























Chart 13. US 281 Corridor.



Source: TxDOT

### IMPROVING TEXAS' RURAL CONNECTIVITY

Rural Texas, a critical source of food, fuel, and fiber, is experiencing economic and population growth that is straining its transportation system, the safety and reliability of which will play a vital role in quality of life and a strong economy in the state's rural communities. The state's rural transportation system faces significant challenges including increasing levels of traffic, a lack of adequate connectivity and the need for additional roadway safety features.

Addressing the state's rural transportation challenges will require increased funding. In August of 2022 the Texas Transportation Commission approved a [Unified Transportation Program \(UTP\) for 2023 to 2032](#) that includes \$14 billion for road, highway and bridge improvements in Texas' rural districts, which includes \$6.9 billion for rural connectivity.<sup>31</sup> The state's ability to invest adequately in its rural transportation system will be impacted by inflation in the cost of road, highway and bridge repairs. TxDOT's [July 2022 Highway Cost Index Report](#) found that the cost of highway construction increased by 27 percent from July 2021 to July 2022 (based on a three-month rolling average).<sup>32</sup>

Providing Texas with a rural transportation network that will support further economic growth and maintain its quality of life will require Texas to continue to invest in a rural transportation system that is safe and reliable and that provides adequate mobility and connectivity to the state's rural communities.

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## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> TRIP analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data.
- <sup>2</sup> Texas Demographic Center (2022). Population for 2010-2050 in one year increments for State of Texas and Counties. <https://demographics.texas.gov/data/tpepp/projections/>
- <sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Geography Division (2018). Rural Texas. [https://demographics.texas.gov/Resources/Presentations/DDUC/2018/2018\\_05\\_23\\_RuralTexas.pdf](https://demographics.texas.gov/Resources/Presentations/DDUC/2018/2018_05_23_RuralTexas.pdf)
- <sup>4</sup> Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). [Rural and Statewide Connectivity presentation to the Texas Transportation Commission](#). March 30, 2022.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> TxDOT (2022). Texas Ports. <https://www.dxd.gov/inside-dxd/division/maritime/ports.html>
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> TRIP analysis of National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and Federal Highway Administration data (2021). Data is for 2020.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> County Engineers Adopt Rural Road Safety Program. Minnesota Local Technical Assistance Program.
- <sup>18</sup> Adding Highway Shoulders, Width, Reduce Crash Numbers and Save Lives (August 9, 2012). Texas Transportation Institute. <https://tti.tamu.edu/2012/08/09/tti-study-analyzes-roadway-improvements/>
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> National Cooperative Highway Research Program, Transportation Research Board (2007). Future Options for the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. ES-ii.
- <sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation (2021). Status of the Nation's Highways, Bridges and Transit: Conditions and Performance Report to Congress. P. III-2.
- <sup>22</sup> Federal Highway Administration, Freight Analysis Framework (2021). Data is for 2022. [https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freight/freight\\_analysis/faf/](https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freight/freight_analysis/faf/)
- <sup>23</sup> Federal Highway Administration, Freight Analysis Framework (2021). Data is for 2022. [https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freight/freight\\_analysis/faf/](https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freight/freight_analysis/faf/)
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>25</sup> TxDOT. [Rural and Statewide Connectivity presentation to the Texas Transportation Commission](#). March 30, 2022.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>31</sup> TxDOT. [Unified Transportation Program 2023](#).
- <sup>32</sup> TxDOT [Highway Cost Index Report \(2012 Base\)](#). August 2022.