

BASIC Project Information

Project Name: **Southwest Oklahoma Regional Freight Plan**

Sponsor: **South Western
Oklahoma Development
Authority (SWODA)**

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Funding Opportunity #: DTOS59-21-RA-RAISE

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PROJECT COSTS		LOCATION	
RAISE Request Amount:	\$425,000	State(s) in which project is located:	Oklahoma
Estimated other Federal Funding	\$0	Is project area in an urbanized area:	No
Estimated Non-Federal Funding	\$0	Population of urbanized area:	N/A
Future Eligible Project Costs	\$425,000	Located in an Opportunity Zone:	Yes, partly
Previously Incurred Project Cost	\$0	Located in Persistent Poverty area:	Yes, partly
Total Project Costs	\$425,000		
Are matching funds restricted:	NO		





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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

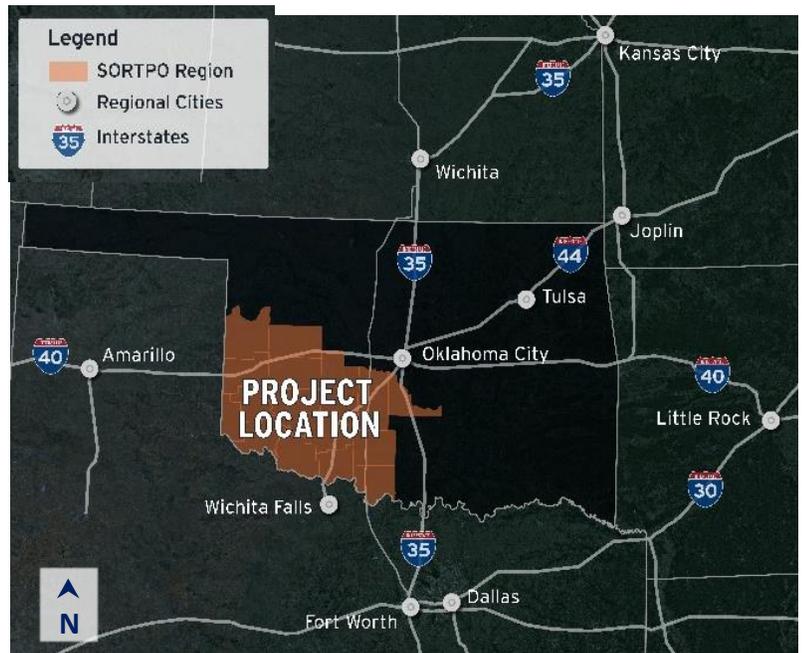
PROJECT INTRODUCTION

Southwest Oklahoma (the Region) is a critical economic generator for the State of Oklahoma and United States. The Region is host to many growing industries and provides vital freight connections through a robust system of air, rail, and roadway networks which connect energy production (wind, oil, and gas), agriculture production, and military installations to broader statewide and national facilities and supply chains.

Due to the importance of the Region’s contribution to local, state, and national economies, a strategic regional freight plan is needed for the Region to plan and coordinate the safe, efficient, and cost-effective movement of commodities and goods. As such, the South Western Oklahoma Development Authority (SWODA) seeks a RAISE planning grant to identify investment strategies and prioritize regional freight projects. The goal of the Southwest Oklahoma Regional Freight Plan (the Project) is to strategically direct local, state, and federal resources toward improved system performance for efficient movement of freight. Accordingly, the Project follows an adopted public engagement process that promotes stakeholder participation from the freight and logistics industry, business community, elected officials, tribal governments, and the public to find consensus on a prioritized project list. Identifying and prioritizing regional freight investments will allow the Region to maximize state, local, and federal resources. This Project is also consistent with US DOT’s Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success (ROUTES).

Freight transportation systems must safely and effectively provide for the efficient and cohesive movement of goods and commodities across multiple municipalities, counties, regions, and states while considering impacts to Areas of Persistent Poverty. The regional project area includes 16 counties; with 3 of the counties and 24 census tracts identified as areas of persistent poverty. The Project location is defined within the transportation planning jurisdiction of The Southwest Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SORTPO), one of Oklahoma’s largest regional transportation planning organizations (RTPO). The project location (Figure 1) encompasses SORTPO’s transportation planning region covering 14,180 square miles, 16 counties, 120 municipalities and two military installations. This region borders Texas to the south and west and serves as a direct link to the economic opportunities in Texas, mainly energy production and agriculture. The regional transportation planning process is funded through a combination of State Planning & Research funds and local funds provided by SWODA and the Association of South-Central Oklahoma Governments (ASCOG). ASCOG and SWODA are regional councils of governments.

FIGURE 1: GENERAL PROJECT LOCATION





Through interstates, state and U.S. highways, and railways, the Region connects to statewide commodity flows and commodity flows in Texas and other regions. Oklahoma's freight network carries goods and commodities to and from Arkansas, California, Kansas, Louisiana, Texas, and Wyoming. Components of Oklahoma's network includes

In total, over **800 million tons of freight** are carried annually through the Oklahoma statewide freight network, valued annually at an estimated **\$1.3 billion**.¹

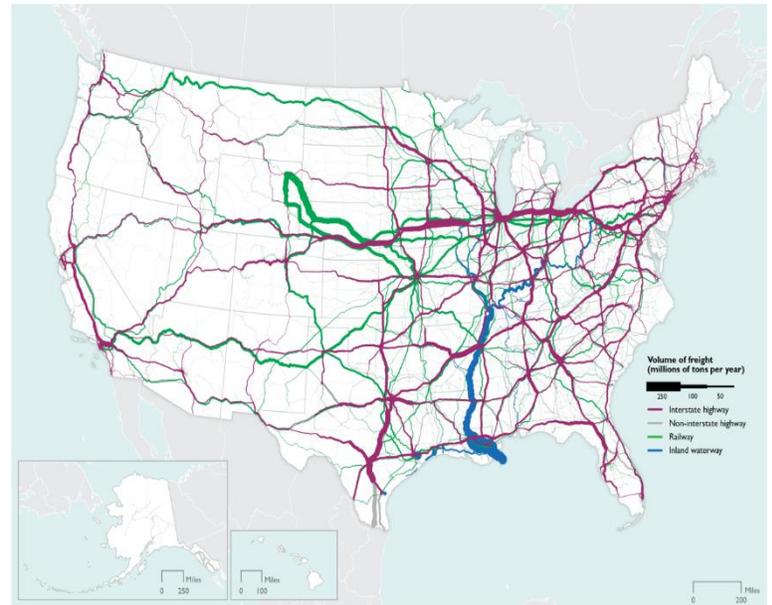
interstate highways and railways, some carrying over 90 million tons of freight each year. In total, over 800 million tons of freight are carried annually through the Oklahoma statewide freight network (air, waterway, railway, and highway combined), valued annually at an estimated \$1.3 billion.¹ Because of this, the Region's freight network is transporting more rurally produced goods than it was originally intended to accommodate. For example, in 2019, the American Gypsum Company, manufacturer of gypsum wallboard for the construction industry, alone transported 716,800,000 tons of outbound gypsum wallboard throughout the United States via the Region's freight network. Furthermore, approximately 63 percent of the State's annual freight movement is traveling through the Region, creating wear and tear to the infrastructure while providing no real direct economic benefit to the Region.² The Project will help ensure that the Region's freight network will accommodate trips generated by the demand for these rurally produced goods and commodities.

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

FIGURE 2: FREIGHT FLOWS BY HIGHWAYS, RAILROADS, AND INLAND WATERWAYS: 2017

CHALLENGES

Although the Oklahoma Department of Transportation, local governments, rail companies, and Aeronautics Commission continue to invest infrastructure dollars in the Region's freight network to maintain a state of good repair. Several challenges exist within the network that lead to safety concerns, inefficiencies, and an increase in maintenance costs. Freight traveling through the network creates congestion, bottlenecks, and excessive idling times. It is forecasted that freight trips will increase and planning for the rehabilitation and expansion of the freight network will be critical³. The Project will more precisely forecast economic trends to guide the Region's infrastructure investment strategy, providing accelerated project delivery and maintaining a state of good repair. Figure 2 shows annual freight tonnage for all modes throughout the United States⁴. Current economic trends



¹ Oklahoma Freight Transportation Plan (2018-2022), Chapter 2. https://www.ok.gov/odot/documents/OKFreightPlan2018_2022.pdf

² Oklahoma Freight Transportation Plan (2018-2022), Chapter 2. https://www.ok.gov/odot/documents/OKFreightPlan2018_2022.pdf

³ Oklahoma Freight Transportation Plan (2018-2022), Chapter 4. https://www.ok.gov/odot/documents/OKFreightPlan2018_2022.pdf

⁴ Facts and Figures 2017. <https://www.bts.gov/freight-flows-highway-railway-and-waterway-2017>



(shown in Table 1) identify market trends that impact the Region’s freight network⁵. These include increased production of energy and agriculture products, truck platooning, population growth, and increased traffic.

TABLE 1: IDENTIFIED MARKET TRENDS

Market Trends	
-	National energy independence will require increased production of crude oil, refined petroleum products, natural gas, solar energy, and wind energy.
-	The agriculture industry will continue to grow because of the Region’s increased production of cattle, cotton, soybean, and wheat.
-	The Region’s goods production will facilitate the growth and advancement of retail centers transforming these sites to key distribution centers for local (i.e., family farms) and national businesses (i.e., wallboard).
-	Truck platooning and other new technological advances may further increase the need for facility upgrades.
-	Population growth near retail centers and medical facilities will lead to a greater need for convenient and safe access to jobs in the Region.
-	Rural residents and workers will see an increase in traffic on existing local roads not intended for forecasted freight trips. These residents need continued access to healthcare, schools, and jobs.

Safely transporting operational materials and products associated with these goods and commodities will most likely require facility upgrades (i.e., updating bridge decks and substructures to handle heavy loads), increasing capacity (i.e., new lanes), and implementing safety measures (i.e., rumble strips, passing lanes, rail track and bridge upgrades, and crossing signal upgrades). The Project will assist the Region, stakeholders, and partners in developing solutions to critical issues associated with the market trends above. Current critical issues are shown in Table 2 on the following page.



At-grade rail crossing. Source: SWODA

⁵ Oklahoma Freight Transportation Plan (2018-2022), Chapter 4. https://www.ok.gov/odot/documents/OKFreightPlan2018_2022.pdf



TABLE 2: CRITICAL ISSUES

Critical Issues	
Peak Origin-Destination Travel Times & Routes	Need for data of current freight movement to, from, and within the region, including general origins and destinations, peak times, routes, and traffic counts.
Projection of Growth Patterns	Modeling projected growth of goods and commodities in 5-year and 10-year timeframes, including land use changes that pinpoint ‘hot spot’ generating freight trips. (i.e., distribution centers, new rail yards).
Linkage Planning and Logistical Efficiencies	Identification of links that connect mobility of air, truck and rail freight modalities within the Region that can provide efficient distribution of goods and commodities, while potentially addressing safety (i.e., moving freight better suited by train) or homeland security concerns (i.e., routes for military equipment).
Accurate Cost Estimation & Priority Projects	Detailed cost estimates for high-priority projects, and planning-level estimates for others. Establishment of a list of recommended projects, including prioritization, to help ensure monies are available and secured.
Assessment of Current Condition	Assess the current state of truck and rail freight system operations and identify ways to effectively prioritize and address future freight congestion issues, key regional bottlenecks, infrastructure deficiencies, potential technologies to increase flow and safety, and urban and rural land use requirements and policies.
Freight Technologies	Identification of existing and future desired freight technologies and methods that correlate with regional workforce capabilities and capitalize on other regional assets, including research and development of energy alternatives, and emerging technologies.
Barriers and Gaps to Access Jobs, Healthcare, and Services	Identifying gaps and barriers between employers and employees, residents and healthcare, and other safety concerns of rural residents where the transportation network does not promote their mobility.
Streamlining Approval Process	Strategic recommendations and guidance that outlines decision-making processes and targeted regional actions and policies for priority investments within the Region.

OPPORTUNITIES

This Project will address critical needs within the Region. Oklahoma is committed to an investment strategy that can accommodate the pursuit of national goods and commodity independence, while ensuring residents have safe mobility options. Increased freight efficiencies would produce quantifiable regional economic benefits and reduce adverse impacts to the environment. For example, accelerating projects such as improvements to at-grade



crossings and upgrades to lane width and pavement conditions would dramatically increase transportation safety. Updating current systems by providing improvements such as new and widened shoulders would help address issues with oversize/overweight (OS/OW) loads, mainly associated with the regional wind energy, agriculture, and oil and gas industry operations. Identifying these types of accelerated projects would help Oklahoma ensure transportation dollars are maximized with future projects.



Source: www.ksw.com



Source: GreenGeezer

FUNDING REQUEST

The RAISE planning grant funding request for this project is \$425,000, which includes allocations for each major component of the Project including public participation, economic and network assessment and gap analysis, innovative technologies consideration, project prioritization, evaluation against performance measures, and public engagement, environmental justice analysis and a final plan. The Project is located across 16 counties in rural southwest Oklahoma. Three counties (Caddo, Tillman, and Washita) and twenty-four census and 24 census tracts are designated Areas of Persistent Poverty (see Figure 11). In rural areas and for planning projects located in areas of persistent poverty the USDOT Secretary may increase the Federal share of costs above 80%. SWODA is requesting 100% of the funding of the project. Dedication of staff for oversight and management of this Project is encumbered through a combination of funding sources to include SWODA, ASCOG and ODOT State Planning and Research (SPR).

PROJECT PARTNERS

The Project, managed and supported by SWODA, boasts numerous supporters, including the Lieutenant Governor, State and Federal Congressional delegates, industry representatives, local business owners, and other stakeholders. These partners understand the importance of the Project and share the common goal of advancing the Southwest Oklahoma Regional Freight Plan to prioritize projects and accelerate project delivery, while considering equity and climate change. Each partner understands the wholistic benefits provided by focusing finite resources on solutions that improve small rural highways and key National Highway Freight Network (NHFN) corridors. A snapshot of Project partners is shown in Figure 2: a complete list of partners is provided on the project website⁶.

⁶ Letters of Support. <https://sortpo.org/freight/>



FIGURE 2: PROJECT PARTNERS

Project Partners					
Project Partners	 South Western Oklahoma Development Authority	 Southwest Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization	 Association South Central Oklahoma Governments	 Oklahoma Department of Transportation	
Lieutenant Governor	 Matt Pinnell State of Oklahoma				
Congressional Delegation	 Frank Lucas U.S. Representative			 Tom Cole U.S. Representative	
Supporting Agencies and Organizations	Oklahoma Department of Commerce • WATCO American Gypsum • Lawton Metropolitan Planning Organization Oklahoma Farm Bureau • Cotton Growers of Oklahoma Oklahoma Southwest Alliance • Oklahoma Rail Association				

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Project is supported by SORTPO’s sixteen countywide long-range transportation plans (LRTP) aimed at identifying issues, opportunities, and trends and influencing transportation decisions for each SORTPO county in the next 20 years.⁷ Included in each of these individual county wide plans is development of a regional freight plan to efficiently improve accessibility and mobility for people and freight through multiple jurisdictions and municipalities. Also, this Project will address two of the ten Planning factors “Increase accessibility and mobility of people and freight” and “Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system across and

⁷ County Long Rang Plans (LRTP). <https://sortpo.org/transportation/country-long-range-plans-lrtp/#>



The Project has identified seven goal task areas, as shown in Table 3 on the following page, aimed at addressing the market trends and critical issues identified in Table 2. Within these seven goal areas are objectives and example performance metrics that could be used to continually evaluate freight network performance and ensure strategic investments are successful. These objective task areas align with both the state and national freight policies⁹. The final goals and objectives will be determined through the regional transportation planning process following the adopted public participation plan with input from the public, Project Partners, and stakeholders.

TABLE 3: PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND EXAMPLE PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Objective Area	Objective	Example Performance Metric
Safe and Secure Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for a safer, more secure, and resilient transportation system for the Regions’ residents, businesses, and visitors. • Ensure the ability of the highways and railroads to safely accommodate growth in freight traffic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced traffic collisions • Reduced highway fatalities • Reduced rail collisions
Infrastructure Preservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support infrastructure preservation and maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highway pavement conditions • Bridge conditions • Railway conditions • Rest area conditions
Mobility: Choice, Connectivity and Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve accessibility and mobility for people and freight • Improve the national defense readiness capability of public highways and railroad infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced traffic delays • Percent of travel meeting Level of Service • Decreased truck idling time
Economic Vitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support a transportation system that enhances regional connectivity, retains existing businesses, promotes new businesses, and enhances freight movements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased freight travel time reliability • Number of job opportunities created by transportation system per 1-million-dollar investment
Environmental Preservation & Mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce impacts to the counties’ natural environment, historic areas and underrepresented populations resulting from transportation programs, projects and services information to motorist and emergency personnel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tons of mobile emissions from on road motor vehicles per TMR (PMR) • Number of Alternative Fueling Stations within 1 mile of Roadway • Number of improvements for water runoff
Efficient Intermodal System Management and Operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve freight system mobility and operations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilization of ITS systems for emergency or traffic assistance • Truck hours of delay • Truck planning time

⁹ Oklahoma Freight Transportation Plan (2018-2022). https://www.ok.gov/odot/documents/OKFreightPlan2018_2022.pdf



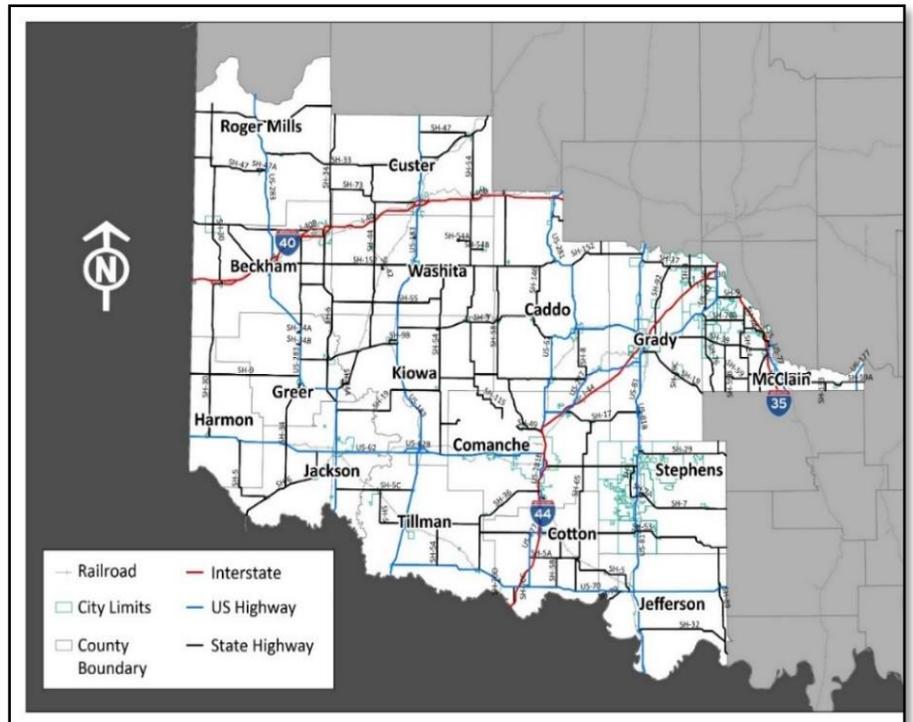
Objective Area	Objective	Example Performance Metric
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase efficiency through modernization of assets and streamlining of processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roadways within freight intensive areas • Rail hours of delay
<p style="text-align: center;">Regional</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the regional transportation system to advance equity and contributes to communities' livability and sustainability while protecting the natural, cultural and development environments. • Strengthen partnerships creating opportunities to exchange information, coordinate projects and work together collectively to enhance the region's transportation system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in loss of life between motorist and freight vehicle • Reduction in duration of time and number of road closures

PROJECT LOCATION

Within the SORTPO transportation planning region, short-range and long-haul freight trips transport cotton, wheat, wind energy equipment, and oil and gas products, among others.

Additionally, access to air cargo locations allows the transport of high-value and rapidly transported goods. Major industries located in the Region that use the freight network include agriculture (grain elevators), mining, oil, and gas, and manufacturing. The Region is host to major companies, including Goodyear Tire & Rubber Plant (Lawton), Bar S Foods (Lawton, Altus, and Clinton), Haliburton Technology Center Services operations, and Family Dollar Distribution (Duncan) and other Halliburton Energy Center (Duncan). SORTPO's location, nestled along southwest

FIGURE 5: SORTPO FREIGHT MAP



Oklahoma's border with the north western border of Texas, also serves as Oklahoma's direct link to the economic opportunities in Texas, mainly energy production and agriculture are predominant to this part of the U.S. The Project will evaluate connections to industries in other Oklahoma regions and other U.S. states. As such, the Project



will assess key freight air, rail, and highway corridors, including highways within the NHFN. The Project's interstate highways include I-44, I-35, and I-40, which are within the NHFN. Key US Highways in the project area include: 62, 70, 81, 183, 283 and 277 and State Highways within the project area include 5, 6, 7, 9, 19, 30, 44, 54, 76, and 152. The Region's rail lines include the two class I railroads: BNSF Railway Company (BNSF) and Union Pacific (UP). There are also four Class III short-line railroads: Farmrail Corporation and Grainbelt Corporation (Farmrail System, Inc), Wichita, Tillman & Jackson Railway, Hollis & Easter Railroad, and Stillwater Central Railroad. Much of the Project is situated in the Great Plains, and the relatively even topography is well-suited for the rail industry. The Class I railroads which serve multiple markets and through traffic in the Region and the Class III railroads provide critical connections to business, such as Farmrail System, Inc's short-line rail freight system that carries approximately 940,000,000 tons of inbound and outbound freight through the Region¹⁰.

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Lawton-Fort Sill Airport provides commercial passenger and cargo air service for southwest Oklahoma. There are two military airports: Altus Air Force Base and Henry Post Army Airfield that serve two Department of Defense (DOD), military installations. There are four regional airports that serve as business jet hubs: Chickasha, Duncan, Elk City and Weatherford. In addition to multiple smaller airports there is the Oklahoma Space and Industrial Development Authority (OSIDA) at Burns Flat which provides a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) controlled, non-restricted airspace corridor.

The 2020 Coronavirus pandemic has further revealed the need for United States companies to bring back manufacturing and production from overseas. Southwestern Oklahoma's logistically central location along major freight corridors, and relative location to Oklahoma City, make the Region prime for manufacturing growth opportunities. This is illustrated by private railroad investments, including \$16.5 million in short-line rail infrastructure improvements¹¹, that will increase the compatibility and connectivity to rail operations outside of the Region and shows private commitment to regional economic expansion.

The Project area covers a network of interstate highway, rail, and air corridors that traverse both rural and urban areas. As such, the Project network passes through several [Opportunity Zones](#) located in more densely populated areas (see Figure 6 next page). In total, 10 Census Tracts in eight SORTPO counties have been designated Opportunity Zones. Although portions of the project corridors are within these designated areas, the character of southwest Oklahoma is predominantly rural. Commodities such as wheat, cotton, and petroleum products flow through the Region's freight networks and the rural nature of the Region provides abundant opportunity for agriculture, oil and gas, and wind industries.

¹⁰ Freight flows over the last 5 years gathered through the SORTPO Freight Working Group network

¹¹ SORTPO Freight Working Group

FIGURE 6: SORTPO OPPORTUNITY ZONES



GRANT FUNDS, SOURCES, AND USES OF PROJECT FUNDING

SWODA along with their state and local partners are excited about the opportunity to leverage federal funds in this rural part of the nation for a much-needed regional freight plan. SWODA requests \$408,350 in RAISE discretionary grant funds to coordinate the safe, efficient, and cost-effective movement of goods throughout the region. This request would cover 96 percent of the total project cost; this project as well as the remaining 4% is included in the annual Planning Work Program. The Region’s expansive rural freight network and current fiscal constraints and uncertainties have exhausted all available funding sources for the Project and RAISE funding is needed to ensure the Project’s completion. The total cost of the Project is listed in Table 4 (next page) and includes a breakdown of how funds will be spent for the Project. Additionally, the Project’s funding sources are provided in Table 5 (next page).

In addition to ODOT, SWODA, ASCOG, and local partners continue to prioritize investment in the SORTPO transportation network. This is evidenced by ODOT’s investments of roughly \$198,000,000 dollars committed over the next 5 years for 97 county bridge projects and 150 miles of county roadway improvements, such as the U.S. 81 Realignment Project. Additional transportation investments include the following, among others:¹²

- ✓ Over \$29,000,000 in local and private contributions to roadway and bridge improvements
- ✓ Approximately \$4,700,000 in railroad crossing upgrades
- ✓ Approximately \$6,400,000 in Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission projects

¹² Known Transportation Investments in SW Oklahoma, Private and Local. SWODA, 2020.



TABLE 4: PROJECT COST

Component	Cost	Percent
Materials & Supplies	\$ 20,000	5%
Task 1 - Public Participation Process	\$ 75,000	18%
Task 2 - Assessment	\$ 85,000	20%
Task 3 - Gap Analysis	\$ 46,000	11%
Task 4 - Innovative Technologies	\$ 42,000	10%
Task 5 - Prioritization and Policy	\$ 52,000	12%
Task 6 - Performance Measures	\$ 32,000	7%
Task 7 - Draft and Final Plan	\$ 73,000	17%
Total Project Cost	\$ 425,000	100%

TABLE 5: PROJECT FUNDING SOURCE

Funding Source	Amount	Percent
RAISE Funds	\$ 425,000	100%
Total Project Funds	\$ 425,000	100%

SAFETY

The Region’s network of rural highways and railroads that once served small farm-to-market transport of agricultural goods and machinery now supports large-scale commercial farming and energy sector operations. Safety issues in this region include impact of wildlife such as feral hogs and lane departure accidents, weather events, and highway/rail grade crossings. Feral swine populations have dramatically increased in the area, creating safety issues when these and other animals cross roadways. Extreme weather events, unsafe at-grade rail crossings, and trucks traveling through residential and commercial areas also threaten the safety of those traveling through Southwest Oklahoma.



Feral hog on roadway. Source: nps.gov

Feral hog populations in Oklahoma are estimated between 600,000 and 1.5 million and these animals are most active at night when visibility is low.¹³ Large hogs enter roadways, sometimes unseen, colliding with vehicles or forcing drivers to swerve off roadways, causing injury and/or vehicle damage. Livestock and deer entering roadways also threaten the safety of those traveling through the Region. The Project aims to identify wildlife crossing hotspots as well as opportunities

¹³ Feral Hogs. <https://www.wildlifedepartment.com/hunting/feral-hogs/learn>



to implement wildlife detection techniques to reduce the number of interactions with wildlife on the Region’s roadways.

Extreme weather events are a common occurrence for the Region and include excessively high temperatures, significant rain and flooding events, earthquakes, and tornados. The Region’s flat terrain and waterways make it prone to flooding, which often impacts the transportation system and can lead to damaged infrastructure along roads, bridges, and rail lines¹⁴. Flooding on roadways and bridges threatens the safety of drivers who are unaware of the dangers of driving through flood waters, even at seemingly shallow depths. Adding innovative technologies along the roadways would help inform drivers of extreme weather events, provide network redundancy during an event, improve resiliency of roadway reconstruction, and improve safety. The Region has numerous at-grade rail crossings that need improvements and signalization upgrades. Large trucks and rail cars carrying chemicals and petroleum products pose a high risk in a collision causing chemical and petroleum spills. In 2018, all fatal train involved crashes in Oklahoma happened in rural areas,¹⁵ making these improvements a top priority for the Region. The Project aims to identify locations of signal crossings in need of upgrades.



Example of flooding on roadways in Southwest Oklahoma (Source: ODOT)

The change to larger-scale agricultural operations has increased the number of OS/OW trucks utilizing rural highways and the National Highway Freight Network (NHFN). Many rural highways lack modern safety design that have been proven to reduce fatalities and collisions. OS/OW freight trucks regularly enter and exit roadways at slow speeds with little acceleration, causing conflicts with other motorists and increasing the likelihood of vehicular incidents. Narrow roadways, few passing lanes, limited sight distance, and lack of shoulders make it difficult for motorists to pass OS/OW freight trucks safely. In 2017, Comanche County ranked fifth (first being the worst) out of 77 Oklahoma Counties for the total number of fatality and injury crashes.¹⁶ Safety is SORTPO and ODOT’s top priority, and the Project intends to identify crash hotspots, opportunities for safety-related improvements, and strategies for implementing technology to inform drivers of weather-related events to improve the Region’s safety and decrease vehicle incidents.



Oversize road freight. Source: Tulsa World

The Region’s areas with higher population densities, such as the cities of Lawton, Elk City, Duncan, Chickasha, Weatherford, and Altus, are key activity centers for retail that facilitate distribution of goods and commodities as well as provide healthcare, schools, and places to live for workers. Major companies and industries located in or

¹⁴ https://www.odot.org/p-r-div/lrp_2015_2040/2040_LRTP_Full_Document.pdf,

¹⁵ http://ohso.ok.gov/Websites/ohso/images/CrashBooks/2018/2018_S6_MiscTransport.pdf

¹⁶ https://public.tableau.com/profile/ohso4757#!vizhome/OHSODashboard_0/StatewideCrashesDashboard-Large



near these cities generate large amounts of freight traffic, such as the Family Dollar Distribution Center in Duncan which alone produces 1,000 truckloads per week and carries enough product for three stores. When large freight trucks travel through commercial and residential areas, they can create conflicts with rail cars and those traveling by car, bike, or foot, threatening safety, and disrupting network efficiency. It is of vital importance that rural residents and workers safely get to and from their destinations, and the Project will identify conflict areas such as these for potential future rerouting studies.

Assessing hotspots of vehicle, train, natural disaster, wildlife, and resident incidents will help in the identification of priority projects that can help decrease injury and loss of life and enhance quality of life for the Region. The Project will assess and identify potential safety improvement methods, such as those identified in Table 6 on the following page. These methods below align with already outlined technologies and strategies included in the ODOT Freight Plan and other federal disaster preparedness materials. This Project is also consistent with US DOT’s ROUTES initiative.

TABLE 6: POTENTIAL SAFETY IMPROVEMENT METHODS

Safety Need	Potential Method
Rural Roadway and Highway Upgrades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding rumble strips alerts drivers diverging from their lane and will help prevent or lessen the severity of crashes. • Adding shoulders, passing lanes, and clear zones to allow trucks and other vehicles to safely pull over, safely pass other vehicles, or minimize collision opportunities. • Adding wildlife detection devices in areas with high animal crossings warning vehicles of animals detected in roadways.
Natural Disaster Planning & Upgrades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add new technologies like real-time signs, systems that capture and report safety-related issues, and other technologies that ensure timely information to motorist and emergency personnel.
Hazardous Route Planning & Upgrades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned routes for the safe transport of hazardous materials. • Emergency coordination in case of emergency or spill.
Rail Crossing Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide visibility and enhanced signalization to reduce collisions with trains.
Network Redundancy & Multimodal Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a grid network, when possible, for motorists to access local emergency service. • Add acceleration/deceleration lanes in areas of higher population densities and major industries (i.e., Goodyear Tire & Rubber Plant, Family Dollar Distribution Center)

STATE OF GOOD REPAIR

Increased demand on the freight network will involve additional maintenance and operational improvements to ensure that freight continues to move safely and efficiently. The total inbound, outbound, and through movement within the state is forecasted to grow by 1.4 billion tons by 2040.¹⁷ Increased demand necessitates increased OS/OW loads and superloads (heavy cargo loads that typically weigh 180,000 pounds or more). Loads of this size create faster deterioration of pavement and bridges resulting in poor driving conditions.

The total inbound, outbound, and through, movement within the state is forecasted to **grow by 1.4 billion tons by 2040.**

This is exemplified by US 81 in Grady County, an identified bottleneck location in the Oklahoma Freight Transportation Plan which carries superloads. This highway is used to transport energy, agricultural, and other heavy goods leading to substantial deterioration of the roadway condition.¹⁸ In 2014, the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety issued over 253,000,000 OS/OW and superload permits, or roughly 693 per day¹⁹. The Project will use quantifiable data to identify corridors like US 81 and needed investments that can facilitate State of Good Repair. Oklahoma rail lines located within the Project area include BNSF, UP, and several Class III short-line rail lines. BNSF serves 966 route miles throughout Oklahoma. The Region hosts four short-line railroads that provide critical connections to businesses in various parts of the state which plays an essential role to the local economies. These railroads are critical to the transport of cotton, wheat, minerals, and hydrocarbon. Additionally, new or upgraded facilities have the potential to reduce bottlenecks in urban areas if rail infrastructure cannot support the increased demand. For example, rail bottlenecks in Jackson and Tillman Counties and south of Eldorado to Quanah, Texas are primarily due to bridges and tracks that are not able to support the weight requirements of the cotton industry. Several challenges to maintaining the short-line rail system's state of good repair include:²⁰



Farmrail System Inc. short-line railroad. Source: Farmrail System Inc

- **Track Upgrades:** Upgrade critical lines to accommodate higher capacity and heavier weight cars.
- **Unit Train Capacity:** Ensure lines can hold unit train capacity (minimum of 110 cars).
- **Corridor Preservation:** Program to help retain abandoned rail lines for future rail use.

The Project will further identify, quantify, and prioritize superloads and bottlenecks that impede freight movement by roadway and rail to increase the efficiency of the system and aid in preparation for freight growth. Resulting

¹⁷ Oklahoma Freight Transportation Plan (2018-2022), Chapter 2. https://www.ok.gov/odot/documents/OKFreightPlan2018_2022.pdf

¹⁸ Oklahoma Freight Transportation Plan (2018-2022), Chapter 5. https://www.ok.gov/odot/documents/OKFreightPlan2018_2022.pdf

¹⁹ <http://www.swpermitsok.com/Oklahoma%20Update%20Newsletter%20Volume%201%20Issue%201.pdf>

²⁰ Oklahoma Freight Transportation Plan (2018-2022), Chapter 2. https://www.ok.gov/odot/documents/OKFreightPlan2018_2022.pdf



upgrades will enable Oklahoma to maintain a competitive freight transportation economy, ensure compliance with industry standards.

ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

Help the United States compete in a global economy by facilitating efficient and reliable freight movement. The primary goal of the Project is to strategically direct local, state, and federal resources toward improved system performance for agricultural operations, industries, and facilities that attract, generate, and distribute significant amount of freight contributing to both local and national economies.

In total, *Oklahoma shipped \$5.4 billion worth of goods around the globe in 2017.*¹ Truck freight traffic in the State of Oklahoma is projected to *grow by 46 percent between 2015 and 2045.*¹

Oklahoma’s natural resources provide opportunities for energy and agricultural production, transportation, and distribution. As part of the United States’ national defense, energy, and food independence, Oklahoma and the Region need to continually optimize the opportunity to generate and export resources, including minerals, refined petroleum products, and agriculture. In portions of the Region’s freight network, up to 60,000,000 tons of freight is transported annually, as shown in Figure 7. Oklahoma supplies agricultural products throughout the U.S. and internationally. In total, Oklahoma shipped \$5.4 billion worth of goods around the globe in 2017.²¹ Truck freight traffic in the State of Oklahoma is projected to grow by 46 percent between 2015 and 2045.²²

The Project will provide the investment strategy critical to ensuring the freight network is in a state of good repair, preserving prior infrastructure investment

FIGURE 7: REGIONAL FREIGHT FLOWS

and facilitating new opportunities for goods movement, optimizing the region and state’s assets. Emerging markets include energy, transportation, and distribution, agricultural and biosciences, military, and information and finances.²³ Specific to the Region, the energy, transportation, and distribution, and agricultural and biosciences are most prevalent, though there is strong military presence including Altus Air Force Base and Fort Sill Fires Center of Excellence. These industries not only contribute to the United States’ energy and food independence, but also provide jobs to rural Americans in various Opportunity Zones certified by the Secretary of the US Treasury. Providing an investment



²¹ World’s Top Exports, Oklahoma’s Top 10 Exports. <http://www.worldstopexports.com/oklahomas-top-10-exports/>

²² ODOT Freight Plan HIS Markit Transearch

²³ <https://www.newsmax.com/FastFeatures/industries-in-oklahoma-economy/2015/04/13/id/638098/>



strategy for roadway improvements, technology enhancements, and safety improvements will improve efficiency, reduce delay, and minimize conflicts on the transportation network between commerce and residents.

The Project will also leverage the investments in developments such as the Altus Reservoir Project, which is currently in the planning phase and aims to encourage economic development along the Altus Reservoir Trail Loop.²⁴ Table 7 (next page) highlights potential methods to reduce congestion, deterioration, delay, crashes, and potential subsequent economic impact. The Project will assess the opportunities to incorporate these methods into projects included in the investment strategy.

TABLE 7: ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS METHODS AND BENEFITS

	Methods to Facilitate Financial Security & Quality of Life	Key Benefit to Economy
A	New shoulders, passing lanes, barriers, wrong-way signage, bridge heightening, and separated rail grade crossings.	Creates a safe transportation system for movement of goods large and small.
B	Pavement technologies that increase useful life and reduce maintenance costs.	Withstand heavy loads from agricultural materials and area conditions.
C	Include water treatment, soil treatment, and erosion control within projects.	Ensures the “Great Plains” natural resources are preserved, particularly areas that produce United States food supplies.
D	Protect and build upon ongoing investments in the energy sector corridors.	For national and economic security make the United States less vulnerable to price and supply fluctuations in the Middle East and elsewhere.
E	Upgrade the system to include conflict detection, signage and features for semi or autonomous vehicle systems that capture and report safety-related issues, cybersecurity, and ITS.	Has multiple benefits, including prevention of loss of life during extreme weather events, providing route information for freight vehicles to maximize drive-times, and provides emergency services real-time information for threats to national security.
F	Follow US DOT Everyday Counts that help to rapidly deploy and shorten project delivery.	Benefit as many users as quickly as possible, accelerated project delivery.
G	Improve access to facilities including a modernized grid.	Provide measurably increased safety and efficiency for rural workers to access industry.
H	Infrastructure that will facilitate easy connection of interstate travel between other states commerce, using technology and governmental coordination.	Using new technologies that are optimal for area conditions.

²⁴ <https://www.altusok.gov/198/Altus-Reservoir-Project>



ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Environmental sustainability is a priority for Southwest Oklahoma. Maintaining air quality standards, fertile agricultural areas, and improving stormwater drainage on freight networks will improve the quality of life for residents in the Region. Clean energy production and fueling will further improve air quality while bolstering the regional economy. The Project provides the following improvements to support a more sustainable environment.

CLEAN ENERGY

Oklahoma has maintained its leadership in the energy sector for many decades and will continue to do so in the future. As the demand for clean energy increases and coal and petroleum demand decrease, Oklahoma is poised to adjust its energy production methods to meet the demand. In the Region, wind energy and natural gas production offer more environmentally viable options over fossil fuels and enhance air quality and quality of life.

WIND ENERGY

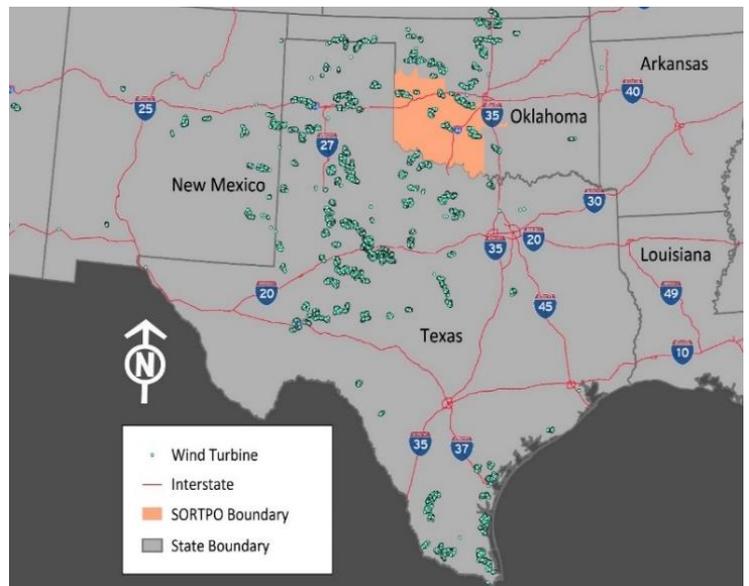
Oklahoma produces a significant amount of wind energy. The state has 9,048 Mega Watts (MW) of installed wind capacity and 1,017 MW under construction. In Oklahoma, this industry employees around 9,000 wind energy jobs.²⁵ In 2018, Oklahoma ranked second in the nation for installed wind power capacity and the Region’s wind energy industry is growing.²⁶ As shown in Figure 8, The Region has over 1,197 wind turbines at 19 different projects already in operation.²⁷ Bolstering the functions of this industry will lead to greater industry capacity and increased environmental sustainability.

By upgrading freight network facilities, OS/OW vehicles carrying wind energy equipment and machinery may travel through the network more efficiently making this industry even more attractive to potential investors and contributing to improved environmental sustainability. This will not only improve industry operations in the Region but will facilitate the movement of wind energy equipment to and from surrounding states and other Oklahoma regions.

ALTERNATE FUEL CORRIDORS ²⁸

As part of the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act, FHWA designated specific US highway corridors for electric vehicle (EV) charging, hydrogen, propane, and compressed natural gas (CNG) fueling. In 2016, I-35, I-40,

FIGURE 8: SORTPO WIND TURBINE LOCATIONS



²⁵ America Wind Energy Association, 2017, Wind Facts at a Glance. <https://www.awea.org/wind-101/basics-of-wind-energy/>

²⁶ Oklahoma Freight Transportation Plan (2018-2022), Chapter 4. https://www.ok.gov/odot/documents/OKFreightPlan2018_2022.pdf

²⁷ U.S. Wind Turbine Database. <https://eerscmap.usgs.gov/uswtodb/viewer/#7.29/34.901/-97.433>

²⁸ U.S. DOT Alternative Fuel Corridors. https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/alternative_fuel_corridors/



and I-44 corridors were designated as alternate fuel corridors for EV charging and CNG fueling. In the summer of 2021, the following highway segments were designated as alternative fuel corridors:

- **US 81** between the US 81/I-44 interchange in Chickasha, Oklahoma north to Enid, Oklahoma, (Corridor Ready)
- **I-40:** Between the TX/OK border and Erick, Oklahoma; (Corridor Ready)
- **US 62** between the US-62/I-44 interchange in Lawton, Oklahoma, and the OK/TX border,
- **US 81** between the OK/TX border and the OK/KS border²⁹.

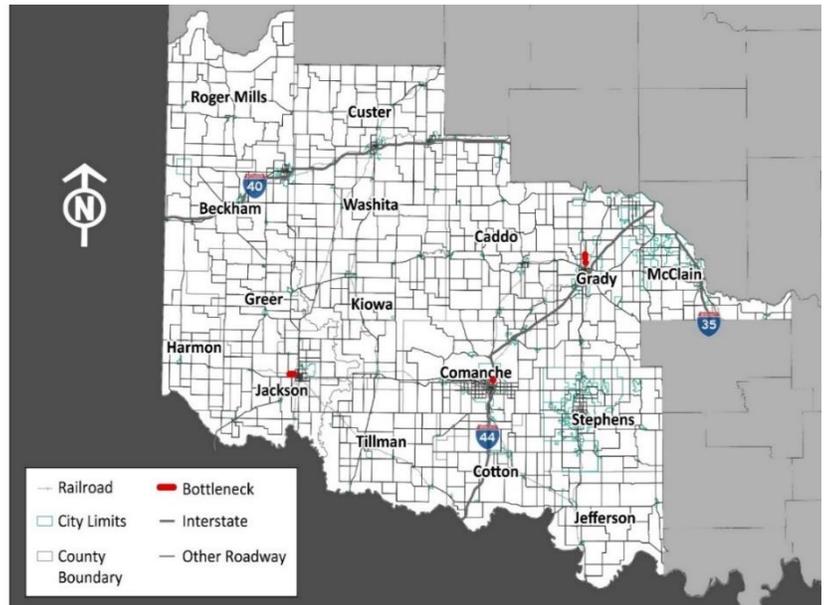
REDUCED STORMWATER IMPACTS

With any new improvements to the regional freight network, including new roadways, roadway widening, or the addition of passing lanes, design considerations for stormwater will be made to help reduce runoff and filter sediment. This is especially important given the relatively high amounts of stormwater runoff that agricultural lands produce when compared with forested lands³⁰ Southwest Oklahoma’s flat terrain and numerous rivers and creeks make it especially prone to flooding, causing disruptions to the regional freight network. The Project will plan for improvements that will follow the ODOT Roadway Drainage Manual,³¹ the standard for designing and planning roadway drainage systems for the State of Oklahoma. As a part of this, best management practices for stormwater improvements will be used and include improvements such as detention ponds, catch basins, and rain gardens, among others. These improvements will help prevent issues such as flooding that can slow or halt traffic, overtax the stormwater drainage systems, degrade water quality, and cause stormwater-related damage to adjacent properties.

REDUCED CONGESTION-RELATED EMISSIONS

Bottlenecks and other disruptions to the freight network increase idling times creating unnecessary emissions. Federally mandated air quality standards must be upheld, and systematic reductions of vehicle emissions is critical. Within the Region, three roadway bottleneck locations have been identified shown in Figure 9, one along US-277 at the I-44 on-ramp in Chickasha, one along US-62 at the I-44 on ramp in Lawton, and one in Altus on Market St. A vital component of the Project is to reduce bottlenecks in the regional freight network by identifying opportunities to increase freight network efficiencies. This effort would expand

SORTPO FIGURE 9: BOTTLENECK LOCATIONS



²⁹ Corridor-Ready and Pending Alternative Fuel Corridors. https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/alternative_fuel_corridors/2020_refresh/ https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/alternative_fuel_corridors/pending/

³⁰ Stormwater Management: Best Management Practices (BMPs). https://www.michigan.gov/documents/deq/ess-nps-savvy-bmp_209386_7.pdf

³¹ ODOT Roadway Drainage Manual. <https://www.ok.gov/odot/documents/Chapter%2010%20Stormwater%20Drainage.pdf>



upon current truck route planning and feasibility studies, such as the Lawton Metropolitan Planning Organization’s Feasibility of a Freight Route for the Lawton West Side Industrial Park³², aimed at rerouting truck traffic to circumvent residential areas and reduce bottlenecks. Creating bypasses to these and other congested urban areas within the Region and improving freight network efficiency would reduce time spent in traffic, thereby reducing adverse environmental impacts by improving air quality.

QUALITY OF LIFE

The Region is part of a tri-state area known as the “Southern Great Plains” comprising Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. This area accounts for a quarter of all US energy production,³³ and thus significantly contributes to America’s high standard of living. The economy of the United States depends on freight connections to this area for the movement of goods and commodities that contribute to a high quality of life for Americans. A fundamental component of a high quality of life is access to jobs. As investment in the production and transportation industries increases in the Region, so will employment opportunities for its rural residents. In 2019, freight, logistics, transportation, and material moving, and production-related occupations accounted for roughly 12% of the Region’s occupations.³⁴ As these employment numbers continue to grow, so will the need for reliable transportation to and from these locations, including access to higher education and vocational training facilities. Increasing the efficiency of the system will provide greater reliability in freight movement and significant regional and national improvements in economic strength, increasing the economic productivity of land, capital, or labor. The Project will:



Students at a regional technology center train to become certified aircraft mechanics. Source: Altus.af.mil

- aim to identify investment strategies that improve the access to jobs of rural residents
- will examine the impact of proposed freight projects, and
- will increase access to goods and job opportunities to underserved communities.

Increasing jobs, regional economic competitiveness, freight routes and technology increase quality of life and employment opportunities and development in rural southwest Oklahoma. Investment in the planning process will impact development in the region. The Project will adhere to SORTPO’s adopted Public Participation Plan that provides opportunities for the public, traditionally underserved and stakeholders to actively participate in all aspects of this project. The Project will also aim to identify technologies and strategies that improve the freight network while simultaneously expanding access to broadband internet for rural residents. By expanding broadband service along interstates and highways as well as preparing for future expansion, the Region’s potential to implement innovative technologies increases. Innovative technologies can enhance safety, efficiency, and quality of life and help ensure economic competitiveness. Wireless broadband can be used to integrate and expand police,

³² Feasibility of a Freight Route for the Lawton West Side Industrial Park, Lawton Metropolitan Planning Organization, 2015

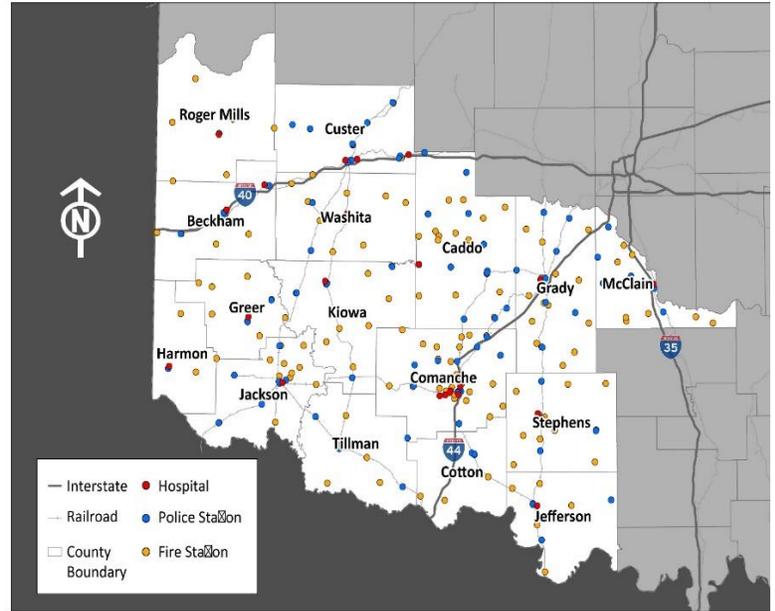
³³ U.S. Energy Information Administration, Electricity Data Browser. <https://www.eia.gov/electricity/data/browser/>

³⁴ https://www.ok.gov/oesc/Labor_Market/Occupational_Employment_Statistics/



fire, and health services. Broadband internet can also enable the nearby communities to attract and retain job-creating businesses and improve the productivity of home-based businesses by competing in regional and global markets. The Coronavirus pandemic further exposed the need for broadband in rural communities as schools and resources shut down, leaving many areas unable to virtually access necessary resources³⁵. Furthermore, roadway improvements that benefit freight movement will also improve residential access to emergency services. This improved roadway network, in conjunction with expanded broadband availability, will help improve access to medical care through transportation to in-office visits and telemedicine capabilities. Figure 10 details the locations of these facilities in the Project area and potential distances emergency personnel are required to travel to reach those within the Region.

FIGURE 10: SORTPO EMERGENCY SERVICES LOCATIONS



INNOVATION

As mentioned above, the Region, like many other rural areas throughout the country, lacks the essential broadband and cellular service needed to conduct the every-day activities of a modern world. In addition to expanding broadband service, the Region will identify new technological innovations into the investment strategy as they arise that are aimed at improving transportation and quality of life. To help with this effort, innovative financing techniques would expand access to capital funds for transportation improvement projects. The following innovation methods will be incorporated into the Project and successful delivery is highlighted below.

BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT

Ensuring reliable high-speed service for the area will encourage economic competitiveness and growth and improve quality of life for those living and working in the Region. Furthermore, strategic installation of broadband and cellular infrastructure will allow implementation of innovative transportation technologies throughout the Region, such as connected and autonomous vehicle (CAV) and truck platoon deployment, Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), wildlife detection signals, and vehicle-to-infrastructure communications. To date, fiber optic cable has been installed along I-44, from Duncan to Altus, and from Altus to Clinton, but more is needed. The Project will identify gaps in broadband service in the Region and how to effectively plan and promote for the delivery of reliable and connected service. ODOT has identified that, at a minimum, the Region’s NHFN interstate corridors should be equipped with continuous high-speed service, and additional highway and roadway corridors will be identified.

³⁵ <https://journalistsresource.org/studies/society/internet/rural-broadband-coronavirus/>



REDUCING RURAL ROADWAY DEPARTURES

Reducing fatalities on rural roadways is a priority for the region. Providing countermeasures, such as shoulders, centerline rumble strips, friction treatments, and roadway reflectors, helps keep vehicles in their lanes, preventing or reducing the severity of crashes on rural roads. Wildlife detection signals can also prevent roadway departures and crashes by warning oncoming drivers if wildlife is detected on roadways. The Project will identify crash hotspots, problem areas, and areas with frequent wildlife crossings for application of these and other corrective measures, thereby improving safety along roadways in Southwest Oklahoma.

OKLAHOMA INTELLIGENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

The Oklahoma Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Program³⁶ uses ODOT's 2,600 linear miles of fiber optic cable to improve transportation throughout the state. Through expanded broadband internet deployment, the Region can increase its participation in this program to improve transportation efficiency and safety. This program specifically benefits the movement of freight by offering the following initiatives:

- Bluetooth sensors to provide commercial motor vehicle origin and destination data,
- Road weather information system,
- Dynamic message signs, and
- Vehicle-to-infrastructure communications



Example of Dynamic message sign

While fiber optic cable already exists along a few of the Region's corridors, more is needed. This would allow technologies such as probe data to monitor speed and provide real-time traffic information. Cameras and weather sensors could provide notification of weather and road conditions. Furthermore, signal cabinets and transmission infrastructure should provide more space than needed to allow for expansion in the future. The Project will identify locations where the ITS Program can be incorporated.

VIRTUAL PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

As outlined in FHWA's Everyday Counts-5 Innovations, Virtual Public Involvement (VPI) is used to obtain a broader reach during the public engagement process. The Region's vastness and rural nature can create challenges to attending public meetings and utilization of virtual meetings in some situations would help the public provide valuable input to freight issues and concerns. The deployment of high-speed fiber-optic cable along freight corridors will facilitate the application of VPI as part of future public involvement efforts throughout the Region. The Project will identify places where VPI can be incorporated.

PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

As identified by FHWA's Center for Innovative Finance, utilizing Public-Private Partnerships (P3s) will help deliver roadway projects by providing private capital for transportation improvement. P3s would allow creativity and efficiency to help attract freight industries to the Region. The Project will identify P3 funding opportunities along the regional freight network to help enable regional economic growth by providing capital and accelerated project

³⁶ <https://www.odot.org/hqdiv/p-r-div/itscvo/pdfs/statestrategic04.pdf>



delivery. This includes opportunities for P3 tolling leases that provide upfront capital and monthly revenues to help fund transportation improvement projects. In 2017, Oklahoma passed a senate bill to outline the structure of P3 infrastructure project assessment³⁷. The State’s Oklahoma Turnpike Authority currently maintains tolling along I-44 in Grady, Comanche, and Cotton Counties³⁸, and utilizing P3 tolling in addition to State tolling would provide access to much-needed private capital. The Project will evaluate the potential to leverage additional public and private partnerships such as these throughout the Region.

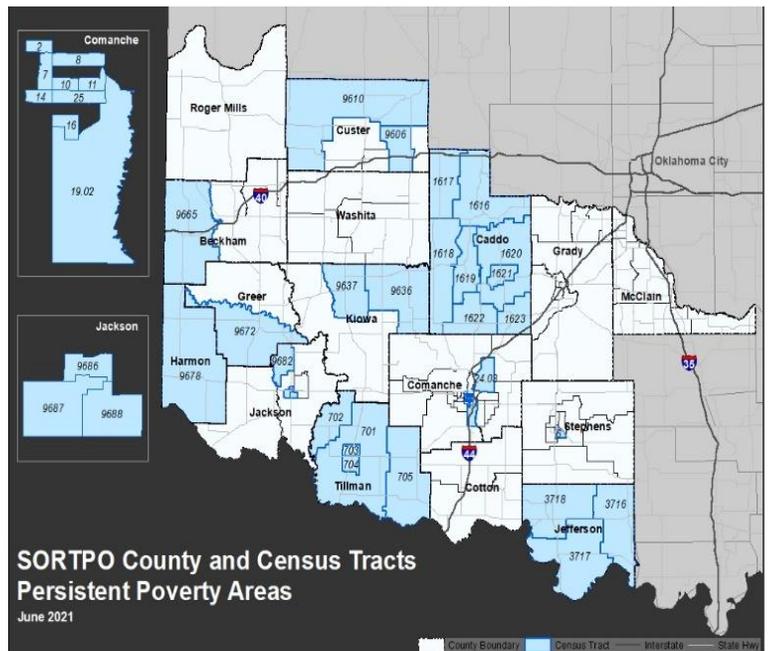
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The SORTPO Policy Board on June 28, 2018, adopted the SORTPO Limited English Proficiency Plan (LEP) and Public Participation Plan (PPP); which provides the public and interested parties with opportunities to be involved in the regional transportation planning process. Procedures encouraging participation by traditionally underserved individuals, including elderly, low income and minority individuals, persons with disabilities, and persons with LEP are followed by SORTPO staff.

Pursuant to Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to address Environmental Justice (EJ) in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, dated February 11, 1994, and the subsequent U.S. Department of Transportation Order 5680.3, issued April 15, 1997, SORTPO’s procedures for public engagement promotes EJ in all aspects of the Regional Transportation Planning Organization process. SORTPO does not discriminate based on race, color, religion, gender, gender expression, age, national origin, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations. SORTPO is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for the public, staff, clients, volunteers, subcontractors, and vendors.

Specific to the RAISE grant is the identification of Persistent Poverty Areas and impact of the project in these areas. Figure 11 was developed utilizing information obtained from <https://datahub.transportation.gov/> and illustrates the Region’s Persistent Poverty Areas. Data from this table identifies 3 counties (Caddo, Harmon, and Tillman) and 24 Census Tracts. *(NOTE: The data obtained does not identify Jefferson County as an area that meets the County definition; however, the 3 census tracts in this county are listed as meeting the census tract definition).* Development of the Southwest Oklahoma Regional Freight Plan will also include identification of racial impact,

FIGURE 11: SORTPO COUNTY AND CENSUS TRACTS PERSISTENT POVERTY AREAS



³⁷ <https://www.levelset.com/blog/new-legislation-for-oklahoma-p3-projects-and-infrastructure/>

³⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turnpikes_of_Oklahoma



recommendations of equity focused policies, new or improved freight access to underserved communities, increase access to goods and employment opportunities.

PARTNERSHIP

SWODA, ASCOG, ODOT, and other partners are committed to improving conditions and safety on Oklahoma’s transportation network. Working under the SWODA umbrella, SORTPO will administer the Project through SWODA’s funding administration and oversight. ODOT’s Field Districts 3, 5, and 7 are responsible for project identification and implementation receiving input from SORTPO, stakeholder/public participation events, regional partners, counties, and municipalities.

The Project will guide freight investments to support the Region’s freight and economic visions and goals for safety, efficiency, equity, community development, and sustainability. The final plan recommendations are intended to be incorporated into partner agencies’ specific long-range freight development plans to promote regional efficiency and consistency. This effort will be led by SORTPO staff with direct oversight by the SORTPO Policy Board.



SORTPO stakeholder engagement as part of the Countywide Long-Range Transportation Plans. Source: SWODA

Regional partners and stakeholders through surveys and meetings identified a higher preference for projects that improve safety, freight movement, and support economic development. Since 2015, 16 countywide long-range transportation plans have been adopted by the SORTPO Policy Board whose members, along with those of the SORTPO Transportation Technical Committee, include representation from the private sector. Strategies identified in each of the county transportation plans include:

- The need to conduct a freight assessment and study for the Region,
- Prioritization of transportation projects that serve major employment and activity centers, rail facilities and freight corridors, and
- Identification and designation of routes and connections as freight priority corridors.

SORTPO works closely with many regional organizations and local municipalities, businesses, and freight stakeholders. Various entities in the Region have shown their support for the project by providing letters of support. Some of these partners include:

- Lieutenant Governor Matt Pinnell, State of Oklahoma
- House of Representatives, Southwest Oklahoma Delegation:
 - Representative Marcus McEntire, District 50
 - Representative Brad Boles, District 51
 - Representative Gerrid Kendrix, District 52
 - Representative Todd Russ, District 55
 - Representative Dick Lowe, District 56
 - Representative Anthony Moore, District 57
 - Representative Daniel Pae, District 62
 - Representative Trey Caldwell, District 63



- Representative Rande Worthen, District 64
- Representative Toni Hasenbeck, District 65
- Senate Districts, Southwest Oklahoma Delegation:
 - Senator Lonnie Paxton, Senate District 23
 - Senator Chris Kidd, Senate District 31
 - Senator Jessica Garvin, Senate District 43
- Lyle Roggow, President, Duncan Area Economic Development Foundation
- Roland Mower, Director Clinton Economic Development Authority
- Laura McNichol, Senior Vice President, Government & Industry Relations, WATCO Companies
- Clark Southard, CATERO
- Oklahoma Southwest Alliance
- Brent Kisling, Oklahoma Department of Commerce
- Rodger Kerr, President, Altus Chamber of Commerce
- Lyle Roggow, President, Duncan Area Economic Development Foundation
- Richard Rogalski, Lawton Metropolitan Planning Organization

All letters of support can be found in the *Letters of Support* section on the project website³⁹.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Because this is a planning project, and no construction or project delivery-related risks directly apply, risk assessment is not required for funding eligibility. However, SORTPO, SWODA, ASCOG, and ODOT are committed to delivering this project and tangible results associated with the Project. As a part of this commitment, ODOT's District, 5 and 7 engineers are voting members of the SORTPO Transportation Policy Board and have provided a joint letter in support of the Project. The District Engineers are active in this program to help ODOT identify safety issues and make informed decisions on project prioritization for the Region. Additionally, through the federal fiscal year Planning Work Program, SPR and local funds are committed to the regional transportation planning process; which includes project management and oversight of the consultant hired to develop the Project by existing staff; allowing the work to begin immediately on this project ensuring that the Project will be prioritized.

OVERVIEW OF PROJECT BENEFITS

The Project will identify critical freight and transportation needs within the Region. The SORTPO Region is committed to an investment strategy that can accommodate the pursuit of national goods and commodity independence, while ensuring residents have safe mobility options. Increases in freight efficiencies would identify and produce quantifiable regional economic benefits and reduce adverse impacts to the environment. Improving at-grade crossings and upgrading lane widths and pavement conditions would dramatically increase transportation safety. Updating current systems by providing improvements such as new and widened shoulders would help address issues with oversize/overweight loads.

³⁹ Letters of Support. <http://sortpo.org/freight/>



Through broad public involvement, stakeholder engagement, data analysis, and project prioritization, the Project will create a holistic and project-specific approach that addresses the issues important to the Region. Identifying these types of accelerated projects will help Oklahoma ensure transportation dollars are maximized with future projects. Creating cohesive freight vision for the Region will enable system efficiency and the realization of goals for freight movement within the Region.