



Part Four

The DFW Interstate Highway System: Backbone of Inland Logistics

Dallas-Fort Worth: A Premier Inland Logistics Hub

The Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) interstate highway system is integral to the region's status as a premier inland logistics hub. With a comprehensive network of major highways, DFW efficiently handles the transportation needs of both short and long-haul trucks, facilitating the seamless movement of goods across the United States.



Key Highways

Strategic Arteries of Commerce

The DFW metroplex is crisscrossed by several major interstate highways that provide direct access to key markets, making it a pivotal point for the distribution of goods:

» I-35

As a crucial north-south corridor, I-35 connects DFW to major cities like Austin, San Antonio, and ultimately, the U.S.-Mexico border. This interstate is vital for enhancing cross-border trade, particularly under the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). The highway supports a significant portion of the trade volume between the U.S. and Mexico, with millions of dollars' worth of goods moving along this route daily.

» I-20

Running east-west, I-20 links DFW to major southern states, including Louisiana, Alabama, and Georgia. This highway is a critical artery for long-haul transportation, facilitating the efficient movement of goods between the southeastern U.S. and the western states. Its importance is underscored by the high volume of truck traffic, particularly in segments that connect to major distribution centers and industrial parks.

» I-30

I-30 serves as a vital connector between Dallas and Fort Worth, supporting intra-regional transport. This interstate is particularly important for the movement of goods between the two cities' industrial hubs, ensuring that products can be distributed quickly and efficiently within the metroplex.

» I-45

The interstate I-45 links Galveston, Houston and Dallas, and is one of the most heavily traversed multimodal freight corridors in Texas. The highway element of the I-45 Corridor is also one of the most congested in the nation: a national study released in 2015 showed that of the top 100 freight bottlenecks in the country, five were located on I-45. Across the entire Interstate Highway System, I-45 had more freight bottlenecks than any other facility in the nation.



Usage By Short and Long-Haul Trucks

A High-Volume Transport Network

The DFW interstate highway system is designed to accommodate a high volume of both short and long-haul trucks, making it one of the busiest logistics hubs in the nation:

» Short-Haul Trucks

Short-haul trucks are predominantly used for local deliveries and last-mile logistics. These vehicles benefit from the extensive local highway network, which connects DFW's industrial areas with urban centers. The efficiency of short-haul operations is critical for supporting the region's vibrant e-commerce sector, where quick delivery times are essential.

» Long-Haul Trucks

Long-haul trucks traverse the interstate highways, linking DFW to national and international markets. The region's strategic location at the crossroads of major highways allows for efficient long-distance transportation, reducing transit times and costs. The presence of numerous truck stops, rest areas, and maintenance facilities along these routes further enhances the efficiency of long-haul operations.



Traffic and Freight Volume

According to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), DFW's highways are among the busiest in the state, with millions of truck trips annually. The sheer volume of freight traffic underscores the importance of these routes:

» I-35

Handles over 10,000 trucks per day on certain segments, making it one of the most heavily trafficked highways in the state. This high volume is indicative of the interstate's critical role in supporting both domestic and cross-border trade. The I-35 corridor is a key artery in the NAFTA/USMCA trade routes, linking Mexico, the U.S., and Canada. As of 2022, the I-35 corridor supported approximately \$1.2 trillion in trade annually. The corridor is expected to see continued growth, with freight volume projected to increase by 45% by 2045. To accommodate this growth, major expansion projects are underway, including the I-35 Capital Express project, which aims to enhance capacity and reduce congestion.

» I-20

Sees significant truck traffic, especially on the segments connecting to major distribution centers. The highway's capacity to handle large freight volumes makes it a key component of the national logistics network. The I-20 Texas corridor is home to 9.5 million or 32.5% of Texas residents and serves 4.4 million or 35% of workers in Texas. The corridor supports the national energy sector and other key industries, such as trade, transportation, warehousing, and agriculture. In 2021, the total gross domestic product (GDP) by all industries along the corridor was \$676 billion, or 37% of Texas' GDP. By 2050, the corridor's population is projected to reach 11.6 million, and its GDP will increase to \$1.6 trillion.

» I-30

Serves as a crucial east-west corridor connecting the DFW metroplex to the Ark-La-Tex region and beyond. The highway handles significant truck traffic, particularly in segments near distribution centers and industrial hubs in Dallas and Fort Worth. I-30 also plays a vital role in facilitating trade and transportation between Texas and neighboring states, contributing to the movement of goods across state lines. The corridor supports a diverse range of industries, including manufacturing, logistics, and retail. As of 2022, I-30 sees approximately 8,000 to 10,000 trucks daily on key segments. With ongoing urban development and population growth along the corridor, truck traffic is projected to increase by 35% by 2045, leading to planned infrastructure improvements aimed at boosting capacity and reducing congestion. The corridor's strategic location also makes it a vital link in the supply chain for goods moving between the southern and eastern U.S. markets.

» I-45

Vital for long-haul freight between Dallas and Houston, with thousands of trucks using the corridor daily. The highway's importance is further highlighted by ongoing expansion projects aimed at increasing its capacity and improving traffic flow. I-45 is a critical link between the Port of Houston, one of the busiest ports in the U.S., and the DFW metroplex. In 2020, over 1.5 million tons of freight moved along the I-45 corridor, and this figure is expected to more than double to 3.5 million tons by 2050. The I-45 corridor also plays a key role in the energy sector, supporting the movement of petroleum products and other commodities essential to the region's economy.



Expansion Plans

To accommodate the growing demand and enhance the efficiency of the highway system, several major expansion projects are underway or planned. These projects are essential for maintaining DFW's competitive edge as a logistics hub:

I-35E Expansion

» Overview

A \$1.6 billion project to widen the freeway and improve interchanges, aimed at reducing congestion and enhancing freight mobility. This expansion is crucial for supporting the increasing volume of cross-border trade, particularly as economic ties with Mexico continue to strengthen.

» Key Dates

Construction began in 2021, with completion anticipated by late 2025.

I-30 Corridor Improvement

» Overview

Plans to expand and upgrade this key artery between Dallas and Fort Worth, including additional lanes and modernized interchanges. The project is expected to alleviate traffic bottlenecks, particularly during peak freight movement hours.

» Key Dates

Preliminary work started in 2022, with major construction phases expected to begin in 2024 and complete by 2028.

I-45 Expansion

» Overview

TxDOT is planning to widen and upgrade I-45 to support increased freight volumes and improve connectivity between DFW and Houston. This project is particularly important for industries reliant on Gulf Coast ports for import and export activities.

» Key Dates

The planning phase is ongoing, with environmental assessments and design work expected to conclude by 2025. Construction is slated to begin in 2026 and continue through 2030.

I-635 LBJ East Project

» Overview

A significant expansion and reconstruction project to alleviate congestion and improve traffic flow on this vital loop around Dallas. This project is crucial for enhancing the efficiency of both short-haul and long-haul freight operations within the metroplex.

» Key Dates

Construction began in 2023, with anticipated completion by 2028.



Looking Ahead

The DFW interstate highway system is not just a crucial component of the region's logistics infrastructure; it is a driving force behind its economic growth. By supporting a high volume of both short and long-haul truck traffic, and with significant expansion projects on the horizon, DFW is well-positioned to maintain its status as a premier inland logistics hub.

The ongoing improvements to the freeway system will ensure the region continues to meet the demands of modern logistics, driving economic growth and supporting a diverse industrial landscape. As the DFW area continues to grow and evolve, its interstate highway system will remain at the heart of its logistics prowess, enabling the seamless movement of goods across the nation and beyond.