel Rodriguez Arregui said in an interview earlier this month. Competition promises to be fierce. Hong Kong-based Hutchison Port Holdings, a major port developer and operator whose par-

ent company is chaired by billionaire Li Ka-Shing, said it planned to study the bid documents. So will terminal operators SSA Marine of Seattle and Dubai's DP World.

Ditto for railroads Union Pacific Corp. of Omaha and Fort Worth-based BNSF Railway Co. Several companies had previously expressed interest in the deal but backed off after repeated delays in the launch of the bidding. "All the major players . . . they'll be here," said a confident Rodriguez Arregui, who will oversee the selection process.

The Punta Colonet proposal will be structured as a joint port and rail project, requiring terminal operators, railroads and construction companies to join forces to win the deal. Hutchison and Union Pacific had formed an earlier alliance that dissolved last year. Sources said SSA had partnered with leading Mexican construction firm Empresas ICA. Those companies declined to comment about their arrangement.

About 30 million containers crossed the Pacific last year, a flow that had been increasing by about 10% annually for more than a decade until recently. And, though transpacific trade has slowed because of weakness in the U.S. economy, experts said those figures would continue to grow over time. "In the long run . . . it could get to the size of Long Beach-L.A.," which last year handled 15.7 million containers combined, Favela said.

For additional information, please see:
<http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-mexport25mar25,0,3018089.story>

MOVING THE
AMERICAN
ECONOMY

New NCHRP Statewide Freight Forecasting Toolkit (Report 606)

The Transportation Research Board (TRB) recently published a new National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) Report No. 606 on Forecasting Statewide Freight.

Federal planning legislation and regulations now mandate that state departments of transportation and metropolitan planning organizations consider the needs of freight when planning and programming transportation investments. While there are standard techniques used to forecast the movement of people, less attention has been paid to forecasting freight movements, and there are consequently fewer standardized techniques that state and local agencies can adapt to their local situation. This Toolkit is designed to provide transportation planners with the information they need to prepare forecasts of freight transportation by highlighting techniques successfully developed by state agencies across the country.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, the volume of freight moved within the United States has nearly doubled the rate of population increase over the past three decades. In those years, this volume has also outstripped the annualized rates of growth in disposable income and gross national product. The 2002 Commodity Flow Survey, by the Bureau of the Census, found that more than 19 billion tons of freight, valued at almost \$13 trillion, moves annually over the nation's transportation system.

In calendar year 2002, an average of 12 billion ton-miles of goods moved in the United States each day. All of this activity places growing pressure on each state's transportation infrastructure, leading to many costly traffic congestion problems—notably around major airports, seaports, and truck-rail transfer terminals. Significant changes have also been taking place in the spatial patterns and commodity mix of both domestic and international trade. Modern logistic practices and the rapid growth in e-commerce are now also influencing these patterns.

Analytic methods are needed to help states to (a) determine where and how much current freight activity is taking place within and across their borders, (b) forecast future mode and commodity-specific freight movement patterns, and (c) establish and apply suitable performance measures to evaluate their effectiveness in accommodating freight demand. These tools and methodologies for individual states need to be upwardly compatible so that they can be assembled to form multi-state, sub-state, and regional data and information snapshots. Currently, there exist numerous gaps in the data needed to estimate the necessary origin-to-destination (O-D) freight movements.

This gap is especially apparent in the case of truck-only, as well as truck-inclusive, freight movements. Collection and analysis methods are needed to fill these data gaps, to use the resulting O-D volumes to estimate freight flows on specific sections of a state's multimodal transportation network, and to forecast O-D freight movement patterns. These patterns include freight movements both within and between metropolitan areas and crossing state borders.

The objective of this project was to develop an analytical framework for forecasting freight movements at the state level. This framework includes (1) a toolkit of data collection techniques, analytical procedures, and computer models; (2) management approaches and decision-making procedures; and (3) performance evaluation methods that can guide states in establishing priorities for improving their transportation systems to best accommodate increase freight demand.

For additional information, please see the TRB's NCHRP Report 606: Forecasting Statewide Freight http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp_rpt_606.pdf

Financing Transportation in the 21st Century: An Intergovernmental Perspective

The National Academy of Public Administration and six national associations representing state and local officials have released a report that explores, from an intergovernmental perspective, options to strengthen the nation's transportation finances.

In addition to the National Academy of Public Administration, the other participating organizations included the Council of State Governments, the International City/County Managers Association, the National Association of Counties, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the National Governors Association, and the National League of Cities.

The report shows the conditions and performance of the current U.S. highway and transit system, and how much funding will be necessary in order to maintain and improve the transportation system network over the coming years ahead. The assessment also illustrates the operations and management costs and State DOT and MPO efforts to meet the growing demands of the global economy.

For additional information on this report, please see the following web-link: http://www.trb.org/news/blurb_detail.asp?id=8863

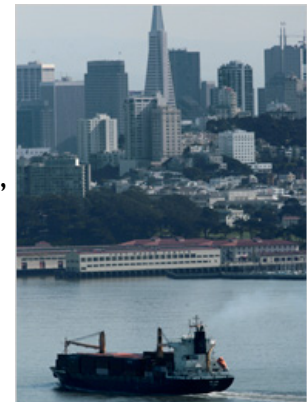
EPA Rule to Sharply Reduce Emissions From Diesel Engines in Locomotives, Ships

The Environmental Protection Agency announced a final rule in the Federal Register on March 14 which it said will make sharp reductions in particulate matter and nitrogen oxide emissions from locomotives and marine diesel engines.

When the regulations take full effect in 2015, EPA estimates they will result in a 90 percent reduction in particulate matter emissions from the engines and an 80 percent reduction in nitrogen oxides. By 2030, EPA projects the emissions limits will reduce particulate matter emissions by 27,000 tons per year and nitrogen oxide emissions by 800,000 tons. "This will help the millions of people who live along our coasts, rivers and rail lines," EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson said. Johnson said the rule has industry and environmental group support.

The rule applies to all line-haul, passenger, and switch locomotives that operate extensively within the United States, including newly manufactured locomotives and remanufactured locomotives that were originally manufactured after 1972. It applies to newly built marine diesel engines with displacements less than 30 liters per cylinder installed on vessels flagged or registered in the United States. Marine Tier 4 engine standards apply only to commercial marine diesel engines above 800 horsepower and recreational marine diesel engines above 2,000 horsepower. For additional information, please see: [http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/6424ac1caa800aab85257359003f5337/2f8d4b77c0bbad3f8525740c0057376e!](http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/6424ac1caa800aab85257359003f5337/2f8d4b77c0bbad3f8525740c0057376e!OpenDocument)

[OpenDocument](http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/6424ac1caa800aab85257359003f5337/2f8d4b77c0bbad3f8525740c0057376e!OpenDocument)



Three South Texas highways to be interstates

South Texas is not only going to get its first interstate - it is also going to get a second and a third. State transportation officials knew one of three southern highways - U.S. Highway 281 in Hidalgo County, U.S. Highway 77 in Cameron County or U.S. Highway 59 in Webb County - would eventually become part of an interstate stretching from the Texas-Mexico border to Texarkana, in the northeast part of the state. Only Webb County is currently served by an interstate.

The state's Trans-Texas Corridor plan calls for an Interstate 69 extension linking South Texas to points north, with I-69 eventually becoming part of a federal highway project to connect Canada and Mexico. Advocates expect the project to reduce congestion, enhance safety, expand economic opportunities and improve air quality, among other benefits. Now, though, instead of only one South Texas highway making the cut for I-69 inclusion, all three of them have. "All three routes are considered part of the I-69 system," said Mario Jorge, the Texas Department of Transportation's local district engineer. "The actual determination of which one comes first will be handled at a later date when funding becomes available."

Early discussions included the possibility of adding new lanes to one of the highways and operating them as a toll road targeting commercial traffic, while existing lanes would remain free for motorists to use. But Jorge said no new lanes will be added to the highways, and the major upgrades will just be overpasses. U.S. Highway 77 is the most likely choice to become the first I-69 corridor running through the Rio Grande Valley, he said, because it will be quicker, easier and cheaper to upgrade. No final decision has been made yet, however. "Our plan is to get an interstate to the Valley as soon as we possibly can," Jorge said. "If 77 can get it here, we will do that."

Of the two Valley routes, U.S. Highway 77 has more segments that are already up to "interstate standards," which means they have more overpasses compared to U.S. Highway 281. There also are fewer landowners along U.S. Highway 77 between Brownsville and Corpus Christi, meaning the state doesn't have to get as many approvals from property owners to access land for construction. "It is a lot more expensive and a lot more complicated along 281," Jorge said. "There are way too many property owners." The private development team for I-69 will have the

final say over which corridor is upgraded first. A consortium comprised of Spanish infrastructure giant Cintra and San Antonio-based Zachry Construction Corp. will provide TxDOT with a cost estimate and design for the Texas portion of the I-69 corridor in the next few months, Jorge said. TxDOT also will ask the companies to do the upgrade of U.S. Highway 77, he said. He said "zero dollars" have been allocated to upgrade the highway. State transportation officials started cutting road projects in December, citing a budget that can't keep up with existing road maintenance and new highway construction.

Jorge said the private developers will be funding the U.S. Highway 77 project from tolls collected in other segments of I-69 outside the Valley. Once the consortium presents the three corridor construction plans to TxDOT, state officials will make their final decision on which route to upgrade first. Hidalgo County Judge J.D. Salinas met with Gov. Rick Perry last week to ask him to upgrade both U.S. Highway 77 and U.S. Highway 281 at the same time. Salinas points to a February 2007 TxDOT study that repeatedly states that U.S. Highway 281 carries more truck traffic as a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement. The federal government signed NAFTA in 1994 to increase trade among the United States, Canada and Mexico.

U.S. Highway 281 carried 5.9 percent of the state's NAFTA traffic. U.S. Highway 59 was slightly lower and U.S. Highway 77 carried 3.6 percent. The study also predicts U.S. Highway 281 will have the second largest increase in truck traffic by 2030 among seven major NAFTA corridors. Only Interstate 30, running from Dallas to Texarkana, will have a larger increase, according to the study's projections.

Salinas questions the state's rationale for leaning toward upgrading U.S. Highway 77 before U.S. Highway 281. "Their own studies say that 281 is busier than 77," he said. Salinas added, though: "I'm not going to put 77 against 281 - they need to do both." U.S. Highway 281 will be upgraded, Jorge said. He just doesn't know when. However, construction for the U.S. Highway 77 upgrade should begin in the next three to five years. See newspaper article at the following web-link:

<http://www.topix.com/city/corpus-christi-tx/2008/03/three-south-texas-highways-to-be-interstates>

Central U.S. Gulf Coast Study Released by FHWA

On March 12, FHWA in cooperation with RITA and the Climate Change Science Program (CCSP) publicly released the Gulf Coast Study. This report was led by FHWA and is one of 21 priority “Synthesis and Assessment Products” produced as part of the U.S. Climate Change Science Program.

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has released a study on the potential impacts of climate changes and land subsidence, the natural sinking of an area’s land mass, on transportation infrastructure in the U.S. Gulf Coast region. The Gulf Coast Study’s release is phase one of a three-part study. “This study provides transportation planners in the Gulf Coast region with valuable information that will assist them as they make decisions for the future,” said U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters.

The Impacts of Climate Change and Variability on Transportation Systems and Infrastructure: Gulf Coast Study, Phase I, provides an assessment of the vulnerabilities of transportation systems in the region to potential changes in weather patterns and related impacts, as well as the effect of natural land subsidence and other environmental factors in the region. The area examined by the study includes 48 contiguous counties in four states, running from Galveston, TX to Mobile, AL.

Based on 21 simulation models and a range of emissions scenarios, the study found that potential changes in climate over the next 50 to 100 years could disrupt transportation services in the region. Twenty-seven percent of major roads, 9 percent of rail lines, and 72 percent of area ports are at or below 4 feet in elevation, and could be vulnerable to flooding due to future sea level rise and natural sinking of the area’s land mass. The study is designed to help state and local officials as they develop their transportation plans and make investment decisions. Federal transportation officials will continue to work closely with state and local planners as they incorporate the study into their planning processes.

Subsequent phases of the study will focus on risks and adaptation strategies involved in planning, investment, design and operational decisions for infrastructure in the Gulf Coast region and nationwide. The study was

performed in partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey and state and local researchers, and is one of 21 “synthesis and assessment” reports produced as part of the U.S. Climate Change Science Program. The Gulf Coast Study is currently available online at <http://climate.dot.gov>.

The Potential Impacts of Climate Change on U.S. Transportation

Recently, the TRB and the Division on Earth and Life Studies (DELS) released the pre-publication version of TRB Special Report 290, The Potential Impacts of Climate Change on U.S. Transportation, which explores the consequences of climate change for U.S. transportation infrastructure and operations.

The TRB report provides an overview of the scientific consensus on the current and future climate changes of particular relevance to U.S. transportation, including the limits of present scientific understanding as to their precise timing, magnitude, and geographic location; identifies potential impacts on U.S. transportation and adaptation options; and offers recommendations for both research and actions that can be taken to prepare for climate change.

One of the Report’s Key Findings:

“Potentially, the greatest impact of climate change for North America’s transportation systems will be flooding of coastal roads, railways, transit systems, and runways because of global rising sea levels, coupled with storm surges and exacerbated in some locations by land subsidence.”

The TRB report also summarizes previous work on strategies for reducing transportation-related emissions of carbon dioxide—the primary greenhouse gas—that contribute to climate change. [Five commissioned papers](#) used by the committee to help develop the report, [a summary of the report](#), and a [National Academies press release](#) associated with the report are available online at <http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/sr/sr290.pdf>

U.S. DOT Says Delay Hits Progress on Several Key Regulations

A recent U.S. Department of Transportation report said work on several key new regulations has fallen behind schedule, including shorter stopping distance for heavy trucks, safety reviews of new trucking companies, medical certification of drivers and a new registration system.

Some of the rules, such as the shorter stopping-distance requirement, have been delayed several times. Some trucking industry officials said delays in the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's regulatory agenda may be the result of the agency's focus on projects such as revising the hours-of-service rule and opening the southern border to Mexican trucks, charges agency officials denied.

"Those two programs are really taking up a huge chunk of their time. . . . It really, really just taxed them, and I think that's really what ultimately pushed some of these rulemakings back," said Steve Keppler, director of policy and programs for the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance. However, the DOT agency leading the stopping-distance project is the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, which is not involved with the HOS or Mexican truck projects.

In 2005, NHTSA said it would recommend cutting the maximum allowed stopping distance for Class 8 trucks by 20% to 30% from the current limit of 355 feet. Last fall, DOT said it expected to have the rule out by this month, but before then, a January 2007 report slated its publication for May 2007. DOT's most recent report lists September

as the target month, but industry officials are pessimistic it will get out by then. "We're expecting a delay; this has been delayed now three or four times," said Paul Johnston, chairman of the Heavy Duty Brake Manufacturers Council and senior director of compression and braking systems for Meritor WABCO.

Johnston said the group understood that the agency was incorporating recently released safety data on truck fatalities into its justification for the regulation. The rule had been "based on previous data of that same fatality information," Johnston said. "What we're hearing is that's being updated or being adjusted, and that puts it back through the cycle. So we're concerned."

Most of the other delayed regulations are the responsibility of FMCSA. According to the U.S. DOT's March report, they include: Unified Registration System; the new entrant audit regulation, scheduled for publication this month but now not expected until September; linking driver medical certification to the commercial driver license, which had been slated for April but now won't be published until August; and the intermodal chassis safety rule, which has been pushed back to August from a targeted April release.

In September, DOT said URS, which would combine several different federal registration programs and databases, would be unveiled this month, but in the most recent report, it is scheduled for November. The program originally had

been scheduled for release in September 2007. "If I had to guess, I'd say that what's going on there is a finite number of people and a finite energy source, and they are expending it in other directions," said Dave Osiecki, director of policy and programs for American Trucking Associations. Those other directions, some speculated, are the court-ordered revision of the hours-of-service rule that was completed in December and the ongoing, controversial cross-border trucking pilot program.

"It's simply this: a limited number of taxpayer dollar resources and limited number of hours in the day. It's conceivable that they can get only so much done," said Rod Nofziger, director of government affairs for the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association.

FMCSA Administrator John Hill told Transport Topics March 10 that while the Mexican truck program "is a huge amount of work," he did not believe it was interfering with the agency's other activities. "We have been working on this for a number of years, and our regulatory agenda is still moving forward," he said, adding that the agency's record "is better now than it ever was before, in terms of deadlines."

For additional information, please see the following news article:

<http://www.ttnews.com/articles/basetemplate.aspx?storyid=19377>

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Famous Quote of the Day:

"An optimist is the
human
personification of spring."

Susan J. Bissonette

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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.

Next FHWA HQ's Talking Freight Web Seminar

The Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Office of Freight Management and Operations and the Office of Planning host the "Talking Freight" seminars.

The seminars are part of a broader Freight Professional Development Program aimed at providing technical assistance, training, tools, and information to help the freight and planning workforce meet the transportation challenges of tomorrow. The web seminars are held on a monthly basis throughout the year and are open at no cost to all interested parties in both the public and private sectors.

The next "Talking Freight" web seminar to be held on April 16th from 12-1:30 PM (CST) will cover the "National Freight Policy Framework". The Framework for a National Freight

Policy is a joint effort of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) and its partners in the public and private sectors to inventory existing and proposed strategies, tactics, and activities to improve freight transportation.

The National Freight Policy Framework is structured to identify examples of good planning practice, actions which would benefit from increased collaboration, conflicts needing resolution, and issues needing more attention. This seminar will cover the basics of the framework and how you can contribute to this effort.

For additional information, or to register for future events, please see the following web-link: http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freight/fpd/talking_freight.htm

TxDOT Transportation Planning Conference in Houston, Texas on May 27-30, 2008

TxDOT is planning to host its biennial Transportation Planning Conference on May 27-30th in Houston, Texas at the Westin Galleria Hotel. For additional information and for on-line registration for this conference, please see the following web-site: <http://tti.tamu.edu/conferences/tpp08/>

Please note that the TTI on-line registration will only be available until 5:00 pm CST, Wednesday, May 21, 2008. After this date, attendees will need to register on-site at the Westin Galleria Hotel.

