

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

The Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) is charged with planning, constructing, and maintaining Oklahoma’s surface transportation infrastructure, including the interstate system, the U.S. highway system, and the Oklahoma highway system. ODOT also manages state-owned freight railroads and administers other multimodal programs, including passenger rail, rural public transit, and the waterways program.

Oklahoma is located in the south-central plains of the United States and is characterized by a diverse and growing demographic and economic base. Major industries in Oklahoma include oil and gas, agriculture, aerospace, and manufacturing. The state’s population in 2019 was 3.96 million and is projected to grow 20 percent by 2045. The population growth is expected to be strong in Oklahoma City and Tulsa, the state’s two large metropolitan areas. Low-to-moderate growth is forecast in the remainder of the state.<sup>1</sup> Employment in the state is forecast to grow 4.13 percent between 2018 and 2028.<sup>2</sup> Freight, measured in ton-miles of travel, in Oklahoma is expected to fall in line with U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) projections and grow at a rate of slightly over 1 percent per year.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2 PURPOSE

ODOT is developing this Oklahoma Freight Transportation Plan (OFTP or Plan) in order to provide a safe, reliable, and productive freight transportation system that will support the growing economy and population in the state. It will accomplish the following outcomes:

- Increase attention and focus on freight needs and opportunities.
- Improve coordination of freight planning across multiple modes.
- Provide guidance for other state and regional/metropolitan freight planning efforts.
- Obtain input from the public and private stakeholders regarding state freight planning.

This OFTP was developed to be consistent with the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). The FAST Act established a new funding category dedicated to freight—the National Highway Freight Program (NHFP)—and required that states identify the use of NHFP funds within a state freight plan, which includes certain specified elements. The IIJA calls for additional elements and updates every four years.

<sup>1</sup> Woods and Poole data from Oklahoma Long Range Transportation Plan: 2020-2045.

<sup>2</sup> <https://oklahoma.gov/oesc/labor-market/employment-projections.html>

<sup>3</sup> Freight Analysis Framework (version 5.3) shows ton-miles growing at 1.11 percent per year for freight originating or terminating in Oklahoma and 1.22 percent nationwide through 2050.

A statewide freight plan is required to address the following components, which are summarized from the FAST Act and IIJA:

- Freight trends, needs, and issues
- Supply-chain cargo flows by mode
- Commercial ports inventory
- E-commerce impacts on freight infrastructure
- Considerations of military freight
- Truck parking assessment
- Freight policies, strategies, and performance measures to guide investment
- When applicable, a list of critical rural and urban highway corridors; critical multimodal rural facilities and corridors
- Ability to meet national freight goals and enhanced reliability and resiliency of freight transport
- Intelligent transportation systems (ITS) and other technologies and strategies to improve freight safety and efficiency
- Improvements that reduce deterioration on heavy-vehicle routes
- Goals and strategies to decrease environmental impacts of freight
- Findings/recommendations from any multi-state compact
- Inventory of, and strategies for, facilities with freight mobility issues (e.g., freight bottlenecks)
- Strategies for congestion or delay caused by freight
- Freight investment element with priority projects
- Consultation with a Freight Advisory Committee (FAC)

## 1.3 VISION AND GOALS

### 1.3.1 Guiding Freight Vision Statement

This OFTP is part of a broad policy context. ODOT has a set of established transportation goals, policies, and strategies—formulated in Oklahoma’s 2020-2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) (August 2020) and in other documents—which this OFTP supports. Additionally, this OFTP must conform to and demonstrate the achievement of national freight goals as set forth in federal legislation. To accomplish both missions—and as an expression of purpose to manage the freight system in the state—this OFTP embraces the following Freight Vision Statement for Oklahoma:

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*Oklahoma will continue to provide for the safe, reliable and productive performance of our multimodal freight system as a mainstay of our economy, ensuring it is resilient to interruption and sustainable for the future.*

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This Freight Vision Statement recognizes that Oklahoma's freight transportation system is multimodal and is important for supporting the state's economy and supplying the essential needs of its residents, workers, and visitors.

### ***Freight Plan Context***

This OFTP exists in a broad planning context. In addition to the national freight plan goals, this OFTP was guided by the Oklahoma 2020-2045 LRTP. This Plan was also informed by the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program, which incorporates metropolitan transportation improvement programs, ODOT's Federal Fiscal Year 2022-2029 Eight-Year Construction Work Plan, and numerous regional and metropolitan transportation plans from around the state. Finally, this OFTP was developed in coordination with the 2022 Oklahoma State Rail Plan (SRP).

### ***ODOT Responsibilities and Freight Partners***

ODOT is responsible for Oklahoma's surface transportation infrastructure, including the interstate system, the U.S. highway system, and the Oklahoma highway system. The network that encompasses these three highway groups is sometimes referred to as the State Highway System, and this network is the beginning framework for developing this OFTP. As this Plan proceeds, certain highways will be highlighted for their importance to freight transportation. In the freight arena, ODOT also oversees state-owned freight railroads and administers the waterways program (the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System [MKARNS]). In relation to freight, ODOT works closely with railroad and port owners and operators to support intermodal connectivity and mobility for goods movement.

ODOT is an active partner in additional transportation functions that involve various federal and state agencies, local jurisdictions, and private businesses. Numerous public- and private-sector organizations must fulfill their roles and work together to address the state's transportation needs.

Federal and state agencies that are critical to supporting freight transportation efforts in Oklahoma include the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the Oklahoma Corporation Commission, the Oklahoma Highway Patrol, and the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority (OTA). For freight transportation planning purposes, other critical agencies and organizations include, but are not limited to, airports, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), Native American tribal entities, port authorities, railroad companies, and private-sector freight transportation businesses.

### 1.3.2 Oklahoma Freight Goals

#### National Freight Program Goals

National goals for freight are enumerated in the IJJA and are summarized in Table 1-1. The Oklahoma freight goals are consistent with the national goals, as discussed next.

**Table 1-1. National Freight Program Goals**

Goals	
1.	Invest in infrastructure and operational improvements that strengthen economic competitiveness, reduce congestion, reduce the costs of freight transportation, improve reliability, and increase productivity
2.	Improve safety, security, efficiency, and resilience - urban and rural
3.	Improve network state of good repair
4.	Use innovation and advanced technology to improve safety, efficiency, and reliability
5.	Improve economic efficiency and productivity of networks
6.	Improve state flexibility to support multi-state planning and address highway freight connectivity
7.	Reduce environmental impacts

Source: WSP adapted from <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/bipartisan-infrastructure-law/nhfp.cfm>.



*Truckers regard highways as their factories and trucks as their work tools. We need highways to be improved so that the channels of commerce can work effectively.*

*—Oklahoma Trucking Association member*

#### Consistency with State and National Freight Goals

Table 1-2 lists Oklahoma’s freight goals in the priority order that the Oklahoma FAC determined in June 2022. The table shows how freight goals correspond to an established Oklahoma 2020-2045 LRTP goal area and to established national freight goals listed in Table 1-2.

**Table 1-2. Oklahoma's Freight Goals and Correspondence to Long Range Transportation Plan Goals and National Freight Goals**

2020-2045 Long Range Transportation Plan Goal Area	Oklahoma Freight Transportation Plan Freight Goals	National Freight Goal #
Safe and Secure Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve the safety and efficiency of freight movement and its interaction with other vehicles.</li> <li>Ensure the ability of urban and rural highways to safely accommodate growth in freight traffic.</li> </ul>	2
Infrastructure Preservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet freight transportation needs by maintaining the Oklahoma State Highway System in a state of good repair.</li> <li>Support the preservation of Oklahoma multimodal freight networks through appropriate policies and initiatives.</li> </ul>	3, 5
Efficient Intermodal System Management and Operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the competitive performance of the Oklahoma freight system.</li> <li>Safeguard industry supply chains by improving resiliency of the freight transportation system to withstand disruptions, including those related to extreme weather such as stormwater runoff and flooding.</li> <li>Promote use of innovation and advanced technology to enhance system performance.</li> </ul>	2, 4
Economic Vitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote competitive access to domestic and international markets for Oklahoma's industries.</li> <li>Direct freight-related transportation investments to support the state's economy.</li> </ul>	1, 6
Mobility: Choice, Connectivity and Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foster a diverse portfolio of modal choices for Oklahoma's freight shippers and receivers in urban and rural areas.</li> <li>Support end-to-end operations of industry supply chains in Oklahoma markets for Oklahoma's industries.</li> </ul>	1, 5
Environmental Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the growth of Oklahoma clean energy by promoting clean fuel use by freight providers.</li> <li>Avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse environmental impacts related to freight transportation, such as emissions and wildlife habitats.</li> <li>Consider the impacts of freight movement on underserved and historically disadvantaged communities.</li> </ul>	7
Fiscal Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capitalize on federal funding and finance programs to aid investment in the freight transportation system.</li> <li>Coordinate freight corridor development programs with neighboring states.</li> </ul>	6

Source: Oklahoma Freight Advisory Committee

## 1.4 OVERVIEW OF THIS PLAN

This Plan's base year is 2019, which means that the research and trend review looks back to the year 2019 as a consistent reference point, if the best available data permits.<sup>4</sup> This Plan looks forward to short-term (2023 through 2030) and long-term future (2031 through 2045) views. This Plan's products include a review of highway, freight rail, and waterway facilities, a

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix B for summary of data sources and years.

bottleneck analysis, and a freight investment element that identifies projects to be funded with NHFP funds. This OFTP is organized into the following remaining chapters:

- **Chapter 2 – Oklahoma’s Freight Story Today**
  - Reviews Oklahoma’s current freight flows, major commodities, and facilities by mode (highway, rail, marine and air).
  - Describes Oklahoma’s multimodal freight assets.
  - Assesses truck parking facilities and needs.
  - Identifies conditions and challenges confronting Oklahoma’s freight system today.
- **Chapter 3 – Outreach**
  - Describes stakeholder and public involvement in this Plan.
- **Chapter 4 – The Freight Future**
  - Outlines major economic, demographic, technology, and transportation trends affecting freight.
  - Reviews long-range freight forecasts.
  - Describes implications of transportation trends for the future of freight in Oklahoma.
- **Chapter 5 – Freight Bottlenecks and Mobility Issues**
  - Summarizes the results of analysis of truck bottlenecks, safety, maintenance, and other issues affecting freight movement for all modes.
- **Chapter 6 – Moving Freight**
  - Presents proposed performance measures, improvement priorities, policies and strategies and projects.
  - Recommends projects for use of freight formula funds, 2023 through 2030.
  - Identifies freight-related projects expected to be underway, 2023 through 2030.
  - Recommends freight network designations.
- **Chapter 7 – Conclusion and Next Steps**
  - Outlines Oklahoma’s commitment to incorporating freight into its decision-making process going forward.

Separate technical reports provide more details on the data analysis and results, and these reports will be available on ODOT’s OFTP website <http://www.odot.org/2023-2030FreightPlan>.