



PORTS-TO-PLAINS

ALLIANCE

Securing the Benefits of Commerce to
North America's Energy & Agricultural Heartland

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Ports-to-Plains Alliance Asks Communities to Support I-27 Extension

Texas does not have a major north-south interstate west of the very congested Interstate 35, and the Ports-to-Plains Alliance would like that to change. The Alliance has created a committee of West Texas mayors and community leaders that is leading the effort to unite the region behind the initiative to extend Interstate 27 and is asking West Texas city councils, county commissioner courts, chambers of commerce and other civic groups to pass resolutions of support for the extension.

“Extending Interstate 27 is vitally important for all of Texas and especially for West Texas to remain economically competitive,” said Ports-to-Plains President Michael Reeves. “With the President-elect Donald Trump proposing a trillion dollar infrastructure plan, it is important that we let our legislators and the Texas Department of Transportation know that I-27 is a top priority and West Texas is united behind the effort.”

Ports-to-Plains is distributing a sample resolution of support to its members, and is asking them to forward it to federal and state legislators as well as the Texas Transportation Commission. Individuals may indicate their support at www.portstoplains.com.

“This is a long-term proposition, but that means it is important for us to take the first step and seek a future interstate designation for an extended I-27 today,” said Reeves.

The current 124 mile I-27 between Lubbock and Amarillo was designated as a future interstate in 1968 and was not completed until 1992 at a total cost of \$453 million. The Ports-to-Plains Corridor is nearly 1,000 miles long in Texas and the cost to upgrade that entire corridor to interstate standards is estimated at around \$7 billion. To upgrade the approximately 500 miles from Lubbock to Laredo to interstate standards is projected to cost around \$5 billion. However that is quite cost-effective when compared to the \$4.8 billion it cost to rebuild a 28 mile section of I 35 E from I 635 to U.S. 380 in Dallas County.

According to the Texas Freight Mobility Plan, “By 2040 over 73 percent of Texas’ population and 82 percent of the state’s employment is projected to be located within five miles of an interstate.” An extended Interstate 27 is critical for the economic competitiveness of West Texas.

U.S.-Mexico trade had doubled since 2004 and approximately 60% of U.S.-Mexico trade crossed at a Texas land port in 2015. Laredo is far and away the largest land port and Eagle Pass ranked third in Texas. Much of that freight moves up I-35 and has led to a tremendous increase in congestion. The Interstate 35 segment through Travis County is the number 1 ranked corridor for truck congestion in the state.

The Texas Freight Mobility Plan notes that further investment alone on I-35 will not fix the problem. The Plan says, "The state must focus not only on improving existing facilities, but also on developing future freight corridors to move products to markets and exports." It goes on to recommend that TxDOT, "give additional consideration to the extension or designation of other interstate routes. Examples include I-27 and upgrades to portions of US 190 to interstate standards."

The proposed extension of I-27 connects major West Texas population and economic centers including Amarillo, Lubbock, Midland-Odessa and San Angelo in addition to numerous smaller communities. It will cross I-40, I-20 and I-10 and serve three border crossings with Mexico at Del Rio, Eagle Pass and Laredo. An extended I-27 will be a major backbone for the energy industry in Texas serving top oil and gas producing counties as well as the growing wind energy industry. Furthermore, it will serve the agriculture industry including many of Texas top counties for the production of cotton, cattle, corn, grains, sheep and goats and other commodities.

"A future Interstate designation will be a significant new economic development tool for communities along the corridor," said Reeves. "Manufacturers, warehousing and distribution will be drawn to the new interstate. Travel services businesses such as hotels, truck stops, convenience stores and restaurants, which can have a dramatic impact on small communities, will also open. This will create much needed new jobs and expanded tax base in rural West Texas."

The Ports-to-Plains Corridor is a Congressionally Designated High Priority Corridor that extends from Denver to Laredo via Interstate 27. The Ports-to-Plains Corridor Coalition has worked to upgrade the corridor to four-lane divided with truck relief routes where needed. Those efforts have led to almost \$2 billion in upgrades to the nine-state corridor.

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Ports-to-Plains is a grassroots alliance of over 275 communities and businesses, including alliance partners Heartland Expressway, Theodore Roosevelt Expressway and Eastern Alberta Trade Corridor Coalition, whose mission is to advocate for a robust international transportation infrastructure to promote economic security and prosperity throughout North America's energy and agricultural heartland including Mexico to Canada. Additional information on the Ports-to-Plains Alliance is available at <http://www.portstoplains.com/>.