NCTCOG FACT SHEET

May 2026

QUICK TAKE

What:

Freight North Texas: Goods Movement Planning for the North Central Texas Region.

Significance:

The North Central Texas Council of Governments coordinates planning and recommendations to move freight more effectively in the 12-county metropolitan planning area.

By the Numbers:

The manufacturing, transportation and warehousing industries in North Central Texas make a combined $80 billion in gross domestic product (GDP).

In 2024, approximately 514,873,800 tons of goods were shipped from the region.[1] The Bureau of Transportation Statistics estimates the value of a ton of goods shipped ranges from $430 for bulk commodities to $18,000 for electronic and electrical equipment.

NCTCOG estimates that 99% of the United States can be reached by trucks within 72 hours.

There are four Foreign Trade Zones in North Texas, including the third busiest for receiving merchandise in the US.

[1] North Texas Commission, North Texas Profile (2025).

Freight Movement: More than Just Trucks

There are five principal modes of transportation used to transport freight through, in, and out of the North Texas region. Trucks are perhaps the most visible mode of freight movement, transporting 79.24% of goods being shipped to and from the region.[2] However, Dallas-Fort Worth is diverse, encompassing rail, intermodal, air cargo, trucks and pipelines. All these modes work together to ensure food gets to the grocery store, fuel makes it from the refinery to the service station and retail products are delivered to market for consumers.

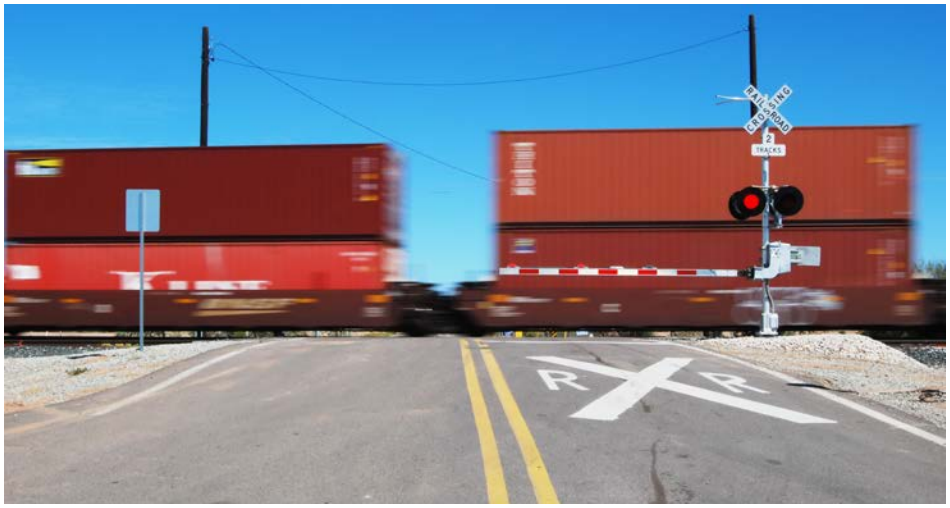
Freight North Texas: A Freight Mobility Plan is the North Central Texas Region's freight plan. It outlines the goods movement planning efforts in the region, led by North Central Texas Council of Governments to enhance safety, mobility, efficiency, and air quality associated with freight movements in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. It concludes with recommendations for policies, programs and studies to help improve the freight movement in the region, which include the following:

- Truck Bottleneck Study
- Rail Pathing Study
- Air Cargo Analysis
- Truck Routing Study

Follow-Up Studies

- Rail Crossing Study
- Truck Safety Analysis
- Commodity Flow Model
- First- and Last-Mile Improvement Study

[2] U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Freight Analysis Framework (FAF) (2024).



Source: Getty Images

Updates to Completed Studies:

- Truck Parking Study Update
- Freight Congestion and Delay Update
- Freight Land Use Analysis Update

Freight is immensely important to the economy of the region. If the flow of goods were to stop, the Federal Highway Administration estimates:

- Within 6-12 hours, assembly lines would come to a stop.
- Within 24 hours, hospitals would begin to run out of essential supplies.
- Within 48 hours, service stations would begin to run out of gas.
- Within 72 hours, grocery stores would begin to run out of perishable items.

It is important to keep freight movement at its current pace due to its effect on the economy, not only to ensure the timely delivery of goods in the region but also to guarantee the employment reliant on freight movement. Over 408,710 workers are employed in some facet in the transportation and material-moving industry. Their median income is $49,213.[3]

With six interstate highways, three Class I railroads, two regional railroads and three airports with extensive cargo, the region's central location allows it to serve as the primary distribution center for the Southwest, and for the world, using the following methods:

Truck

The region heavily relies on trucks to deliver commodities such as gasoline, fuel oils, nonmetal mineral products, natural sand and coal. An extensive road network allows access to the region from many directions, saving truck operators and consumers both time and money.

Railroads

The regional rail network is extensive, and is composed of three Class I railroads (Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, Canadian Pacific Kansas City Railway and Union Pacific Railroad). Two regional railroads (Dallas, Garland & Northwestern and Fort Worth & Western) are also included. Both the Class I railroads and regional railroads work together to link the region with major international and domestic freight routes in North America. Rail shipments utilize the regional network, which covers more than 2,300 miles, to ship large amounts of items that are heavy (e.g., coal and grains), have a low per-unit value (e.g., gravel) or need to be shipped over 500 miles. The region also relies on heavy rail to deliver commodities such as plastics, rubber, gasoline, fuel oils and basic chemicals.

Intermodal

Intermodal is a critical part of the region's freight transportation network. An intermodal facility is a place where a specific transportation mode (truck, rail, air, or ship) transfers goods to another transportation mode. In North Texas, the most prominent intermodal transfers occur between truck and railroad cars.

The region has four intermodal railyards: BNSF Railway's Alliance Facility, located in Fort Worth; Union Pacific Railroad's Dallas Intermodal Terminal, located in Wilmer/Hutchins; Union Pacific Railroad's Mesquite Intermodal Terminal in Mesquite; and CPKC Railway in Wylie. Combined, these facilities handle over 2 million intermodal transfers (also known as lifts) annually.

Air Cargo

Air Cargo is mainly used to transport highly valuable and priority items, representing only a small share of the total tonnage shipped in the US. North Texas has three air cargo facilities: Dallas Fort Worth International Airport, Dallas Love Field, and Perot Field/Alliance Airport. DFW Airport and Alliance lead the region in transportation of cargo.

Pipelines

Pipelines and pipeline facilities in the region allow for the transportation of petroleum, natural gas and other hazardous materials. The region's pipeline network is extensive, totaling approximately 16,000 miles. This extensive network, which operates mainly below ground, transports roughly 33 million tons annually in North Texas, placing it second to trucks in terms of tonnage transported. [4]

[3] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wages in Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington (May 2024).

[4] U.S. Department of Transportation, Freight Analysis Framework (FAF) 5.7.1 (2024), Region 484 (Dallas-Fort Worth), Pipeline mode: 33,251,600 tons.