

NCTCOG FACT SHEET

November 2025

QUICK TAKE

What:

Air cargo is characterized by time-sensitive, high-value, low-weight shipments. Items such as electronics, high-fashion clothing, seafood, and fresh flowers are typically shipped by air. Additionally, urgent business documents, medical equipment, and emergency replacement parts and products are transported by plane.

Significance:

North Texas relies heavily on aviation facilities to sustain growth and economic prosperity. Through connectivity to global markets, more than 400 aviation facilities provide economic development opportunities, the ability to engage in business activities related to aviation and cargo movement, as well as leisure and tourism opportunities throughout the world. The region's airports serve as a non-conventional inland port system, providing global access and economic growth.

Quick Fact:

\$8.3 trillion is the value of goods shipped internationally by air each year, accounting for approximately 33% of world trade by value.

Air Cargo: Vital Part of North Texas Economy

Despite being the largest metropolitan area in the nation without access to a water port, North Texas is a leader in global and domestic trade. The region's location along one of the nation's major trade corridors provides the freight industry access to a variety of transportation modes for moving goods. This access allows for the timely and efficient delivery of goods, helping to reduce costs and increase savings for the region's consumers. Air cargo is one component of the region's comprehensive freight system. In 2024, Dallas-Fort Worth airports processed 1,187,415,47 metric tons of cargo. The region's success in air cargo is due to:

- 1) Major distribution hubs for FedEx and UPS
- 2) DFW Airport's status in the nation's Top 15 Air Cargo Airports, and a Top 20 Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) for value of foreign merchandise imported
- 3) A large network of regional general aviation airports, including air cargo providers and three major air cargo airports

Inside the Numbers



Air

\$591,253 per 5,871
thousands of tons



Truck

\$12,421,511 per 11,520,318
thousands of tons



Rail

\$690,459 per 1,738,346
thousands of tons

Domestic Mode

Weight
(thousands of tons)

Value
(millions of current
dollars)

Truck

11,520,318

12,421,511

Rail

1,738,346

690,459

Air (including truck-air)

5,871

591,253

Source: Freight Shipments by Mode | Bureau of Transportation Statistics (bts.gov)

Shipping cargo by air is essential for the economic growth in a region without access to a water port, as it provides shippers with the ability to reach inland markets more quickly and efficiently. Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, Alliance Airport, and Love Field benefit the region’s economy by providing scheduled air cargo operations.

Several of the region’s general aviation airports aid businesses by allowing shippers to provide critical just-in-time cargo shipments to their customers. While the major cargo airports provide most of the region’s air cargo service, the smaller general aviation airports make the seamless flow of goods to and from the region possible.

2024 US Air Cargo Airport Rankings

Rank	City	Total Cargo (metric Tons)
1	Anchorage, AK	11,552,000
2	Memphis, TN	9,622,600
3	Louisville, KY	8,157,400
4	Miami, FL	5,306,500
5	Hebron, KY	4,443,800
6	Los Angeles, CA	3,786,700
7	Chicago, IL	3,700,800
8	Ontario, CA	2,188,600
9	New York, NY	2,173,100
10	Indianapolis, IN	2,036,400
11	Dallas-Fort Worth, TX	1,702,400

Sources: Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Airports Council International

North Texas’ Air Shipments to and from the World

International air cargo shipments play a vital role in the world’s economy. According to the International Air Transport Association, 62 million metric tons of cargo are transported by air each year (about 170,000 metric tons daily). The annual value of these goods is \$8.3 trillion – or 33% of the value of goods traded internationally.

International air freight in North Texas serves as a major gateway for air cargo to Asia, with 48% of international air cargo flying on trans-Pacific routes to and from Dallas-Fort Worth. DFW's central U.S. location makes it both an attractive e-commerce hub and the hub of transit freight between Latin America and Asia. This growth is expected to continue in the future, with Boeing predicting air cargo operations between North America and Asia will grow 4.4% per year by 2041.

Foreign Trade Zones (FTZ)

The federal government created foreign trade zones in 1934 to provide an incentive for the U.S. to trade its goods internationally. Foreign goods admitted to FTZs are not immediately subject to customs duties or excise taxes. Firms may defer payment of duties until goods are delivered to their destinations.

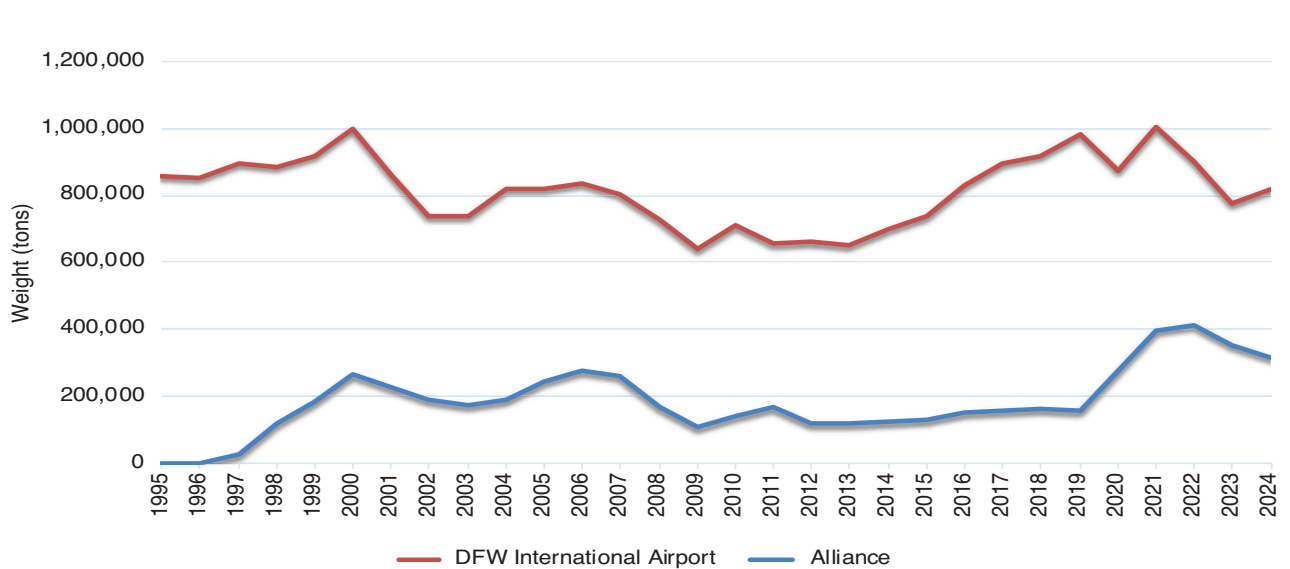
Alliance Texas

Within the Alliance Global Logistics Hub, the 9,600-acre FTZ, there was \$1,000 - 5,000 million in export activity in 2023, and \$5,000 - 10,000 million in merchandise received.

DFW International Airport

At DFW Airport, 2,500 acres are designated as an FTZ. This includes a 21-acre business park north of State Highway 114 and two cargo distribution centers with direct airport ramp access. DFW International Airport is ranked in the top 20 FTZ in the nation, for the category of merchandise received. The following chart displays the air cargo tonnage throughout the years for both large-scale air cargo operations in the region, displaying the importance of both facilities as air cargo throughput increases.

DFW International Airport and Alliance Air Cargo Tonnage



Source: DFW Airport, Alliance Texas



North Central Texas
Council of Governments

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