

Freight Connecting the Nation: Rail and Air

The Dallas-Fort Worth region is home to one of the most dynamic and interconnected freight networks in the nation. While trucks remain the most visible part of that system - carrying roughly 77% of all goods shipped into North Texas - the movement of freight relies on much more than just highways.

Rail, intermodal facilities, air cargo operations, pipelines and trucking all play vital roles in ensuring groceries reach store shelves, fuel arrives at service stations and consumer products are delivered efficiently across the region.

Rail is a major contributor to this transportation ecosystem, with three Class I railroads - Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, Canadian Pacific Kansas City and Union Pacific - providing the North Texas area with direct connections to ports on both U.S. coasts as well as to Canada and Mexico.

The region's extensive intermodal hubs further strengthen these connections by enabling seamless transfers between rail and truck, helping divert long-haul freight from highways and reducing congestion.

To support this growing and increasingly complex freight environment, NCTCOG leads **Freight North Texas**, an ongoing planning initiative designed to enhance safety, mobility, efficiency and air quality. As one of the fastest-growing metropolitan areas in the country, Dallas-Fort Worth depends on reliable freight operations to keep pace with population and economic expansion.

Technology continues to guide and transform the freight industry, especially as online shopping and demand for rapid delivery expand. Intelligent traffic signal optimization - one of the program's central tools - helps reduce unnecessary stops, decrease idling and cut emissions, all while ensuring goods reach their destinations more quickly. These efforts improve daily operations and reinforce the region's leadership in fostering a forward-thinking, resilient and efficient freight network.

While ground-based freight forms the backbone of regional logistics, air cargo adds a powerful layer of speed and reach that strengthens North Texas' economic competitiveness. **Dallas Fort Worth International Airport** consistently ranks among the top cargo airports in the nation, serving as a gateway for high-value goods such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, medical devices and other time-sensitive products. In 2024 alone, approximately **818,000 tons of cargo** passed through DFW Airport, underscoring its importance as both a regional and international logistics powerhouse.

Complementing DFW's global reach is **Perot Field Fort Worth Alliance Airport**, recognized as the world's first industrial airport and a leader in freight-focused operations. Alliance is purpose-built for logistics, with seamless connections to air cargo, rail and highway infrastructure. In 2024, the airport handled roughly **314,000 tons of cargo**, reflecting its essential role in supporting North Texas' rapidly expanding distribution and manufacturing sectors.