EL PASO CHAMBER

THE FUTURE OF TRANSPORTATION IN EL PASO REGION

EPC El Paso Mobility Coalition

EL PASO CHAMBER

THE FUTURE OF TRANSPORTATION IN EL PASO

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

El Paso is the 22nd largest city in the United Stated and the 6th largest in Texas. It is next to Mexico, the 15th largest economy on the planet and it is on a favorable trajectory by almost all measures. EMCo's mission is to ensure that El Paso's transportation infrastructure keeps pace and even enhances El Paso's already strong track.

In 2019, the El Paso Chamber created the vehicle for our continued advocacy success with the launch of the El Paso Mobility Coalition (EMCo). EMCo's membership consists of regional leaders from the business sector, governmental organizations, and representatives from El Paso's class of elected officials. In terms of specifics, EMCo will achieve these important objectives through a robust transportation plan that is data driven, regional, for today and tomorrow, and aligned at the local, state, and federal levels. The El Paso Chamber and EMCo believe that success in transportation planning and advocacy will ultimately result in our region realizing its potential as an economically competitive international region.

El Paso and Ciudad Juárez represent the largest binational metropolitan region in the Western Hemisphere with an approximate population of 2.5 million residents. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the metropolitan region had an unemployment of less than 3%. El Paso was also

experiencing low unemployment rates—regularly less that 4% and competitive wage growth. Additionally, El Paso's international bridges were accommodating approximately $100 billion worth of international commerce annually.

FOUNDATIONAL OBJECTIVES OF EMCO

1. Ensure benefits of transportation flow to El Paso region today and tomorrow
2. Align and advocate transportation policy in washington, DC and Austin
3. Align and advocate transportation planning with El Paso City, County, MPO and RMA

The El Paso region is the 10th largest exporter of goods in the United States with Mexico being the primary recipient. As the metropolitan region grows, El Paso's main transportation thoroughfare, Interstate 10, is strained as it accommodates the lion's share of local traffic and most of the region's commercial through traffic.

Without a current, robust, and vibrant transportation system, all sectors of the region's economy and the quality of life will suffer. Inefficient transportation leads to escalated pricing of goods, increased costs of labor, and reduced quality of life. By comparison, an efficient system preserves mobility for workers, businesses, residents, emergency responders and tourists—a level of mobility that expands opportunities for commerce, reduces environmental impact, and enhances freedom of movement.

The COVID-19 crisis, coupled with the results of the November presidential and recent congressional elections, have spurred legislative contemplations concerning economic stimulus via an ambitious transportation and infrastructure bill. Having passed a COVID-19 stimulus bill, president Biden is now targeting a major infrastructure bill estimated to be between $2 and $4 trillion, focused on highways, bridges, and broadband networks.

El Paso must become more proactive in its transportation planning, advocacy, and sequencing of priority transportation projects if our region is going to receive federal dollars from the prospective legislation. If properly executed, El Paso's receipt of federal transportation funds should result in the following:

- Increased El Paso Business Profitability and Job Creation: Lower business costs lead to increased profit. Increased business profitability generates economic growth and creates jobs.
- More jobs as efficiently facilitating trade is key as approximately 5,000 jobs are supported for every billion dollars of exported goods.
- Parity in State Funding: El Paso positioning itself for equitable access to funding through the state will help build political capital for future projects and reinforce the local commitment to work with state entities for access.
- Increased Tax Revenues for El Paso: Additional economic activity and population growth means greater tax revenues for local governments from property tax and sales tax.
- Direct and Indirect Economic Benefits: The construction of major infrastructure has positive economic benefits. Those benefits come from the income that is paid to workers who are employed as well as the purchase of materials and supplies used to build the project. Additional economic benefits result from the economic multiplier effect that ensues when those workers spend their salaries locally on food, clothing, housing, entertainment, and other activities. That spending, also called the indirect economic benefit, has a deep economic effect as does the personal spending of those employed by companies providing the materials for the project.
- Signature Projects: The potential for our region to realize transformational infrastructure projects, such as the downtown green cap, the second phase of the streetcar, and a funded regional trail system, are all potential projects that can be realized and would invite investment and jobs to our region.

> **For all humanity's advances, our daily haul can still be a nightmarish experience that reduces productivity, increases stress, endangers public safety, and hastens global climate change.**
>
> **- CityLabs, The Future of Transportation**

THE FUTURE OF TRANSPORTATION

Transportation in the United States is already undergoing disruption from a number of sources: ride sharing services, hybrid and electric vehicles, the return of buses, trolleys, and light rail services, and increased bike and pedestrian mobility. Consumer preferences are changing to be less traditional vehicle focused. At the same time, several companies are actively working on introducing autonomous vehicles to the road. Freight trucks are an obvious early target for automation. All of these factors have profound implications for what the future of transportation could look like and how it will impact our highway centric transportation thinking. It is important to also consider that the speed of these changes is exponential, not linear. As fast as we think these changes are coming, it is likely faster still.

TRANSPORTATION TRENDS

At the same time, these changes pose interesting considerations for how our current infrastructure is maintained or changed. For example, many states fund their transportation infrastructure needs through a motor fuel tax. Increases in public transportation and suburban flight have reduced the rate of fuel consumption growth, and the increase in hybrid and electric vehicle usage furthers the rate decline. Unfortunately, Texas has not adapted well to the change. Dramatic population growth is mostly occurring in urban areas and has limited growth impact on fuel consumption. The motor fuel tax is based on volume and has not been updated to address inflation or other factors in several decades. Additionally, there is very little support in the state for increasing motor fuel taxes.

Another source of potential funding for road projects is tolling. Tolling has allowed for several projects to be constructed around the state without impacting current transportation funding by creating bonding capacity tied to the toll intakes. El Paso was able to build a significant segment of its outer 375 loop by using tolling. But tolling has proven controversial in Texas. Voters have a negative impression of tolls and much of the state leadership is philosophically opposed. Recently, the senate leadership made the decision to remove all toll projects from the Texas Department of Transportation 10-Year Plan or the Unified Transportation Plan (UTP).

As transportation technology evolves, planning decisions will need to anticipate what policymakers and the transportation market will unfurl. Additionally, efforts to curtail carbon emissions in response to climate change are leading to policy initiatives that focus on walkability, use of mass transit, cycling, high speed rail, and other forms of non-auto travel. As driverless technology evolves, existing infrastructure will be stressed and deteriorate. Semi-automated vehicles powered by renewable energy (already available on some car models) will likely lead to additional suburban growth as parking demand and traffic around urban areas increases—particularly at park times. Fully autonomous vehicles, ride share, and lighter vehicles will result in the need to rethink how traditional space is used as the traditional inter-vehicle space allows for human inefficiencies—smarter driving means less space needed.

Designing and funding the future transportation needs of El Paso will require a clear understanding of the needs and benefits of transportation for El Paso and the surrounding region. It will require extraordinary alignment at the local, state, and federal levels, and it will require a compelling narrative that the community can feel empowered by. The traditional argument of fighting for scraps will no longer be effective in an environment where funding for much larger metro areas is drying up quickly.

THE COVID-19 IMPACT ON TRANSPORTATION

The current COVID-19 crisis impacts the future of transportation at the federal, state, and local levels in that traditional transportation funding sources and modes will need to be reexamined and will likely be restructured. El Paso should play a lead role as transportation policy adapts in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Institutions such as public mass transit, in the short term, are being transformed as social distance requirements are often at odds with the systemic structure of how public transportation takes place. The funding for ambitious highway projects will need to be rethought as the budgets of public institutions are experiencing strain. Conversely, opportunities are likely to emerge as the federal government has issued, and will most likely continue to issue, stimulus and aid relief dollars for public infrastructure projects to include transportation projects. Based on past experience, the cost of construction is likely to decrease as the economy contracts and recovers. El Paso, a leading port city, will also have opportunities as global supply chains may be reoriented in response to geopolitical considerations and trade agreements.

Currently, in Texas, transportation's traditional funding sources are revenues from the state's gas tax, the state's vehicle registration fees, a portion of the state's sales tax, and funding from federal and local governments. As some of these funding sources experience strain (less people are driving, purchasing gas, etc.), the state's policymakers will be forced to reexamine—and get creative—regarding how transportation is funded and ensure transportation-related jobs are sustained.

El Paso may have the opportunity to expedite megaprojects, such as Reimagine I-10 and the downtown green cap, based on upcoming federal legislation. Depending on the political climate, economic stimulus combined with policy directives related to climate change may offer El Paso the opportunity to lead on projects such as international rail, autonomous transit, and reconfiguration of lanes in anticipation of greater use of electrical vehicles and autonomous transit. The lesson from historical financial crises is that institutions that are ambitious and creative in their reassessment of the status quo end up hastening economic recovery while leaving long-lasting and transformational imprints on their communities.

THE CURRENT SITUATION IN TEXAS

In the next 20 years, Texas will be home to an additional 18 million people. That is in addition to the 29 million residents today. Based on the current 1:1 registered vehicles per citizen that means another 18 million additional vehicles on Texas roads.

The battle for transportation funding in the Lone Star State is as competitive as it gets; the regions of Texas that enjoy the most consistent and robust funding are most often the same regions that are well organized and strategic in their advocacy efforts—this is by design.

In 2008, Governor Rick Perry instructed the Texas Transportation Commission to appoint a committee of volunteers, along with experienced and respected business leaders, as the 2030 Committee. The Committee's charge was to provide an authoritative assessment of the state's transportation infrastructure and mobility needs from 2009 to 2030. The Committee's findings tell a story of a state whose current and future transportation needs are daunting. This means that the largest urban areas in Texas are locked in real time competition to win the resources necessary to both keep up with current needs and prepare for the future.

The Committee developed four mobility scenarios informed by studies of urban mobility funding and long-range projects and programs prepared by each of the Texas's metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs).

- Current Funding Trend: This scenario represents the continuation of currently expected state and federal funding. This scenario represents less funding than planned for most long-range strategies and results in significantly worse mobility. This scenario serves as the baseline for comparison to all other scenarios.

- Maintain Economic Competitiveness: Providing the funding necessary to allow each Texas urban region to have a mobility level better than or equal to similar U.S. regions was the goal of the lowest acceptable mobility scenario. Implementing this scenario improves mobility outcomes so Texas regions would likely be economically competitive with their peers.

- Prevent Worsening Congestion: Under this scenario, congestion levels in 2030 would be no worse than today's conditions. This scenario will cost considerably more than the previous two scenarios because the transportation system must accommodate another 7 million to 17 million people.

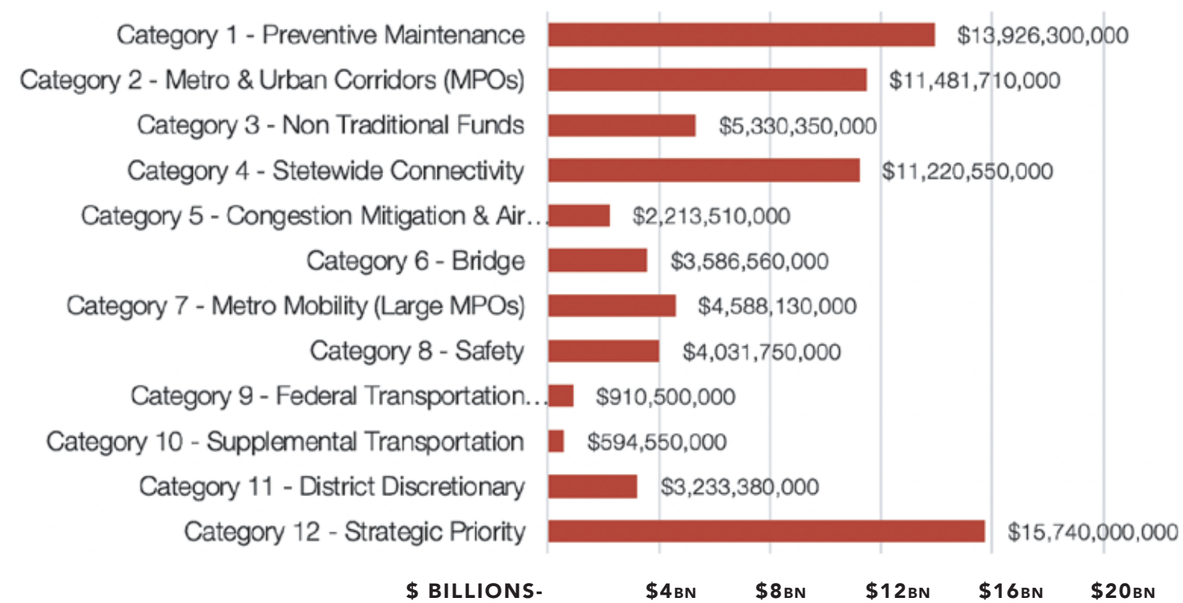
- Reduce Congestion: The most ambitious scenario goal eliminated all points of serious congestion in 2030. This goal was used in previous statewide mobility plans and represents a substantially better level of mobility than today.

CURRENT UTP NEEDS VS AVAILABLE FUNDS

The Unified Transportation Plan (UTP) is a planning and programming document used by the Texas Transportation Commission and TxDOT to determine how to allocate resources within a 10-year span. The UTP contains a list of projects and programs in each district that are being developed or are planned for construction. The UTP document authorizes projects to receive state funding in the areas of aviation, rail, public transportation, state and coastal waterways, and most importantly roadway work to include highway maintenance and construction. The UTP allocates funding across 12 categories, with the largest amount going towards strategic priority, or discretionary, funding. The 2020 allocations can be seen in the table below:

In 2018, the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) released a list of the 100 most congested roadways in Texas. Many of the listed roads were a part of the strategic priority list that, if funded, would have cost the State $140 billion. But these are some of the most congested roadways in the United States, not just Texas. Texas likely has no choice but to do something about its roads in the next 10 years.

EL PASO CONGESTION COSTS ($ MILLIONS)



FOCUS ON EL PASO

El Paso is situated at a four-hundred-year-old transportation and trade hub in the Southwest. What was true in the past is true today as El Paso strategically sits at the center of the country's only all-weather east/west interstate corridor, Interstate-10. Additionally, El Paso's regional international bridges facilitate tens of billions of dollars in international trade and commerce between the United States and Mexico.

EL PASO DISTRICT - TxDOT

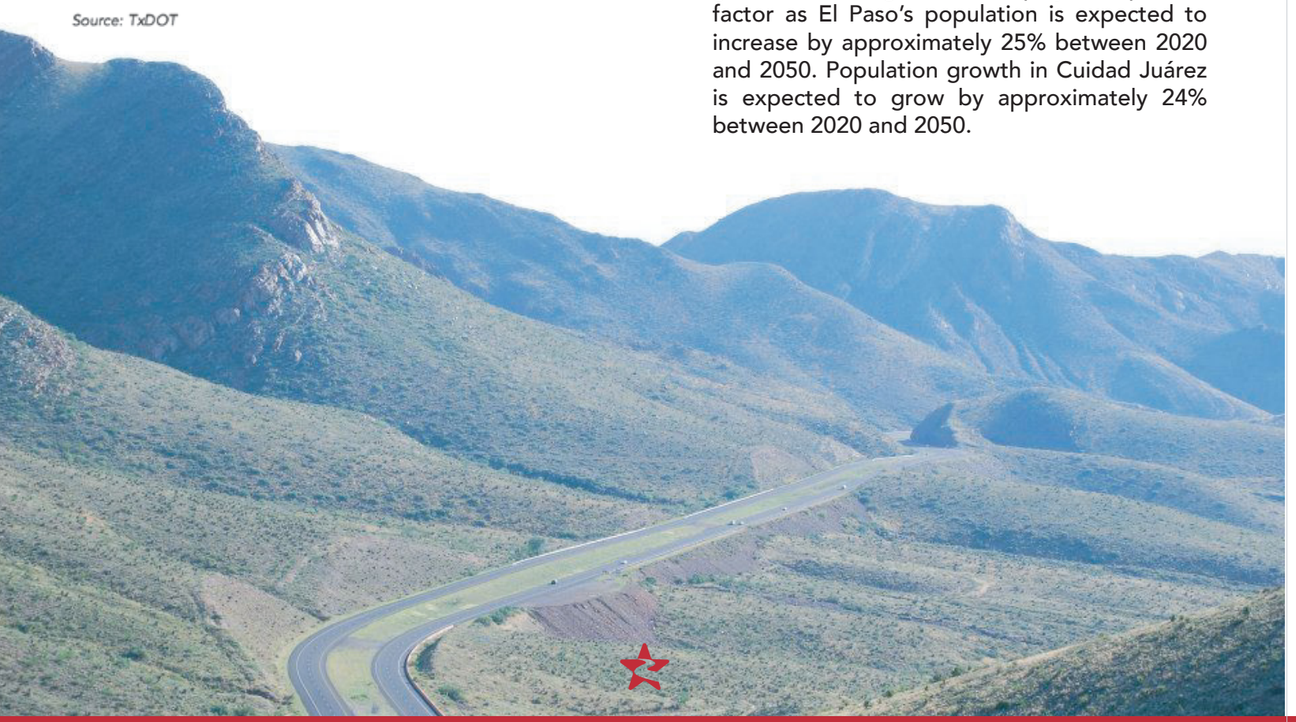
Fast Facts (FY2018)	
Population	1,101,480
Area (Sq. Miles)	21,700
Lane Miles	4,917
Daily Vehicle Miles	12,867,265
Registered Vehicles	670,390
TxDOT Employees	293
Construction / Maintenance Expenditures	$312,000,000
Freight on I-10 (per day)	20,000 Semi Trucks
Local Personal Vehicle Traffic on I-10 (per day)	300,000

Source: TxDOT

EL PASO'S POPULATION GROWTH VS TEXAS

Locally, El Paso has made significant strides in building up its transportation network; the last ten years have seen the construction of Loop 375, Spur 601, interchanges connecting I-10 and Loop 375 as well as the 4.8 miles streetcar system. Additionally, the City of El Paso's award winning 2012 Master Plan, "Plan El Paso," suggests using transportation in a way that promotes walkability and stimulates economic development. To that end, the City has adopted ordinances that promote transit-oriented development along certain corridors.

As El Paso plans for the future, transportation decisions will drive growth, the regional economy, and the competitiveness of the region. External factors such as future regulation regarding carbon emissions, the use of autonomous vehicles and trucks, and international trade agreements and immigration policies will impact what the region requires in order to maximize its competitiveness. Population growth of the region will also play an important factor as El Paso's population is expected to increase by approximately 25% between 2020 and 2050. Population growth in Cuidad Juárez is expected to grow by approximately 24% between 2020 and 2050.

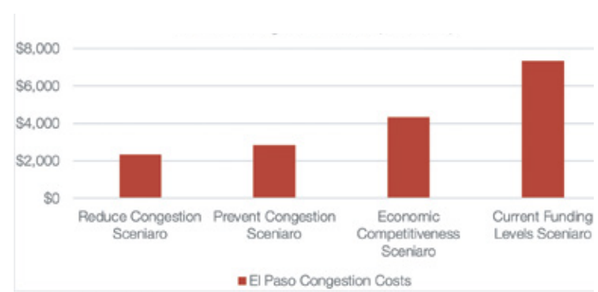


El Paso's effectiveness depends on decisions and advocacy that are guided in a manner that is regional, strategic, and integrated. Coordination between local, state, and federal officials will be imperative, but so too will communication with leadership in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico and Mexico City. The El Paso Chamber will play a lead role in serving as the convening organization for public officials, non-profit leaders, and the business communities from the region to ensure that transportation planning and advocacy is strategic and coordinated.

Traditional transportation topics including roadways, freeway efficiency, and mitigation of congestion for vehicular and commercial traffic will remain key topics for the community to consider. The Chamber will be at the forefront of transportation-related advocacy that leads to a region that is competitive when it comes to livability and the promotion of an environment that fosters job expansion and creation. Non-traditional transportation advocacy will need to include improving the operations of our region's international bridges, integration of carbon-free mass transit options, and seizing opportunities for economic development considerations as transportation projects are planned.

Given El Paso's status as a major port of commerce for the state and country, the challenges and costs associated with maintaining El Paso's status quo of transportation infrastructure or preparing for a more prosperous and resilient future are real.

EL PASO CONGESTION COSTS ($ MILLIONS)



2030 Committee data

The El Paso Chamber will play a lead role in serving as the convening organization for public officials, non-profit leaders, and the business communities from the region to ensure that transportation planning and advocacy is strategic and coordinated.

El Paso is growing in terms of global competitiveness and assuring that the city is supported by a world-class transportation infrastructure is essential. Existing data suggests that El Paso is funded at a rate lower than most cities in the state, and while statistical difference on this point may seem minuscule, quarter and half point differences translate to rather large shortfalls facing El Paso in comparison to projects in other cities.

CITY	POPULATION	% OF THE UTP
San Antonio	2,473,974	6.6
Austin	2,168,316	4.87
Odessa	404,105	2.86
Bryan	468,875	2.68
Yoakum	345,719	2.32
El Paso	868,746	1.96

HOW THE EL PASO MOBILITY COALITION WORKS

EMCo is a community led initiative, housed at the El Paso Chamber, that advocates for highway, transit, and freight rail funding for the El Paso metropolitan area. EMCo members include the El Paso Chamber, the County of El Paso, the City of El Paso, the transportation construction and supply industry, consulting engineers, and other interested organizations.

EMCo is a membership group with a governing executive committee, which meets on a monthly basis. The mobility coalition operates under the El Paso Chamber and benefits from its resources and 501c3/c6 status.

KEYSTONE PROJECTS (2018 – 2020)

Upon formation, EMCo adopted TXDOT's top 4 priorities as its own in order to begin advocating for more transportation funding in Austin before the end of the 2019 Texas Legislative session. Those priorities are:

- Downtown Segment of I-10 Reconstruction
- Borderland Expressway
- Artcraft Direct Connect
- Segment 3 of I-10 Reconstruction

Currently, EMCo is working with the MPO and other stakeholders to ensure that the region's transportation needs are planned for and realized by a collaborative and stakeholder-driven process.

REIMAGINE I-10 SEGMENT 2

The Reimagine I-10 Downtown project is a breakout project from Segment 2 in the Reimagine I-10 55-mile corridor study. The project limits are from Executive Center Boulevard to Loop 478 (Copia St), which includes the downtown El Paso area. The length of the project is approximately 5.6 miles.

I-10 THROUGH EL PASO WAS BUILT IN 1963. THE PAVEMENT IS NOW **OVER 50 YEARS OLD**

I-10 accounts for over a quarter of all vehicle miles traveled in the El Paso region. Out of Texas's 100 most congested roadways, this segment ranked 69th in 2017, resulting in an annual cost of delay of approximately $14 million.

MAINTENANCE

The downtown section of I-10 is over 50 years in age and has been experiencing high truck load size and traffic volumes beyond its intended design. Because of this, I-10 is experiencing deterioration of pavement and bridge conditions.

CORRIDORS

The improvements proposed in the Reimagine I-10 Downtown project originated from the Reimagine I-10 Corridor Study. The proposed improvements for this project will consist of reconstruction of the main lanes, retaining walls, bridges, ramps, and cross streets. This segment is projected to experience over 300,000 daily vehicles in the year 2045. With this in mind, the Reimagine I-10 study identified key operational improvements such as the downtown "circuit" and multiple ramp modifications in order to obtain an acceptable level of service. Furthermore, the Reimagine I-10 study proposed continuous frontage roads in order to aid with incident management. Unique to the Reimagine I-10 study, Adaptive Lanes were proposed within this segment to address trips through the corridor. It was identified that over 80% of truck trips travel through the project limits.

SAFETY

The project is anticipated to enhance safety throughout the corridor. Ramp modifications as well as auxiliary lanes are proposed to reduce crashes. In the downtown area, the proposed "circuit" design aims to separate modes of transportation by providing bike lanes and shared use paths to minimize conflicts between pedestrians, bikes, and vehicles. New grade separation is also proposed at the railroad crossing near Cotton Street along the westbound frontage road (Missouri Street). This grade separation removes conflict points between vehicular and pedestrian traffic with trains. These proposed improvements are anticipated to reduce crashes on the main lanes over the twenty-year study period by 15%.

KEY BENEFITS

In the No Build scenario, I-10 traffic is anticipated to experience speeds of 16 mph in the eastbound direction and 27 mph in the westbound direction, resulting in a failing level of service in the PM peak hour for 2042. The build scenario increases these travel speeds to 56 mph and 60 mph which results in an acceptable level of service in the PM peak hour for 2042.

- Improves mobility and circulation by facilitating east-west movement through and within the corridor
- Increases capacity and intersection efficiency
- Minimizes environmental impacts
- Incorporates innovative uses of transportation alternatives through adaptive/special purpose lanes
- Improves transit service
- Improves bicycle and pedestrian facilities
- Facilitates intermodal connectivity and access for goods and freight transport

PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Many unique transportation-related opportunities exist within this project. The existing Union Pacific railroad line adjacent to I-10 offers an opportunity to provide continuous frontage roads from Downtown to US 54.

Additionally, a transit opportunity exists for Sun Metro to provide an in-line bus stop utilizing the adaptive lanes.

Finally, an opportunity exists to further connect the downtown area by working with private entities to construct a lid or deck park over I-10.

DOWNTOWN EL PASO GREEN CAP

The Downtown El Paso Green Cap is a proposed park space cap above I-10 in downtown El Paso spanning all, or some, of the area between the Prospect Street Bridge and the Campbell Street Bridge (east/west) and bounded by approximately Yandell Drive and Wyoming Avenue. The project would be sequenced as part of Segment 2 of the Go10 El Paso project (Executive Center to Raynolds Street) and would commence after the downtown portion of Segment 2 is finished which is scheduled to occur sometime after 2024.

A RENDERING OF THE POTENTIAL GREEN CAP

CASE STUDY: KLYDE WARREN

In the Southwest region, Klyde Warren Park serves as the preeminent urban deck park and is Dallas's number one tourist attraction. The 5.2-acre park, which opened in 2012, transformed the aesthetics, livability, and economics of Downtown Dallas. Dallas leaders initially conceived of the park as an endeavor to improve quality of life but quickly realized that park galvanized commercial, retail, and residential development around the park's perimeter. Klyde Warren Park's success in stimulating economic development and bolstering Dallas's quality of life led to the Dallas's current efforts to expand the size of the park and invest in additional urban deck parks in their region.

The park was funded using a 50/50 mix of public and private funding, including a significant investment from TxDOT. To date, it is projected to have spurred over 2 billion dollars in additional investment in the surrounding area.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The anticipated benefits of the El Paso project are economic, environmental, connectivity, and aesthetic. Although some transportation amenities will likely be included in the park (hike lanes/bike lanes/trolley lanes, etc.), the project will likely need financial support from the local public sector, private sector, and non-profit as TxDOT has stated they cannot fully fund the green cap. According to initial estimates, the anticipated cost of the green cap portion of the project is estimated to be $160 million in today's dollars for a barebones version of the green cap.

COMPARISON CHART

(DALLAS IMPACT VS POTENTIAL EL PASO IMPACT)

INDICATORS	DALLAS	POTENTIAL IN EL PASO
$/sqft around Park	+470%	$19 to $89/sqft
New buildings around the park	3	3
Increase in taxes around park	$15 Million in 2018	$8-$12 Million
Downtown park area residential growth	+8000% *(from 500 to 40,000)*	500 to 40,000
Total Economic impact	$2 Billion	$1.3 Billion

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The green cap project enjoys strong support from local elected leadership and business leadership. The next steps for the project include identifying potential funding sources, coalescing behind a design, and ensuring that the project is properly messaged. TxDOT would like to know the community's desired project design within the next twelve months. Issues such as size, amenities, load bear, and primary materials are the main drivers of cost for the project.

TxDOT currently has limited procurement funds for Segment 2 and has submitted the Segment 2 portion of GO10 El Paso for Strategic Priority Funding for the 2019 UTP.

THE FUTURE - THE CAMINO REAL AND A 21ST CENTURY PORT CITY

El Paso sits at a critical junction on the Camino Real, one of history's most important trade routes connecting Mexico and the United States. Our vision is that we need to reinvigorate and expand trade and ideas on this historic route and El Paso's premier position as a port city on the Camino Real. To that end, we should think of trade from Santiago to Toronto and our role in facilitating ideas and commerce as one of the world's leading inland port cities. When we look at the intersection of this vision with the trends analysis noted earlier (with regards to AI and automation), we have a compelling path forward for sustainability and prosperity for our region.

The El Paso/Juárez region contains four international crossings that accommodate pedestrians, vehicular, and commercial traffic. El Paso's bridges are the following:

BRIDGE	OWNERS	FEATURES
The Ysleta Bridge	The City of El Paso The Government of Mexico	Also known as the Zaragoza Bridge, this bridge has four commercial lanes and five non-commercial lanes
The Paso Del Norte	The City of El Paso The Government of Mexico	This bridge has four northbound lanes and no commercial traffic is allowed
The Stanton Bridge	The City of El Paso The Government of Mexico	This bridge has three southbound lanes and one northbound SENTRI lane, no commercial traffic is allowed on this bridge
Bridge of the Americas	The City of El Paso The Government of Mexico	This bridge has two two-lane bridges for commercial traffic, and two four-lane bridges for vehicular traffic, and is the region's only toll-free bridge

El Paso is also home to two international railroad crossings.

Since the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), international trade and commerce along the US-Mexico border has increased dramatically. Trade activity in the El Paso/Juárez region has increased by approximately 400% since the passage of NAFTA

El Paso/Juárez International Commerce at El Paso/Juárez Ports:

YEAR	DOLLARS
1995	$20 BILLION
2000	$30 BILLION
2005	$43 BILLION
2012	$65 BILLION
2018	$82 BILLION

Source: https://journals.openedition.org/articulo/2567

Taking into account numbers from our region's ports including Santa Teresa, the El Paso region ranks number ten in the United States for exports. According to the International Trade Association, approximately 5,000 jobs are supported by each billion dollars worth of exported goods. In 2018, El Paso ports accommodated approximately $32.3 billion worth of export trade. The types of international commerce most active at El Paso ports involve computer parts, auto related materials, and insulated wire and cable.

According to the Hunt Institute for Global Competitiveness, El Paso ports of entry led the way in decline for truck border crossings with loaded containers across top US-Mexico ports of entry in 2020. Amidst the continuing COVID-19 crisis, El Paso's ports were hit more severely than other ports of entry across the border in 2020 with the largest decline of the top ports in loaded truck container crossings.

In order to enhance our region's competitiveness, El Paso and Ciudad Juárez must do the following:

- Ensure that our region's ports offer the lowest wait times along the US-Mexico Border;
- Utilize technology to facilitate trade without compromising security;
- Coordinate between communities and educational institutions to ensure that a ready workforce exists for future market requirements;
- Plan for new ports or retrofitted ports to accommodate future modes of transport, future modes of trade, and future types workforce requirements; and
- Ensure that our ports accommodate the swift movement of pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists as long bridge wait times hurt our region's economy, air quality, and quality of life. Mass transit cross border transportation must also be examined.

RESEARCH AGENDA

As EMCo continues work towards transportation-related issues, we will maintain a research agenda that will help us better advocate. Topics we are interested in gaining better insight into include:

1. Updated lane miles for our district
2. Economic impact of projects and ranking
3. Economic impact of the deck park and cost of delay and/or not coordinating
4. Traffic and pavement impact of unregistered vehicles (i.e. Mexico traffic)
5. Freight shuttle
6. Bridge improvement ppportunities
7. I-10 pavement condition and projections
8. Trade partners
9. Economic growth here and Ciudad Juárez
10. Tax benefits

CONCLUSION

El Paso's existing transportation infrastructure needs to be upgraded; this is a crucial step to preserving economic flow of goods and material through the I-10 corridor and also represents a tremendous opportunity to the community as a whole. Transit speeds are inevitably getting slower without major improvements and every drop in speed means higher opportunity costs for every sector of highway user.

Funding for the region's infrastructure needs to be improved not only for parity's stake, but for real dollar investment in infrastructure. The upgrades described in the report represent investments in efficiency, safety, and overall quality of life. The implementation of a green cap, for example, would create a whole new dimension to downtown El Paso, rebuilding linkages between neighborhoods, creating much needed green space in downtown, and propelling a new pedestrian environment directly above a newly invigorated I-10 corridor. The kind of project represented by these efforts would fundamentally change the city forever, all while improving the aging highway.

The COVID-19 crisis offers several impediments, and opportunities, for the El Paso region. There is little doubt that traditional methods of funding transportation will emerge. El Paso will lead on those discussions as historical experience suggests that crisis offers opportunities for ambitious policies aimed at enhancing the community's capital outlay while stimulating the economy.

The data presented in this report leads to one major conclusion; investment in the El Paso project yields a higher return per dollar than in comparable projects across the state. The sheer amount of cross-border traffic and the investment it represents in El Paso, Texas, and Mexico, means that any improvement in moving goods and material has exponential benefit to these economies, in that order.

Furthermore, El Paso stands on the precipice of new economic development with factors like a downtown baseball stadium and arena complex as well as newly invigorated commercial and retail activity. The culmination of the El Paso transportation projects would be a booster to every aspect of this economic development. And while this development is not only worthy for its impact in El Paso, the development of complex projects like the I-10 project would be a model for future development in the region and across the state of Texas.

The time to act on the future of transportation in El Paso is now and the El Paso Mobility Coalition is the right composition of actors with the political capital, infrastructure know-how, and overall experience to make this vision a reality.

EL PASO
CHAMBER

Visit elpaso.org