

Gulf Coast Strategic Highway System

Part of Trans Texas Corridor System

Initial Version

2004 Version

Four-Lane Divided Highway

PRESENTED BY THE
Gulf Coast Strategic Highway Coalition

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**Testimony by Judge John P. Thompson before the
Senate Committee on Infrastructure Development and Security
May 4, 2004**

The Gulf Coast Strategic Highway System has been conceived to meet the transportation needs of this region's military facilities in deploying combat equipment through Texas' Strategic Military Ports.

Participants in the Gulf Coast Strategic Highway Coalition believe this system can also provide substantial relief of East-West long-haul freight congestion and provide economic development opportunities in portions of Texas and Louisiana that have not kept up with the economic growth which has occurred elsewhere – and do it in an environmentally acceptable way.

We have for many years relied on our Interstate Highway System for both deployment of military convoys and movement of commercial freight. It has served us well but is reaching design capacity and in some cases exceeding capacity.

We have three major military facilities that require deployment through the ports at Corpus Christi and Beaumont. And we believe the system shown here can best accomplish that deployment.

North-South Corridor Is TxDOT and Gulf Coast Coalition's First Priority

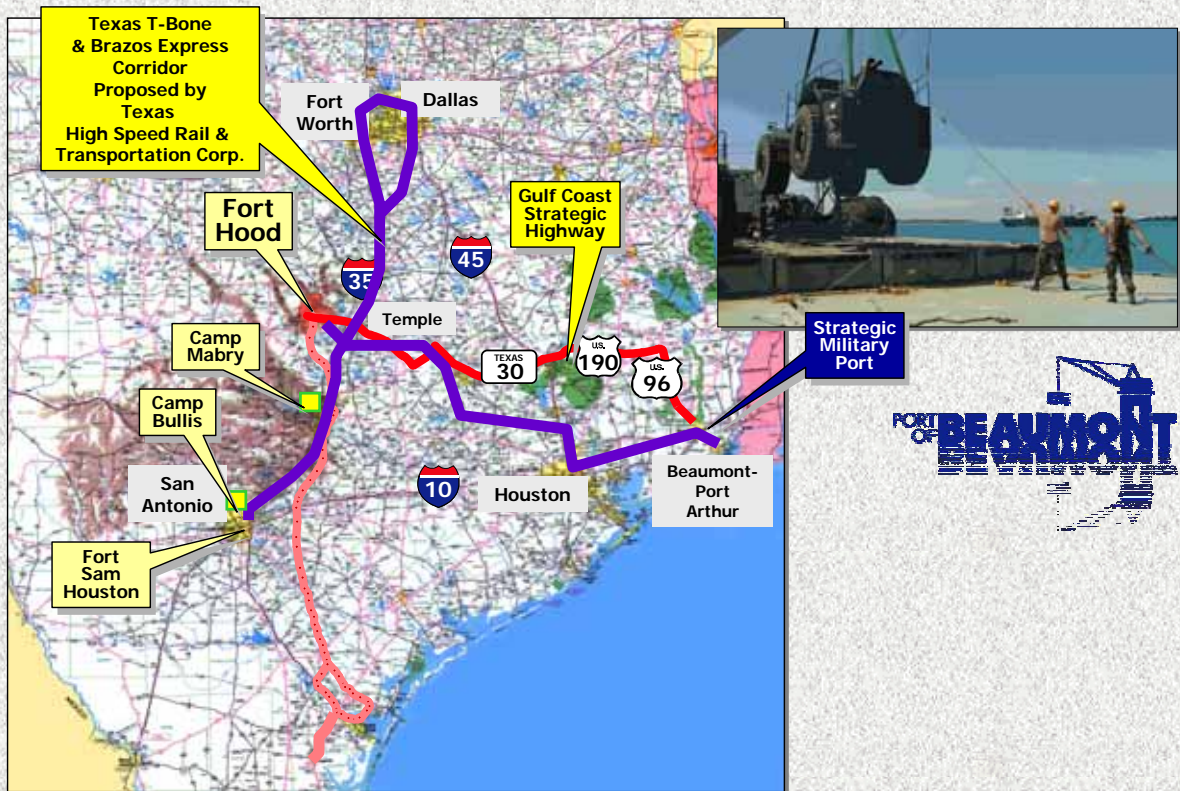


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No corridor is constructed all at once. We would submit that the first priority is to provide relief to Interstate 35 congestion on a parallel North-South route which would tie State Highway 195 to State Highway 130 and an improved U.S. 181 Trans Texas corridor, and link Fort Hood to the Strategic Port of Corpus Christi.

Destination: Ports of Beaumont & Houston



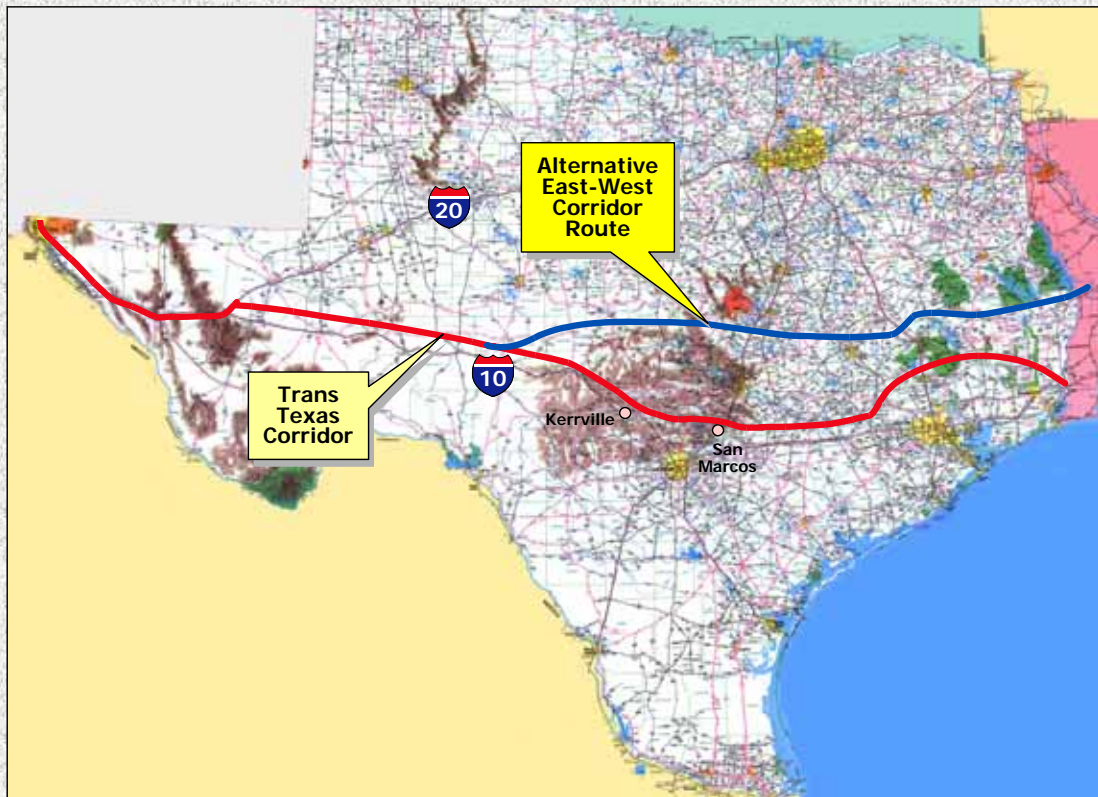
The Port of Beaumont has been the traditional port of deployment for Fort Hood and remains an important element for its deployment.

A Trans Texas east-west corridor parallel to a four-lane U.S. 190 and Texas 30 from Killeen to Jasper, linking to U.S. 96, will provide an excellent deployment route to the Port of Beaumont.

The Legislature has asked TxDOT to look at military deployment routes. A U.S. 190-Texas 30 route can be part of the solution as well as a part of the proposed Trans Texas Corridor system.

The Port of Houston is requesting strategic military port designation. If that occurs and the 612-mile Texas T-Bone and Brazos Express Corridor is built as a high-speed rail corridor, it could provide an excellent rail link for deployment to both the ports of Beaumont and Houston.

Need for East-West Corridor Established



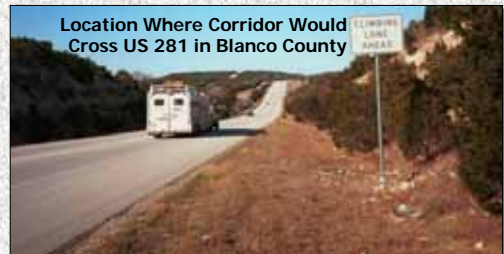
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The Trans Texas Corridor Plan recognizes the need for a new East-West corridor across Texas. The route, however, passes through the Hill Country and reintroduces thru traffic on to Interstate 10 at the Louisiana border.

We believe that a straight route running parallel to U.S. 190 from Sonora then north of the Hill Country and south of Fort Hood to East Texas would provide an easier, less costly alternative.

Hill Country Adds to Construction Costs



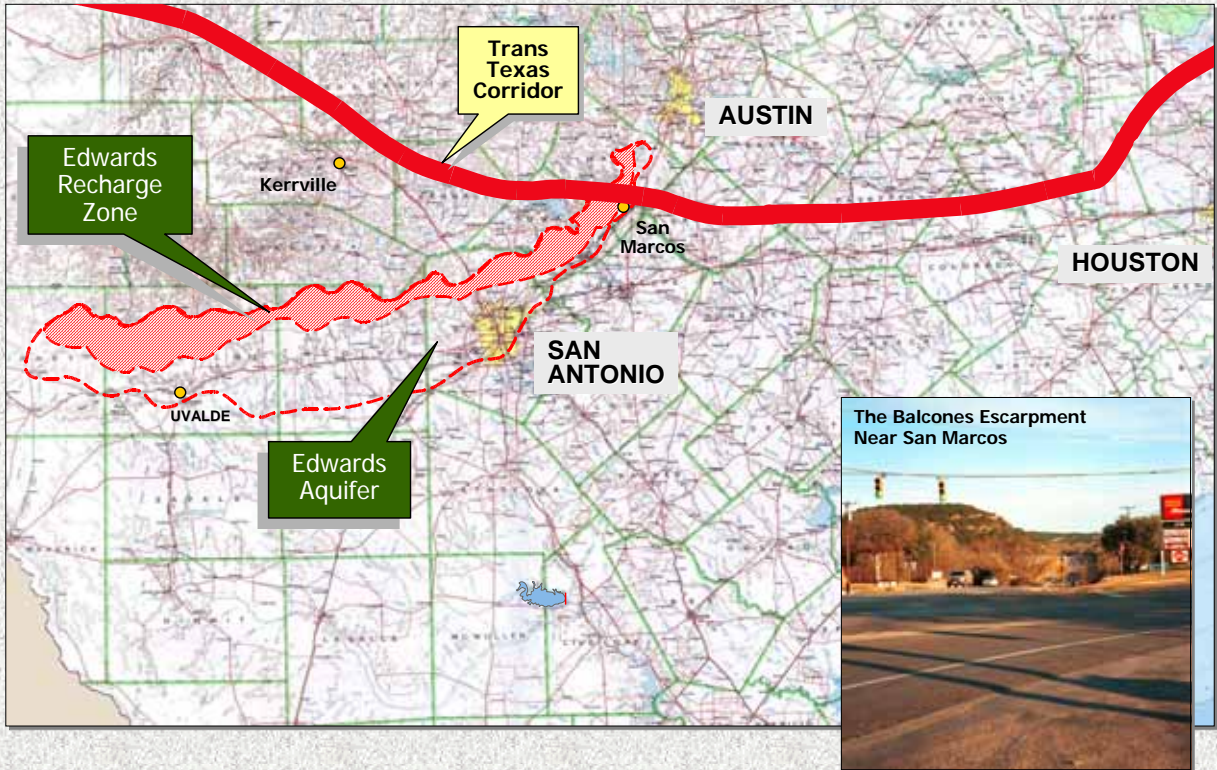
This series of photographs taken in the Hill Country is self explanatory.

Hill Country Right-of-Way Cost



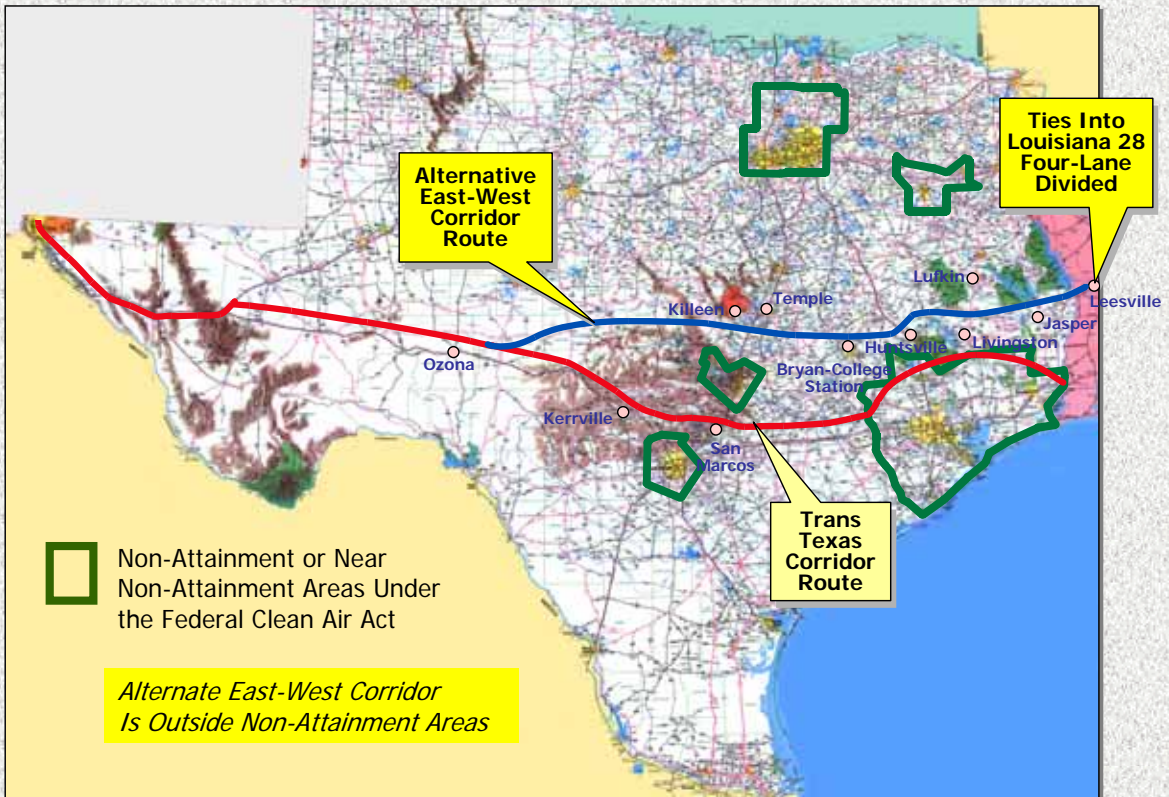
This is a development of 2,000 acres north of State Highway 306 consisting of 1,000 homesites with an average lot price of \$40,000. It is almost directly in the path of the conceptual route running through Comal County west of San Marcos.

Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone



Environmental considerations in the Hill Country can be expected to be major hurdles for a new major transportation corridor.

An Easier, Less Costly Alternative



The Gulf Coast Strategic Highway Coalition believes that a route to the north of the Hill Country paralleling U.S. 190 as shown here in blue would be an easier, less costly alternative and would be outside all non-attainment or near non-attainment areas in the state.

An Easier, Less Costly Alternative

U.S. 190 in Menard County



U.S. 190 in San Saba County



U.S. 190 in Lampasas County



U.S. 190 in McCulloch County

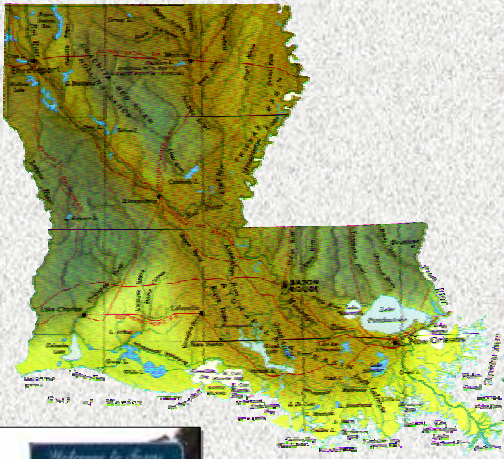


U.S. 190 in Bell County



The terrain along this route would lower construction costs, lower right of way cost, lower the impact on existing residential and visitor related activities as well as minimize environmental opposition.

Need to Partner With Louisiana



- ◆ The Trans Texas Corridor Plan routing deals with Houston Area air issue but funnels all traffic back to I-10 at Sabine River
- ◆ I-10 takes traffic through Baton Rouge which is also a non-attainment area
- ◆ I-10 in Louisiana crosses sensitive wetlands and waterways
- ◆ Capacity of I-10 through bayou country and Atchafalaya Basin cannot be expanded



The current east-west Trans Texas Corridor route brings traffic flow back to Interstate 10 at the Texas-Louisiana border.

We believe that TxDOT should partner with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) to develop a new East-West route that crosses the central portion of both states, avoiding the major metropolitan areas and Clean Air Act non-attainment regions.

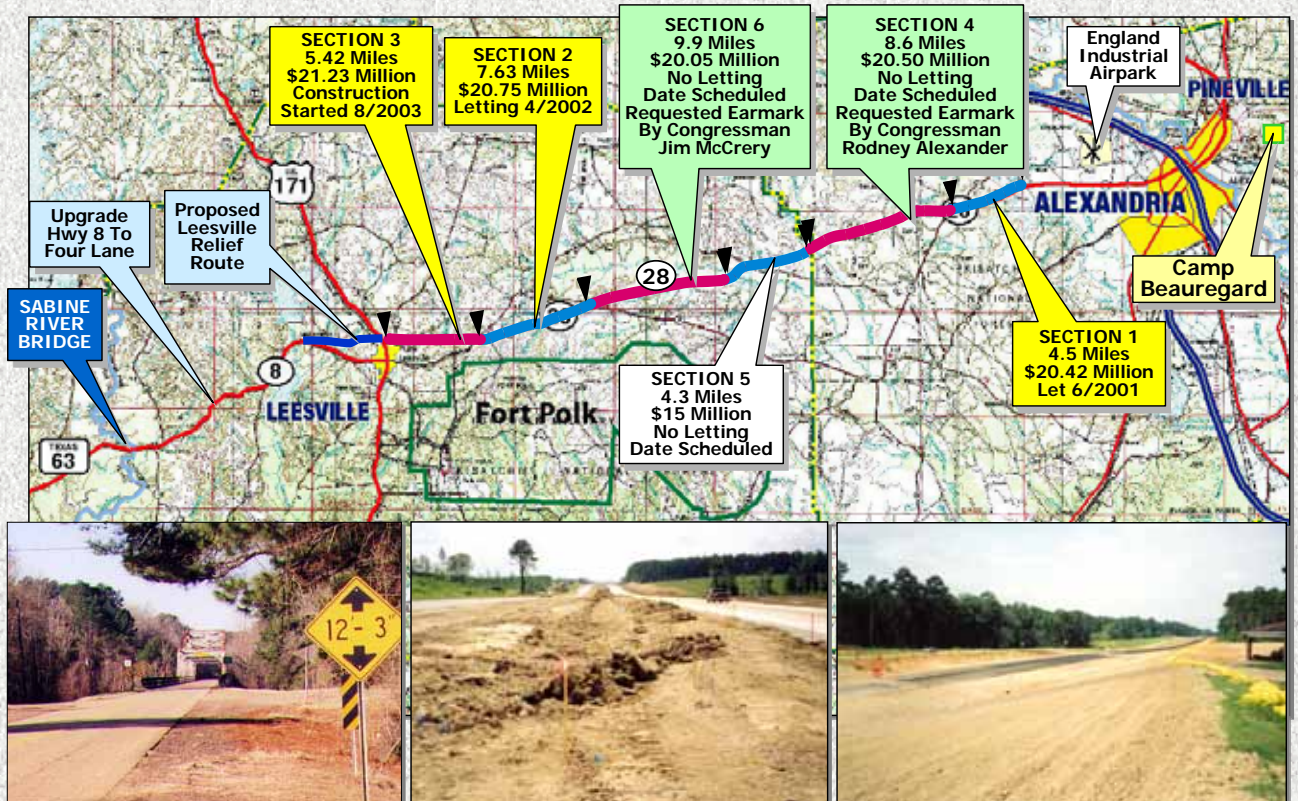
The Louisiana DOTD does not believe it is feasible to add lanes to the I-10 route through Louisiana.

Interstate 10 In Louisiana



The 20 mile passage through the Atchafalaya Basin was a major engineering feat at the time of its construction. Environmental issues would prevent its expansion today.

Improvements to Highways 8 and 28



LA 28 improvements to 4 lane from Leesville to Alexandria are in the state plan. Section 1 was let for construction in June 2001 and Sections 2 and 3 have been subsequently let.

LA 8 improvement to four lanes from Leesville to the Sabine River have been included in the state plan. Replacement of the outdated bridge over the Sabine River is to be let in 2007. This system, when complete, will have the same capacity as I-10 in Louisiana.

TxDOT Developing Priorities For Trans-Texas Corridor



Doug Woodall, director of TxDOT Turnpike Planning and Development, makes presentation

- ◆ Trans Texas Corridor concept was announced in January 2002
- ◆ Gulf Coast Coalition and Alliance for I-69 Texas passed resolutions and endorsed the Trans Texas concept at the TxDOT Commission meeting on Feb. 19, 2002
- ◆ Coalition and Alliance supported legislation in 2003 to implement the Trans Texas concept
- ◆ Major portions of both routes included in TxDOT's four priority corridors

By building the north-south Trans Texas Corridor relieving I-35, an ideal deployment route will be provided from Fort Hood and Fort Bliss to the Port of Corpus Christi. By moving the east-west Trans Texas Corridor north of the Texas Hill Country and tying it to a 4-lane highway under construction to Louisiana, an ideal deployment route will be provided to the Port of Beaumont for both Fort Hood and Fort Polk.

Gulf Coast Strategic Highway System



- ◆ Connects U.S. Army to Strategic Military Ports and supports joint training concepts
- ◆ Provides relief routes for Interstate traffic at points outside of air quality non-attainment areas
- ◆ Provides opportunities for economic development and growth for areas outside of non-attainment areas

In summary, the Gulf Coast Strategic Highway System connects Army facilities in these states to two strategic Texas ports.

It provides relief routes for Interstate traffic on I-10 and I-20 at points outside of air quality non-attainment areas, and

It provides opportunities for economic development and growth for areas outside of nonattainment areas and areas not enjoying the economic boom of the last decade.

GULF COAST STRATEGIC HIGHWAY COALITION

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