

TRAFFIC, TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

Despite what many residents think, Corpus Christi traffic remains fairly uncongested when compared to other cities, including cities our size. Work must be done on a continual basis, however, to make sure traffic remains that way. Corpus Christi continues to struggle with providing air travel to and from the city, and lanes for pedestrian and bike travel are limited. As fuel prices increase, rail shipping will become a more attractive option.

Air Travel

- American Eagle, Continental Express and Southwest Airlines provide jet service between Corpus Christi International Airport and Dallas/Ft. Worth and Houston.
- Corpus Christi continues to struggle to attract quality air service in the form of number of flights and direct access to other cities. This negatively impacts economic development, tourism and government relations. Improvements to the Corpus Christi International Airport terminal and other facilities continue to improve air travel to and from the city.

Rail Service/Freight

The Corpus Christi MSA is served by three Class 1 rail carriers: Union Pacific, BNSF Railway and Kansas City Southern, which operate 174 miles of mainline railroad in Nueces and San Patricio counties.

One Class 3 short-line railroad, known as Corpus Christi Terminal Railroad, operates 26 miles of rail owned by the Port of Corpus Christi.

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) estimates that freight tonnage carried on Texas highways and railroads is projected to grow 85% and 68% respectively over the next 20-years.

As the cost of fuel fluctuates, rail is becoming an increasingly important component in freight movement.

Key issues related to improving the movement of freight and bulk cargo include:

- the upgrading of U.S. 77;
- the progress of La Quinta;
- replacing the Harbor Bridge;
- identifying improvements to South Padre Island Drive;
- completion of the Joe Fulton International Trade Corridor; and
- improvements to Port Avenue.

Bus Service

- In Nueces County, 9.47% of households do not own a car, while in San Patricio County the figure is 7.5%
- The Regional Transportation Authority operates a fleet of 55 buses and seven trolleys and has 1,450 bus stops, six major transfer sites and four park-and-ride sites. The RTA also is working the Texas Department of Transportation to make major bus stop improvements in the Five Points area.

TRANSPORTATION

REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY (RTA) SERVICE DELIVERY CHARACTERISTICS

<i>Item</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>Percent Change 04-05</i>	<i>Percent Change 05-06</i>
Trips	5,435,703	5,880,493	5,760,289	+8.2%	-2.0%
Miles of Service	4,769,467	4,716,596	4,561,364	-1.1%	-2.3%
Hours of Service	288,022	289,854	276,746	-0.6%	-4.5%
Trips per Hour of Service	18.9	20.3	20.8	--	--

Source: Regional Transportation Authority

Roads and Travel

■ Texas is facing an \$86 billion shortfall between the transportation funds the state is projecting to raise in the next 25 years using existing funding methods and the amount needed to increase road capacity to handle expected traffic increases.

■ The following state and federal dollars are slated to be spent on Coastal Bend transportation:

	<i>State</i>	<i>Federal</i>
2008	\$ 8,122,644	\$ 25,880,000
2009	\$56,360,000	\$ 39,717,600
2010	\$ 1,068,803	\$ 38,640,000
2011	\$18,600,000	\$ 77,699,000
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$84,151,447</i>	<i>\$181,936,600</i>

Source: Corpus Christi Metropolitan Planning Organization

■ Major two- and four-lane highways in the Coastal Bend are Interstate 37, U.S. 181 and U.S. 77 and state highways 44, 358 (South Padre Island Drive), 286 (Crosstown Expressway), 357 (Saratoga Boulevard) and 35.

■ The Texas Transportation Commission has approved a proposal to develop the Texas portion of Interstate 69, known as the Trans Texas Corridor. The master plan would develop the southern section of U.S. 77 to interstate standards. Good connections from the Port of Corpus Christi to I-69 are necessary for the area to benefit from the economic impact.

■ Replacing the Harbor Bridge would cost more than \$800 million at this time. Although it is not considered “structurally deficient,” the bridge does not meet several current design standards.

■ Replacing the Harbor Bridge with a bridge allowing for a 200-foot clearance for ships (compared with the current 138 feet) might help attract cruise line service to and from Corpus Christi.

■ Pavement condition in the TxDOT Corpus Christi District ranks below the state average of 85% of pavement being in good or better condition.

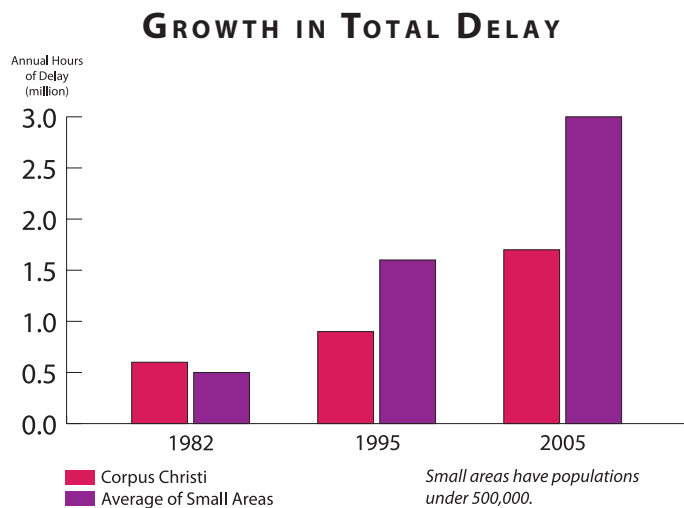
■ The Corpus Christi District has spent an average of \$44 million yearly on maintaining or rehabilitating pavement. It is estimated that it would take \$82 million annually over a five-year period to improve pavement conditions to the state average.

■ A travel time study in 2006 found that the slowest

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segment of road in Corpus Christi was on Staples Street between McArdle Road and South Padre Island Drive. Drivers traveled at an average speed of 5.81 miles per hour. Seven of the 15 most-congested segments were along Staples Street.

- Compared with other cities its size, Corpus Christi has less traffic congestion and delays are growing at a much slower rate.



Source: *Corpus Christi Metropolitan Planning Organization*

- The Texas Department of Transportation and the Corpus Christi Metropolitan Planning Organization are planning or considering upgrades to the following major roadways in the Corpus Christi area:

- SH 286 (Crosstown Expressway) to expand capacity on the southern extension between SPID and Saratoga Boulevard and extending SH 286 to south of FM 43 (Weber Road);
- SH 361 between North Padre Island and Port Aransas to add additional lanes in both directions;

- Saratoga Boulevard between Staples Street and Rodd Field Road as well as Staples Street from Saratoga Boulevard to Oso Creek to add median improvements to make travel easier and safer without adding additional lanes at this time.
- South Padre Island Drive between SH 286 (Crosstown Expressway) and Nile Drive by making changes to ramps and possibly adding auxiliary lanes.
- Planning of a Southside Mobility Corridor to add new roadway from Padre Island across to SH 286 (Crosstown Expressway), U.S. 77, SH 44 and connecting to I-37.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Traffic

- Approximately 70% of streets in Corpus Christi and 80% in Portland have sidewalks.
- The cities of Corpus Christi and Portland have been retrofitting street corners with American with Disabilities Act compliant accessibility ramps.
- The City of Corpus Christi has identified projects in excess of \$20 million that would improve pedestrian access over a multi-year period.
- Bicycle lanes, off-street hike-and-bike trails and designated bike lanes are limited in metropolitan areas of the Corpus Christi MSA. They include:
 - The Bay Trail: a hike-and-bike trail that includes a 1.1-mile section around the Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi campus and a section from Cole Park through the Ocean Drive Parks to the Ocean/Alameda intersection, where it connects to a bicycle lane on Ennis Joslin Road. Plans call for this trail to be extended along Ennis Joslin Road to South Padre Island Drive and eventually through the city's Southside.

T R A N S P O R T A T I O N

- Sunset Lake: This transportation enhancement project in Portland includes a hiking and bikeway facility.
- The possible conversion of the abandoned Southern Pacific Rail corridor in Portland as a hike-and-bike trail.
- The Regional Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan, approved by the Corpus Christi Metropolitan Planning Organization and the City of Corpus Christi in 2005, calls for dedicated on-street bicycle lanes and planning for future dedicated lanes on several city streets and drainage channel improvement projects.

Sources:

City of Corpus Christi

Corpus Christi International Airport Web site:
<http://www.cctexas.com/airport>

Corpus Christi Metropolitan Planning Organization

“Economic Trends,” July 2008, Corpus Christi Economic Development Corporation

“Real Estate Market Overview 2007,” Texas Real Estate Center, Texas A&M University

Texas Transportation Institute

Questions We Need to Consider

1. How can the region move forward with plans to improve transportation infrastructure such as U. S. 77 and the Joe Fulton International Trade Corridor?
2. How can the region improve streets and pavement conditions to match state averages?
3. How could the region improve its air, rail and freight transportation options?
4. Why has the region seen a flux in commercial air carriers recently?
5. How long will the Harbor Bridge continue to be viable and when will replacement be mandatory?
6. How can we improve air service?
7. How can we improve hike and bike trails?