



# Oklahoma State Rail Plan

Oklahoma Department of  
Transportation  
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Version 1.0





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# 1 THE ROLE OF RAIL IN OKLAHOMA

## 1.1 Introduction

The Oklahoma State Rail Plan (Rail Plan) addresses existing and future passenger and freight rail service in Oklahoma. The Rail Plan helps to establish rail policy and investment priorities to better position Oklahoma rail stakeholders for federal funding. The 2026 Oklahoma State Rail Plan is an update of the 2021 plan, accepted by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) in 2022. It reflects the input of the public, rail industry partners, rail users, and government agencies on rail priorities.

This Rail Plan conforms to federal requirements for rail plan content established by the 2008 Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA). The Rail Plan is also consistent with FRA State Rail Plan Guidance of 2013.<sup>1</sup>[1] Per FRA Guidance, the Rail Plan consists of the following chapters:

**Chapter 1 – The Role of Rail in Oklahoma** discusses the current and future roles of rail in Oklahoma’s multimodal transportation system. It describes how Oklahoma provides political, legal, and financial support to rail development.

**Chapter 2 – Oklahoma Existing Rail System** provides an overview and inventory of the State’s existing rail system. This includes the usage and services of all rail lines. It analyzes rail’s contribution to Oklahoma’s transportation goals. It also describes trends that will affect the rail system in the future.

**Chapter 3 – Proposed Passenger Rail Improvements and Investments** describes potential improvements and investments to address Oklahoma’s passenger rail needs.

**Chapter 4 – Freight Rail Needs, Opportunities and Proposed Investments** discusses challenges and opportunities, including safety, associated with Oklahoma’s freight rail system and describes possible improvements to address them.

**Chapter 5 – Oklahoma Rail Service and Investment Program** describes the vision and goals for rail in Oklahoma and identifies studies, projects, and policy changes to support them. It also examines project benefits and funding issues.

**Chapter 6 – Coordination and Review** summarizes public input, and how this Plan coordinates with other state-wide planning initiatives.

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<sup>1</sup><https://railroads.dot.gov/rail-network-development/planning/systems-planning/state-rail-plan-guidance>



## 1.2 Oklahoma's Goals for Rail and Multimodal Transportation

### 1.2.1 National and Statewide Goals

Freight and passenger rail should support Oklahoma's multimodal goals. In the 2050 Oklahoma Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), completed in 2025, ODOT identified seven goals to guide the State's transportation priorities. These goals align with national transportation goals, showing that ODOT supports national priorities and meets the requirements for federal transportation funding programs. The national and State goals are outlined in the next section.

#### **National Goals**

**Safety:** To achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads.

**Infrastructure Condition:** To maintain the highway infrastructure asset system in a state of good repair

**Congestion Reduction:** To achieve a significant reduction in congestion on the National Highway System

**System Reliability:** To improve the efficiency of the surface transportation system

**Freight Movement and Economic Vitality:** To improve the national freight network, strengthen the ability of rural communities to access national and international trade markets, and support regional economic development.

**Environmental Sustainability:** To enhance the performance of the transportation system while protecting and enhancing the natural environment.

**Reduced Project Delivery Delays:** To reduce project costs, promote jobs and the economy, and expedite the movement of people and goods by accelerating project completion through eliminating delays in the development and delivery process, including reducing regulatory burdens and improving agencies' work practices.

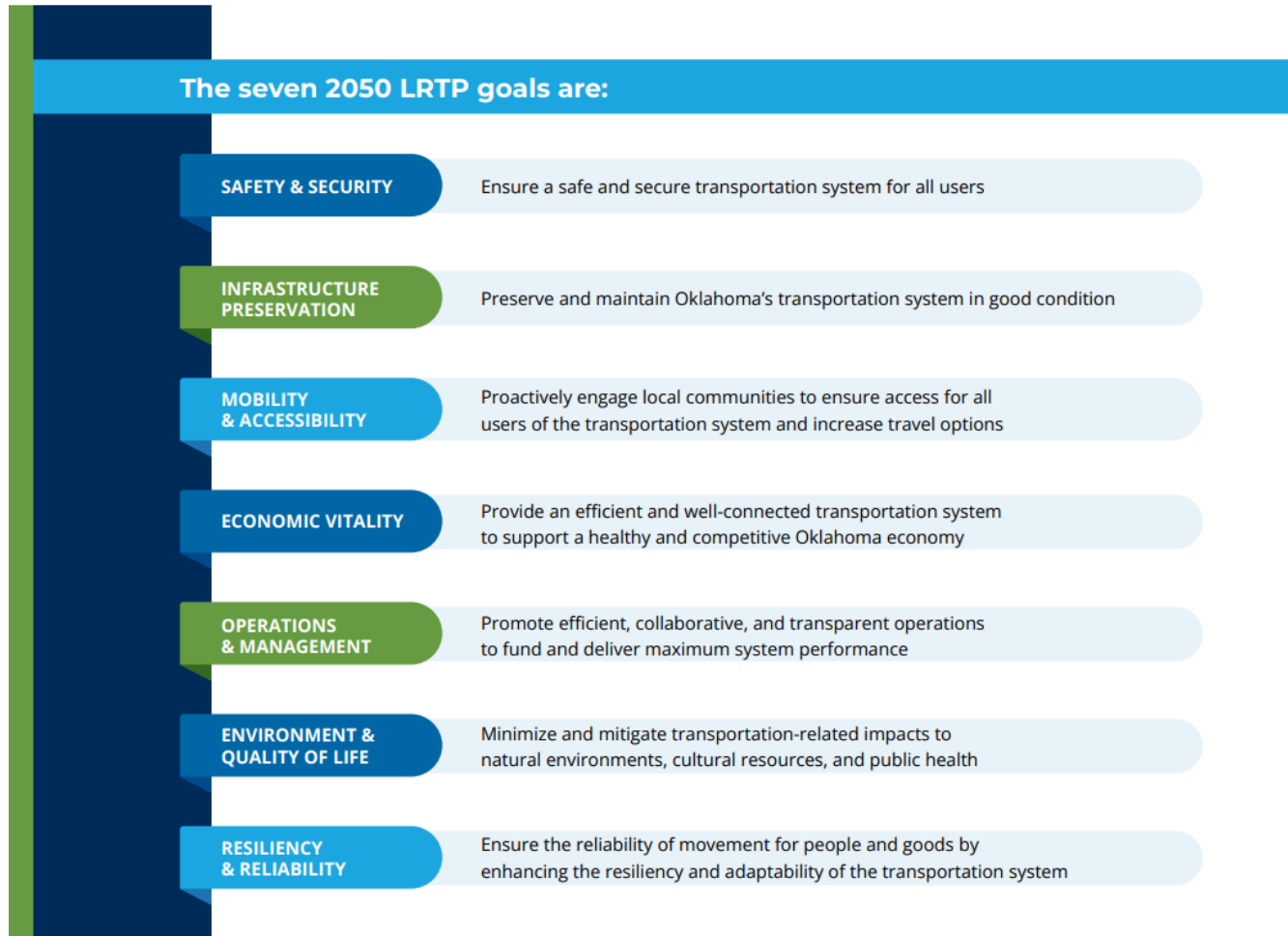
Oklahoma LRTP establishes seven goals related to safety, infrastructure preservation, mobility choice, economy, operations, environment, and resiliency. Figure 1-1 shows the seven 2050 LRTP goals.

The vision, goals, and objectives of this Rail Plan are consistent with these goals and will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.



**State Goals**

**Figure 1-1. Oklahoma Multimodal Long Range Transportation Plan Goals**





## 1.3 The Role of Rail in Oklahoma

### 1.3.1 Freight Rail

Rail is an important transportation option for a range of industries and commodities shipped to, from, within Oklahoma. According to the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Freight Analysis Framework - 5 (FAF-5), rail carries 10 percent of all freight tonnage originating and terminating in Oklahoma.<sup>2</sup>

Some highlights are as follows:

- Oklahoma is one of the nation's largest producers of **nonmetallic mineral products**, particularly limestone, sand & gravel, and granite. According to FAF-5, Oklahoma ranks 11<sup>th</sup> in the nation for overall tonnage shipped of building stone, 12<sup>th</sup> for natural sands, and 20<sup>th</sup> for gravel. Rail is important to these industries. For example, over half of Oklahoma natural sands are shipped by rail, as are over a third of Oklahoma gravel tonnage.
- Oklahoma is also one of the nation's largest producers of **petroleum and chemical products**. The state is ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the nation for shipping crude oil, 8<sup>th</sup> for natural gas, 11<sup>th</sup> for fertilizer and 12<sup>th</sup> for fuel oils. Rail supports the petroleum industry through shipments of commodities needed to support the petroleum development such as frac sand, piping, drilling fluid products, and ceramic proppant. Rail is used to support outbound shipments for petroleum development, such as shipping waste from the drilling process and petroleum products. Petroleum products are often transported by pipeline, but rail plays an important role where pipelines are not available, and is used to ship around seven percent of petroleum products from Oklahoma. Rail is a key transportation mode for chemicals and is used to transport 15 percent of basic chemical tonnage and 12 percent of fertilizer from Oklahoma.
- Rail is used to ship **coal** to Oklahoma power plants. Several coal-fired power plants in Oklahoma have closed or been converted to natural gas within the last decade, but additional coal-fired plants remain. Rail is the overwhelming choice for shipping coal due to its cost-effectiveness. In addition, much of the coal shipped to Oklahoma is sourced from the Powder River Basin in Wyoming/Montana, which is served only by rail.
- Rail is used for shipping **paper products** to and from Oklahoma, as well as for shipping **wood products** to Oklahoma. Nearly a quarter of the paper shipped from Oklahoma is shipped by rail. Lower, but still significant, volumes of paper are shipped inbound, as are wood products.
- Rail carries a significant portion of **automobiles** shipped for local distribution in Oklahoma, including facilities in Oklahoma City owned by Union Pacific Railroad (UP) and BNSF Railway (BNSF).
- Rail is used for shipping and receiving **grain** and **milled grain** products and provides an important alternative for farmers and food manufacturers.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freight/freight\\_analysis/faf/](https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freight/freight_analysis/faf/)



- A range of additional products are shipped or received by rail. Some products are not shipped directly by rail to Oklahoma, but are instead carried in intermodal containers by rail to the Dallas/Fort Worth metropolitan area and then trucked (drayed) to/from Oklahoma.

### 1.3.2 Passenger Rail

Amtrak's **Heartland Flyer** is the only passenger rail service in Oklahoma, traveling once daily in each direction between Oklahoma City and Fort Worth, Texas. In 2024, ridership of the service was 81,624. Of these, about 50,000 passengers were traveling between Oklahoma City and Fort Worth, 12,000 were traveling between Fort Worth and Norman, OK, while the rest were using one of the other four stations on the route. Fort Worth or Oklahoma City are the most frequent trip destinations. Passengers can also connect to other Amtrak routes in Fort Worth. Surveys of **Heartland Flyer** passengers indicate that the vast majority of passengers use the train for personal reasons rather than work or business.

## 1.4 Rail Institutional Governance Structure in Oklahoma

### 1.4.1 Oklahoma Department of Transportation

The Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) is responsible for coordinating a state transportation improvement strategy, which includes rail planning, project development, and financing, and the development of this Rail Plan. ODOT is Oklahoma's State Rail Transportation Authority (SRTA) and State Rail Plan Approval Authority (SRPAA). Oklahoma complies with the requirements of 49 U.S.C. §22102, which stipulates eligibility requirements for FRA rail freight grant assistance programs pertaining to state planning and administration.

#### **Freight Mobility Branch (Formerly Rail Programs Division)**

The Freight Mobility Branch of ODOT oversees the 142-mile state-owned rail network. The Branch is responsible for acquiring and administering federal and state funds, managing highway construction projects affecting railroad property, railroad crossing safety improvements, and maintaining the state-owned rail lines. Rail involvement at ODOT can be divided into five sections: State-owned Rail Line Management, Safety, Passenger Rail, Construction, and Federal Programs, as shown in Figure 1-2.

Figure 1-2. ODOT Freight Mobility Branch



### 1.4.2 Oklahoma State Transportation Commission

The State Transportation Commission (STC) leads the Oklahoma Department of Transportation. The STC was created for the purpose of developing comprehensive transportation policy and planning within the State of Oklahoma. The STC has final approval authority on funding allocations, including the Railroad Revolving Loan and Grant Program (RRLG), federally funded highway-rail grade crossing safety projects, and highway-rail grade crossing surface repair projects in Oklahoma.

STC membership comprises nine transportation commissioners, who are appointed by the Oklahoma Governor and confirmed by the Oklahoma Senate. The Commission appoints an Executive Director, who serves as the executive head of ODOT. As of 2026, the ODOT Executive Director is Mr. Tim Gatz. The Governor also appointed Mr. Gatz as Secretary of Transportation.



### 1.4.3 Other State Agencies with Activities Related to Rail

#### **Oklahoma Corporation Commission**

The Oklahoma Corporation Commission (OCC) is a regulatory agency with oversight over the fuel, oil, gas, utilities, and transportation industries. The OCC monitors the operations of Oklahoma railroads for compliance with state railroad public crossing safety regulations, including maintenance of sight lines against obstructions, such as trees and grass. The OCC routinely reviews public at-grade crossings for safety compliance, investigates public complaints, and makes recommendations concerning railroad crossing openings, closings, and crossing signal upgrades. The OCC mediates between the public and the railroad industry on state rail safety regulations. The OCC ensures that railroads follow state regulations to provide fencing between railroad rights-of-way and properties where livestock is being raised.

#### **Oklahoma Department of Commerce**

The Oklahoma Department of Commerce (ODOC) is Oklahoma's statewide economic development agency, focusing on business development and community development. The department provides financial assistance programs to help attract new industries, including those that use rail. ODOC provides tax credits and infrastructure assistance, including track rehabilitation and the construction of spur tracks.

#### STRATEGIC INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ENHANCEMENT (SIDE) ACT

During the 2022 regular session, the Oklahoma Legislature created the Strategic Industrial Development Enhancement Act (SIDE). This promotes the competitiveness of rural industrial parks by improving connections between railroads and industrial developments. The SIDE Act authorizes a new corporate income tax credit for qualified expenditures in industrial parks and rail infrastructure developments associated with industrial parks.<sup>3</sup>

In 2025, ODOC allocated a total of \$10 million in SIDE Act tax credits for eight projects. These tax credits will help facilitate \$82 million in capital expenditures. Businesses that received the tax credits plan to create approximately 357 new jobs associated with these projects.<sup>4</sup> Rail infrastructure projects were prominent among the SIDE Act tax credits.

#### RAILROAD MODERNIZATION TAX CREDIT

Available since 2006, Oklahoma's Railroad Modernization Tax Credit is equal to 50 percent of qualified railroad reconstruction or replacement costs incurred by a Class II or Class III railroad. The credit is limited to \$5,000 per mile of railroad track owned or leased within the State by the taxpayer. The total amount of credits used to offset tax liability is limited to \$5 million per year.<sup>5</sup>

### 1.4.4 Port Authorities

Oklahoma is home to two public port authorities that operate rail-served locations. Both are served by Class III railroad operators, and both have barge facilities on the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River

<sup>3</sup> [SIDE Act - Oklahoma Department of Commerce](#)

<sup>4</sup> [SIDE Act - Oklahoma Department of Commerce](#)

<sup>5</sup> [RailroadTaxCreditEvaluation11172023.pdf](#)



Navigation System. The Class III rail lines at each port interchange with a Class I railroad via their rail operator.

- **Tulsa Ports** is led by the City of Tulsa – Rogers County Port Authority Board. Members of the board are appointed by the Mayor of Tulsa and the Rogers County Commissioners. Tulsa Ports operates two rail-served locations: the Tulsa Port of Catoosa, a 2,000-acre industrial park, barge port, and rail transload facility, and the Port of Inola, a 2,200-acre industrial park with access to rail and barge transportation. The Port of Catoosa is served by the Port of Catoosa Industrial Railroad. The Verdigris Southern Railroad serves the Port of Inola.
- **Muskogee City-County Port Authority** is led by a board appointed by the City and County of Muskogee. It operates a 450-acre multimodal transportation complex, with a barge port and rail transload access, and serves nearby industrial parks. The facility is served by the Port Muskogee Railroad.

Port authorities facilitate economic development activity, capital investment, and job creation in Oklahoma. Port authorities can construct facilities, issue bonds, make loans, and sell or buy real and personal property.

#### 1.4.5 Regional and Local Organizations

Aside from ODOT, Oklahoma’s transportation agencies include Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs). Oklahoma’s MPOs and RTPOs are described in this section.

##### ***Metropolitan Planning Organizations***

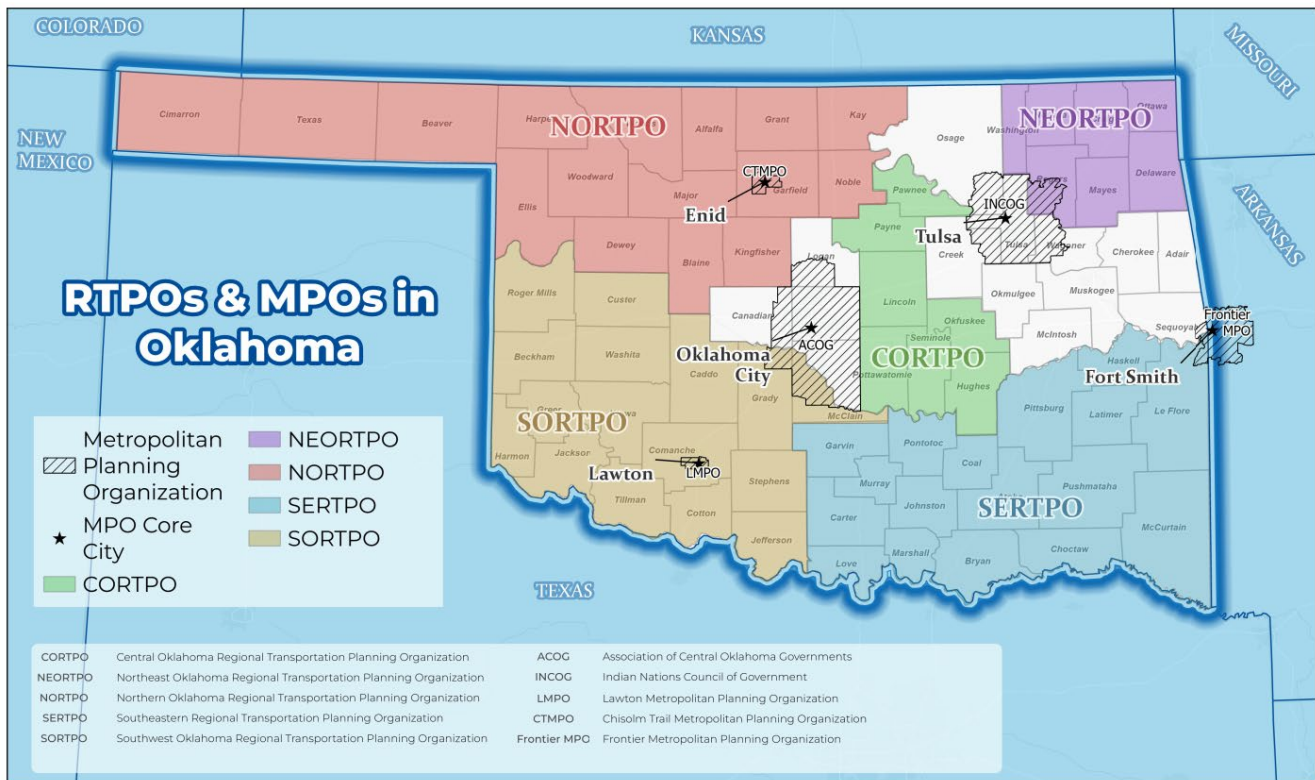
Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are federally mandated and funded transportation policy-making organizations comprised of local government and transportation officials. The formation of an MPO is required for any urbanized area with a population greater than 50,000.

MPOs are required to maintain a Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) as part of a continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive planning process. Compliance is required to access federal funding, and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) oversee compliance through periodic certification. ODOT provides ongoing oversight to the MPOs.<sup>6</sup> MPOs must work together with area transportation stakeholders to understand and plan for the area’s travel needs. MPOs look at freight and passenger rail as part of their transportation planning process. MPOs located in Oklahoma are shown with a crosshatch on Figure 1-3.

<sup>6</sup> [eCFR :: 23 CFR Part 450 Subpart C -- Metropolitan Transportation Planning and Programming](#)



Figure 1-3. Regional Transportation Planning Organizations and Metropolitan Planning Organizations



Oklahoma has five MPOs, including one bi-state MPO shared with Arkansas. These MPOs are described below:

- **Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) – Oklahoma City, Oklahoma**
  - » Serves the Oklahoma City Urbanized Area, which includes all of Oklahoma and Cleveland counties and portions of Canadian, Grady, Logan, and McClain counties. As a metropolitan area with a population greater than 200,000, ACOG meets the Transportation Management Area (TMA) threshold. TMAs must meet extra federal planning requirements.
- **Indian Nations Council of Government (INCOG) – Tulsa, Oklahoma**
  - » Serves Tulsa County and portions of Creek, Osage, Rogers, and Wagoner counties. INCOG also meets the TMA threshold.
- **Lawton Metropolitan Planning Organization (LMPO) – Lawton, Oklahoma**
  - » Serves the Lawton Urbanized Area, as defined by the 2020 U.S. Census.
- **Chisolm Trail Metropolitan Planning Organization (CTMPO) – Enid, Oklahoma**
  - » Serves Enid, North Enid, and portions of Garfield County.
- **Frontier Metropolitan Planning Organization (Frontier MPO)**
  - » Serves portions of Le Flore and Sequoyah counties in Oklahoma, and Fort Smith, Arkansas.



### ***Regional Transportation Planning Organizations***

Within Oklahoma, Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) coordinate transportation planning in rural areas. RTPOs review and provide comments on statewide transportation plans. They also develop regional priority projects across different transportation modes, and prepare rural long-range transportation plans. In addition to planning, RTPOs host public meetings, collect data, and share transportation information with local government members.

RTPOs are divisions of Councils of Governments (COGs), which serve as regional planning bodies for multiple counties. They handle issues such as transportation planning, on-demand transit, economic development, and emergency management. Both ACOG and INCOG serve dual roles as COGs and MPOs.

The five RTPOs are housed within the state's 11 COG districts, which are identified below:

- **Central Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization (CORTPO)**
  - » **Central Oklahoma Economic Development District – COEDD**
    - Serves Pawnee, Payne, Lincoln, Pottawatomie, Seminole, Okfuskee, and Hughes counties.
- **Northeastern Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization (NEORTPO)**
  - » **Grand Gateway Economic Development Association – GGEDA**
    - Serves Washington, Nowata, Craig, Ottawa, Delaware, Mayes, and parts of Rogers counties.
  - » **Eastern Oklahoma Development District – EODD**
    - Serves Okmulgee, Muskogee, McIntosh, Sequoyah, Cherokee, Adair, and parts of Wagoner counties.
- **Southeastern Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SERTPO)**
  - » **Southern Oklahoma Development Association – SODA**
    - Serves Garvin, Pontotoc, Coal, Atoka, Murray, Johnston, Carter, Love, Marshall, and Bryan counties.
  - » **Kiamichi Economic Development District of Oklahoma – KEDDO**
    - Serves Pittsburg, Haskell, Le Flore, Latimer, Pushmataha, McCurtain, and Choctaw counties.
- **Northern Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization (NORTPO)**
  - » **Northern Oklahoma Development Authority - NODA**
    - Serves Alfalfa, Grant, Kay, Major, Garfield, Noble, Blaine, and Kingfisher counties.
  - » **Oklahoma Economic Development Authority - OEDA**
    - Serves Cimarron, Texas, Beaver, Harper, Woods, Woodward, Ellis, and Dewey counties.



- **Southwest Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SORTPO)**
  - » **Southwestern Oklahoma Development Authority - SWODA**
    - Serves Roger Mills, Custer, Beckham, Washita, Harmon, Greer, Kiowa, and Jackson counties.
  - » **Association of South-Central Oklahoma Governments - ASCOG**
    - Serves Caddo, Comanche, Cotton, Tillman, Stephens, Jefferson, and parts of Grady counties.
- **COGs with no RTPO:**
  - » **Association of Central Oklahoma Governments - ACOG**
    - Serves Oklahoma, Canadian, Logan, McClain, Cleveland, and parts of Grady counties.
  - » **Indian Nations Council of Governments - INCOG**
    - Serves Osage, Tulsa, Creek, and parts of Wagoner counties.

### **Local Economic Development Agencies**

Within the State of Oklahoma, numerous local public and private economic development agencies work to retain, grow, and recruit businesses. These organizations market potential industrial development sites to prospective businesses. Among the potential industrial sites are locations which are, or could be, served by rail. These include industrial parks, where multiple shippers share rail access, or individual sites where sidings or rail spurs can provide dedicated rail access.

## 1.5 Oklahoma's Authority to Conduct Rail Planning Investment

### 1.5.1 State Authority to Support Rail

Oklahoma Statutes, Title 66 (Railroads) pertains to the establishment of railroad companies in the state of Oklahoma. Oklahoma DOT's rail-related responsibilities per the Oklahoma Statutes are also detailed in Title 66. These include the following:

- The authority to acquire, construct, reconstruct, repair, replace, operate and maintain railroad rights-of-way and trackage projects at such locations and on such routes as it shall determine to be feasible and economically sound; (OS § 66-304(A)(1))
- Initiation of railroad safety program, requiring ODOT to coordinate construction and maintenance of safety devices at highway-rail crossings (OS-66-125a).

### 1.5.2 State Authority for Grants and Other Rail Financing

Oklahoma has utilized both federal and state transportation funding programs when rail infrastructure improvements were eligible and appropriate. State-sponsored rail investment in Oklahoma has been provided through ODOT and state economic development agencies. State funding actions have included the following:

- Created Oklahoma Tourism and Passenger Rail Revolving Fund pursuant to OS § 66-325. This fund receives \$2,000,000 annually under OS § 69-1521 (ROADS Fund) and HB 2772 to support



capital and operating costs for the **Heartland Flyer** passenger service. Additionally, the fund receives an allocation of \$850,000 in motor fuel taxes each year, totaling \$2,850,000 (OS § 68-500.6(A)(3)(a)).

- Established provisions and terms for Railroad Rehabilitation Act, which allows ODOT to provide loans to certified freight railroads for replacing or reconstructing outdated rails, roadbeds, sidings, and bridges in the interest of supporting commerce and prosperity in Oklahoma. Loans are subject to Transportation Commission approval, must be at or below market interest, and cannot exceed ten years, with a total fund cap of \$5 million and a 50 percent annual limit (OS § 66-309.3). As of late 2025, the loan program is not capitalized and is dormant.

Additional details on these funding programs are provided in Chapter 2.

### 1.5.3 Railroad Modernization Tax Credit Program

OS 68-2357.104 establishes a railroad tax credit for qualified railroad reconstruction or replacement expenditures. The credit equals 50% of an eligible railroad's qualified railroad reconstruction or replacement expenditures. For tax years 2020 through 2029, the credit amount is limited to \$5,000 per mile of railroad track owned or leased in Oklahoma. Qualified expenditures include: track maintenance, repairs for damage caused by natural disasters, reconstruction or replacement of infrastructure such as track, roadbed, crossings, bridges, industrial leads, and track-related structures, new construction of industrial leads, switches, spurs and sidings, and extensions of existing sidings. Projects must be reviewed by ODOT to certify that the work is both eligible and complete. The railroads then file with the Tax Commission for review and approval of the tax credit.

## 1.6 Freight and Passenger Rail Services, Initiatives, and Plans

A range of freight initiatives are ongoing in Oklahoma:

- State-Owned Rail Lines** – ODOT manages 142 miles of rail lines. The state purchased these to keep them in service rather than allow them to be abandoned. All but eight miles are leased to short line operators. In 2025, the Oklahoma Legislature passed a law to make it easier to sell the remaining state-owned rail lines. ODOT is directed to issue a request for proposals for sale of state-owned rail lines. Interested parties have 120 days to respond. ODOT will review the responses and present a recommendation to the State Transportation Commission.<sup>7</sup>
- Heartland Flyer Service** – ODOT, along with Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) fund the **Heartland Flyer** service. In 2024, ridership on the **Heartland Flyer** not only recovered to pre-COVID pandemic levels, but was the highest ridership on the

Heartland Flyer at Oklahoma City



<sup>7</sup> <https://www.oklegislature.gov/BillInfo.aspx?Bill=SB341&Session=2500>.



service since 2012. Farebox recovery has improved since the pandemic as well. However, as of late 2025, continued funding into FY 2027 for the service has not been identified. In 2025, TxDOT's funding request for the \$3.5 million Texas contribution to the service was not included in the State's budget. In August 2025, the Texas Transportation Commission approved the use of regional toll revenues by the Regional Transportation Council and the North Central Texas Council of Governments to provide the Texas share of funding through 2026. Oklahoma funds a portion of its share through the Oklahoma Tourism and Passenger Rail Revolving Fund, but this is insufficient to cover Oklahoma's share of the service. Additional sources of funding will need to be found in both Texas and Oklahoma for the **Heartland Flyer** to remain in service beyond 2026.

- **Support for Freight Infrastructure Improvements** – The passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) provided an unprecedented increase in the level of federal funding available for railroad infrastructure projects. For example, since the passage of IIJA:
  - » The Kiamichi Railroad received a \$56.6 million federal grant to upgrade track on the Ashdown, Hope, and Paris subdivisions of the Kiamichi Railroad in Oklahoma, Arkansas and Texas, including the replacement of 76 miles of jointed rail with continuous welded rail and resurfacing and installation of ballast on these segments, resurfacing 114 crossings, and installation of trespassing signs and barriers at ten crossings.
  - » The Stillwater Central Railroad received a \$29.5 million grant to rehabilitate ties and perform surfacing work along approximately 120 miles of track, replace ten bridges, upgrade an additional 40 bridges, and upgrade one grade crossing.
- **Port Improvement Projects** - Tulsa Ports has been overseeing a series of rail-related improvements, including infrastructure for the Verdigris Southern Railroad, a 4.4-mile rail spur completed by the port authority in 2024. This provides access to the Tulsa Port of Inola. Construction is currently underway on a new \$37.5 million unit train facility at the Tulsa Port of Catoosa. Port Muskogee is also increasing its rail-served operations, taking over 125.49 acres of land formerly known as the Frontier Terminal.
- **Safety Improvements** – ODOT continues to improve safety at highway-rail at-grade crossings through its administration of the federal Railway-Highway Crossings (Section 130) Program. ODOT can complete 12 to 15 projects per year under this program. ODOT has also been active in sponsoring projects and helping to win federal grants under the Railroad Crossing Elimination Program. These include:
  - » A planning project to assess alternatives, including a potential grade separation, for an at-grade crossing at Basin Road in Mannford, Oklahoma.
  - » A project to construct a track siding, remove an existing siding, close two at-grade crossings, and implement safety improvements at an additional three crossings to improve safety and reduce the frequency of blocked crossings in Davis, Oklahoma.

Port of Catoosa Industrial Railroad





- » A planning study sponsored by Claremore, Oklahoma to assess the feasibility of grade-separated railroad crossings along a corridor in Claremore.
- » A planning study to review options at 52 at-grade crossings in Edmond, Norman, and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.





## 2 OKLAHOMA'S EXISTING RAIL SYSTEM

This chapter provides a description of existing conditions of the Oklahoma rail system, including the following:

- Description and inventory of the freight and passenger rail systems in Oklahoma, including the performance of passenger rail services, and condition of freight rail infrastructure
- Summary of public funding and financing sources available to support rail
- Assessment of safety trends and description of ongoing efforts to improve rail safety and security in Oklahoma
- An analysis of the rail system's economic and environmental impacts

The chapter then pivots from describing the existing system to an analysis of demographic, economic, land use, freight, travel demand, and modal congestion trends that impact Oklahoma's rail system now and in the future.

### 2.1 The State's Existing Rail System: Physical Inventory and Operating Profile

#### 2.1.1 Development of the Oklahoma Rail Network

The initial construction of Oklahoma's rail network started relatively late compared to that of neighboring states. Until 1866 rail lines were not permitted to pass through lands owned by Native American tribes, but a new treaty that year allowed the construction of two rail routes across their lands, one north-south route, and one east-west route. Between 1870 and 1872 the Missouri-Kansas-Texas (MKT or "Katy") pushed southwest across the Red River into Texas, while the Atlantic & Pacific formed the beginnings of an east-west route. Beyond these two routes, no new routes were built until the late 1880s. Restrictions were later reduced, and starting in the late 1890s a railroad construction boom ensued, driven by the discovery of oil, the expansion of agriculture, and population growth. Oklahoma's rail network increased from 289 miles in 1880 to 6,572 miles in 1920, with much of the growth occurring during the decade between 1897 and 1907.<sup>8</sup>

After 1920, railroads began to lose market share to competing modes, as pipelines were increasingly used to transport oil, and motor vehicles transported goods and people. By 1965, the Oklahoma rail network declined to 5,570 miles, and by 1995 to 3,434 miles.<sup>9</sup> Oklahoma was impacted by the nationwide financial troubles of the railroad industry that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s. For

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<sup>8</sup> Oklahoma Railway Museum, "A Brief History of Oklahoma Railroads,"

<https://oklahomarailwaymuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/A-Brief-History-Of-Oklahoma-Railroads.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



example, the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad, a major presence in Oklahoma, ceased operations in 1980 after years of financial difficulties. In 1980, the U.S. Congress passed the Staggers Rail Act, which deregulated the rail industry. While the Staggers Act improved railroad industry finances, it initiated a reduction in the rail network, since it allowed railroads to abandon or spin off unprofitable rail lines. The State of Oklahoma was forced to intervene to help preserve portions of the Oklahoma rail network, acquiring 882 miles of rail lines that would otherwise have been abandoned. Since then, the finances of the rail industry have improved, and Oklahoma has sold most of the rail lines it had acquired back to private industry.

Most passenger rail services operated by private railroads ended in the 1960s. The Texas Chief service between Chicago, IL and Houston, TX through Oklahoma City was transferred from the Santa Fe Railway to Amtrak in 1971. Amtrak continued to operate the Texas Chief through the 1970s, but the service was discontinued in 1979. Between 1979 and 1999, there were no intercity passenger rail services in Oklahoma, until the predecessor of the **Heartland Flyer** route began in 1999.

### 2.1.2 Railroads and Services

#### **Freight Railroads of Oklahoma**

Within Oklahoma are 3,378 miles of rail lines, 93 percent of which are owned by private freight railroads, 5 percent are owned by ODOT (mostly east of Oklahoma City), and 2 percent are owned by other entities, including the U.S. Department of Defense (mainly at the McAlester Army Ammunition Plant in Pittsburg County), three port authorities, and an excursion railroad. Figure 2-1 displays the ownership of the rail network.



Figure 2-1. Oklahoma Rail Ownership Type



Source: ODOT, WSP Analysis

Class I, II, and III railroads are defined by the U.S. Surface Transportation Board (STB), based on annual operating revenue. Thresholds are adjusted for inflation using 2019 as a base year. Currently, Class I railroads have revenues above \$1.05 billion; Class III railroads, below \$47 million; and Class II Railroads, between \$1.05 billion and \$47 million.

Class I railroads operate 57 percent of Oklahoma’s rail network; Class III railroads, 43 percent of the state’s freight rail. As of the first half of 2026, no Class II railroads operate in Oklahoma (Table 2-1).

Table 2-1. *Oklahoma Rail Mileage by Type of Railroad*

Railroad	Miles Leased	Miles Owned, Operated	Miles Owned, Not Operated	Total Miles Operated Excluding Trackage Rights	Trackage Rights
<b>Class I Railroads</b>	0	1,909	78	1,909	751
<b>Class II Railroads</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Class III Railroads</b>	267	1,179	0	1,446	134
<b>Other</b>	0	23	0	23	0
<b>Total Mileage</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>3,111</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>3,378</b>	<b>885</b>

Source: STB R-1 Annual Reports, Railroad Survey, Railroad websites

### *Class I Railroads*

Three of the six U.S. Class I railroads operate in Oklahoma.

- BNSF Railway (BNSF)
- Canadian Pacific Kansas City Limited (CPKC)
- Union Pacific (UP) Railroad

Class I railroads provide service to shipper locations in Oklahoma, and also provide “line-haul” service, carrying freight to and from other parts of North America.

Table 2-2. *Mileage of Class I Railroads in Oklahoma*

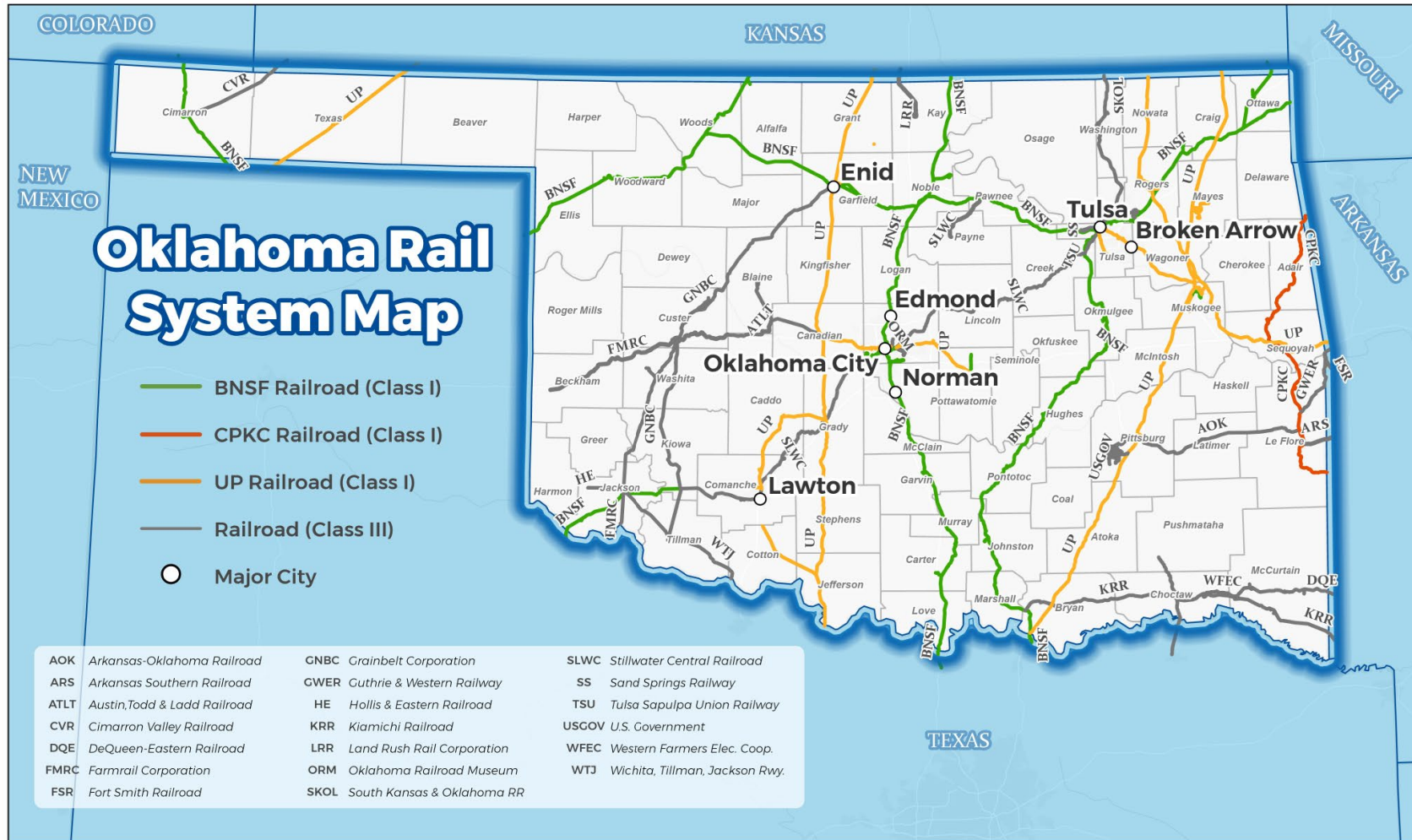
Railroad	Miles Leased	Miles Owned, Operated	Miles Owned, Not Operated	Total Miles Operated Excluding Trackage Rights	Trackage Rights
BNSF Railroad	0	966	0	966	330
Canadian Pacific Kansas City Limited	0	122	5	122	1
Union Pacific Railroad	0	821	73	821	420
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,909</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>1,909</b>	<b>751</b>

Source: STB R-1 Annual Reports

Figure 2-2 shows the Oklahoma rail lines by operator.



Figure 2-2. Oklahoma Rail Operators



Source: ODOT

Note: Railroad mileage by type of owner and operator is provided in Table 2-2. Most of the rail lines in Oklahoma are operated by their owners, but some rail lines are leased. In several cases, Class I railroads lease rail lines to Class III operators. Other rail lines are leased by Class III railroads from ODOT. Railroads also reach agreements to run their trains over other railroads' lines for a fee, an arrangement referred to as trackage rights.

**BNSF RAILWAY**

BNSF, a subsidiary of Berkshire Hathaway, is headquartered in Fort Worth, Texas. BNSF operates over a network of 32,500 route miles in the U.S. and Canada, of which 966 miles are in Oklahoma. BNSF primarily operates west of the Mississippi River. BNSF Railroad has the highest rail mileage in Oklahoma, owning and operating nearly half of Oklahoma’s Class I railroad network.

**CANADIAN PACIFIC KANSAS CITY LIMITED**

Based in Calgary, Alberta, CPKC operates 20,000 miles of rail, which follows a “T” shape with an east–west component of the network mainly in Canada. Canadian Pacific (CP) purchased Kansas City Southern Industries (KCS), completing the merger in 2023. With the KCS network, CP acquired a set of North/South rail lines that operate between Illinois and into Mexico, through Oklahoma. CPKC owns and operates 127 miles of rail in the eastern part of Oklahoma, running through Adair, Sequoyah, and LeFlore counties in Oklahoma, south to Shreveport, LA and north to Kansas City, MO. CPKC serves ports in Corpus Christi, Houston, Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and Chicago.

**UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD**

UP is based in Omaha, Nebraska, and operates a network of 32,693 route miles in 23 U.S. states – concentrated west of the Mississippi. UP operates 821 miles of track in Oklahoma serving Tulsa, McAlester, Oklahoma City, Enid, and Guymon. According to UP, approximately 41,000 rail cars originate and 38,000 rail cars terminate in Oklahoma annually. The highest volume commodity both shipped and received by UP in the state is stone & gravel. From Oklahoma, UP’s rail connects north to Kansas City, MO and Wichita, east to Little Rock, south to Dallas, and southwest to Amarillo.

**Class III Railroads**

Twenty Class III railroads operate in Oklahoma. Class III railroads provide last-mile service to customers, connecting them to the larger Class I networks that receive or deliver shipments to other locations in North America.

The ownership of Class III railroads in Oklahoma varies (Table 2-3). Some are owned by shippers, such as the Western Farmers Electric Cooperative, or the Austin, Todd, and Ladd Railroad, which is owned by Wheeler Brothers Grain. Others are owned by short line holding companies. For example, Watco owns four railroads in Oklahoma, while OmniTRAX owns three. Other railroads are independently owned, such as the Northwestern Oklahoma Railroad, or the Arkansas-Oklahoma Railroad.

**Table 2-3. Mileage of Class III Railroads in Oklahoma**

<b>Railroad</b>	<b>Parent Company</b>	<b>Miles Leased</b>	<b>Miles Owned, Operated</b>	<b>Total Miles Operated Excluding Trackage Rights</b>	<b>Trackage Rights</b>
<b>Arkansas-Oklahoma Railroad</b>	Arkansas-Oklahoma Railroad	65	70	135	4
<b>Arkansas Southern Railroad</b>	Watco	6	0	6	4



Railroad	Parent Company	Miles Leased	Miles Owned, Operated	Total Miles Operated Excluding Trackage Rights	Trackage Rights
<b>Austin, Todd &amp; Ladd Railroad</b>	Wheeler Brothers Grain	4	39	43	29
<b>Land Rush Rail</b>	Farmrail	21	0	21	0
<b>Cimarron Valley Railroad</b>	Jaguar Transport	0	35	35	0
<b>Farmrail Corporation</b>	Farmrail Systems	92	89	181	0
<b>Gateway Eastern Railroad</b>	CPKC	0	23	23	0
<b>Grainbelt Corporation</b>	Farmrail Systems	0	204	204	60
<b>Kiamichi Railroad</b>	Genesee & Wyoming	15	158	173	0
<b>Northwestern Oklahoma Railroad</b>	Northwestern Oklahoma Railroad	0	5	5	0
<b>Port of Catoosa Industrial Railroad</b>	Omnitrax	0	25	25	0
<b>Port Muskogee Railroad</b>	Omnitrax	0	9	9	0
<b>Sand Springs Railway</b>	Omnitrax	0	25	25	0
<b>South Kansas &amp; Oklahoma Railroad</b>	Watco	5	74	79	0
<b>Stillwater Central Railroad</b>	Watco	29	260	289	37
<b>Texas, Oklahoma &amp; Eastern Railroad</b>	Patriot Rail	17	64	81	0
<b>Tulsa Sapulpa Union Railway</b>	Tulsa Sapulpa Union Railway	13	10	23	0
<b>Verdigris Southern Railroad</b>	Watco	0	6	6	0
<b>Western Farmers Electric Cooperative</b>	Western Farmers Electric Cooperative.	0	14	14	0
<b>Wichita, Tillman &amp; Jackson Railway</b>	Rio Grande Pacific	0	69	69	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>1,179</b>	<b>1,446</b>	<b>134</b>

Source: Survey of Railroads, ODOT, Railroad Websites



### ***Inactive Rail Corridors***

Like other regions in the United States, the Oklahoma rail network reached its maximum mileage during the early twentieth century, before the widespread adoption of automobiles. Oklahoma's rail network today is about half the mileage of the peak network. Railroads today operate fewer rail miles but handle more traffic. With the reduction of the network, within Oklahoma are rail trackage and rights-of-way that do not currently provide rail service.

**Inactive or out of service** rail lines are not currently used for service but are considered part of the U.S. rail network, with the serving railroad retaining a "common carrier" obligation to provide service upon reasonable request. However, restoration of some inactive corridors would require substantial investment to be operational again.

**Abandoned** rail corridors are no longer considered part of the U.S. rail network. Federal law permits railroads to abandon rail lines and forgo common carrier rail service, subject to approval by the STB. While some abandoned corridors remain intact as transportation rights-of-way, many are no longer transportation corridors. The principal requirements for discontinuance or abandonment are that the railroad certify that no local traffic has moved over the line for two years, that any overhead traffic can be routed over other lines, and that no formal complaint is filed by a rail service user.

Abandonments have been minimal in Oklahoma within the past decade or so, limited mostly to short stretches of trackage serving industries. Since the previous 2021 State Rail Plan, BNSF finished the abandonment process for 0.74 miles in Pawnee County in 2022.<sup>10</sup>

**Rail-banked** rail corridors can serve as recreational trails and are legally recognized by the STB as part of the U.S. rail network, with an "interim use" classification under the National Trails System Act of 1983. All easements in effect when the corridor was used for rail remain in effect for trail use. The trail operator is responsible for maintaining all bridges and structures previously used within the rail corridor. Although the law permits a rail operator to request the restoration of a rail-banked corridor for rail purposes, such re-conversions are uncommon in practice. ODOT systematically reviews all proposed rail abandonments to evaluate their appropriateness for recreational use under the federal railbanking legislation. In 2025 ODOT and Stillwater Central Railroad, LLC agreed to railbank approximately 3.2 miles in Stillwater in Payne County, Oklahoma.<sup>11</sup> Rail corridors may also be converted to recreational trails after the abandonment process is completed, provided the right-of-way remains intact. These corridors are not considered railbanked because they were not designated for interim trail use during abandonment proceedings.

Fifty-nine miles comprising 13 trails are converted rail rights-of-way within Oklahoma<sup>12</sup>. Two of the longer trails are:

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<sup>10</sup> BNSF Consumption Notice, Docket No. AB 6 498X, [https://dcms-external.s3.amazonaws.com/DCMS\\_External\\_PROD/1649959742190/304277.pdf](https://dcms-external.s3.amazonaws.com/DCMS_External_PROD/1649959742190/304277.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> STB Filing- Docket No. AB 1330X and AB Docket No. AB 1040 (Sub-No. 1X): [https://dcms-external.s3.amazonaws.com/DCMS\\_External\\_PROD/1753813159371/309824.pdf](https://dcms-external.s3.amazonaws.com/DCMS_External_PROD/1753813159371/309824.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.railstotrails.org/state/oklahoma/>



- **Osage Prairie Trail:** Approximately 14 miles of the former Midland Valley Railroad between Tulsa and Skiatook, Oklahoma.
- **Katy Trail:** Approximately eight miles of the former Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

### ***Characteristics of the Rail Network***

#### **DOUBLE TRACK/SINGLE TRACK**

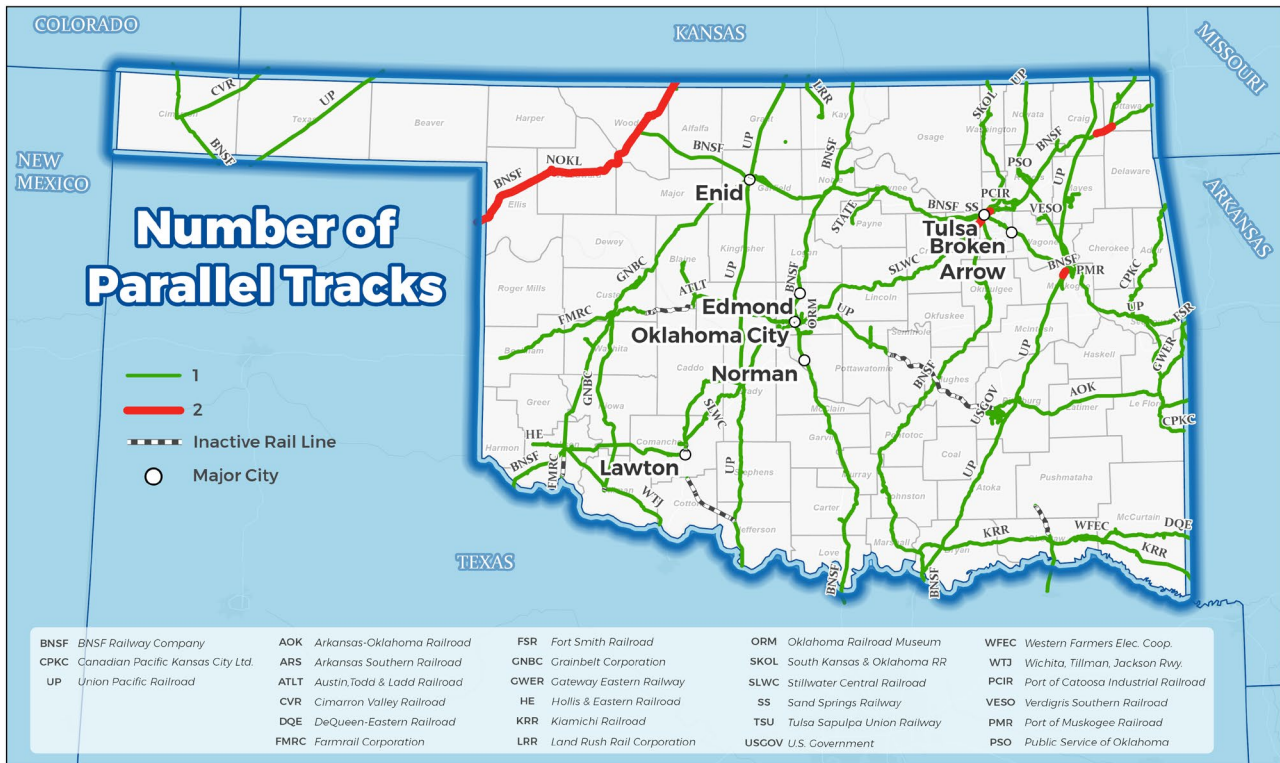
The majority of Oklahoma rail lines are single-track, where trains pass one another using passing sidings. Because building and maintaining two parallel tracks is expensive, only the busiest corridors are double tracked. Figure 2-3 shows Oklahoma rail lines by the number of tracks. The BNSF Southern Transcon, which passes through Oklahoma between Chicago and southern California, has 2.

**BNSF Double Track**





Figure 2-3. Rail Line by the Number of Tracks in Oklahoma



Source: ODOT, 2021 Oklahoma State Rail Plan

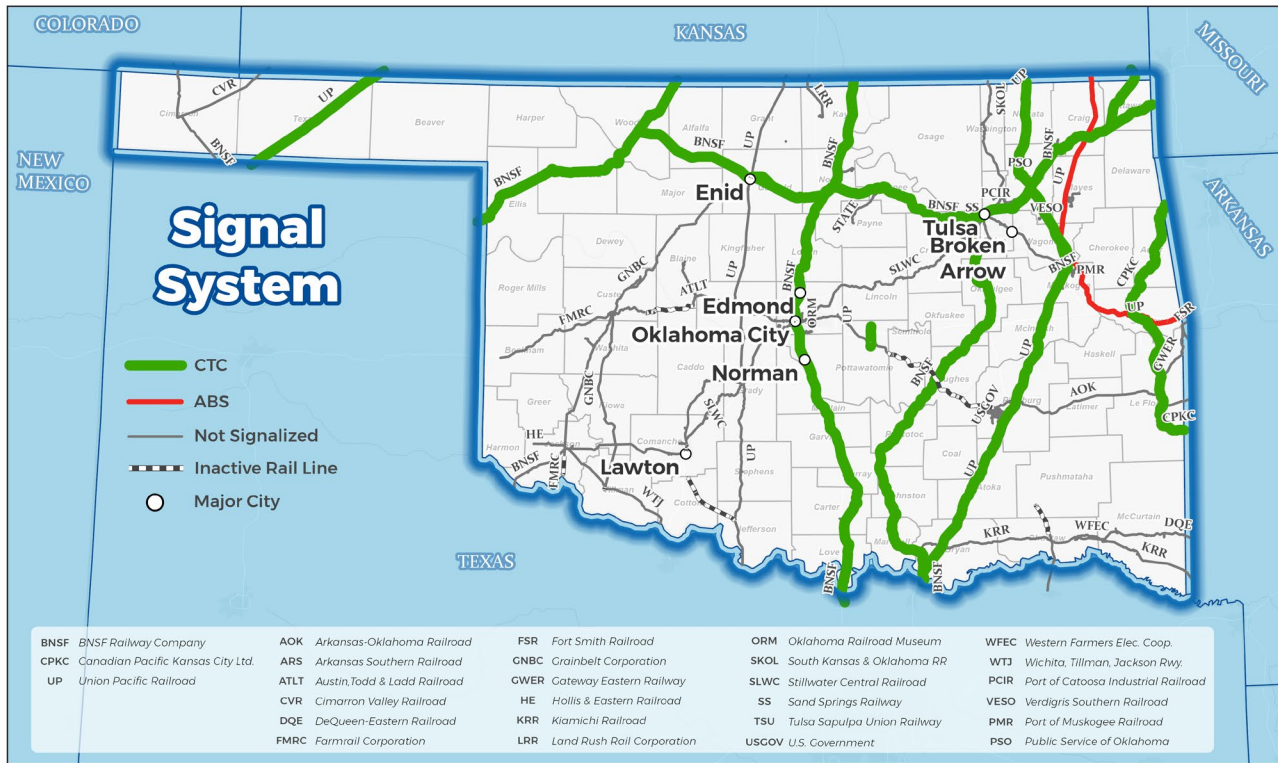
DISPATCH SYSTEM

Figure 2-4 provides an overview of the dispatch systems used to control train movements on Oklahoma rail lines, categorized by three primary types of dispatching systems:

- **CTC** - The most heavily used routes are dispatched by centralized traffic control (CTC), enabling a dispatcher to control railroad interlockings and signals to direct traffic flow of trains from a central location.
- **ABS** - Rail lines with moderate traffic rely on automatic block signal systems (ABS), by which electronic signals control train movements. In contrast to CTC, central dispatchers are not able to control signals or interlockings.
- **Not Signalized** - For low-density rail lines, electronic signal systems are not necessary, and trains are dispatched relying on train schedules, radio communication, or alternative methods. Rail lines without electronic signal systems are referred to as “dark territory.”



Figure 2-4. Rail Signal System in Oklahoma



Source: ODOT, 2021 Oklahoma State Rail Plan

As shown on the map, most Oklahoma rail lines use CTC system or are not signalized. ABS is less common.

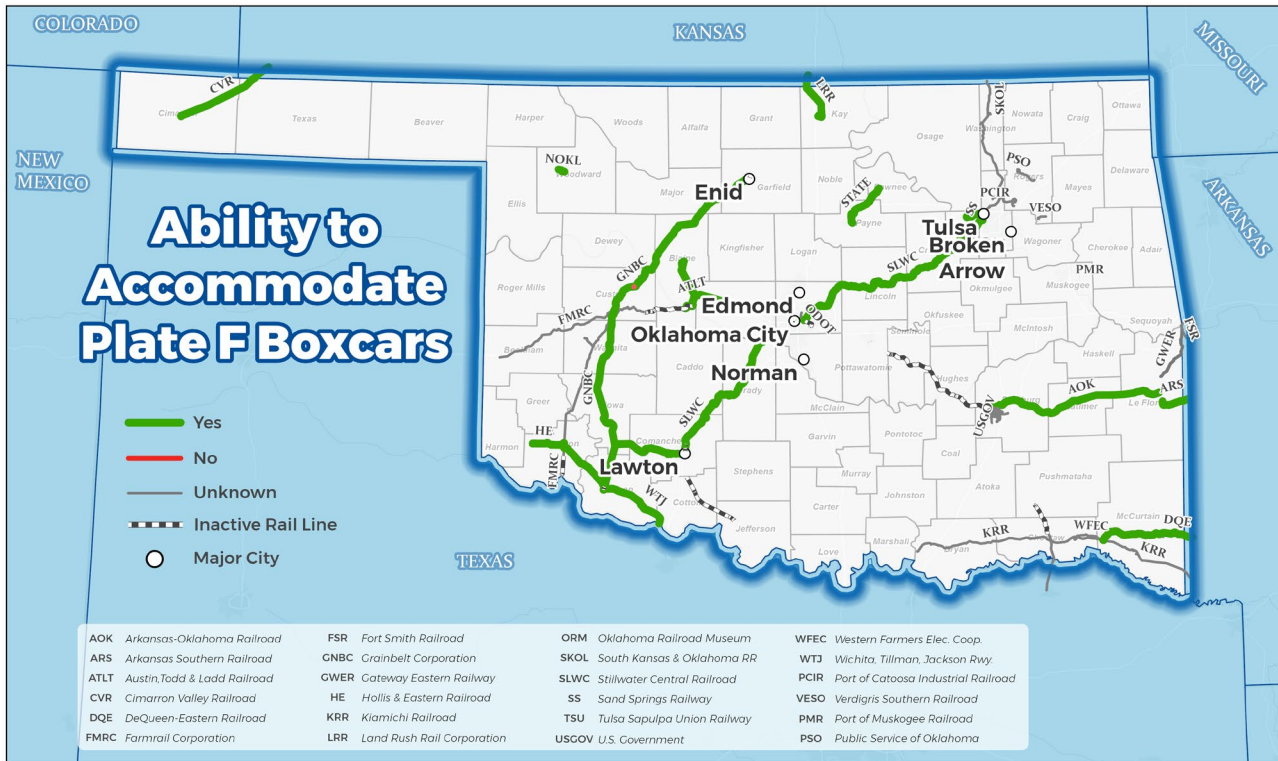
HEIGHT LIMITATIONS

Since Oklahoma's rail network was developed, the types and dimensions of railcars have increased. Initially, railcars were no more than 15 feet 6 inches, measured as the height above rails. Today, large "high cube" boxcars are 17 feet tall. Railcars that carry intermodal containers stacked two deep (double-stack intermodal cars) and railcars designed to carry automobiles (automotive racks) can be as high as 20 feet 2 inches. An additional 6 feet to 8 feet of clearance above railcars is required for safe travel due to train jostling.

Plate F clearance ("plates" are drawings of typical cross sections of different railcar sizes) is of particular concern on the Class III rail network. As shown in Figure 2-5, most of Oklahoma's Class III network can safely accommodate Plate F railcars.



Figure 2-5. Height Restrictions – Plate F

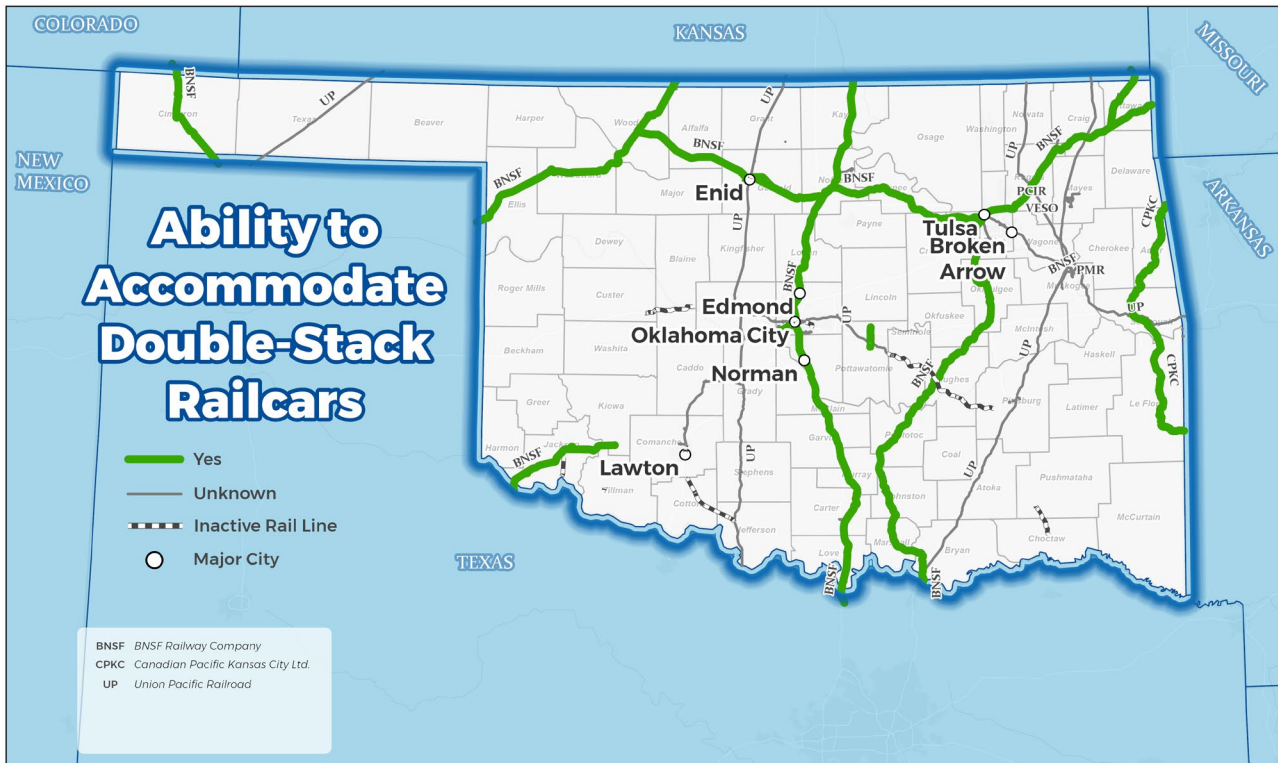


Source: Survey of Railroads

Most of Oklahoma's Class I rail network is cleared to at least Plate F, but of higher concern is whether rail lines can accommodate double-stack intermodal railcars, reflected in Figure 2-6.



**Figure 2-6. Height Restrictions – Double-Stack Intermodal Railcars**



Source: Railroad Websites, 2021 Oklahoma State Rail Plan

**WEIGHT LIMITATIONS**

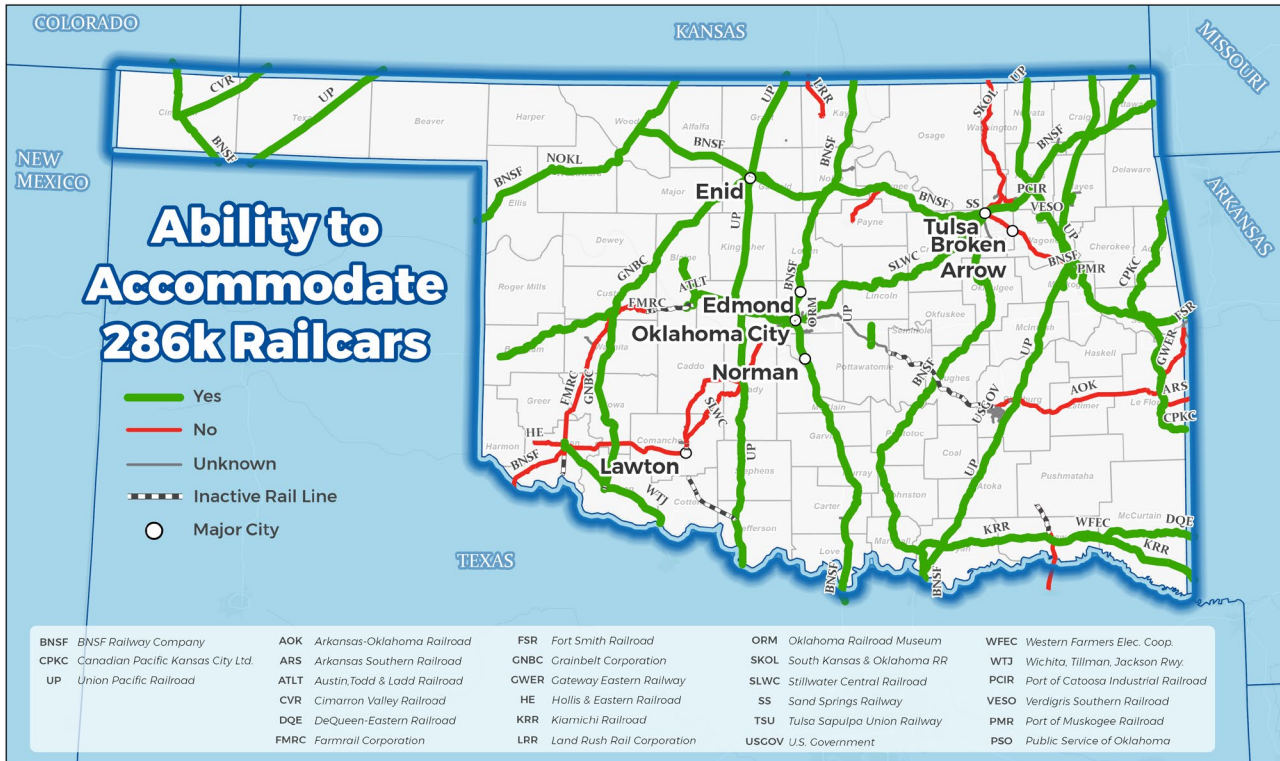
When Oklahoma’s rail network was originally constructed, railcars were lighter than they are today. In the 1990s the U.S. railroad industry increased the maximum standard gross weight (gross weight includes the weight of cargo or “payload” and the weight of the railcar itself or “tare”) of railcars from 263,000 pounds to 286,000 pounds. This increase was intended to improve efficiency, since many of the costs associated with handling railcars are the same regardless of weight. Railcars with 286,000-pound capacity have a better weight to tare ratio so that while 286,000 pounds is 8.7 percent higher than 263,000 pounds, the new railcars can accommodate 10 percent to 11 percent more payload per railcar.

To accommodate 286,000-pound railcars, rail lines require a combination of heavier rail, better ties, and better-maintained ballast, and bridges must be load-rated to these heavier railcars. The issue of 286,000-pound railcars is particularly problematic for short line railroads given their limited resources to upgrade weight-restricted segments. Weight restrictions place shippers at a disadvantage since they generally pay the same rates regardless of whether they use 286,000-pound railcars or 263,000 pound railcars but ship less per railcar in the 263,000 pound railcars. Furthermore, shippers are increasingly required to partially load heavier, more expensive railcars, since smaller railcars used for hauling 263,000 pound loads are becoming more difficult to find. Non 286,000-pound lines create bottlenecks because it is usually not cost-effective to shift freight between railcars to accommodate the weight-restricted segment.



Figure 2-7 shows Oklahoma's rail lines by their ability to accommodate 286,000-pound railcars. A total of 384 miles are restricted to 263,000 pound railcars, and 283 miles are restricted to 268,000 pound railcars, less than the industry standard 286,000-pound capacity.

Figure 2-7. Weight Restrictions



Source: Survey of Railroads, Railroad Websites

STRACNET/DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE FACILITIES

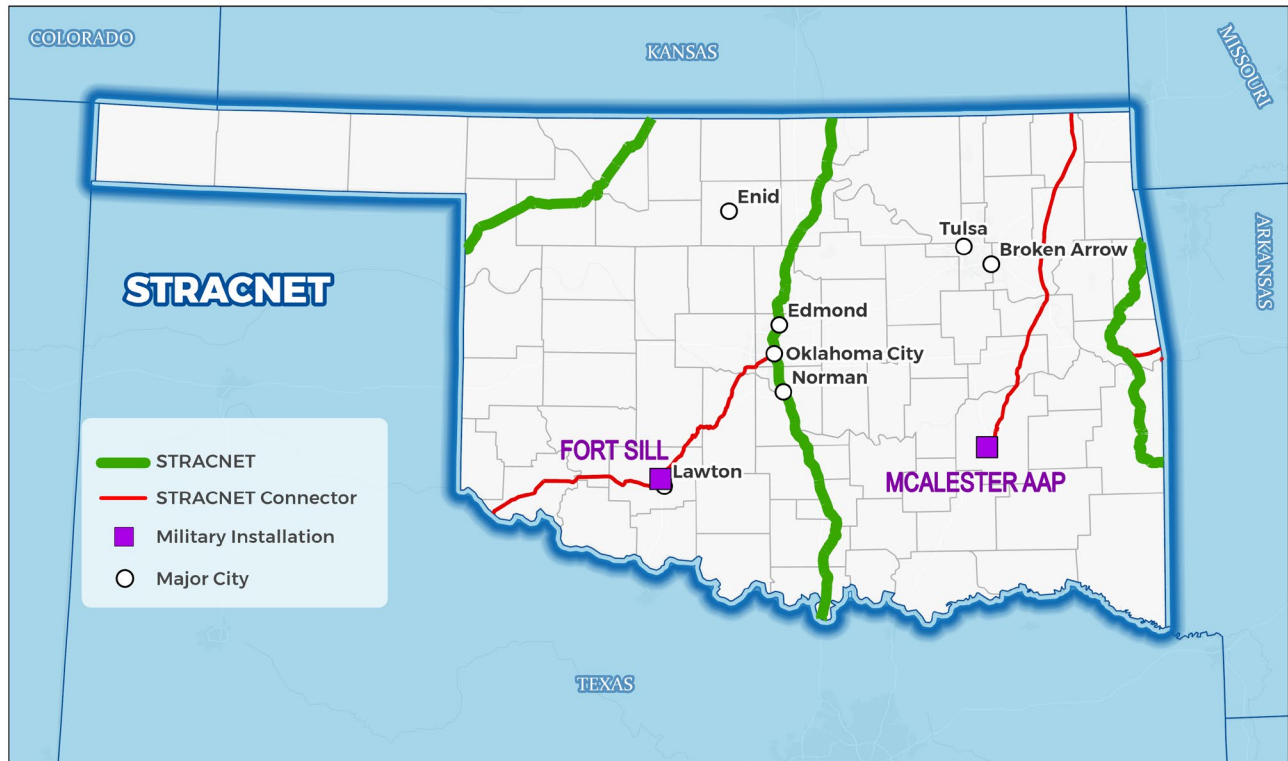
The National Strategic Rail Corridor Network (STRACNET) is a 33,000 mile nationally interconnected network of rail corridors designated as important to national defense. They were first identified in 1976 based on analysis of deployment needs, peacetime traffic, and combat tank shipments with subsequent updates reflecting changes in defense needs and the location of military installations. The current STRACNET provides main line corridor throughput capability as well as access to major defense contractors, logistics sites, and military facilities critical to national defense.

The Department of Defense's 2023 **Strategic Rail Corridor Network (STRACNET) & Defense Connector Lines** document provides a list of 141 Department of Defense installations and activities requiring rail service. Two of these are in Oklahoma: Fort Sill, with a railhead in Fort Sill, and McAlester Army Ammunition Plant, with a railhead in Savanna. Fort Sill is home to the U.S. Army Field Artillery School and Air Defense Artillery School. McAlester Army Ammunition Plant receives, stores, ships, produces, renovates, and demilitarizes conventional ammunition.

Figure 2-8 shows the STRACNET network in Oklahoma. These routes mainly travel north-south through Oklahoma, including along BNSF Railway paralleling I-35 and traveling through Oklahoma City.



Figure 2-8. **STRACNET Corridors**



Source: U. S. Department of Defense

### 2.1.3 Freight Rail Multimodal Facilities

Oklahoma hosts a variety of facilities where freight is transferred between rail and other modes, including highway and water. These multimodal connections enable shippers to leverage advantages offered by each transportation mode within a single freight movement. For instance, truck/rail operations combine the versatility of trucking with the cost-effectiveness of rail for transporting large volumes of freight over long distances. Similarly, rail/water connections allow shippers to optimize the economic benefits of both rail and water transport when moving bulk commodities.

#### **Automotive Ramps**

Finished vehicles are transported from ports or automotive assembly plants for local distribution by truck. BNSF and UP each operate one automotive facility in Oklahoma City. The BNSF automotive facility in Oklahoma City is operated by Inter-Rail Transport. Automotive facilities serve as key logistics hubs or regional distribution facilities for transporting automotive products such as finished vehicles or vehicle parts.



### ***Intermodal Terminals***

Intermodal terminals are locations where trailers and containers are transferred between trucks and railroad flatcars. No intermodal terminals marketed to the shipping public are in Oklahoma, which means that for most shippers, Dallas-Fort Worth is the closest option to access the intermodal network. The Plains Cotton Cooperative Association (PCCA) built a private intermodal rail yard in Altus, OK capable of handling 100 well cars, or approximately 220 containers at a time. This facility is reserved for PCCA customers only and ships approximately 16 BNSF intermodal trains per year, with each container holding roughly 80 bales of cotton. Freight is generally bound for export to Asia.

### ***Transload***

Transload facilities are locations where freight is transferred between truck and railcars. Transloads sites are different from intermodal terminals and auto ramps, which exclusively handle containers and vehicles respectively. Locations of Oklahoma transload facilities are shown in Figure 2-9, and are described in more detail in Appendix C. Transloading enables shippers without direct access to rail at their locations to access the rail network.

**Intermodal train**





Figure 2-9. *Transload Facilities in Oklahoma*



Source: Survey of Railroads, Railroad Websites

Transload facilities have been categorized into three types of facilities: Warehouse, Outdoor Transload, and Team Track.

- **Warehouse** transload facility is an enclosed facility that combines transloading with warehousing functions.
- **Outdoor transload** (or transload yard) is an open-air yard designed to transfer bulk or dimensional commodities, like lumber, directly between railcars and trucks
- **Team track** is a self-service rail siding, spur track, or platform for unloading or loading cargo directly to railroad track.

**River Ports**

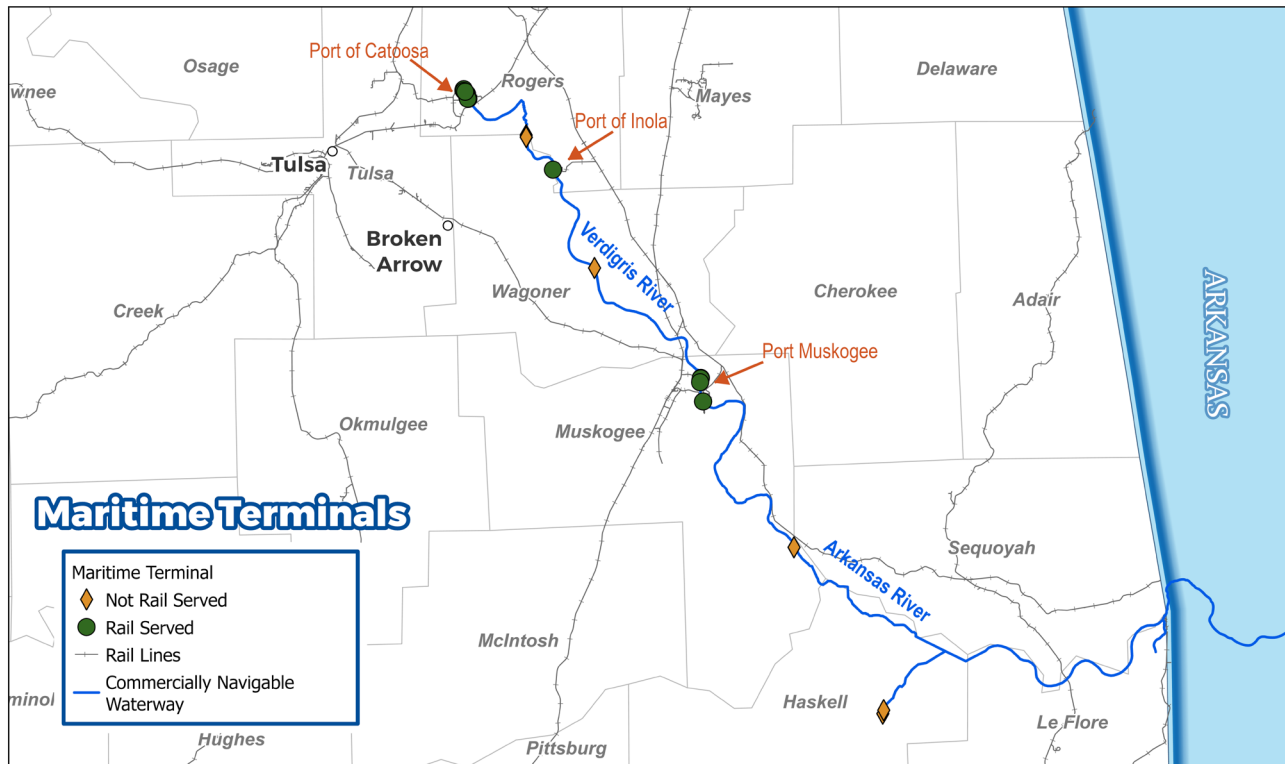
The McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System (MKARNS) provides Oklahoma with access to the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. MKARNS is commercially navigable from its confluence with the White and Mississippi Rivers in Arkansas, with the navigation channel ending upstream at the Tulsa Port of Catoosa. MKARNS is part of the greater U.S. Inland waterway system and is



designated as Marine Highway 44.<sup>13</sup> The navigation channel is maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) with five locks and dams within Oklahoma, enabling commercial navigation.

According to USACE data, 22 maritime terminals are located along Oklahoma's waterways. Fifteen are rail-served (Figure 2-10). All current rail-served maritime terminals are located within the Tulsa Port of Catoosa, Port Muskogee, and the Port of Inola.

**Figure 2-10. Maritime Terminals within Oklahoma**



Source: WSP Analysis USACE Institute for Water Resources

**TULSA PORT OF CATOOSA**

The Tulsa Port of Catoosa, located outside Tulsa, encompasses 2,000 acres with over 50 companies on-site, employing nearly 3,500 workers. The port handles a variety of commodities, including agricultural products, building materials, petroleum products, and machinery.<sup>14</sup> The Verdigris River provides waterway access with a navigation channel in the industrial park measuring approximately 1.3 miles long with a turning basin at the end. Within this navigation channel at the port, there are 10 maritime terminals per USACE data, all of which are rail-served. South Kansas & Oklahoma (SKOL)

<sup>13</sup> The U.S. Marine Highway Program is administered by the Maritime Administration and designates marine highways that mirror the Interstate Highway System. The program encourages the use of waterways over landside transportation by providing discretionary funding for facilities along the marine highway system.

<sup>14</sup> [About – Tulsa Ports](#)



Railroad owns the rail within the port, with trackage rights provided to Port of Catoosa Industrial Railroad (PCR). Rail service at the port interchanges with the BNSF Cherokee subdivision.

According to the USACE, slightly under 4 million tons moved through the port via the waterway in 2023, of which 52 percent was outbound, and 48 percent was inbound.

### PORT MUSKOGEE

Port Muskogee encompasses 1,000 acres and handles a variety of commodities, including agricultural products, building materials, and metal products. The port is located on the Arkansas River's main channel. According to USACE, three rail-served waterway terminals are in the port. UP owns the track within the port and provides trackage rights to Port Muskogee Railroad (PMR).

According to the USACE, just over 0.5 million short tons moved through the port in 2023 (8 percent outbound 92 percent inbound to the port).

### PORT OF INOLA

The Port of Inola is east of Tulsa and encompasses 2,200 acres with rail and barge access. The port is relatively new, with the first tenant facility completed in 2020. The targeted commodities to be handled at the port include plastics, resins, iron, steel, and nonferrous metals with industrial park tenants manufacturing commodities such as metals, semiconductors, batteries, battery components, and advanced aerial vehicle components.<sup>15</sup> The Verdigris Southern provides switching at the port and interchanges with the UP.

## 2.1.4 Passenger Rail System

### ***Passenger Rail Service***

Passenger rail service in Oklahoma is provided by the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, otherwise known as Amtrak, a corporation owned by the U.S. government that provides intercity passenger rail operations with over 30 routes in 46 of the 48 contiguous United States. Congress formed Amtrak under the Rail Passenger Service Act of 1970, which was signed into law by President Richard Nixon, and Amtrak came into existence on May 1, 1971. Railroad participation in Amtrak was voluntary, but relieved railroad companies of the obligation to provide intercity passenger rail service, which many had previously been obliged to do. The original agreements under which Amtrak assumed responsibility for intercity passenger rail services were based on the following principles:

- In exchange for capital stock in Amtrak, a railroad transferred title to its passenger train equipment to Amtrak.
- The railroad granted to Amtrak the universal right to operate passenger trains on any tracks in its system.
- The railroad was granted relief from any passenger rail service obligation.

<sup>15</sup> <https://tulsaports.com/locate-here/tulsa-port-of-inola/>



- Amtrak paid the railroad the incremental cost of maintaining its lines over which Amtrak operated. The costs covered were those required to maintain the fixed infrastructure in a state of good repair appropriate for passenger service.

The railroad was protected from most costs or lawsuits that came from running passenger trains. The Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) of 2008 established a threshold of 750 miles to determine the responsibility for operating costs of Amtrak routes not covered by ticket revenues. Routes less than 750 miles are considered “regional” service, and states and/or local partners in which these routes operate are responsible for operating subsidies. The federal government provides subsidies for “long-distance” routes over 750 miles. Most long-distance routes operate as a single daily round trip with some notable exceptions such as the Sunset Limited and Cardinal, which operate tri-weekly. Examples exist of state and locally supported service operating as frequently as hourly. Several examples now exist of passenger operators other than Amtrak delivering these services. With a distance less than 750 miles, the **Heartland Flyer** is considered a regional service.

### **HEARTLAND FLYER** OVERVIEW

A single Amtrak route serves Oklahoma, the **Heartland Flyer**, providing daily round-trip service between Santa Fe Depot in Oklahoma City and Fort Worth Central Station in Fort Worth, Texas, with five stops between (Figure 2-12). At 206 miles, the **Heartland Flyer** is a regional train and funded through cost-sharing between state governments (ODOT and TxDOT). The service is provided over a railway owned and operated by BNSF Railway. BNSF is compensated for hosting the **Heartland Flyer** service on an “avoidable cost” basis (i.e., the costs that BNSF would not incur if the **Heartland Flyer** did not operate).

**Figure 2-11. Passengers Waiting for Heartland Flyer**

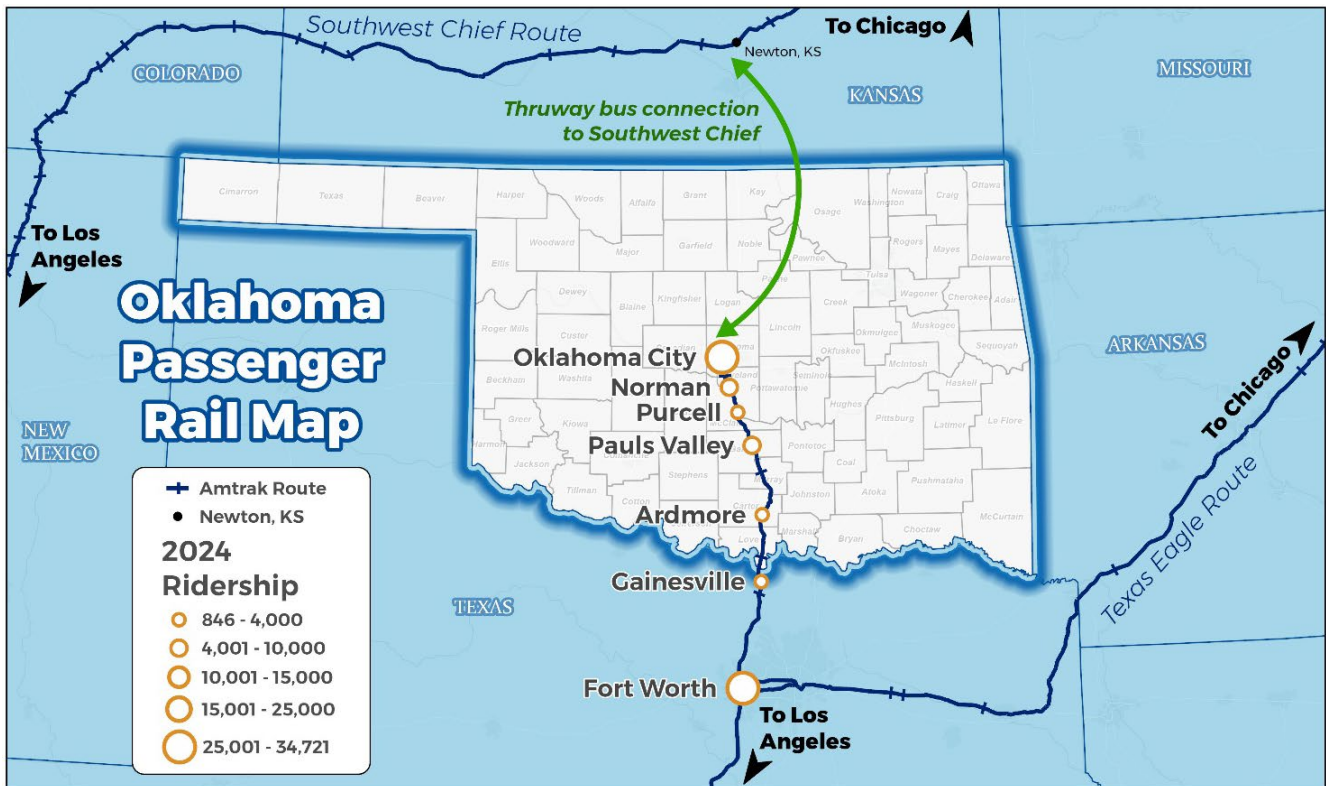


Source: Amtrak

Since its inception in 1999, the **Heartland Flyer's** schedule has been roughly the same with only minor alterations. As can be seen in Table 2-4, the southbound **Heartland Flyer** departs Oklahoma City in the morning, arriving at Fort Worth midday. The northbound train departs Fort Worth in the dinner hour, arriving at Oklahoma City in the evening. The 206-mile journey in each direction is completed in just over four hours, or about one hour longer than an uncongested highway trip.



Figure 2-12. Heartland Flyer Route and Ridership Map



Source: Amtrak

Table 2-4. Heartland Flyer Stations and Departure Times

Station	Mile	Service #821 (daily)		Service #822 (daily)	
		Read Down	Read Up	Read Down	Read Up
<b>Oklahoma City, OK (OKC)</b>	0	8:25 a.m. Depart	9:27 p.m. Arrive		
<b>Norman, OK (NOR)</b>	20	8:47 a.m. Depart	8:49 p.m. Depart		
<b>Purcell, OK (PUR)</b>	35	9:02 a.m. Depart	8:28 p.m. Depart		
<b>Pauls Valley, OK (PVL)</b>	57	9:25 a.m. Depart	8:03 p.m. Depart		
<b>Ardmore, OK (ADM)</b>	102	10:17 a.m. Depart	7:11 p.m. Depart		
<b>Gainesville, TX (GLE)</b>	141	11:03 a.m. Depart	6:28 p.m. Depart		
<b>Fort Worth, TX (FTW)</b>	206	12:27 p.m. Arrive	5:25 p.m. Depart		

Source: Amtrak



### HEARTLAND FLYER STATIONS

Four **Heartland Flyer** stations are in Oklahoma, and two are in Texas. Station overviews are included in this section, and full station details for the seven stations can be seen in Appendix E.

- **Oklahoma City, Oklahoma:** Santa Fe Depot serves as the Oklahoma City Amtrak station and is in downtown Oklahoma City. The station is unstaffed, but is a historic station building with a waiting area. The Oklahoma City Streetcar stops adjacent to the station. The EMBARK bus service provides additional transit connections at the station.
- **Norman, Oklahoma:** The Norman Station is in the center of Norman, and within one mile of the University of Oklahoma campus. It is unstaffed with no shelter. Local transit connections are through the EMBARK Norman bus service, whose transit center is three blocks away.
- **Purcell, Oklahoma:** The Purcell Station is unstaffed and has a station building with a waiting area. It is located a block from the Purcell central business district and is served by Delta Public Transit, which provides on-demand bus service.
- **Pauls Valley, Oklahoma:** The Pauls Valley Station is unstaffed and has a station building with a waiting area. It is in the central business district of Pauls Valley. Public transit is provided by Delta Public Transit's on-demand bus service.
- **Ardmore, Oklahoma:** The Ardmore Station is unstaffed and has a platform only. It is in the Ardmore central business district, and local transit is provided by the Southern Oklahoma Rural Transportation System on-demand bus service.
- **Gainesville, Texas:** The Gainesville Station, located less than 10 miles south of the Oklahoma state line, is unstaffed and has a station building with a waiting room. It is in the Gainesville central business district, and local transit is provided by the TAPS Public Transit, which provides on-demand bus service.
- **Fort Worth, Texas:** The Fort Worth Central Station is staffed and has a station building with a waiting room. It is in downtown Fort Worth and serves as a transportation hub. Commuter/regional rail connections are available by the Trinity Railway Express to Irving and Dallas, and the TexRail service to Grapevine and Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport (DFW). The "T" provides local bus connections, including a downtown circulator bus. Greyhound also serves Central Station with intercity bus service.

### HEARTLAND FLYER CONNECTIONS

Passengers can connect directly to Amtrak long-distance trains traveling between Los Angeles, California, and Chicago, Illinois, in Fort Worth, and via a bus connection at Oklahoma City:

- **Connection to the Texas Eagle Service:** The **Heartland Flyer** arrives in Fort Worth at 12:27 p.m., and the westbound and eastbound **Texas Eagle** trains depart Fort Worth at 2:02 p.m. and 2:18 p.m., respectively. Therefore, the layover in Fort Worth between the arrival of the **Heartland Flyer** and the departure of the westbound **Texas Eagle** is about an hour and a half; the layover between the **Heartland Flyer** and the eastbound **Texas Eagle** is closer to two hours. Northbound travelers transferring from the **Texas Eagle** to the **Heartland Flyer** have a longer layover, since the westbound **Texas Eagle** arrives in Fort Worth at 1:17 p.m. and the eastbound **Texas Eagle** arrives at 1:51 p.m., while the **Heartland Flyer** leaves Fort Worth at 5:25 p.m.

Therefore, between the arrival of the **Texas Eagle** and the departure of the **Heartland Flyer** for westbound **Texas Eagle** trains is a wait of a little over four hours, and over three and a half hours to transfer from the eastbound **Texas Eagle** to the **Heartland Flyer**.

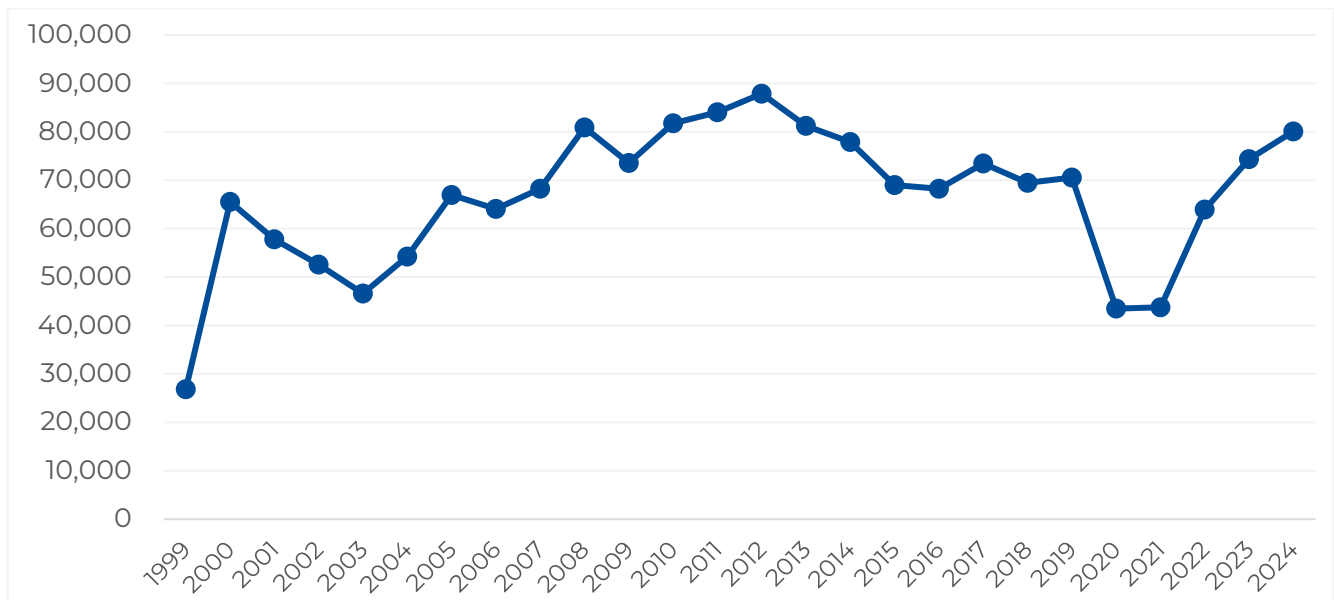
- **Connection to the Southwest Chief Service:** Amtrak provides a connecting bus service between Oklahoma City and Newton, Kansas, to meet the **Southwest Chief** service between Los Angeles, California, and Chicago, Illinois. This transfer occurs at night. The westbound **Southwest Chief** travels through Newton, Kansas, at 2:20 a.m., while the eastbound **Southwest Chief** arrives at Newton at 1:59 a.m. Northbound buses depart Oklahoma City Santa Fe Depot at 9:50 p.m. and arrive in Newton at 1:40 a.m. Southbound buses depart Newton at 4:00 a.m. and arrive in Oklahoma City at 7:18 a.m. Intermediate **Southwest Chief** markets include Kansas City, Missouri, cities in Kansas (including Lawrence, Topeka, and greater Wichita at Newton), and parallel to the historic Route 66 corridor with stations including Albuquerque, New Mexico, and near Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona.

**Passenger Rail Performance**

RIDERSHIP OVERVIEW

During the COVID-19 pandemic, ridership on the **Heartland Flyer** service declined drastically, but has since recovered, and with over 80,000 passengers, 2024 ridership was among the highest since the service began in 1999 (Figure 2-13). Nationally and internationally, passenger rail service in recent years has tended to exceed pre-pandemic levels.

**Figure 2-13. Heartland Flyer Ridership by Year**

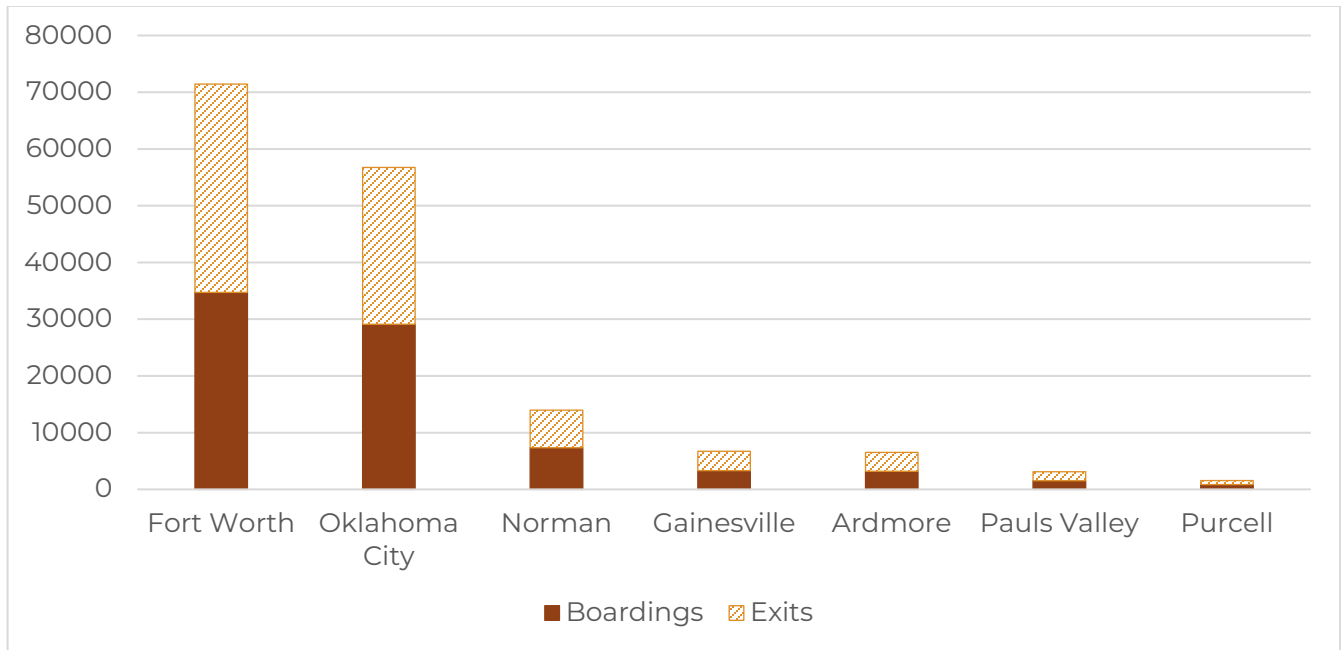


Source: Amtrak

RIDERSHIP BY STATION

Ridership by station for the **Heartland Flyer** can be seen in Figure 2-14. Most passenger boardings and exits (80 percent) are at Fort Worth or Oklahoma City. Those two plus Norman comprise 89 percent of boardings and exits.

**Figure 2-14. Heartland Flyer Ridership by Station (FY 2025)**

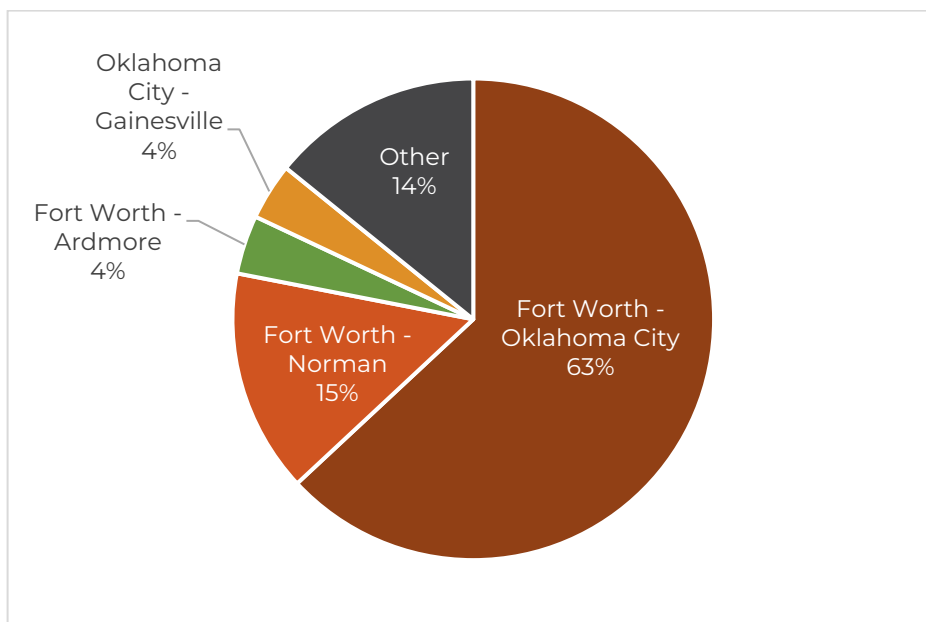


Source: Amtrak

**CITY PAIRS**

Most trips on the **Heartland Flyer** route are used to access Oklahoma City or the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex, so that Oklahoma City – Fort Worth is nearly two-thirds of the ridership, and Fort Worth – Norman is another 15 percent (Figure 2-15).

**Figure 2-15. Heartland Flyer Ridership by City Pair in FY 2024**

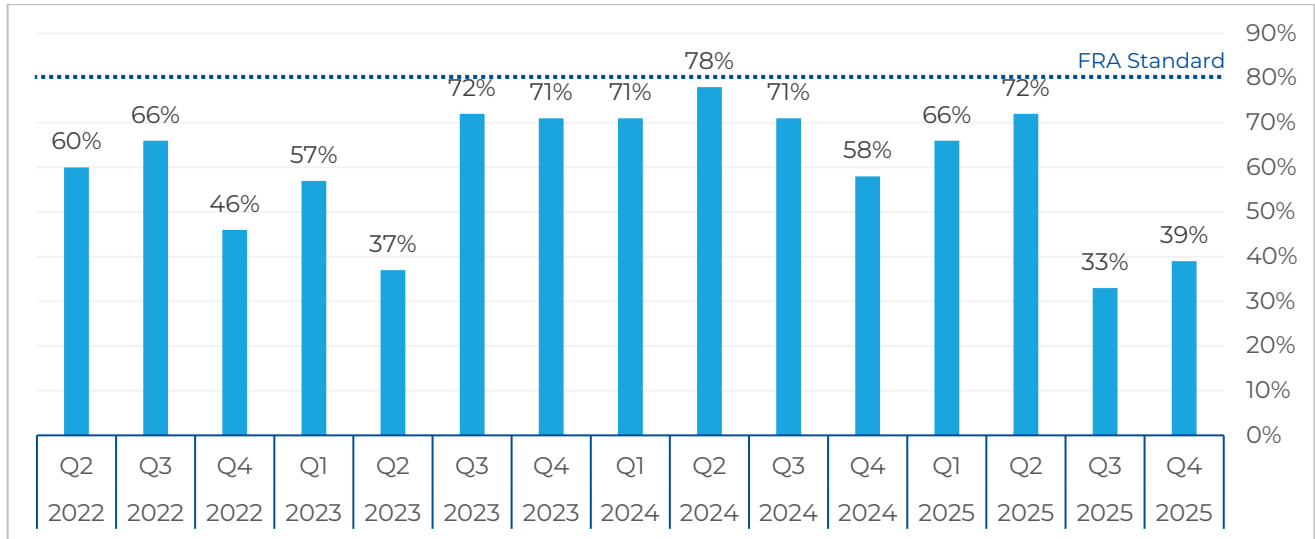


Source: Amtrak

CUSTOMER ON-TIME PERFORMANCE

Customer on-time performance is defined as the percentage of customers who arrive at their destination within 15 minutes of the scheduled arrival time. Overall, customer on-time performance for **Heartland Flyer** service has varied over the past three years. Some of the worst on-time performance over this period were the last two quarters of 2025, with 33 percent and 39 percent of customers arriving on time. Since the second quarter of 2022, the Heartland Flyer has not surpassed the FRA on time performance standard of 80 percent. (Figure 2-16)

**Figure 2-16. Customer On-Time Performance for the Heartland Flyer (Amtrak)**

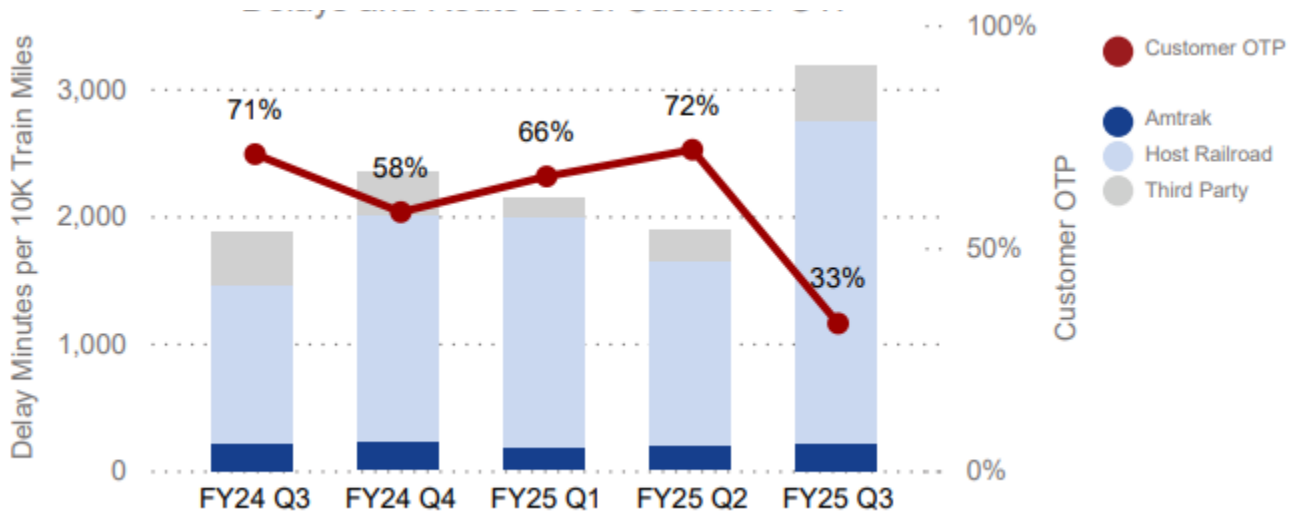


Source: **Amtrak**

Customer on-time performance is affected by the host railroad, along with Amtrak and other third parties. Figure 2-17 includes the five most recent quarters of data for customer on-time performance, along with delay responsibility, by minutes per 10,000 train miles. Most delays are associated with host railroad interference, although some level of delay is also caused by Amtrak or third parties. For host railroads to avoid delaying Amtrak trains, it is important that host railroads are able to plan for Amtrak trains and that Amtrak trains are on time. The top three causes of delay in FY25, Q3 were slow order delays, freight train interference, and weather-related delays.



**Figure 2-17. Customer On-Time Performance with Delay Responsibility (Amtrak)**



Source: Amtrak

According to details from the most recent fiscal year quarter (FY25, Q3), the Pauls Valley Station in Oklahoma has the highest number of exiting customers arriving late, with about 95 percent on train 822 (**Heartland Flyer** northbound). Purcell also had a high number of customers arriving late, with just over 90 percent on train 822. Overall, train 821 (**Heartland Flyer** southbound) saw lower numbers of customers late relative to the northbound train (822) (Table 2-5).

**Table 2-5. Late Detaining Customers in Quarter 3 of Fiscal Year 2025 for the Heartland Flyer (Amtrak)**

Train Number	Arrival Station Code	Arrival Station Name	Total Exiting Customers	Late Existing Customers	Average Minutes Late	Percentage of Late Exiting Customers
821	FTW	Fort Worth, Texas	9,892	6,263	45	63.30%
821	GLE	Gainesville, Texas	654	324	36	49.50%
821	ADM	Ardmore, Oklahoma	415	131	28	31.60%
821	PVL	Pauls Valley, Oklahoma	140	18	27	12.90%
821	NOR	Norman, Oklahoma	56	1	16	1.80%
821	PUR	Purcell, Oklahoma	20	0	—	0.00%
822	PVL	Pauls Valley, Oklahoma	296	280	53	94.60%
822	PUR	Purcell, Oklahoma	207	190	67	91.80%

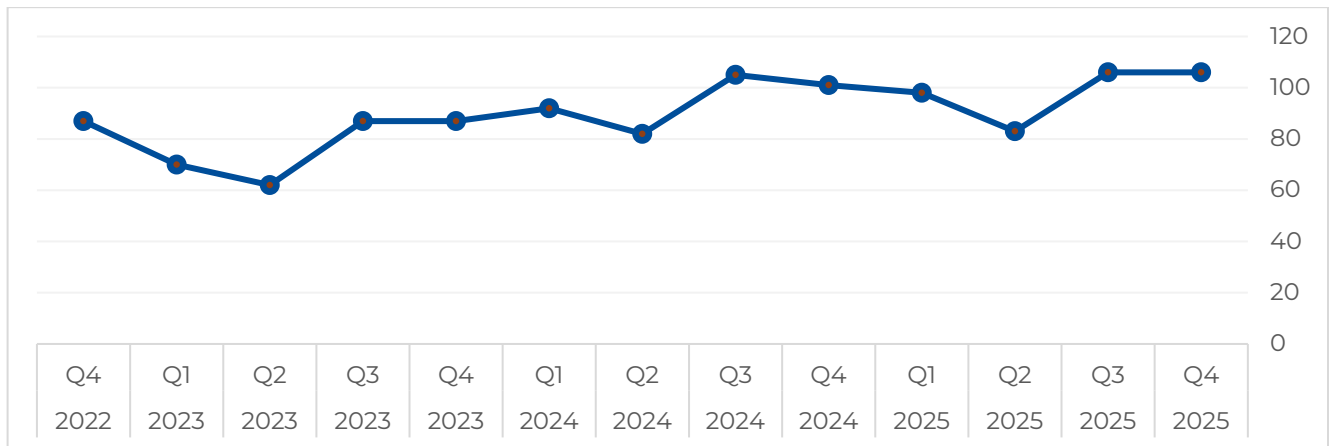
Train Number	Arrival Station Code	Arrival Station Name	Total Exiting Customers	Late Existing Customers	Average Minutes Late	Percentage of Late Exiting Customers
822	NOR	Norman, Oklahoma	1,656	1,409	69	85.10%
822	ADM	Ardmore, Oklahoma	439	371	74	84.50%
822	OKC	Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	7,463	5,094	66	68.30%
822	GLE	Gainesville, Texas	358	196	38	54.70%

Source: Amtrak

PASSENGER-MILES PER TRAIN MILES

Passenger-miles per train-mile provides an indication of the average number of passengers on a **Heartland Flyer** train at any given time (i.e., the train’s load factor). The higher the number of passengers per train, the more farebox revenues can help cover operating costs of the services, and the more external benefits (e.g., environmental and safety benefits) the service can provide. In the most recent year, the average ridership has been 98 passenger-miles per train-mile. At 106 passenger-miles per train-mile, both Q3 and Q4 of 2025 were the highest of the four-year period (Figure 2-18).

Figure 2-18. **Passenger-Miles per Train-Mile for the Heartland Flyer (2022 to 2025)**

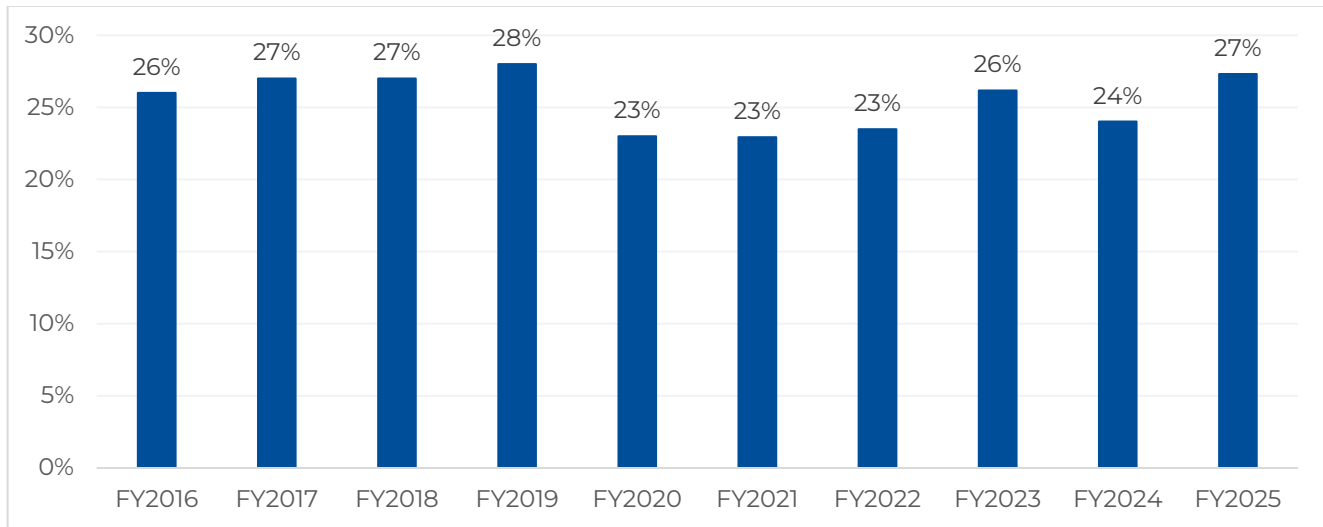


Source: Amtrak

FAREBOX RECOVERY RATIO

The ticket revenues that Amtrak collects cover about a quarter of the cost of the service. The **Heartland Flyer’s** cost recovery ratio is Amtrak’s adjusted operating revenue divided by Amtrak’s adjusted costs. Cost recovery trends mirror ridership, since the costs of operating trains are fixed while passenger revenue fluctuates with the number of customers. For the **Heartland Flyer**, cost recovery for the past few years has remained between about 20 and 30 percent, with the most recent quarter at 29 percent (FY25, Q3) (Figure 2-19).

Figure 2-19. Farebox Recovery for the Heartland Flyer

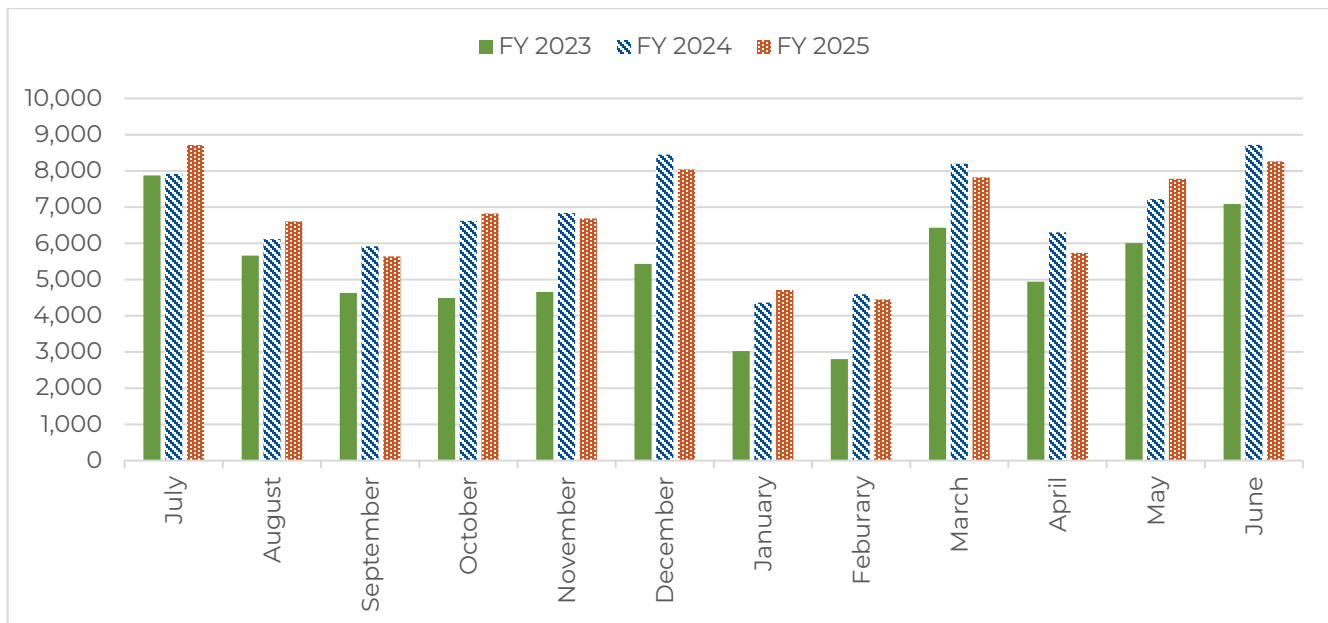


Source: Amtrak

MONTHLY TRENDS

Monthly trends can be evaluated to determine if passengers are more reliant on the **Heartland Flyer** during specific parts of the year. Figure 2-20 includes the monthly data for the last three complete fiscal years. Peaks occur during June, July, December, and March, roughly corresponding to times of peak leisure travel.

Figure 2-20. Ridership on the Heartland Flyer by Month for Fiscal Years 2023 to 2025 (Amtrak)



Source: Amtrak



### ***Tourist/Excursion Railroads***

Railroad operations known as “excursion” or “tourist” trains provide passenger rail service, but the intent of the service is recreational as opposed to transportation. Often, the train rides end where they began. The purpose is the enjoyment of a train ride as well as to educate visitors on railroad heritage and history. The Oklahoma Railway Museum provides a historical experience in motion, with an educational experience of railroads and how they shaped Oklahoma and the nation. Regularly scheduled 40-minute train rides occur two Saturdays per month, with four trips per day, between April and August. The excursions operate approximately 3 miles of former Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad trackage, which the museum owns. Excursion trains can play an important role in rail corridor preservation, since they operate over rail lines that typically lack demand for freight service and may otherwise be abandoned.

### **2.1.5 Public Funding and Financing**

Public funding for rail infrastructure can be broadly classified into three categories:

- Highway-railroad grade crossing improvements
- Direct investment in rail infrastructure such as tracks, yards, and bridges
- Support for passenger rail

In Oklahoma, as in most states, the freight rail network is primarily owned by private companies. Operating costs of freight service are funded by revenues from freight customers. Capital investments in track and rolling stock (freight cars and locomotives) are largely privately funded as well. Some public funding is available for freight rail, described in more detail below. For Class I railroads, public funding tends to be limited. The smaller Class II and Class III railroads rely more heavily on public funding and financing for capital improvements.

The justification for public support varies based on the funding type. Grade crossing improvements improve public safety, and projects such as grade separations can improve mobility for automobiles by reducing wait times at crossings. Public investments in short line infrastructure or connecting shipper facilities maintain shipping options for local industries or agriculture, or attract new development. Public subsidies for passenger rail, in contrast, are essential to the provision of service, as passenger fares cover about a quarter of the cost of operating the ***Heartland Flyer***, and cannot support capital expenses.

State, local and federal funding programs are described below. Some of these funding sources are exclusively for rail while others are potentially eligible for rail if a rail project's benefits align with identified grant program goals. Some public programs used for rail provide funding (such as grants given with no expectation of repayment). Other programs provide financing where full payment is anticipated, although typically at lower interest rates than would be available on the private market.

### ***State Funding/Financing***

#### **PROGRAMS OF THE ODOT MULTIMODAL DIVISION**

State-sponsored rail investment in Oklahoma has been provided through ODOT since the late 1970s. ODOT's Freight Mobility Branch oversees the rail assistance programs described below. One of ODOT's funding sources is the Railroad Maintenance Revolving Fund (RMRF). Funding sources for



the RMRF include an annual 4 percent tax on freight rail revenues, lease agreements with short line rail operators on state-owned trackage, and right-of-way sales. Currently, the RMRF is used for maintenance and rehabilitation projects on state-owned rail lines, providing matching funds for federally funded Section 130 highway-rail grade crossing projects, grant administration for FRA projects, and matching funds for federal discretionary grants.

#### OKLAHOMA TAX CREDIT PROGRAMS

Oklahoma supports rail projects through tax credits, either reducing corporate income tax liabilities of railroads or other entities, or by diverting income taxes paid by railroad employees. Specific programs are:

- **Rail Modernization Tax Credit** (OS 68-2357.104) - This program, administered by ODOT since 2006, provides a tax credit up to 50 percent of qualified railroad reconstruction and replacement expenditures incurred by Class II and Class III railroads. The amount of tax credit is limited to \$5,000 per mile of railroad track owned or leased within Oklahoma by the taxpayer. The total amount of credits used to offset tax liability is limited to \$5 million per year. An analysis performed in 2023 found that between 2017 and 2021, an average of 10 returns per year were submitted under the program, claiming an average of just over \$270,000 per submittal. The overall reduction of tax liability was approximately \$2.4 million per year.<sup>16</sup>
- **The Strategic Industrial Development Enhancement (SIDE) Act** (HB 3081) – Passed in 2022 by the State Legislature, this program promotes the competitiveness of rural industrial parks, including projects to improve rail access. The program is capped at \$12 million annually for 2023-2028. The program focuses on low population counties with populations less than 100,000. Locations must be qualified, such as an industrial park owned by an economic development agency or a municipality, or locations adjacent to a Class II or Class III railroad. Project sponsors may be economic development agencies, port authorities, industrial parks, or Class II and Class III railroads. Eligible entities to receive the tax credits must be located in Oklahoma and have a qualifying project at a qualifying location. The project sponsor submits a project application to the Oklahoma Department of Commerce on behalf of the eligible entity. The project tax credit is 50 percent of the qualified expenditure, and may not exceed \$3,000,000. As of 2026, legislation has been introduced to extend the program to 2032.
- **Public-Private Partnership (P3)** (O.S. 62-891.2) - The Oklahoma Department of Commerce also administers the P3 program, which can be used to fund essential infrastructure, including rail improvements. The program utilizes the regular state tax withholdings collected from a benefited for-profit employer to repay loans from the state. It has been utilized by the Tulsa Port of Catoosa to assist with implementing a \$35 million unit-car loading facility. That loan was repaid using the state income tax withholdings of railroad employees. The P3 program shares a

<sup>16</sup> PFM Consulting Group, ***Incentive Evaluation Commission, Draft Evaluation: Railroad Modernization Tax Credit***, September 29, 2023,

[https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/omes/documents/iec/archive/support/2023/Railroad%20Tax%20Credit\\_Draft%20Evaluation\\_9.28.23.pdf](https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/omes/documents/iec/archive/support/2023/Railroad%20Tax%20Credit_Draft%20Evaluation_9.28.23.pdf)

pool of \$200 million with two other ODOC-administered programs. As previous awards are repaid, new awards can be made with the same funds, so it acts as a “revolving loan fund.”

**PASSENGER RAIL FUNDING**

Passenger rail service in Oklahoma is funded in part by passenger ticket revenues but, like most passenger rail, the *Heartland Flyer* service relies on other funding to support operating costs as well as capital needs. Texas and Oklahoma have contracted with Amtrak to provide the service and pay the portion of capital and operating costs that are not covered by passenger ticket revenues.

As shown in Table 2-6, ODOT entirely funded the *Heartland Flyer* until 2007, when the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) began to provide funding. The cost of the service (net farebox revenue) jumped by 40 percent between 2013 and 2014, when the cost allocation formula changed as part of the Passenger Rail and Improvement Act (PRIIA). Subsidies for the service increased from \$5 million in 2017 to over \$7 million in 2026. As a result, ODOT's cost to support the service increased from \$3.0 million in 2017 to \$4.1 million in 2026, 37 percent over the 2017 cost.

**Table 2-6.** *Funding of the Heartland Flyer 1999 - 2025*

Year	Total Contract Cost	Oklahoma Contract Cost	Texas Contract Cost	Total Revenues
1999	\$1,309,462	\$1,309,462	\$0	\$570,083
2000	\$5,237,846	\$5,237,846	\$0	\$1,384,637
2001	\$5,237,846	\$5,237,846	\$0	\$1,187,670
2002	\$5,237,846	\$5,237,846	\$0	\$1,014,422
2003	\$4,700,000	\$4,700,000	\$0	\$880,808
2004	\$4,700,000	\$4,700,000	\$0	\$1,012,013
2005	\$3,900,000	\$3,900,000	\$0	\$1,322,664
2006	\$3,900,000	\$3,900,000	\$0	\$1,303,138
2007	\$4,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$1,320,790
2008	\$4,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$1,880,832
2009	\$4,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$1,744,746
2010	\$4,122,502	\$2,211,251	\$1,911,251	\$1,972,544
2011	\$4,400,000	\$2,325,000	\$2,075,000	\$2,101,750



Year	Total Contract Cost	Oklahoma Contract Cost	Texas Contract Cost	Total Revenues
2012	\$4,550,000	\$2,325,000	\$2,225,000	\$2,257,672
2013	\$4,200,000	\$2,100,000	\$2,100,000	\$2,201,774
2014	\$5,900,000	\$2,950,000	\$2,950,000	\$2,135,475
2015	\$5,700,000	\$3,200,000	\$2,500,000	\$2,278,000
2016	\$5,752,906	\$3,252,906	\$2,500,000	\$2,221,000
2017	\$5,038,212	\$2,979,000	\$2,059,212	\$2,075,000
2018	\$5,469,801	\$3,104,131	\$2,365,470	\$2,089,000
2019	\$5,681,174	\$3,216,280	\$2,464,894	\$2,066,336
2020	\$5,983,137	\$3,387,230	\$2,804,093	\$1,364,423
2021	\$5,939,212	\$3,370,533	\$2,568,678	\$974,332
2022	\$5,441,013	\$3,087,993	\$2,353,021	\$1,794,090
2023	\$6,480,261	\$3,677,807	\$2,802,454	\$2,020,865
2024	\$5,464,411	\$3,217,396	\$2,247,015	\$2,134,811
2025	\$6,342,556	\$3,753,177	\$2,589,378	\$2,950,381
2026	\$7,056,971	\$4,068,084	\$2,988,887	\$2,746,838

Source: ODOT

ODOT's primary source for funding the *Heartland Flyer* project has been the Tourism and Passenger Rail Revolving Fund, which has funded the service at \$2.85 million per year. Initially, when TxDOT began to participate in funding the *Heartland Flyer*, ODOT's share was less than \$2.85 million per year, and the Tourism and the Passenger Rail Revolving Fund ran a surplus.

Later, the *Heartland Flyer* was also funded through an additional temporary source of funding related to the sale of the state-owned Sooner Subdivision to the Stillwater Central Railroad, a subsidiary of Watco. The sale of the Sooner Subdivision included a provision that Stillwater Central would provide a 6-month pilot passenger rail service between Midwest City and Sapulpa. The Stillwater Central Railroad chose instead to pay \$3.1 million in Liquidated Damages in 4 payments over 4 years, \$778,000 per year starting in 2019. These payments were deposited in the Tourism and

Passenger Rail Revolving Fund. These funds have been used to pay for the *Heartland Flyer* activities such as operations, capital, advertising and station maintenance.

In 2023, Watco liquidated damages ended. ODOT’s costs for the *Heartland Flyer* have exceeded the annual \$2.85 million funding for the Tourism and Passenger Rail Revolving Fund. ODOT has been paying the difference by drawing down the previous surplus from the Tourism and Passenger Rail Revolving Fund, but by the end of federal fiscal year 2026, this surplus funding will run out. In Federal Fiscal Year 2027, ODOT will run a deficit for the *Heartland Flyer*. TXDOT also does not have a secure funding source for their portion for Federal Fiscal year 2027.

**Table 2-7.** *Oklahoma Funding of the Heartland Flyer, 2021–2025*

Year	Oklahoma Contract Cost	Tourism and Passenger Rail Revolving Fund	Tourism and Passenger Rail Revolving Fund Surplus	Temporary Sources such as Watco Liquidated Damages
2021	\$3,370,533	\$2,850,000	(\$257,467)	\$778,000
2022	\$3,087,993	\$2,850,000	(\$540,007)	\$778,000
2023	\$3,677,807	\$2,850,000	\$827,807	\$0
2024	\$3,217,396	\$2,850,000	\$367,396	\$0
2025	\$3,753,177	\$2,850,000	\$903,177	\$0
2026	\$4,068,084	\$2,850,000	\$1,218,084	\$0

Source: ODOT, March 2026

**Local Funding/Financing**

Localities can provide funding or local tax credits at their discretion for the improvement of rail infrastructure within their jurisdiction. This may be done to improve safety, or to promote economic development by ensuring that local shippers have access to competitive options. As an example, the City of Claremore provided a 20 percent match for a federal grant to study solutions for the travel delays caused by the city’s large number of at-grade rail crossings.

Municipalities can also utilize tax increment financing (TIF) to fund projects. TIFs borrow funds to implement a project that is expected to increase local property or other tax revenues. The increase in collected local taxes over time is set aside to guarantee repayment of the borrowed funds. The State’s Leverage Act, passed in 2000, can boost the effectiveness of TIFs by using project-generated state taxes to match local revenue sources. This program has not been utilized to date.

Oklahoma has two public port authorities (described in Section 1.4.4) that operate three rail-served locations. Port authorities can construct facilities, issue bonds, make loans, and sell or buy real and personal property. Both ports have utilized their own funds, as well as federal grants and state tax credits, to expand rail service at their facilities.



### **Federal Funding**

There are two basic types of federal grants: discretionary and formula. Discretionary grant funding is requested for individual projects through an application process. Formula funding programs provide annual funding directly to states for specific purposes using an allocation methodology. As of 2026, the only formula funding program specific to rail is the Rail-Highway Crossing Program (Section 130).

Most federal funding for freight rail infrastructure projects is provided through competitive discretionary grant programs. Some discretionary programs are rail-specific and are administered by the FRA, while others are multimodal and managed by the USDOT or its sub-agencies, typically the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

Eligible entities must file project applications for federal discretionary grant programs, which are reviewed and awarded by USDOT. Grant programs are usually “oversubscribed,” and a majority of applicants receive no funding in a given funding cycle, although they can re-apply during subsequent funding cycles.

In addition to meeting program goals, applicants are often required to commit non-federal funds to match the federal grant. Programs typically require a minimum 20 percent match, which can be provided by state or local governments, and sometimes the private sector.

Federal programs are subject to change. As of this Rail Plan's preparation, the rail projects reflect the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which included \$66 billion in new funding for rail in federal fiscal years 2022-2026 and expires September 30, 2026.

#### RAIL-HIGHWAY CROSSING PROGRAM (SECTION 130)

ODOT administers Oklahoma's share of the federal Rail-Highway Crossing Program, authorized by U.S. Code (USC) Title 23, Section 130, the “Section 130” program. This is a formula funding source provided to states to reduce crash risk at public rail/highway grade crossings.

In Federal Fiscal Years 2024-2026, appropriations for Oklahoma under this program were \$5.8 million annually, covering 12-15 projects per year. ODOT supplements up to \$8 million if there are cost overruns using other federal safety funds.

#### USDOT DISCRETIONARY GRANT PROGRAMS

This section describes the following USDOT grant programs:

- CRISI (Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements)
- RCE (Railroad Crossing Elimination Program)
- INFRA (Infrastructure for Rebuilding America)
- MEGA (National Infrastructure Project Assistance Program)
- BUILD (Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development)

Additional grant programs targeting passenger rail are discussed later in this Section.

#### CONSOLIDATED RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE AND SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS (CRISI)

FRA's CRISI grant program funds projects that improve the safety, efficiency, or reliability of freight rail and intercity passenger rail systems. Available funding was \$2.5 billion for the combined 2023-24



grant round. CRISI grants can be used for capital projects (construction), workforce development, safety improvements, training, and studies. Eligible recipients are Class II and III railroads, public agencies, universities, and rail labor organizations. Two notable projects in Oklahoma were funded by the program in 2023-2024:

- **Kiamichi Tri-State Freight Rail Improvement Project Phase 2** was awarded \$56,619,066 for Final Design and Construction, and includes activities to upgrade track on the Ashdown, Hope, and Paris subdivisions of the Kiamichi Railroad in Oklahoma, as well as in Arkansas and Texas. The project will replace approximately 76 miles of railroad, resurface 114 crossings, and install trespassing signs and barriers at 10 crossings. Kiamichi Railroad contributed a 30 percent non-federal match.
- **Oklahoma Short Line Track Upgrade and Growth Project** was awarded \$29,495,400 to rehabilitate ties and perform surfacing work along approximately 120 miles of track, replace ten bridges, upgrade an additional 40 bridges, and upgrade one grade crossing, which will allow higher operating speeds on Stillwater Central Railroad. Stillwater Central Railroad and ODOT contributed a 21 percent non-federal match.

#### RAILROAD CROSSING ELIMINATION PROGRAM (RCE)

The RCE Program is funded at \$500 million annually for federal fiscal years 2022 through 2026, and supports grade separations, closing of crossings, track relocations, and other safety improvements. Funds can be used for planning, environmental studies and design, as well as for construction. This program requires a minimum of 20 percent non-federal matching funds.

In the most recent round, four RCE grants were won in Oklahoma, two for planning and two for construction projects:

- **Claremore Rail Corridor Revitalization: Enhancing Mobility and Safety for a Connected Community** was awarded \$424,000. The project is a community corridor study to assess the feasibility of grade-separated railroad crossings in Claremore. This study will focus on four major roadways within the city—Blue Starr Drive, Will Rogers Boulevard, Lynn Riggs Boulevard (Route 66), and Patti Page Boulevard (2nd Street, Oklahoma State Highway 20)—that encompass seven at-grade railroad intersections critical to Claremore's transportation network. The City of Claremore is contributing the 20 percent non-federal match.
- **Mannford Railroad Crossing Planning Project to Improve Basin Road Connection** was awarded \$1,200,000. The project will evaluate an at-grade crossing at Basin Road in Mannford, conduct public and stakeholder engagement, and analyze grade-separated alternatives. ODOT is providing the 20 percent non-federal match.
- **Occupied Crossing Mitigation Project** was awarded \$25,448,000. This project will install new sidings so that BNSF can park trains away from highway-rail grade crossings and avoid blocking those crossings. The project will also improve three, and close two other, grade crossings in Davis. ODOT and BNSF are contributing the 20 percent non-federal match.
- **Prioritizing Crossings to Save Lives in Central Oklahoma** was awarded \$400,000 to evaluate 52 at-grade crossings in Edmond, Norman, and Oklahoma City, analyzing a variety of suitable strategies, balancing the needs of the community and safety with improved mobility and surface transportation network flow. ODOT is contributing the 20 percent non-federal match.



### INFRASTRUCTURE FOR REBUILDING AMERICA (INFRA)

This program supports rail freight and highway projects of national or regional significance to improve multimodal safety, efficiency, and reliability. Under IIJA, the program is funded at \$480 million per year. Most of the funding is awarded to highway projects and to projects exceeding \$100 million in total cost. In the FY2025-2026 round, there were 36 awards, including one award in Oklahoma, for a highway project.

### NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (MEGA)

Another IIJA program, National Infrastructure Project Assistance Program (MEGA), is funded at \$1 billion annually and focuses on large, complex projects over \$100 million. Half of all awards are dedicated to projects over \$500 million in total cost. Highway, freight rail, transit, and passenger rail projects are eligible.

There have been 31 grant awards made under this program FY2022–2026, including freight rail and commuter/passenger rail projects. Oklahoma won one award in 2022 for a highway project to upgrade the I-44/US75 interchange in Tulsa.

### BETTER UTILIZING INVESTMENTS TO LEVERAGE DEVELOPMENT (BUILD)

USDOT's BUILD program, formerly known as Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) and Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER), is an important source of federal funding for rail projects. BUILD is a highly competitive grant program that covers multiple transportation modes, but can provide funding for passenger and freight rail projects that support economic competitiveness, state of good repair, quality of life, sustainability, and safety. A wide variety of project types are eligible, including road, rail, transit, bike/pedestrian, multimodal, intermodal, and port projects.

The popular BUILD program is funded at \$1.5 billion annually for FY2022-26. In past years, approximately 20 percent of awards were for rail projects, which ranged in size and scope from under \$10 million for rural short line rehabilitation projects to a \$100 million project addressing freight rail congestion in the Chicago area. ODOT sponsored a project in that won an award in 2022 to grade separate a BNSF rail line from State Highway 37 in Moore.

### OTHER APPLICABLE USDOT PROGRAMS

**National Highway Freight Program.** Nationally, this formula grant program is funded at \$1.3 to \$1.5 billion annually, with \$21 to \$23 million apportioned to Oklahoma.<sup>17</sup>

**Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ).** The FHWA's CMAQ formula grant program provides a flexible funding source to state and local governments for transportation projects and programs to help meet the requirements of the Clean Air Act. Funding is available to reduce congestion and improve air quality for areas that do not meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ozone, carbon monoxide or particulate matter ("nonattainment areas"), and for former nonattainment areas that are now in compliance ("maintenance areas"). Currently, Oklahoma receives \$13 million annually in CMAQ funding.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure-investment-and-jobs-act/funding.cfm>



**Diesel Mitigation Trust Fund/Volkswagen Mitigation Grants.** In 2016, Volkswagen AG paid a \$1.45 billion penalty for violating the Clean Air Act by the sale of approximately 590,000 model year 2009 to 2016 diesel motor vehicles equipped with “defeat devices,” computer software designed to cheat on federal emissions tests. As a formula grant program, Oklahoma was allocated approximately \$21 million from this agreement to reduce nitrogen oxide emissions from the transportation sector. Grants from the fund can be used to replace diesel locomotives with electric or alternative fueled locomotives. So far two rail projects, totaling \$455,000, have been funded.<sup>18</sup>

#### OTHER FEDERAL PROGRAMS

**Economic Development Administration Grants.** U.S. Economic Development Administration (USEDA) administers grant and loan assistance programs to support local organizations with economic development efforts, focusing on economically distressed communities. The Economic Development Administration’s Public Works program is a discretionary grant program that can be used to fund improvements to publicly owned rail properties that are expected to contribute to local or regional economic development. In 2020, USEDPA awarded a \$1.1 million grant to the Port of Catoosa to assist with rail crossing repairs and other mitigation of flood damage that occurred in 2019.

**Federal Financing Programs.** Federal credit assistance can be a loan guarantee or direct loans with favorable terms, that can include low-interest rates, long payback periods, and loan repayment after construction completion. These financing alternatives can help to bridge the gap between a project’s up-front cost and project-related revenue, which typically does not materialize until construction is completed. USDOT offers several debt and credit assistance tools that may support passenger and freight rail projects, of which the following are the most relevant.

- **Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA).** TIFIA provides credit assistance in the form of direct loans, loan guarantees, and standby lines of credit to transportation projects of national or regional significance. Eligible projects relevant to rail include intermodal connectors, passenger rail vehicles and facilities, and surface transportation elements of port projects.

TIFIA facilitates private participation in transportation projects and encourages innovative financing mechanisms that help advance projects quickly. TIFIA assistance is limited to 33 percent of total project costs and requires a dedicated repayment source to secure the debt financing.

- **Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF).** The FRA’s RRIF program provides direct loans and loan guarantees to finance development of railroad infrastructure. The program is capitalized up to \$35 billion, with \$7 billion reserved for projects benefiting non-Class I railroads. In the past, potential borrowers have identified the long approval period and costs of application as reasons for the program’s underutilization. Despite attempts to improve the

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<sup>18</sup> <https://oklahoma.gov/deq/divisions/air-quality/air-grants-funding-programs/air-funding-program-recipients.html> <https://oklahoma.gov/deq/divisions/air-quality/air-grants-funding-programs/air-funding-program-recipients.html>

program, including an expedited approval process for smaller projects known as RRIF Express, this program remains undersubscribed.

Currently RRIF's administration costs are not covered by appropriations, so new applicants pay an investigation fee for their application to be reviewed. If approved, a credit risk premium must be paid before funds are disbursed. The program remains active, with available funding appropriated in earlier transportation legislation.

- **Economic Development Administration Programs.** As noted above, in addition to grant funding the U.S. Economic Development Administration administers loans, which could be used for rail projects.

### ***Federal Funding and Financing for Passenger Rail***

The funding sources discussed below are for projects to improve or expand passenger service; these cannot be used to cover the day-to-day operating expenses of existing service.

#### **CORRIDOR IDENTIFICATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

This program, commonly referred to as Corridor ID, was established in the IIJA and is administered by the FRA. The Corridor ID program is a comprehensive intercity passenger rail planning and development program intended to guide intercity passenger rail development and create a pipeline of projects ready for implementation. In 2023, FRA selected 69 corridors for new or improved service; each route accepted into the program was granted \$500,000 (0 percent local funds) to establish scope, schedule and budget for a Service Development Plan (SDP, 10 percent local funds), and is prioritized for future federal funding. One of the selected corridors, sponsored by Kansas DOT, is the **Heartland Flyer** extension from Oklahoma City to Newton, Kansas (Amtrak **Southwest Chief** connection) through Edmond, Guthrie, Perry and Ponca City (OK), and Wichita (KS).

#### **NATIONAL RAILROADS PARTNERSHIP FOR INTERCITY PASSENGER RAIL**

This new IIJA program, until recently known as the Federal-State Partnership, is a discretionary grant program to fund intercity passenger rail projects in states outside the Northeast Corridor (**Amtrak's** Boston–New York–Washington, D.C. route). Funds are available for repair and rehabilitation, performance improvements, or new services, and can also cover the required planning and environmental studies. Projects are most competitive for this program if they can be implemented quickly. Initially funded at \$3 billion annually, the 2026 grant round is funded at \$5 billion due to reallocation of federal funding originally designated for the California High Speed Rail Project.

#### **INTERSTATE RAIL COMPACTS GRANT PROGRAM**

This program makes financial assistance available to entities implementing interstate rail compacts pursuant to Section 410 of the Amtrak Reform and Accountability Act of 1997. The purpose of the program is to improve, promote, and develop intercity passenger rail service, including activities related to the financing of such service, and to encourage multi-state grant applications.

While the discretionary grant awards funded through the program will not directly fund rail capital projects, the activities it supports help prepare entities implementing Interstate Rail Compacts to develop rail capital projects that advance safety, economic strength and global competitiveness, , and transformation, consistent with U.S. DOT's strategic goals. The annual funding for the most

recent round of the grants (2023) was funded at \$5.8 million, however only \$900,000 was awarded for three projects.<sup>19</sup>

### RAILROAD RESTORATION AND ENHANCEMENT GRANTS

This discretionary grant fund is a new IIJA program to support operations of new or restored passenger rail services. It is funded at \$50 million per year for FY2022 through FY2026. The program goals include restoring discontinued services and starting new services that enhance the connectivity and geographic coverage of the national passenger rail network. These grants can support up to 90 percent of operating costs in the first year of service, with subsidy levels stepping down to no more than 30 percent for the sixth year of service.

### OTHER PROGRAMS

Some of the federal funding programs described in the above sections on freight rail funding and financing can also be used for passenger rail improvements, these include:

- CRISI (grant)
- RAISE (grant)
- TIFIA (financing)
- RRIF (financing)

## 2.1.6 Programs and Initiatives to Improve Safety

### **Safety Trends**

Although rail is a relatively safe mode of transportation, it is not without risks. The FRA defines three general types of rail-related accidents and incidents:

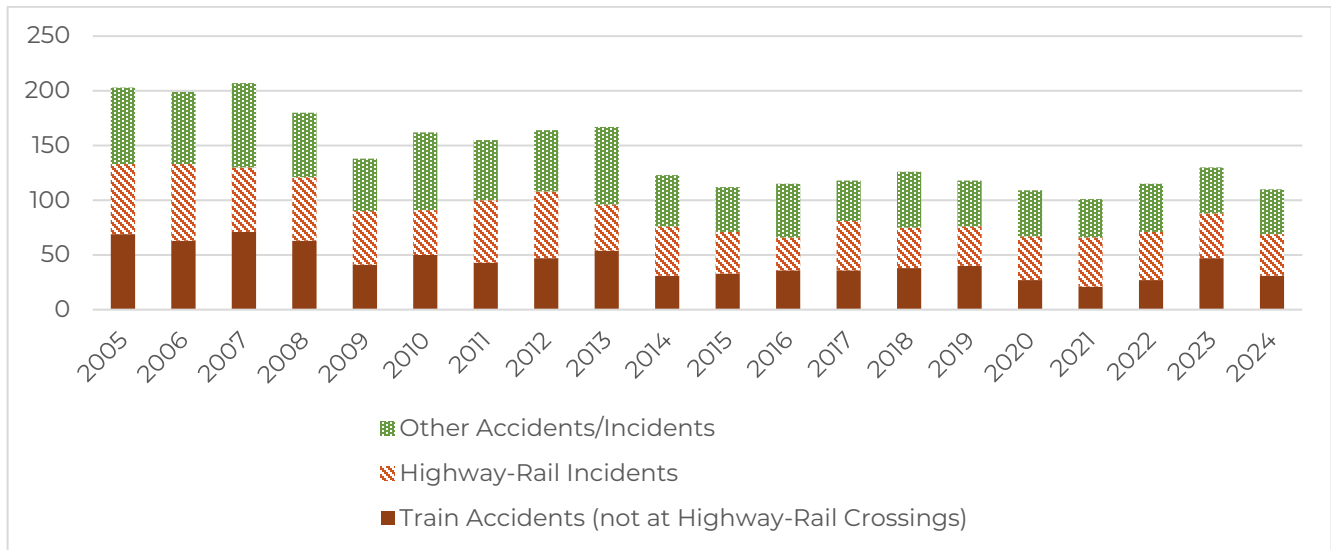
- **Railroad Equipment Accident/Incident:** These events involve on-track rail equipment and include collisions, derailments, or other events that cause damage above a threshold level.
- **Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Accident/Incident:** Any impact between on-track rail equipment and highway users at a highway-rail grade crossing.
- **Other Accidents/Incidents:** These are, typically, events involving railroad employees, passengers, or others, such as trespassers on railroad property.

Between 2005 and 2024, a total of 2,852 rail-related accidents/incidents<sup>20</sup> occurred in Oklahoma, as shown in Figure 2-21. Over this time, the number of accidents/incidents has generally declined, although much of the decline occurred before 2015.

<sup>19</sup> <https://railroads.dot.gov/grants-loans/interstate-rail-compact-grant-program>

<sup>20</sup> Although highway safety statistics typically refer to “crashes,” the FRA refers to “accident and incidents”. This is because the FRA tracks a broader range of events than collisions, which can include occurrences such as derailments or railroad employee work-related sickness or injury.

**Figure 2-21. Accidents/Incidents by Type (2005-2024)**



Source: Federal Railroad Administration, Rail Safety Overview Report (1.12)

Between 2020 and 2024, 73 rail-related fatalities occurred within Oklahoma (Table 2-8). Fatalities have been categorized by location: at a highway-rail grade crossing, or on railroad property away from a crossing. Within the two categories, there are subtypes including vehicle, pedestrian, bicycle, trespasser, suicide, or individual authorized to be on railroad property such as railroad employees/contractors. The FRA defines trespassers as “Persons who are on the part of railroad property used in railroad operation and whose presence is prohibited, forbidden, or unlawful.” Individuals are not allowed on railroad property without permission from railroad owners. By contrast, public highway-rail grade crossings are publicly accessible locations. Of all fatalities, 78 percent occurred on railroad property, with most of those being trespassers struck by trains. Fatalities at highway-rail grade crossings were the second largest, accounting for 21 percent of all fatalities, with over half involving a vehicle. Lastly, one fatality was on railroad property involving a railroad employee or contractor. Since 2020, fatalities have increased, with a spike of 20 fatalities in 2023.

Table 2-8. Fatalities by Type (2020 -2024)

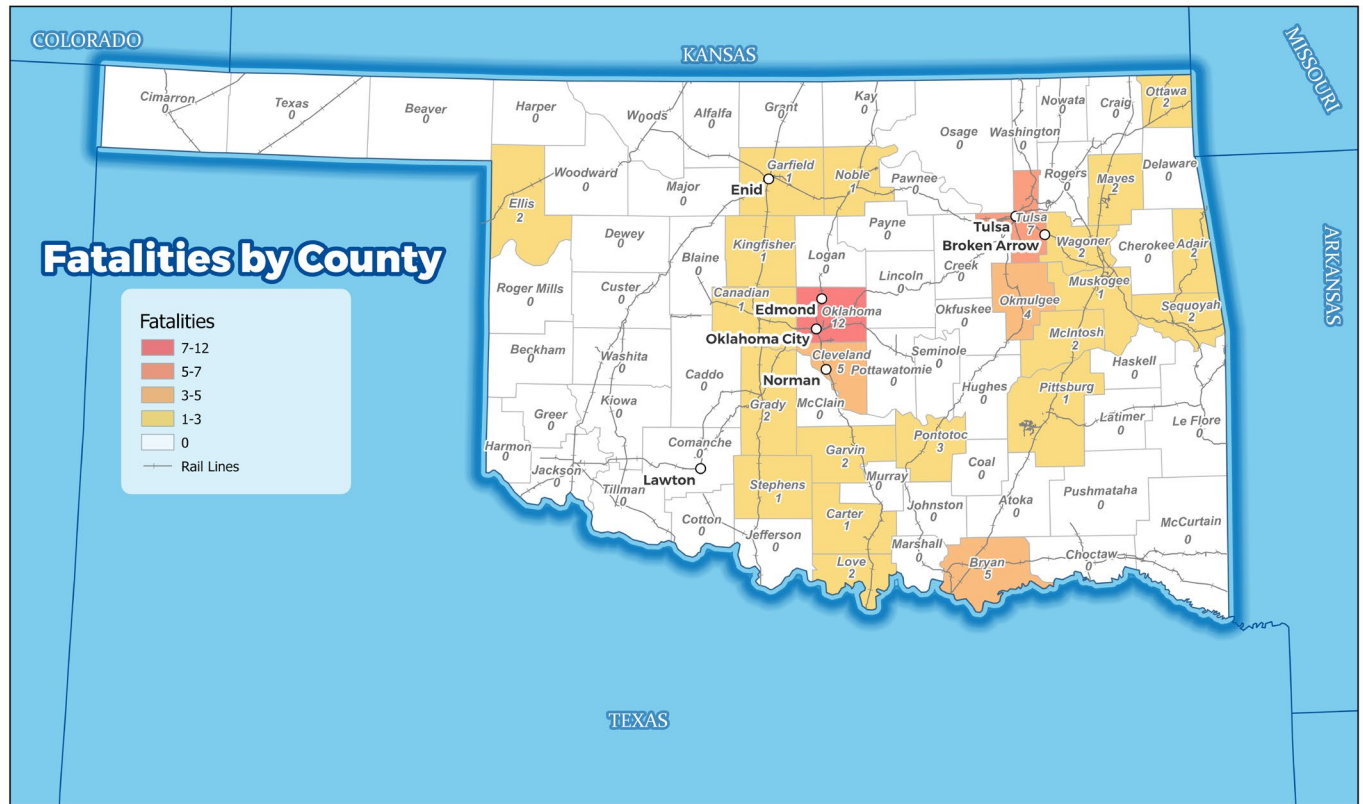
Year	Highway-Rail Grade Crossing			Railroad Property			Total
	Vehicle	Pedestrian	Bicycle	Trespassers	Suicide	Railroad Employee/ Contractor	
2024	2	1	1	8	3	0	15
2023	2	2	0	14	2	0	20
2022	3	0	0	9	0	1	13
2021	1	2	0	9	1	0	13
2020	1	0	0	9	2	0	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>73</b>

Source: WSP Analysis, Federal Railroad Administration, Form 55A, Form 57, and Total Trespasser (not at Highway-Rail Crossing + at Highway-Rail Crossing), Including Suicides (4.13)

Most rail-related fatalities occur in the more populated parts of the state, so that between 2020 and 2024, 12 fatalities occurred in Oklahoma County, and 6 in Tulsa County. These are also areas of extensive rail infrastructure. Figure 2-22 shows the number of fatalities by county between 2020 and 2024.



Figure 2-22. **Fatalities by County (2020 - 2024)**



Source: WSP Analysis, Federal Railroad Administration, Form 55A, Form 57, and Total Trespasser (not at Highway-Rail Crossing + at Highway-Rail Crossing), Including Suicides (4.13)

**Safety Infrastructure**

A total of 3,473 public highway/rail grade crossings are in Oklahoma, and are generally categorized as the following:

- Crossings with passive devices only such as signs or pavement markings
- Crossings with flashing lights
- Crossings with flashing lights and gates

Figure 2-23 provides an example of each.

**Figure 2-23. Examples of Crossing Warning Devices**

**Passive Warning Devices**



**Flashing Lights Only**



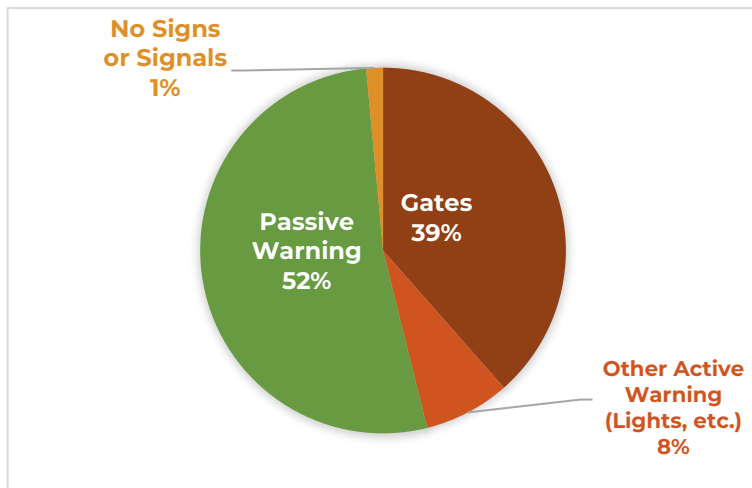
**Flashing Lights and Gates**



Source: ODOT, Wikipedia

Slightly over half of the highway-rail grade crossings in Oklahoma have passive warning devices only, 39 percent have gates, while the remainder either have other warning devices or flashing lights only, or have no warning devices at all (Figure 2-24).

**Figure 2-24. Ratio of Highway-Rail Warning Devices by Type**

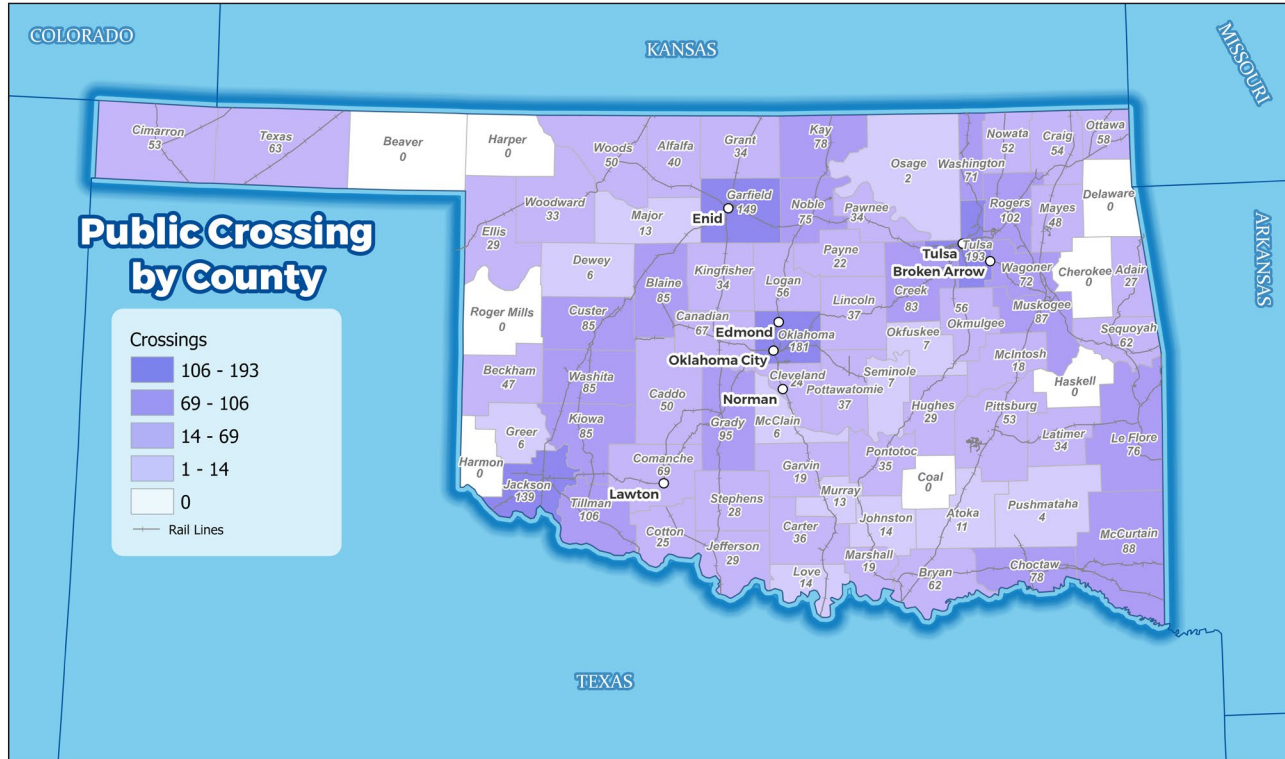


Source: FRA Crossing Inventory Warning Device Equipment Summary (8.10)

Figure 2-25 shows the number of highway-rail grade crossings by county. Tulsa County has the most public crossings, with 193, followed by Oklahoma County with 181, and Garfield County with 149. Eight counties within the state have no public crossings.



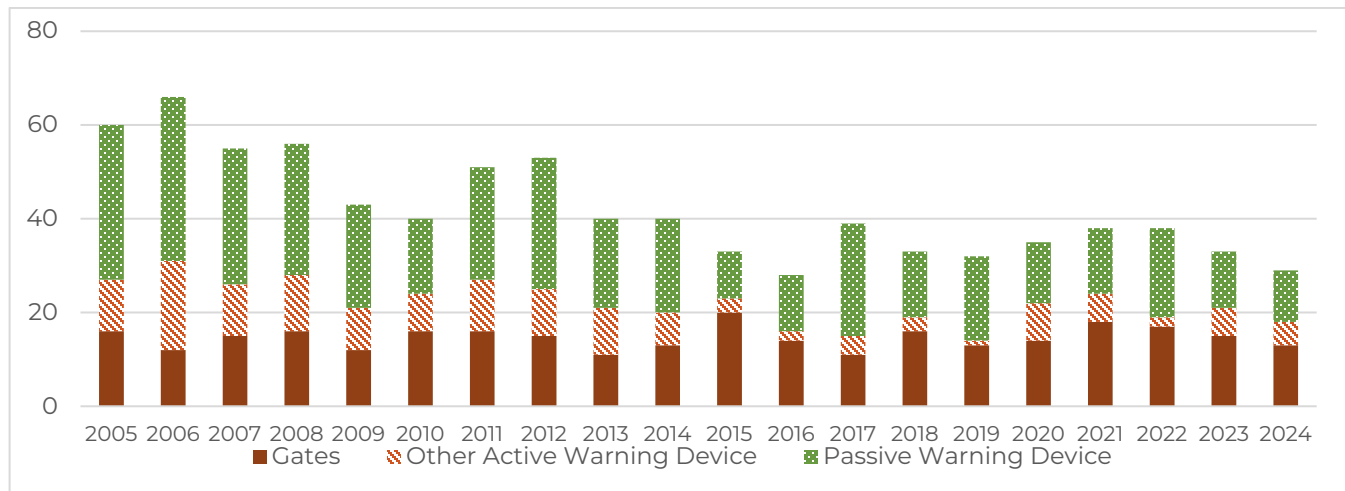
Figure 2-25. **Public Crossings by County**



Source: FRA Crossing Inventory Warning Device Equipment Summary (8.10)

Crashes at public highway-rail crossings in Oklahoma declined 52 percent between 2005 and 2024, as shown in Figure 2-26. Crashes at crossings with passive warning devices declined 67 percent, and crashes at crossings with other active warning devices declined by 55 percent. The frequency of crashes at crossings with gates has not shown a consistent trend. The percentage of crashes that occurred at gated crossings increased from 27 percent in 2005 to 45 percent in 2024.

**Figure 2-26. Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Crashes by Warning Device in Oklahoma**



Source: FRA Data Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Incidents, Fatalities and Injuries (2.08)

### Measures to Improve Safety

Oklahoma's primary rail safety program is its administration of the Railway-Highway Crossing (Section 130) Program to improve safety at highway-rail grade crossings. Funding from the program enables ODOT to complete 12 to 15 safety improvement projects per year. Prioritization of crossing projects is primarily based on the hazard ranking of the crossings. Based on previous crash history and the characteristics of the crossings, ODOT ranks highway-rail grade crossings by the likelihood and severity of future crashes at those crossings. ODOT involves local government officials and representatives from ODOT District offices in prioritizing crossing improvements, but any project selected should address a crossing that has a high hazard ranking. The nature of the improvement can vary, but ODOT's Highway-Rail Grade Crossing State Action Plan of 2022 lists several initiatives:

- **Continue to address multiple accident crossings.** Crossings where multiple crashes occur over a five-year period are considered particularly risky, and are considered priorities for improvement.
- **Work with local roadway authorities to identify additional locations where medians can be installed.** As crossings with passive warning devices have been upgraded with lights and gates through ODOT's administration of the FHWA Section 130 program, a higher proportion of the remaining crashes occur at gated crossings (Figure 2-21). Many of these crashes at gated crossings result from motorists crossing the roadway and driving around gates. Median barriers can block motorists from engaging in this risky behavior.
- **Work with local roadway authorities to identify opportunities for advanced signal preemption.** A hazard for locations where highway-rail grade crossings are near traffic signals, such as stop lights, is the possibility that motorists are stopped on a crossing waiting for traffic to clear at a stop light. Preemption refers to the electronic communication between highway-rail grade crossing electronic systems and traffic signals. When track-based systems detect approaching trains, they can ensure that any automotive traffic stopped at traffic signals has adequate time to clear the crossing before the train arrives. ODOT will continue to install more of these types of electronic communications where they are needed.



- **Work with local roadway authorities to identify additional opportunities for roadway reconstruction at crossings.** During routine maintenance, railroads add gravel ballast, which can raise the level of the tracks. If the roadway near a crossing stays at the same level, the crossing may become “humped” so that there is a steep incline between the roadway and the crossing. This can create hazards because long vehicles, like trucks or buses, may not have the clearance to pass over the hump and can become stuck on the crossing. ODOT will continue to review areas where roadways near crossings need to be reconstructed to avoid this situation.
- **Coordinate with wayfinding or navigation services to divert traffic away from crossings with known risk factors.** ODOT has started a partnership with the driving directions software Waze. The routing algorithms of this software can route drivers away from higher-risk highway-rail grade crossings.

While these proposals are specific, the State Action Plan also recommended more general approaches to improving safety at Oklahoma's highway-rail grade crossings, using the “Four ‘Es’”:

- **Engineering.** Continue to upgrade warning devices, such as adding gates and lights at crossings with passive warning devices. Consider locations to install four-quadrant gates, which block lanes in each direction of travel so that motorists cannot drive around the gates. Improve roadways so that motorists have better visibility for oncoming trains, such as ensuring that roadways and railroad tracks cross as close to perpendicular as possible, or do not have steep approaches. Ensure that signs and pavement markings are in good condition. Remove barriers that prohibit motorists from seeing oncoming trains. Look for opportunities to remove crossings, such as through grade separations where feasible or warranted, and closing/consolidating unnecessary crossings. Add illumination to crossings, so that trains and motorists can better see each other at night.
- **Education.** Operation Lifesaver is a nonprofit public education organization that strives to educate the public on rail-related safety issues, including highway-rail grade crossing risks and risks of unauthorized access to railroad rights-of-way. The organization's volunteers provide educational programs and materials to promote railroad safety.
- **Enforcement.** Local law enforcement can help to identify problematic grade crossings and can help to enforce grade crossing laws.
- **Emergency Services.** At various locations in Oklahoma, stationary trains block crossings for extended periods of time. This can have safety implications if it restricts or slows emergency vehicle access, or if pedestrians, impatient with waiting, crawl through stationary trains. ODOT will work with local authorities to address these areas with blocked crossings. In general, ODOT will consider sensitive land uses such as schools or hospitals when considering crossing improvements.

Automobiles at Crossing



Between 2020 and 2024, there were two hazmat releases, both caused by train derailments. A hazmat release can be defined as any unintentional discharge of a hazardous material during transportation. An additional 52 hazmat cars were damaged or derailed between 2020 and 2024 but did not release any materials. Table 2-9 provides the yearly breakdown of hazmat incidents.

**Table 2-9. Hazmat Incidents, 2020–2024**

Year	Hazmat Releases	Hazmat Cars Damaged/Derailed
2020	1	6
2021	0	9
2022	0	6
2023	0	16
2024	1	17

Source: FRA Rail Safety Overview Report (1.12)

The following state agencies have primary responsibility for hazmat safety in Oklahoma:

- **Oklahoma Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Commission** ensures emergency preparedness for hazardous materials, including spills. Additionally, the commission supports local planning for emergencies via 77 Local Emergency Planning Committees.
- **Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality** licenses remediation companies, oversees cleanup, and manages reporting. In the event of a spill, there is a DEQ hotline at 1-800-522-0206 and county-specific contacts available on their [website](#).

### 2.1.7 Rail’s Economic and Environmental Impacts

#### **Rail Capital and Operational Economic Impacts**

Rail provides employment and contributes to Oklahoma’s economy. In 2021, Oklahoma was ranked 20th in the nation in rail industry employment.<sup>21</sup> Rail’s economic impacts can be evaluated by the following measures:

- **Employment** represents the number of full- and part-time jobs.
- **Earnings** include wage and salary disbursements to employees, supplements to wages and salaries, and owners’ income.
- **Value Added** is the net additional economic activity (value of output minus value of purchased goods and services used in the production process), commonly referred to as gross domestic product (GDP).

<sup>21</sup> Association of American Railroads, “2021 State Rankings”, <https://www.aar.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/AAR-State-Rankings-2021.pdf>



- **Output** represents the value of all business transactions or sales direct to the economic activity.

Freight rail operators in Oklahoma employed 1,788 people in 2025.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, 5,400 railroad retirement beneficiaries lived in Oklahoma in 2025, receiving railroad retirement benefits worth \$130 million annually, largely spent in local communities.

Passenger rail also provides economic impacts and benefits to Oklahoma, although on a smaller scale in comparison to freight rail due to the lower number of passenger trains serving the state. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, Amtrak employed four Oklahoma residents with total wages amounting to \$474,616, and purchased \$491,245 worth of goods and services from Oklahoma-based businesses.

The direct employment and output of the rail industry create a ripple effect due to spending on supplier industries, also known as “indirect” effects. Similarly, employees, suppliers, and railroad retirement beneficiaries spend their earnings on household goods and services, further stimulating the economy via “induced” effects. The Bureau of Economic Analysis Regional Input-Output Modeling System produces “multipliers” that were used to estimate these indirect and induced effects of the railroad industry on employment, income, value added, and output.

The direct employment of 1,792 people in Oklahoma's rail industry supports an additional employment of 4,947 jobs through indirect and induced effects. The provision of wages and benefits of \$168 million to employees of the rail industry results in additional earnings of approximately \$248 million in other industries through indirect and induced impacts. Total business sales created by Oklahoma's rail industry equal \$1.7 billion, including \$958 million in GDP contribution. Table 2-10 summarizes the direct, indirect, and induced effects associated with the rail transportation industry in Oklahoma.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Association of American Railroads, Freight Rail in Oklahoma, <https://www.aar.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/AAR-Oklahoma-State-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> Railroad retiree impacts are calculated at the induced level only. Since retiree benefits are accrued to households rather than representing industry purchases, the economic impact is captured solely as induced impacts (spending by affected households).

Table 2-10. *Economic Impacts of Freight Rail Employment and Operations in Oklahoma, 2023 Dollars*

Economic Indicator	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total
<b>Freight Rail</b>				
Employment	1,788	1,744	2,200	<b>5,732</b>
Earnings (\$M)	\$167.2	\$106.6	\$96.9	<b>\$370.7</b>
Value Added (\$M)	\$471.8	\$211.1	\$187.8	<b>\$870.7</b>
Output (\$M)	\$854.4	\$382.3	\$324.7	<b>\$1,561.3</b>
<b>Passenger Rail</b>				
Employment	4	4	5	<b>13</b>
Earnings (\$M)	\$0.5	\$0.3	\$0.3	<b>\$1.1</b>
Value Added (\$M)	\$1.1	\$0.5	\$0.4	<b>\$1.9</b>
Output (\$M)	\$1.9	\$0.9	\$0.7	<b>\$3.5</b>
<b>Railroad Retirees</b>				
Employment	—	—	994	<b>994</b>
Earnings (\$M)	—	—	\$43.8	<b>\$43.8</b>
Value Added (\$M)	—	—	\$84.8	<b>\$84.8</b>
Output (\$M)	—	—	\$146.7	<b>\$146.7</b>
<b>Total Rail Impact</b>				
Employment	1,792	1,748	3,199	<b>6,739</b>
Earnings (\$M)	\$167.7	\$106.9	\$140.9	<b>\$415.5</b>
Value Added (\$M)	\$472.8	\$211.6	\$273.0	<b>\$957.5</b>
Output (\$M)	\$856.3	\$383.2	\$472.1	<b>\$1,711.5</b>

Source: WSP Analysis using U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis RIMS II Multipliers



### ***Economic Impact of Rail Transportation Users***

Rail's economic importance to Oklahoma is not just due to the employment and spending of railroads and railroad employees within the state, but also because many Oklahoma industries, including metals, minerals, mining, manufacturing, wholesale trade, and retail trade, depend on rail to serve their customers.

An analysis was conducted that focused on the economic impacts of freight movements that originate in Oklahoma (outbound and intrastate). The focus on outbound goods, and not inbound, is intended to avoid double counting economic impacts. For example, goods shipped into Oklahoma might be used to manufacture other products that are then shipped out of state. The economic benefit of these final products is already captured under outbound freight, and including the initial inbound shipment would inflate the overall impact.

The total dollar value of originating freight rail movement in Oklahoma was estimated using commodity flow data from the 2024 STB Waybill, and per ton values inflated from S&P Global 2016 estimates that were escalated to 2024 values. Using the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis Regional Input-Output Modeling System (RIMS II) economic model, the analysis estimated the jobs, earnings, value-added, and business output supported by rail shippers. The absence of freight rail would diminish these economic impacts due to increased transportation costs on alternative modes or potentially eliminate them altogether through supply chain relocation.

Table 2-11 summarizes information used to estimate the economic impacts of rail transportation users. Table 2-12 shows that Oklahoma's freight rail system, with an estimated \$13.8 billion in originating freight, supports approximately 87.3 thousand jobs across various reliant industries. These jobs generate \$5.2 billion in labor income, \$10.8 billion in value-added, and \$24.5 billion in business output.<sup>24</sup> The 87.3 thousand jobs that rail supports makes up 4.5 percent of all employment in Oklahoma, and the \$10.8 billion in value-added contributes 4.1 percent of the total GDP in Oklahoma.

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<sup>24</sup> Originating value per ton is based on WSP analysis of STB Waybill data from 2024.

Table 2-11. *Freight Shipments Included in Economic Impact Analysis, 2024*

Commodity	Originating Millions of Tonnage, 2024	Value per Ton, 2024	Originating Value per Ton, 2024
Nonmetallic Minerals Exc. Fuels	13.2	\$15.8	\$207.5
Chemicals Or Allied Products	3.1	\$2,211.9	\$6,928.5
Pulp, Paper Or Allied Products	2.0	\$1,639.9	\$3,315.6
Petroleum Or Coal Products	1.6	\$347.0	\$568.7
Farm Products	1.0	\$504.1	\$498.3
Others	1.8	N/A	\$2,306.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>22.7</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>\$13,824.8</b>

Table 2-12. *Total Economic Impact or Rail Transportation Users in Oklahoma, 2024*

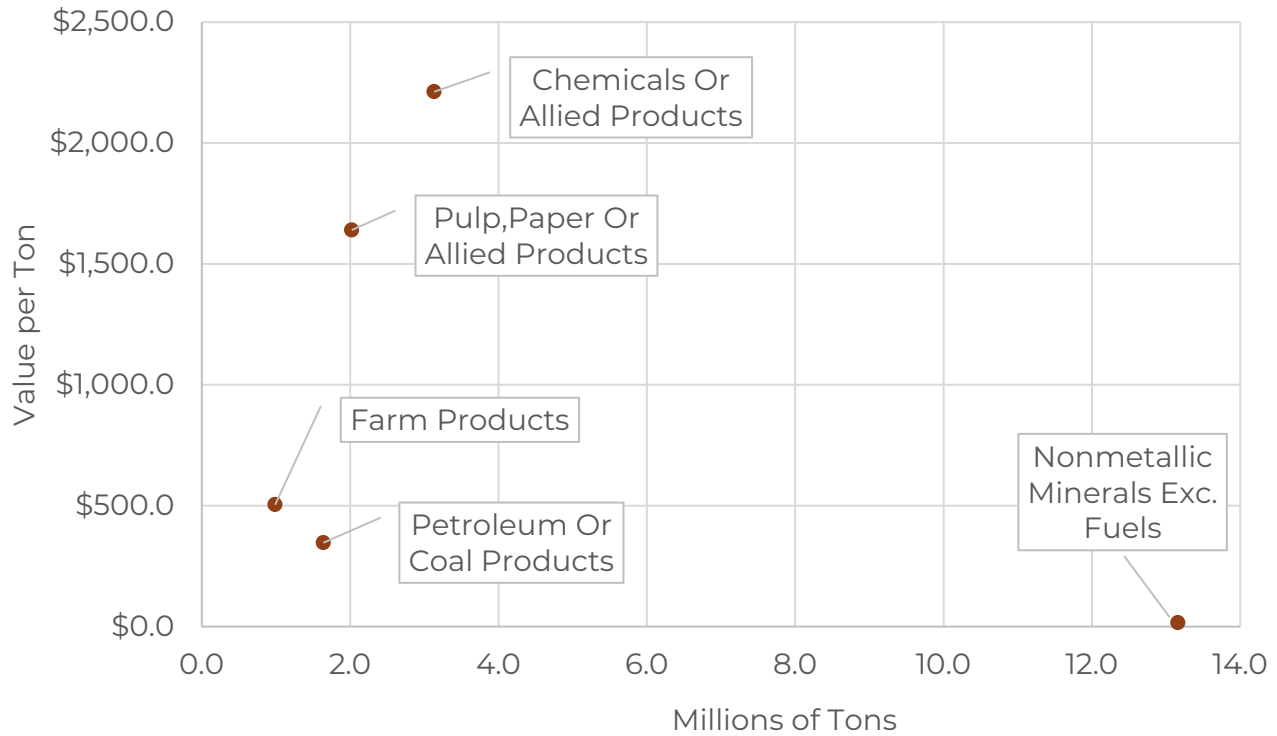
Commodity	Employment	Earnings (\$M)	Value Added (\$M)	Business Output (\$M)
Nonmetallic Minerals	1,680	\$97.2	\$207.1	\$414.8
Farm Products	7,279	\$251.1	\$502.6	\$1,186.7
Petroleum or Coal Products	3,191	\$261.3	\$458.4	\$1,144.4
Chemicals Or Allied Products	40,924	\$2,616.7	\$5,850.0	\$12,686.3
Pulp, Paper Or Allied Products	22,679	\$1,344.6	\$2,709.0	\$6,410.3
Others*	11,525	\$600.1	\$1,088.8	\$2,633.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>87,278</b>	<b>\$5,171.0</b>	<b>\$10,815.9</b>	<b>\$24,475.9</b>

Source: WSP Analysis STB Waybill, S&P value per ton with inflation, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis RIMS II Multipliers

### Value per Ton of Commodities Shipped

The economic impacts of the different commodities are driven by the variation in the originating value per ton, shown in Table 2-11. Figure 2-27 plots the five commodities with the highest tonnage shipped compared to their respective value in 2024 dollars per ton.

**Figure 2-27. Oklahoma Rail Commodity Value vs. Tons Shipped, 2024**



Source: WSP Analysis using STB Waybill Sample, S&P value per ton, adjusted by inflation

While approximately 13.2 million tons of nonmetallic minerals were shipped from Oklahoma in 2024, the commodity's value per ton (\$15.8) is the lowest of the five commodities shown. For this reason, the economic impacts associated with nonmetallic mineral freight shipments are the lowest of the top five commodities. In contrast, chemicals or allied products have the next highest number of tons shipped at 3.1 million tons, and have the highest value per ton across the top five commodities shipped in the state (\$2.2 thousand per ton).

Chemical and allied products, pulp and paper products, and petroleum and coal products have a higher value per ton than nonmetallic minerals because, by the time they are shipped, substantial investments have already been made to transform raw inputs into finished or semifinished commodities, thereby adding value. In contrast, nonmetallic minerals are typically shipped in a raw or minimally processed state, and require additional downstream investment before they become economically useful. Farm products also exhibit higher value per ton because they are inherently valuable in their natural state, reflecting biological production rather than physical extraction. As a result, shipments of higher value commodities generate greater impacts on the state economy than shipments of low value, minimally processed materials.

On the other hand, the low value materials have a higher reliance on rail, since the transportation costs are a larger percentage of their delivered value.



### **Rail Benefits**

Rail is a valuable alternative in advancing Oklahoma's transportation goals, and results in major benefits for Oklahoma residents such as enhanced safety, reduced congestion, and lower fuel consumption.

#### **SAFETY**

Rail transportation is considerably safer than automobile and truck travel, with nationwide rail accidents and injury rates dropping to record low levels in 2025.<sup>25</sup> Data from the USDOT's Bureau of Transportation Statistics show that between 2019 and 2023, trucks were involved in 27,207 fatalities, equivalent to 85.6 percent of all freight transportation fatalities nationwide.<sup>26</sup> Over the same period, rail accounted for 4,307 fatalities, representing 13.6 percent of all freight transportation fatalities. When normalized by activity, the fatality rate for truck freight was 0.24 per 100 million ton-miles, compared to 0.06 for rail freight, indicating that freight rail is approximately four times safer than truck transportation on a ton-mile basis.<sup>27</sup> These differences reflect sustained improvements in railroad safety practices over the past two decades.<sup>28</sup> Since 2010, the percentage of total accidents comprised by highway accidents has trended upward, increasing by 2.6 percent, while railroads' share of accidents has trended downwards, decreasing by 1.4 percent. From 2005 to 2025, on-duty rail fatalities declined 67 percent, derailments declined by 46 percent, and mainline accidents decreased by 37 percent.<sup>29</sup>

Rail-related incident rates in Oklahoma have likewise declined over the past two decades, falling by 65 percent from 2005 to 2025.

Passenger rail is among the safest ways to travel. According to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, from 2019 to 2023, the passenger fatality rate for passenger rail averaged 1.7 deaths per billion passenger-miles, compared with a fatality rate of 13.9 per billion vehicle-miles for motor vehicles.<sup>30</sup> These statistics indicate that, on a passenger-mile basis, passenger rail is approximately 8 times safer than motor vehicles for passengers. In other parts of the country, these benefits are somewhat counteracted by the risks of trespasser strikes and highway-rail collisions, which have higher rates for passenger rail than freight rail. But in Oklahoma specifically, passenger rail has been

<sup>25</sup> Association of American Railroad, Freight Rail Safety Record: Year-Over-Year Improvements, <https://www.aar.org/issue/freight-rail-safety-record/>

<sup>26</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Freight Facts and Figures (Washington, DC, 2025), <https://data.bts.gov/stories/s/Freight-Transportation-Safety/vu39-vtqh/>

<sup>27</sup> Calculated based on the aforementioned fatality statistics and U.S. freight ton-mile data from the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, October 2025, <https://www.bts.gov/content/us-ton-miles-freight>.

<sup>28</sup> American Journal of Transportation, "FRA data confirms rail safety progress with record-low injury and accident rates," March 6, 2025, <https://www.ajot.com/news/fra-data-confirms-rail-safety-progress-with-record-low-injury-and-accident-rates>.

<sup>29</sup> American Railroad Association. Freight Rail Facts and Figures, 2025, <https://www.aar.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/AAR-Facts-Figures-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.

<sup>30</sup> Passenger fatality per billion of train-miles is calculated from data from the , October 2025, <https://www.bts.gov/content/railroad-passenger-safety-data>. Fatality rate per billion of vehicle-miles for motor vehicles is calculated from data from the , October 2025, <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/motor-vehicle/historical-fatality-trends/deaths-and-rates/>.



especially safe. Oklahoma's daily Amtrak passenger train service, the **Heartland Flyer**, had no safety incidents reported in the last 10 years.

### CONGESTION

A single freight train can replace up to 300 trucks, reducing congestion and wear and tear on roadways, and lowering the pressure to build new highways.<sup>31</sup> In 2023, it would have taken 14.2 million trucks to handle the 266.6 million tons of freight that started, ended, or moved through Oklahoma by rail.<sup>32, 33</sup> With an average rail distance of 706 miles for freight originating and/or terminating within Oklahoma,<sup>34</sup> this translates to 10.0 billion miles of additional truck traffic each year. According to USDOT, each additional mile of truck traffic adds \$0.251 in congestion costs,<sup>35</sup> such that the availability of rail networks in Oklahoma prevents \$2.5 billion in annual congestion costs in 2024 dollars.

Additionally, heavy truck traffic remains one of the leading contributors to accelerated pavement deterioration across highway systems. Asphalt and flexible pavements experience exponentially greater damage under heavy axle loads, and impacts rise as trucks exceed design weights. It is estimated that a single five-axle tractor-trailer causes pavement damage equivalent to roughly 1,750 to 2,925 cars on flexible pavements and about 10,600 cars on rigid pavements.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, reduction in heavy truck traffic can lead to significant savings in pavement maintenance and rehabilitation. The reduction in truck vehicle miles traveled (VMT) of 10.0 billion miles per year due to the use of freight rail results in a reduction in pavement damage, amounting to \$1.7 billion in 2024 dollars.<sup>37</sup>

### FUEL CONSUMPTION

Transporting freight by rail is three to four times more fuel efficient than by truck, with Class I railroads carrying an average of 488 ton-miles per gallon of fuel compared to 107 ton-miles per gallon

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<sup>31</sup> Association of American Railroads, 2020. The Positive Environmental Effects of Increased Freight by Rail Movements in America, <https://www.aar.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/AAR-Positive-Environmental-Effects-of-Freight-Rail-White-Paper-62020.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> Tonnage data sourced from the STB Waybill Sample, for freight rail beginning, ending, traveling within, and passing through Oklahoma.

<sup>33</sup> Number of trucks required calculated based on **Quick Response Freight Manual II, FHWA Publication Number: FHWA-HOP-08\_010 (EDL 14396)**, <https://www.fsutmonline.net/images/uploads/qrfm.pdf> data showing 18.8 tons are shipped per truck.

<sup>34</sup> Based on a calculation of tonnage and ton-miles data from the STB Waybill Sample, for freight rail beginning, ending, and traveling entirely within Oklahoma. Overhead trips starting and ending outside of Oklahoma are conservatively excluded from the calculation.

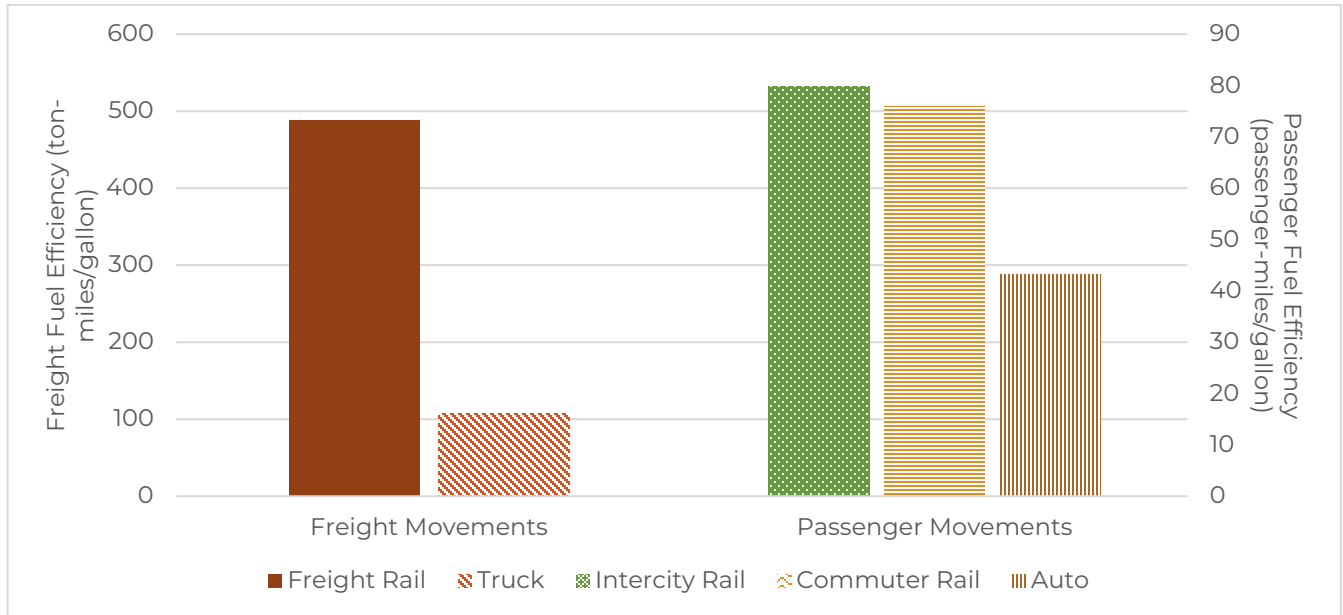
<sup>35</sup> In 2024 dollars, using monetization factors provided in the [USDOT Benefit-Cost Analysis Guidance, December 2025](#).

<sup>36</sup> Bradley, A. and P-M Thiam. 2018. Analysis of car and truck pavement impacts. Retrieved from American Trucking Association, October, <https://www.trucking.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/Analysis%20of%20car%20and%20truck%20pavement%20impacts-FINAL.pdf>.

<sup>37</sup> Based on monetization factors provided by the [Federal Highway Administration](#) for average truck pavement damage. FHWA values were brought to 2024 dollars.

for trucks annually (Figure 2-28).<sup>38</sup> If the 188.3 billion ton-miles of freight traveling to, from, and within Oklahoma by rail in 2023 had instead been transported by truck, it would have required an additional 1.4 billion gallons of fuel. With a gallon of diesel fuel costing an average of \$3.13 in Oklahoma in 2025, this would have cost over \$4.3 billion.<sup>39</sup>

**Figure 2-28. Fuel Efficiency by Mode**



Sources: Federal Highway Administration, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, and American Trucking Association

Recent technology improvements are expected to further enhance rail's fuel efficiency. For example, advanced fuel management systems on locomotives can improve efficiency by up to 14 percent, while stop-start technologies reduce idling and fuel consumption by half.<sup>40</sup>

Passenger rail is approximately twice as fuel efficient as roadway travel; intercity rail typically achieves nearly 80 passenger-miles per gallon of gasoline-equivalent (GGE) and commuter rail approximately 76 passenger-miles per GGE, compared to 43 passenger-miles per GGE for cars (Figure 2-28).<sup>41</sup> In FY

<sup>38</sup> Rail fuel efficiency from Table 4-17: Class I Rail Freight Fuel Consumption and Travel, October 2025, <https://www.bts.gov/content/class-i-rail-freight-fuel-consumption-and-travel>, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Data from 2023. Truck fuel efficiency calculated based on Class 8 Truck fuel economy of 5.7 miles per gallon from U.S. Department of Energy, Alternative Fuels Data Center, October 2025, <https://afdc.energy.gov/data>, and average truckload for distance greater than 500 miles of 18.8 tons, from Quick Response Freight Manual II (2007), FHWA Publication Number: FHWA-HOP-08\_010 (EDL 14396), October 2025, <https://rosap.ntl.bts.gov/view/dot/67831>.

<sup>39</sup> AAA, Oklahoma Fuel Prices, <https://gasprices.aaa.com/?state=OK>

<sup>40</sup> Association of American Railroads, "Freight Rail and Climate Changed: Reducing Emissions" <https://www.aar.org/issue/freight-rail-climate-change/>, accessed March 3, 2026.

<sup>41</sup> Alternative Fuels Data Center's Average Per-Passenger Fuel Economy by Travel Mode, October 2025. <https://afdc.energy.gov/data/10311>

2024, **Heartland Flyer** passengers boarding or disembarking in Oklahoma traveled a total distance of approximately 14.7 million miles by rail.<sup>42</sup>

## 2.2 Trends and Forecasts

### 2.2.1 Demographic and Economic Trends

Economic and demographic factors, such as changing population, employment, personal income, and GDP, along with changes in industry composition, will influence freight and passenger rail services in Oklahoma. A robust rail network in the state has the potential to enhance the competitiveness of vital industries and bolster Oklahoma’s appeal to businesses and residents alike, thereby stimulating future economic and population expansion. This section analyzes historical and projected economic and demographic trends to offer insight into the growth potential of Oklahoma’s rail transportation system.

#### Population

As of 2025, Oklahoma is the 28th most populous state in the country with over 4.1 million residents.<sup>43</sup> Over the past decade, Oklahoma’s population grew more slowly than the national average. From 2014 to 2024, the U.S. population grew at an annualized rate of 0.66 percent, compared to 0.55 percent in Oklahoma, as shown in Table 2-13.

**Table 2-13. Population Estimates and Change, 2014-2024**

Geographic Area	2014 Population	2024 Population	2014-2024 Change	2014-2024 Absolute Growth Rate	2014-2024 Cumulative Annual Growth Rate
United States	318,386,329	340,110,000	+21,723,671	6.83%	0.66%
Oklahoma	3,878,051	4,095,393	+217,342	5.60%	0.55%

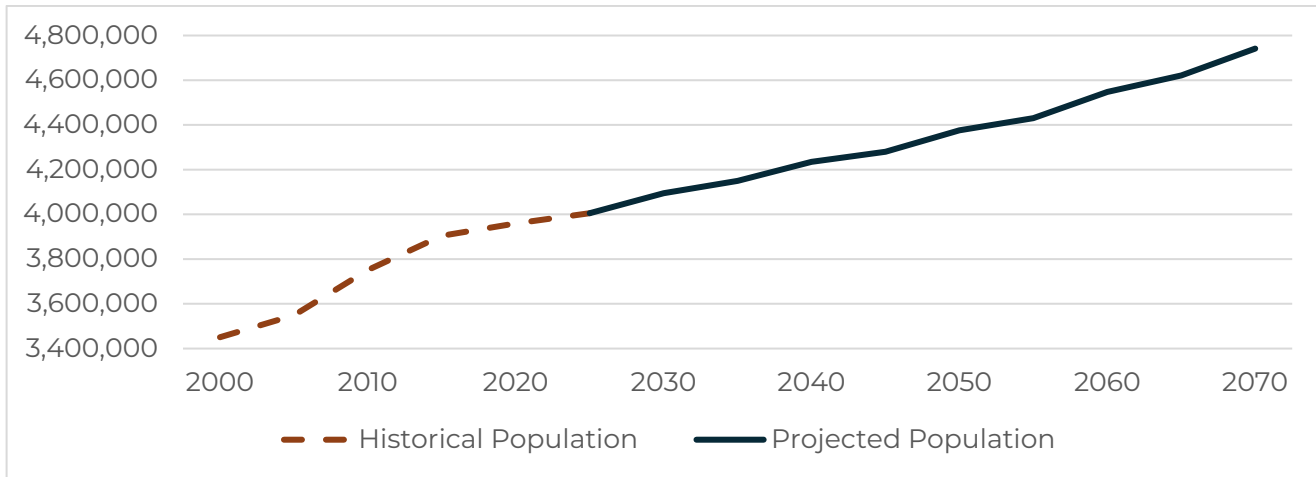
Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2024)

The Oklahoma Department of Commerce forecasts that Oklahoma’s population will grow at an average rate of 0.395 percent between 2020 and 2070 so that the state’s population will be 4.37 million in 2050, and 4.75 million in 2070 (Figure 2-29).<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Rail Passengers Association, Oklahoma Fact Sheet, 2024, <https://www.railpassengers.org/site/assets/files/1209/ok.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> World Population Review  
<sup>44</sup> Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Oklahoma Population Projection 2020-2070, <https://www.okcommerce.gov/wp-content/uploads/Oklahoma-State-and-County-Population-Projections-Through-2070.pdf>

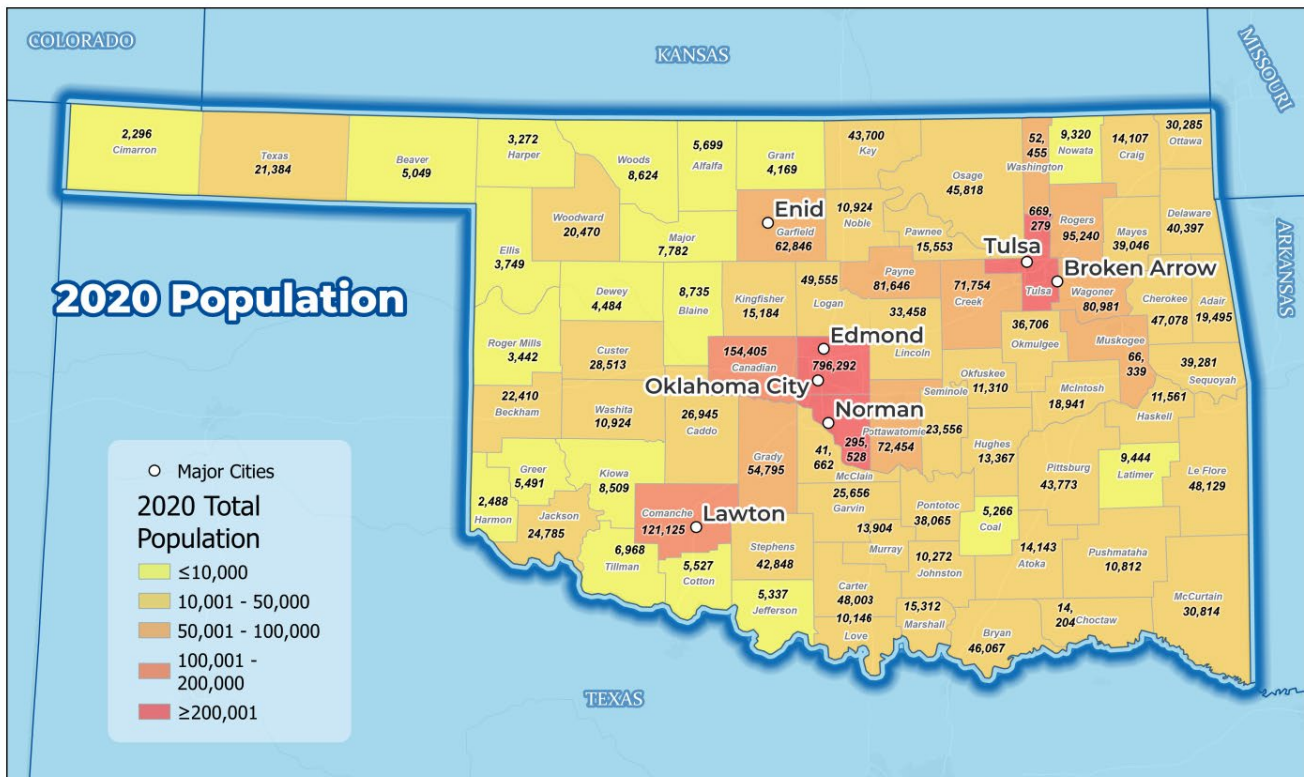
**Figure 2-29. Forecast Oklahoma Population**



Source: Oklahoma Department of Commerce

Five Oklahoma counties account for over half of the state's population, including Oklahoma, Cleveland, and Canadian in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area, as well as Tulsa and Comanche Counties in the Tulsa and Lawton metropolitan areas, respectively (Figure 2-30).

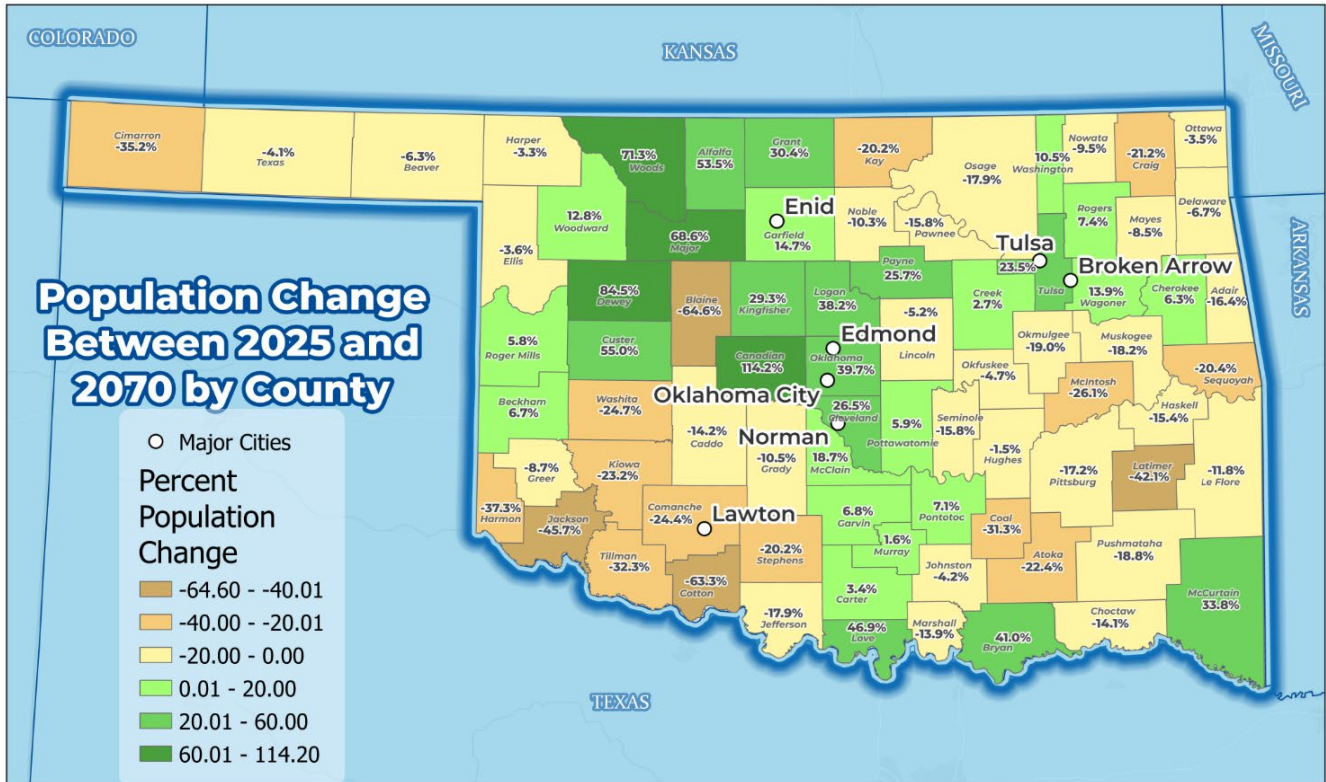
**Figure 2-30. County Residents, 2020**



Source: Oklahoma Department of Commerce

The populations of some counties are forecast to grow faster than others (Figure 2-31). Canadian County, part of the Oklahoma City MSA, is projected to grow at the fastest rate, increasing 114.2 percent by 2070. Dewey, Woods, and Major Counties are also projected to grow faster than other counties. Both Oklahoma County (home to Oklahoma City) and Tulsa County (home to Tulsa) are expected to have the highest growth as measured by the number of additional residents, increasing by about 300,000 and 150,000 individuals, respectively.

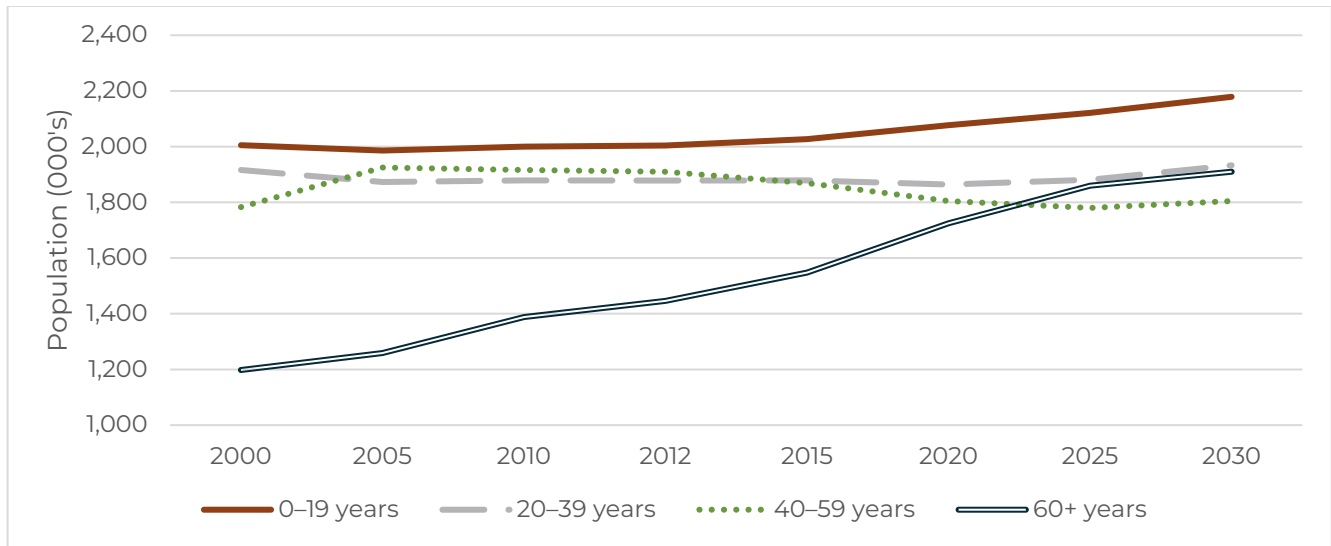
**Figure 2-31. Population Change by County, 2025 to 2070, Oklahoma**



Source: Oklahoma Department of Commerce

Oklahoma's population is expected to continue to age, with the population over 60 growing in total numbers (Figure 2-32), and the share of residents aged 60+ increasing from 20.0 percent in 2012 to 24.4 percent in 2030. As the state's population becomes older, it is necessary for Oklahomans to have transportation alternatives to driving, which could increase the importance of passenger rail.

**Figure 2-32. Oklahoma Age Distribution over Time**

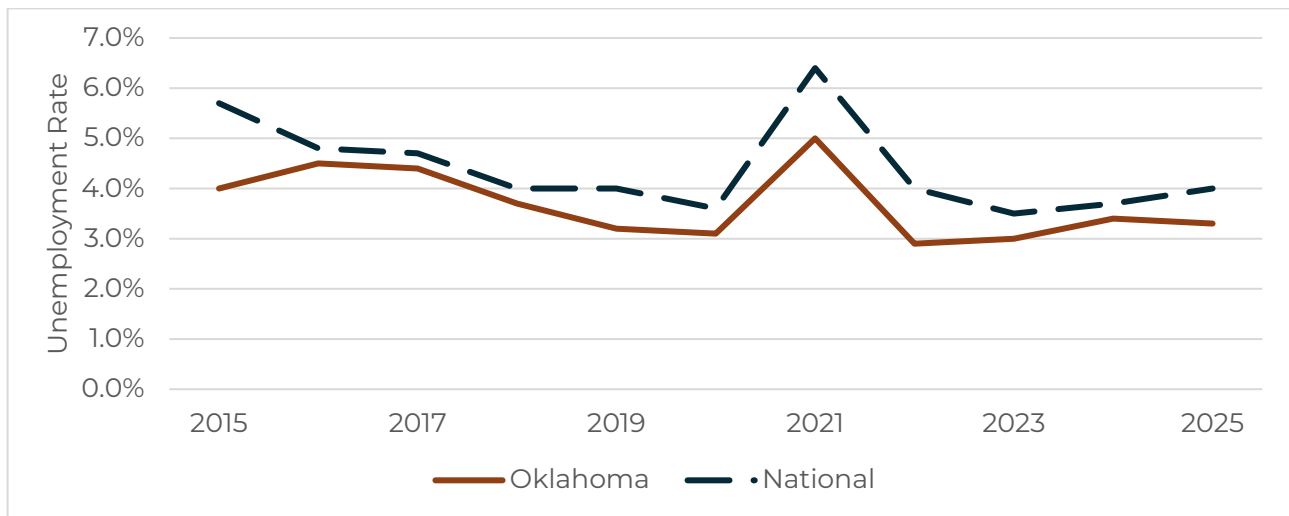


Source: U.S. Census Bureau

**Employment**

As of September 2025, Oklahoma's unemployment rate was 3.2 percent, the 10th lowest in the nation.<sup>45</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic caused an increase in the unemployment rate between 2020 and 2021, but employment recovered in 2022 and the unemployment rate has remained lower since. Since at least 2015, unemployment in Oklahoma has been lower than the national average (Figure 2-33).

**Figure 2-33. Unemployment Rates over Time, Oklahoma vs. National**

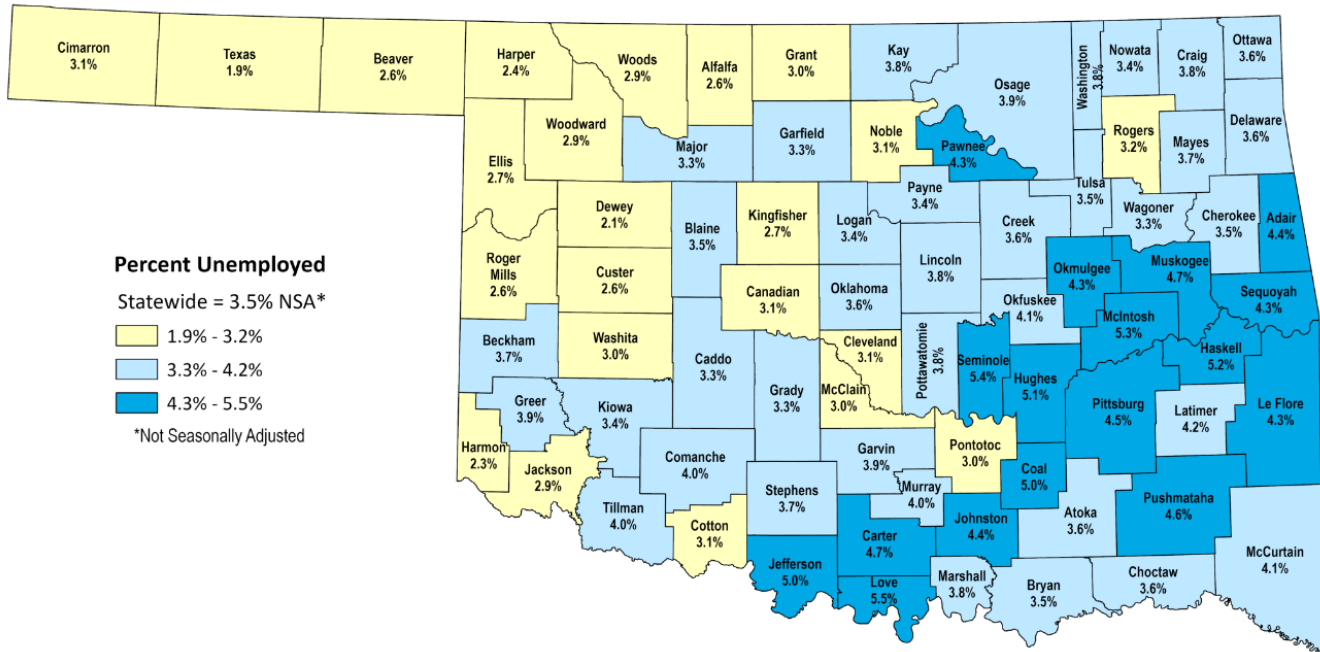


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

<sup>45</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistic, <https://www.bls.gov/web/laus/laumstrk.htm>

Figure 2-34 shows unemployment rates by counties, illustrating that the more eastern and southern portions of Oklahoma face higher unemployment than the northwestern part of the state. Seminole, McIntosh, Haskell, and Hughes Counties have the highest unemployment rates, while Texas, Harmon, and Harper Counties have the lowest.

**Figure 2-34. Unemployment Rates by County, Oklahoma**



Source: Oklahoma Employment Security Commission

Table 2-14 displays the 2022 and 2030 forecast change in employment. Some of the fastest growing sectors, such as Leisure and Hospitality and Professional and Business Services, are not significant rail freight users, but employment suggests that areas closer to major urban centers will see the most growth. So while these industries are not freight dependent, the increase in population and employment in urban areas will increase demand for reliable supply chain movements and lower costs of shipping, both of which are heavily dependent on the availability and expansion of freight infrastructure. Additionally, the Construction and Natural Resources and Mining industries are also expected to grow by 2030, both of which are heavily freight dependent.

It is also important to note that employment shifts result from changes in industry size, but also productivity, i.e., the ability to produce more with the same labor. As an example, manufacturing employment is expected to shrink, but the industry size may remain constant or grow. Manufacturers have become more productive, and can produce the same or more with fewer employees. Table 2-14 presents a breakdown of expected growth in employment across the major industries.

Table 2-14. *Employment Projections in 2030, Major Employment Sectors in Oklahoma*

Industry	Employment (2022)	Employment (2030)	Change	% Change
<b>Total Employment</b>	<b>1,826,010</b>	<b>1,914,270</b>	<b>88,270</b>	<b>4.8</b>
<b>Leisure and Hospitality</b>	193,090	211,440	18,350	9.5
<b>Professional and Business Services</b>	205,230	220,900	15,680	7.6
<b>Construction</b>	79,780	84,200	4,420	5.5
<b>Education and Health Services</b>	403,550	425,570	22,030	5.5
<b>Natural Resources and Mining</b>	51,040	53,620	2,580	5.1
<b>Trade, Transportation, and Utilities</b>	321,730	336,370	14,640	4.6
<b>Government</b>	173,780	180,640	6,860	4
<b>Financial Activities</b>	81,500	83,700	2,210	2.7
<b>Other Services (Except Government)</b>	69,140	69,870	730	1.1
<b>Manufacturing</b>	133,100	132,820	-280	-0.2
<b>Information</b>	17,790	17,670	-120	-0.7

Source: Oklahoma Employment Security Commission

### **Income**

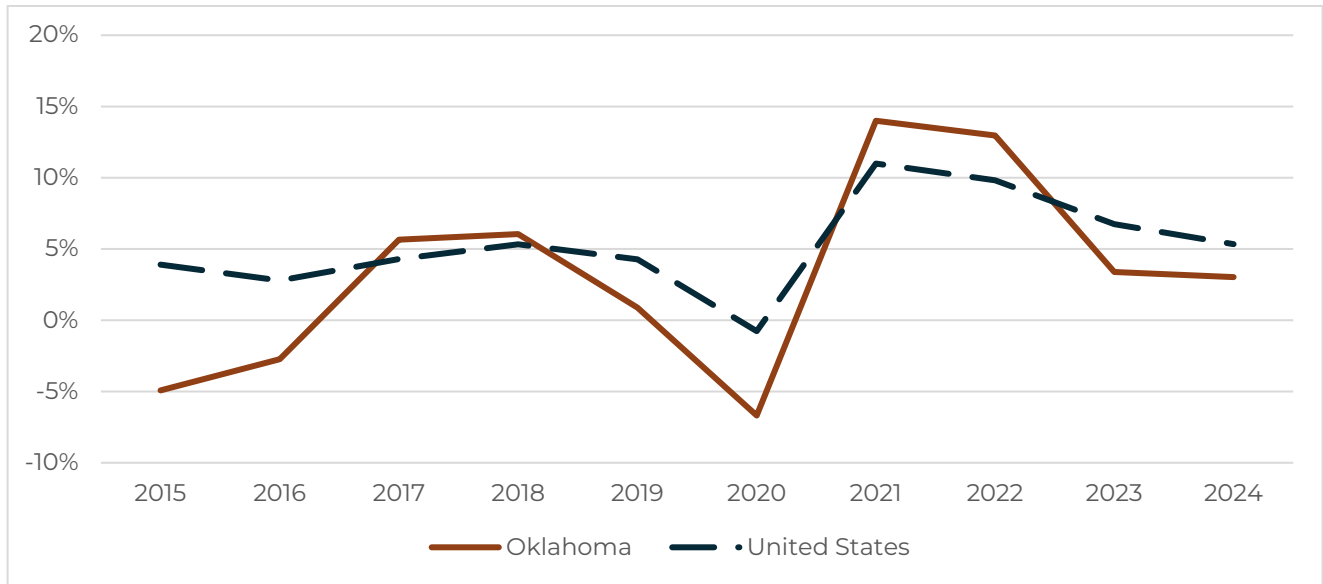
Oklahoma's real per capita income was relatively steady between 2014 and 2024, falling below the U.S. average since 2014 (Figure 2-35).



**Gross Domestic Product**

GDP is the total value of all goods and services produced within a region, and it serves as the most widely used measure of economic size and performance. GDP highlights the scale of economic activity, growth trends, and how a state compares to the national economy. Oklahoma is ranked 30th among all states for GDP in 2024, with a real GDP of \$210 billion dollars. Oklahoma's GDP has fluctuated more than the national average with a more dramatic decline during the COVID-19 pandemic, but a faster recovery afterwards (Figure 2-37).

**Figure 2-37. Percentage Change in Gross Domestic Product to Last Period, Oklahoma vs. United States**



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Oklahoma lagged behind the nation in GDP growth of most industries from 2014 to 2024 (Table 2-15). One exception was the Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting sector, which experienced GDP growth of 31.6 percent in Oklahoma compared to 29.2 percent nationwide.

Table 2-15 also shows the concentrations of each industry in Oklahoma compared to the United States as a whole, as measured by the location quotient. Location quotient is calculated as each industry's share of Oklahoma GDP divided by its share of national GDP. A location quotient above one means that the industry is more concentrated in Oklahoma compared to the country, an indication of the industry's importance to the state's economy.

The Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction industry is six times as concentrated in Oklahoma compared to the United States, demonstrating the state economy's reliance on the energy sector. Over the past decade, the industry has experienced less growth in Oklahoma than the national average. Other areas of petroleum extraction, such as the Permian Basin, have grown faster. However, with a location quotient of 6.07 in 2024, the Oil and Gas Extraction Industry clearly remains a key component of the Oklahoma economy.

While the majority of Oklahoma's petroleum and natural gas is shipped via pipeline, gravel and natural sands used by the industry rely heavily on rail.<sup>46</sup> Rail is also used in areas where pipeline transportation is not available, and to ship natural gas liquids.

Oklahoma also has strong concentrations of several growth industries that rely on freight transportation:

- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting
- Transportation and Warehousing
- Utilities

**Table 2-15. Oklahoma Industry Sector Growth and National Concentration**

Industry	OK GDP Growth 2014-2024	US GDP Growth 2014-2024	OK GDP Location Quotient 2024
<b>Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction</b>	4.6%	35.6%	6.07
<b>Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting</b>	31.6%	29.2%	1.67
<b>Transportation and warehousing</b>	-2.2%	28.9%	1.64
<b>Utilities</b>	-8.0%	20.7%	1.27
<b>Retail trade</b>	35.0%	45.9%	1.12
<b>Other services (except government and government enterprises)</b>	-6.3%	-1.6%	1.06
<b>Educational services, health care, and social assistance</b>	29.6%	34.8%	0.98
<b>Construction</b>	-11.8%	20.8%	0.89
<b>Wholesale trade</b>	-17.4%	1.9%	0.89
<b>Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services</b>	1.0%	16.4%	0.85
<b>Manufacturing</b>	0.7%	15.2%	0.84
<b>Finance, insurance, real estate, rental, and leasing</b>	6.8%	21.3%	0.72

<sup>46</sup> Analysis of Freight Analysis Framework data

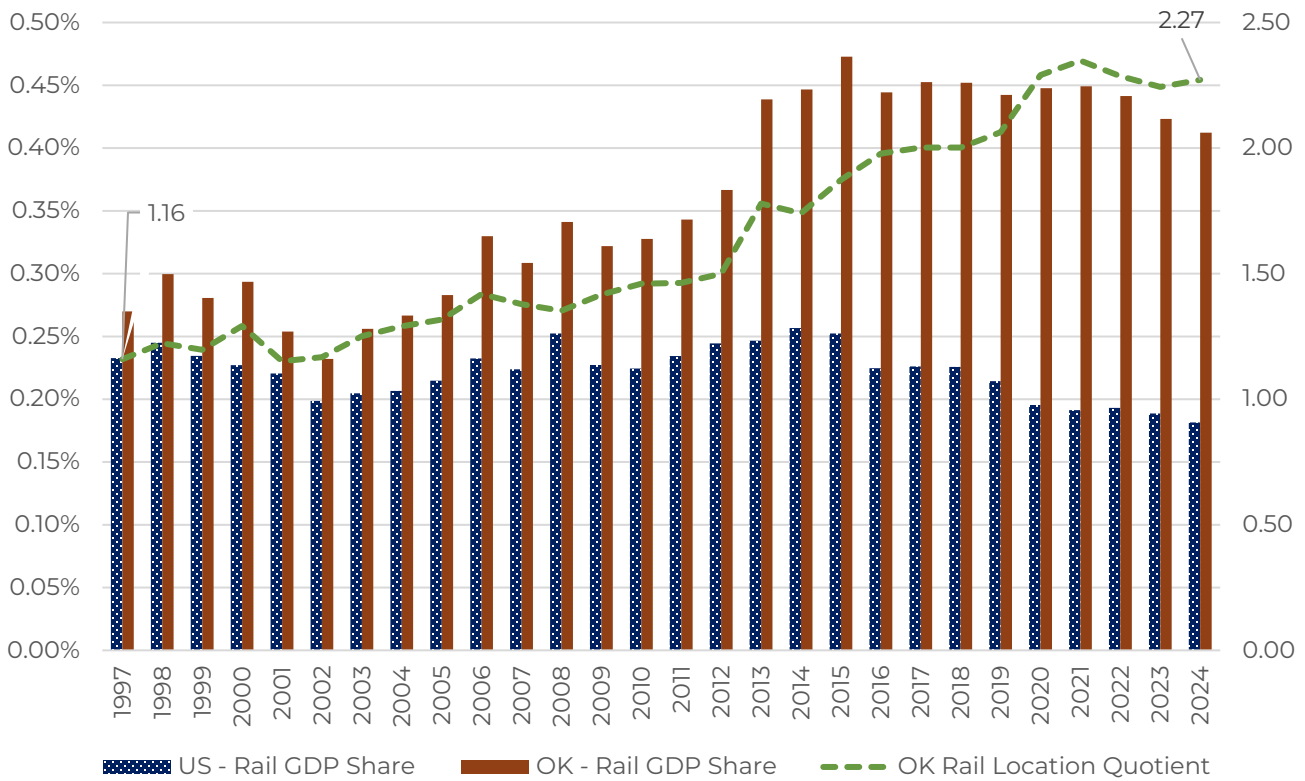
Industry	OK GDP Growth 2014-2024	US GDP Growth 2014-2024	OK GDP Location Quotient 2024
Professional and business services	36.7%	58.0%	0.71
Information	57.2%	116.6%	0.39

Source: US Bureau of Economic Analysis

**Oklahoma's Rail Industry**

Rail transportation productivity in Oklahoma represents 0.41 percent of the state's economy, while it makes up less than 0.18 percent across the US,<sup>47</sup> so the rail industry's role in Oklahoma's economy is significantly higher than in other parts of the U.S. Furthermore, the rail transportation industry in Oklahoma has been increasing in importance over time while the national importance decreased, as shown in Figure 2-38.

**Figure 2-38. Oklahoma Rail Location Quotient, 1997 - 2024**



Source: US Bureau of Economic Analysis

<sup>47</sup> US Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2024.

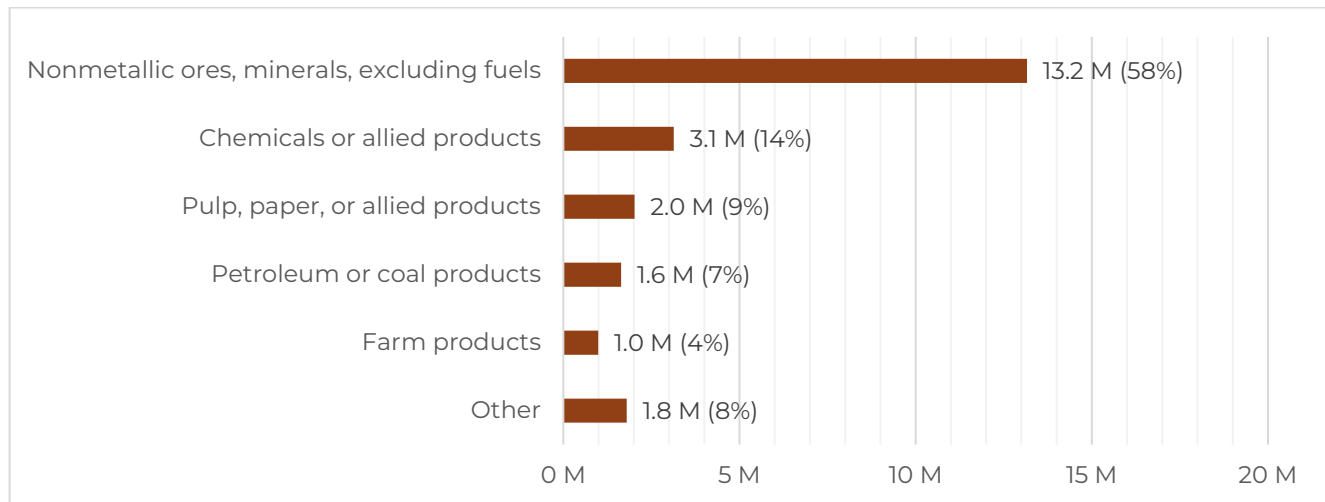
## 2.2.2 Freight Demand and Growth

### Freight Flows by Commodity

In 2024, approximately 22.7 million tons of freight originated in Oklahoma (Figure 2-39), with the largest shares as follows:

- Nonmetallic minerals comprised 58 percent of freight traffic originating in the state, totaling 13.2 million tons, mainly consisting of crushed or broken stone and ballast sand.
- Chemical or allied products accounted for the next highest proportion (14 percent) of freight movement originating in Oklahoma, totaling 3.1 million tons including miscellaneous organic chemicals and fertilizer.
- Pulp, paper, or allied products were 9 percent (2.0 million tons) of originating traffic, with fiberboard, paperboard, and pulpboard representing most of the volume.
- Petroleum or coal products were 7 percent (1.6 million tons) of freight traffic originating in the state, primarily distillate fuel, petroleum lubricating oils, and asphalt pitches or tars.
- Farm products accounted for 4 percent (1.0 million tons) of freight traffic originating in the state, primarily comprised of wheat, followed by corn, cottonseeds, and sorghum.

**Figure 2-39. Originating Oklahoma Rail Tons by Commodity, 2024**



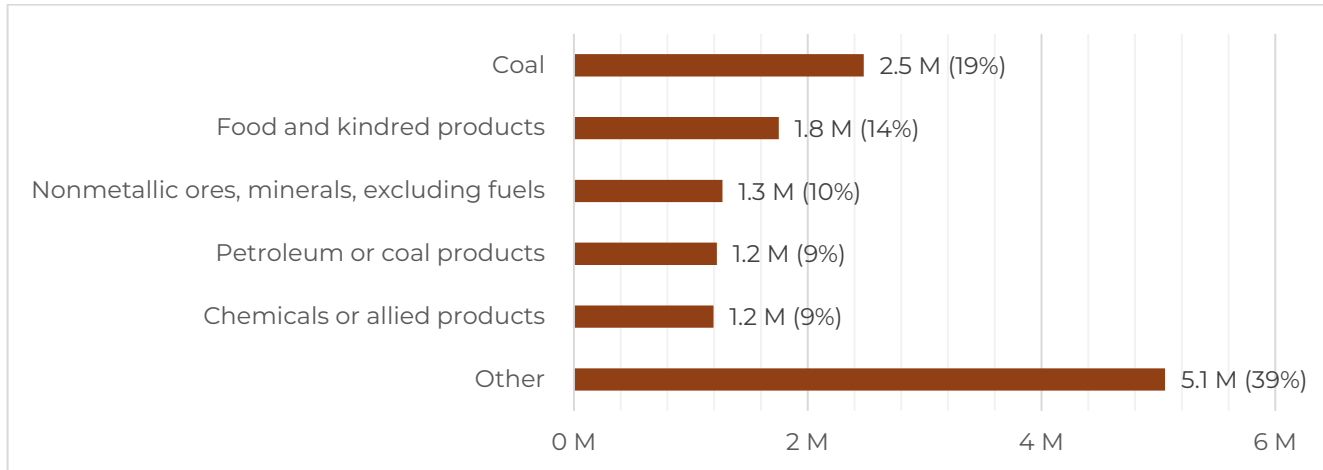
Source: STB Waybill Sample

In 2024, approximately 13.0 million tons of freight terminated in Oklahoma (Figure 2-40):

- Coal was the largest tonnage moving to the state by rail, accounting for 19 percent (2.5 million tons) of total tonnage, all of which was bituminous coal.
- Food and kindred products was the next largest inbound commodity group, totaling 14 percent (1.8 million tons), much of which were soybean oil, animal feed, and corn syrup.
- Nonmetallic ores and minerals were 10 percent (1.3 million tons) of terminating traffic, most of which was broken or crushed stone followed by industrial sand and fertilizer minerals.

- Petroleum or coal products and chemical or allied products each accounted for 9 percent (1.2 million tons) of freight terminating in the state. Petroleum or coal products included asphalt pitches or tars, liquefied gases, petroleum coke, and residual fuel oil. Chemical or allied products included plastic materials, synthetic resins, and inorganic chemicals.

**Figure 2-40. Terminating Oklahoma Rail Tons by Commodity, 2024**

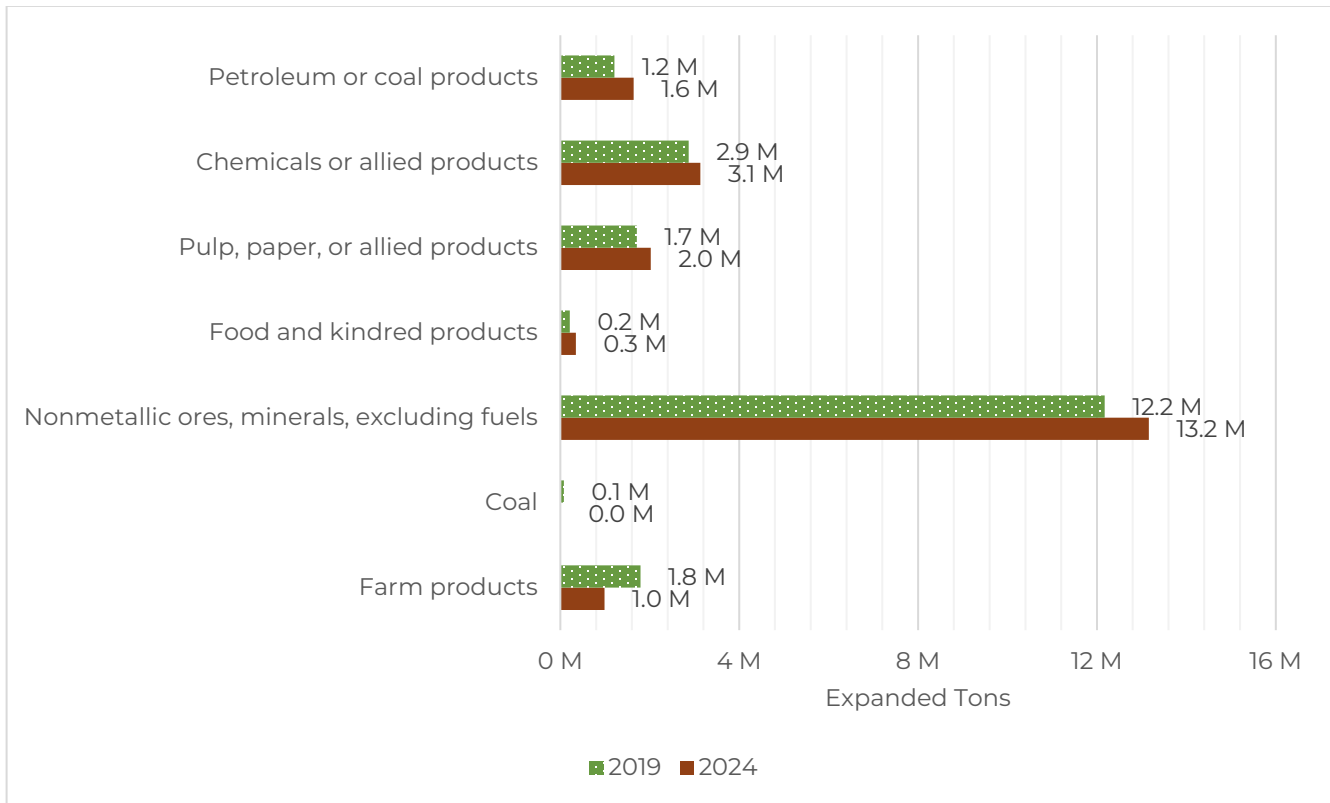


Source: STB Waybill Sample

**COMMODITY TRENDS**

Between 2019 and 2024, total rail tonnage originating in Oklahoma increased by six percent, from 20.0 million tons to 21.3 million tons. The largest change by tonnage was in nonmetallic minerals, which increased by eight percent from 12.2 million tons in 2019 to 13.2 million tons in 2024 (Figure 2-41), with most of the increase consisting of broken or crushed stone and sand. Shipments of chemical or allied products, petroleum or coal products, food and kindred products, and pulp, paper, or allied products originating in the state increased slightly during this period. Most of the increase within chemical or allied products came from industrial organic chemicals. Most of the growth for food and kindred products came from wheat flour. For petroleum or coal products, this increase was largely attributable to asphalt pitches or tars, petroleum lubricating oils, and distillate fuel oil. For pulp, paper, or allied products, this increase was largely attributable to fiberboard, paperboard, and pulpboard.

**Figure 2-41. Top Commodities Originating in Oklahoma, 2019-2023**

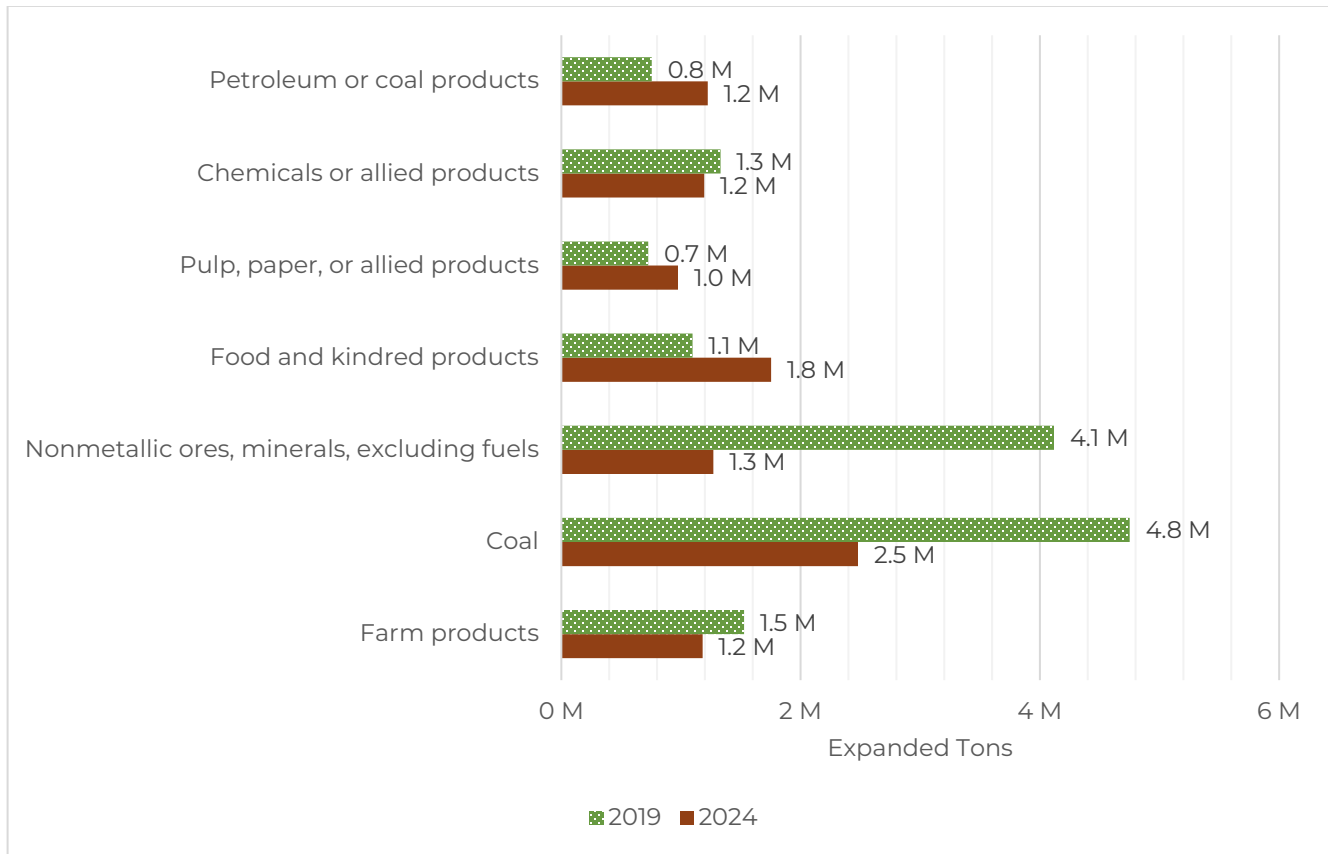


Source: STB Waybill Sample

Farm products originating in Oklahoma experienced a 45 percent decrease from 1.8 million tons in 2019 to 1.0 million tons in 2024. This reduction was led by wheat then cottonseeds, due to a drought.

Between 2019 and 2024, total rail tonnage terminating in Oklahoma decreased by 30 percent, from 14.3 million tons to 10.1 million tons. The largest decline by tonnage was in nonmetallic minerals, which decreased from 4.1 million tons in 2019 to 1.3 million tons in 2024, representing a 69 percent decrease (Figure 2-42). Nearly all of this decrease was attributable to crude, ground, or pulverized industrial sand. Farm products, chemical or allied products, and coal also declined over this period. The reduction in farm products was largely attributable to corn. In chemical and allied products, the largest reduction came from potassium or sodium compounds. The decrease in coal is primarily attributable to several power plants shifting to natural gas, such as Muskogee Power Plant and the Grand River Energy Center.

**Figure 2-42. Top Commodities Terminating in Oklahoma, 2019-2023**



Source: STB Waybill Sample

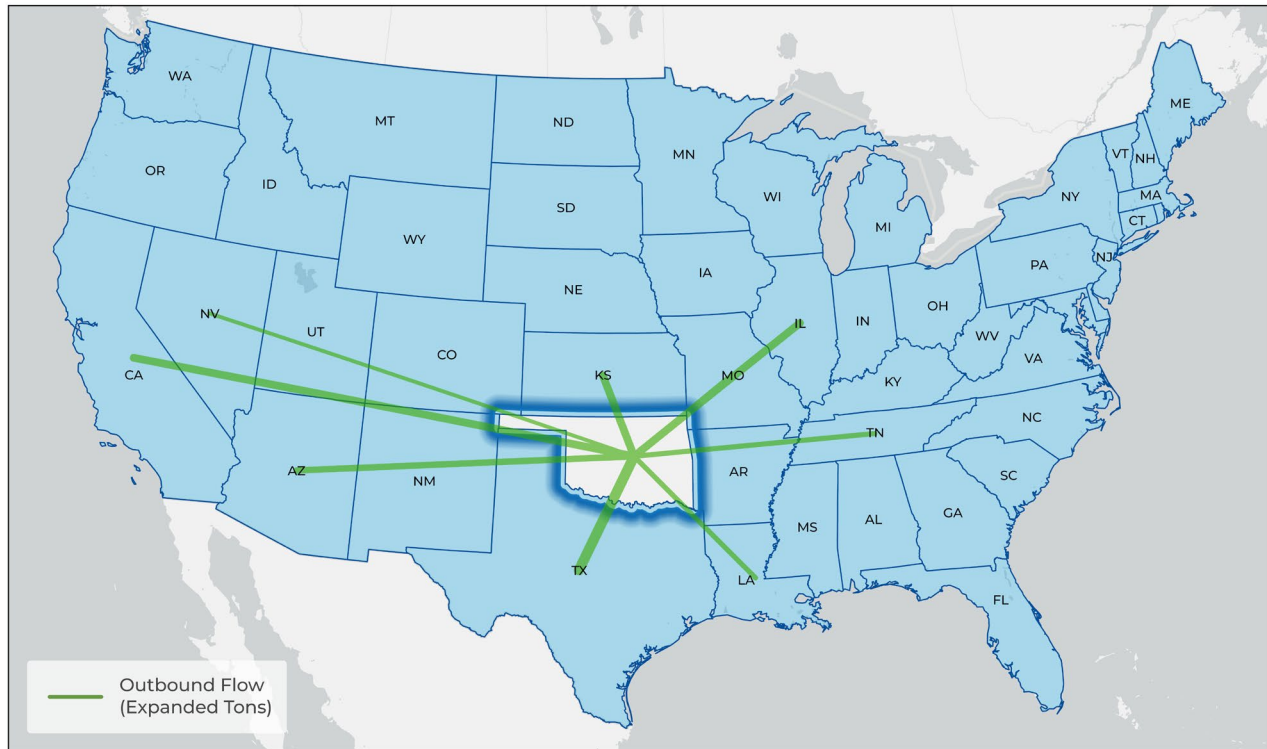
Food and kindred increased from 1.1 million tons in 2019 to 1.8 million tons in 2024, representing a 60 percent growth. This increase was led by animal feed, soybean oil, and corn syrup. Petroleum or coal products and pulp, paper or allied products experienced slight increases in tonnage during this time. Within petroleum or coal products, increases were largely attributable to petroleum refining products. For pulp, paper or allied products, the increase was largely attributable to fiberboard, paperboard, and pulpboard.

**Analysis of the Top Commodities that Move by Rail**

**FARM PRODUCTS**

In 2024, Oklahoma shipped over 980,000 tons of farm products by rail to nine states. Most of these movements terminated in Texas (Figure 2-43). Wheat made up most of these shipments, followed by sorghum grains and corn. California, Illinois, and Kansas were the next largest receiving states. Shipments to California consisted of wheat and cottonseeds. Illinois and Kansas received wheat exclusively.

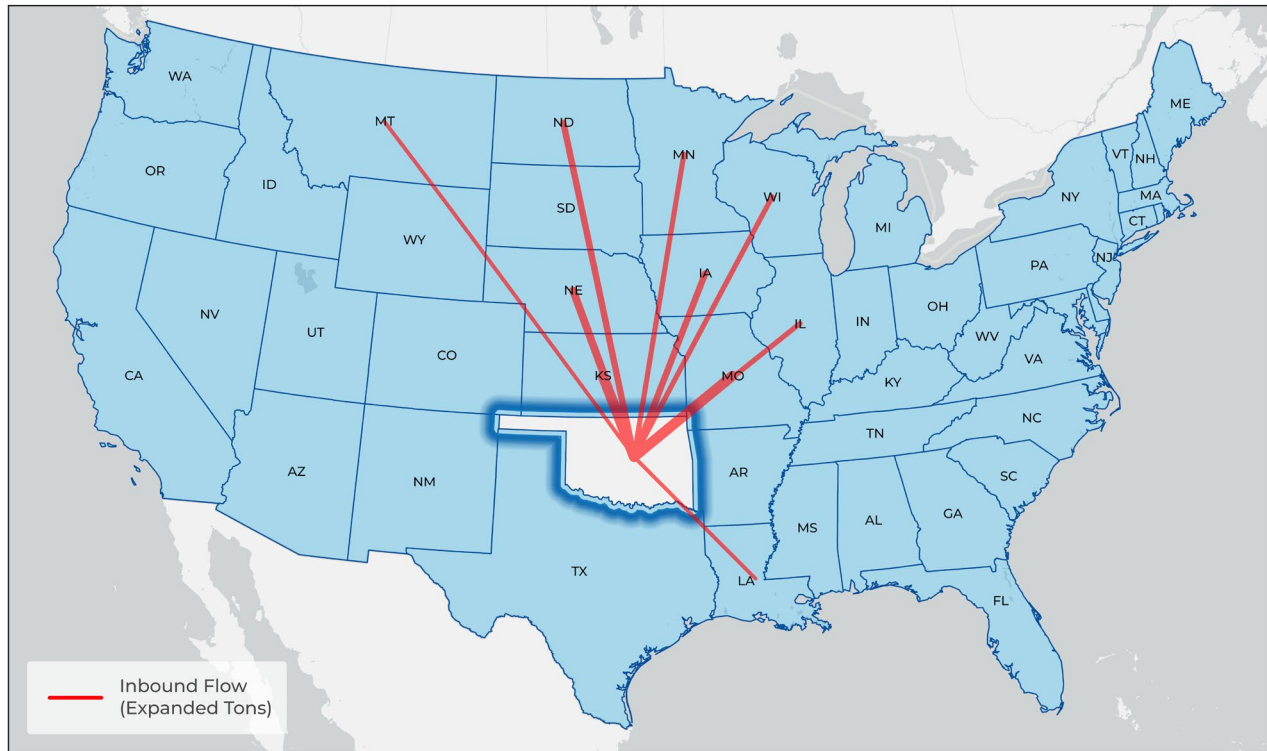
Figure 2-43. Farm Products Originating in Oklahoma, 2024



Source: STB Waybill Sample

In 2024, Oklahoma received roughly 1.2 million tons of farm products by rail from ten states with Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska being the largest sources (Figure 2-44). Shipments from these states consisted almost entirely of corn. Shipments from other states were mostly corn as well, although barley, oats, and wheat were also shipped by rail to Oklahoma.

Figure 2-44. Farm Products Terminating in Oklahoma, 2024



Source: STB Waybill Sample

Oklahoma's largest categories of agricultural production by value are cattle, poultry, hogs and pigs, and grains (primarily wheat followed by corn), in that order. Oklahoma is ranked fifth in the U.S. for cattle and calf sales, tenth for hogs and pig sales, thirteenth for poultry, and ninth for wheat (sixth for winter wheat). The following recent trends in agricultural shipments reflect changes in the agricultural sector in Oklahoma:

- **Shift Away from Wheat** – Wheat is the dominant commodity shipped outbound from Oklahoma by rail, but in recent years, Oklahoma wheat production has declined. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture 2022 Census of Agriculture, the volume of wheat harvested in Oklahoma declined from 139 million bushels in 2012 to 101 million bushels in 2017 to 66.4 million

**Grain Silos**





bushels in 2022.<sup>48</sup> The reduction in rail traffic is consistent with this trend. The decline was primarily caused by drought.

- **Reduction in Corn Shipments** – The amount of corn grown in Oklahoma decreased between 2017 and 2022 from 42.7 million bushels to 23.0 million according to the USDA Agricultural Census. Relatively little corn is shipped by rail from Oklahoma. More corn is shipped to Oklahoma than from the state. Corn shipped to Oklahoma is primarily used for animal feed, supplying the cattle, hog, and poultry industries. Both cattle and hogs grown declined between 2017 and 2022 per the USDA Agricultural Census, with the inventory of cattle declining from 5.1 million in 2017 to 4.5 million in 2022, and the inventory of hogs sold declining from 9.1 million in 2017 to 7.5 million in 2022. Partially offsetting this was an increase in poultry production, with the chicken inventory increasing from 197.6 million in 2017 to 229.5 million in 2022. One factor impacting Oklahoma agriculture has been drought, which occurred in the state 2020 through 2025. A report published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration estimated that drought cost Oklahoma, Texas, and Kansas \$23.6 billion in lost crops, higher feed costs, and selling cattle.<sup>49</sup>

## PETROLEUM PRODUCTS

In 2024, Oklahoma shipped over 1.6 million tons of petroleum products by rail to 29 states. Most of these movements terminated in Texas, California, and Illinois (Figure 2-45). Shipments to Texas primarily included petroleum lubricating oils and liquefied gases. Shipments to California mainly consisted of distillate fuel oil and asphalt pitches or tars. Shipments to Illinois consisted primarily of petroleum lubricating oils, followed by petroleum coke and petroleum refining products.

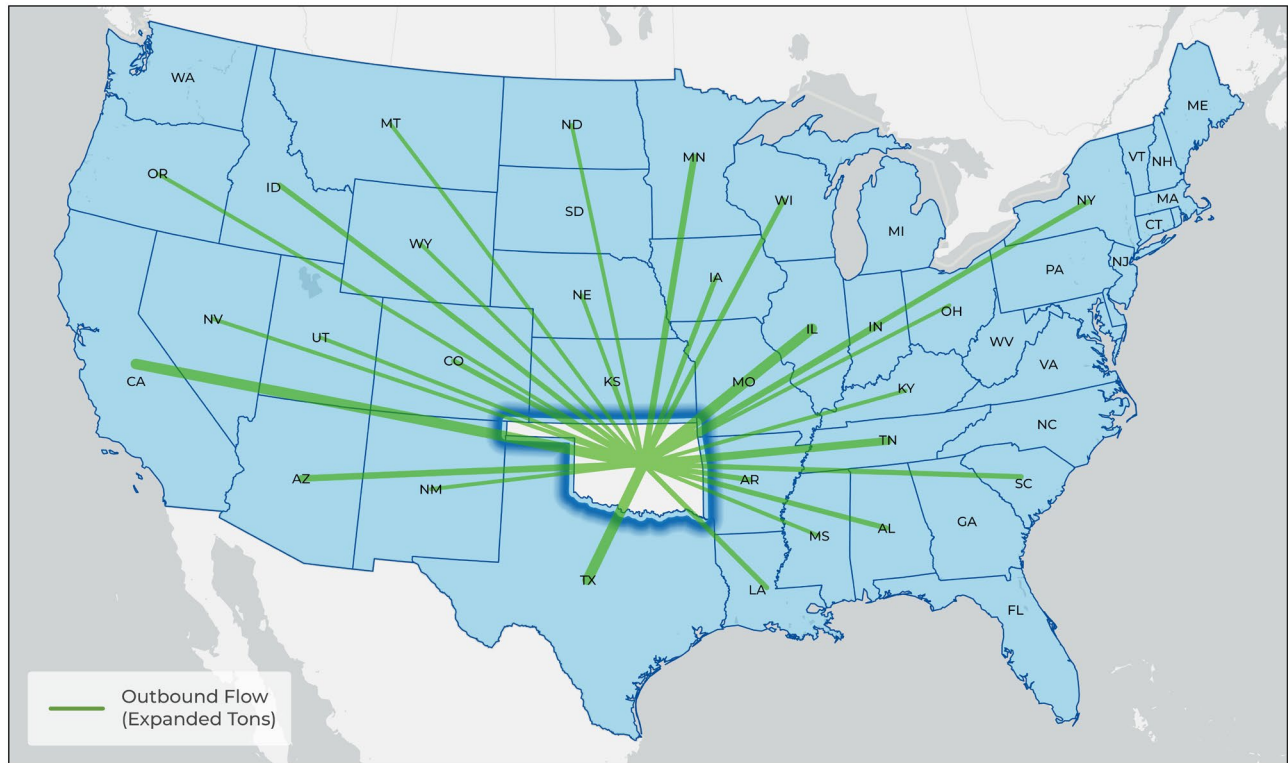
**Petroleum Train**



<sup>48</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2022 Census by State – Oklahoma, [https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AqCensus/2022/Full\\_Report/Census\\_by\\_State/Oklahoma/](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AqCensus/2022/Full_Report/Census_by_State/Oklahoma/)

<sup>49</sup> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. (2025). **Southern Plains Drought Assessment 2020 – 2025**. December. <https://www.drought.gov/sites/default/files/2025-12/Southern-Plains-Drought-Assessment-2020-2025-Report-12-16-25.pdf>.

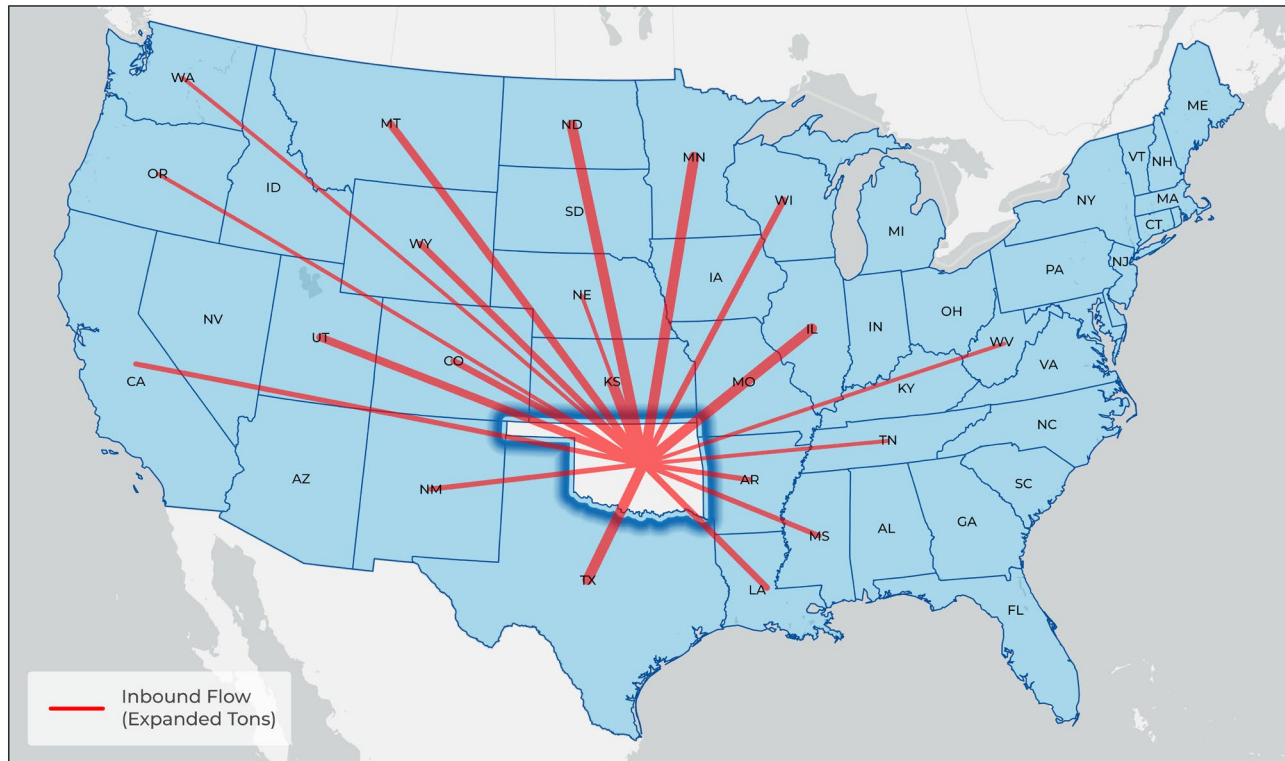
Figure 2-45. Petroleum Products Originating in Oklahoma, 2024



Source: STB Waybill Sample

In 2024, Oklahoma received roughly 1.2 million tons of petroleum products from 21 states (Figure 2-46). Kansas was the largest source, with miscellaneous petroleum products accounting for approximately half of its shipments, followed by asphalt pitches or tars and liquefied gases. Texas was the second-largest source, with liquefied gases and petroleum refining products accounting for most shipments. Illinois was the third-largest source, with petroleum lubricating oils, petroleum coke, and asphalt pitches or tars accounting for most shipments.

Figure 2-46. Petroleum Products Terminating in Oklahoma, 2024



Source: STB Waybill Sample

Oklahoma is ranked as the nation's sixth largest producer of crude oil and marketed natural gas. Of total U.S. crude oil storage capacity, 14 percent resides in Cushing, OK, which serves as the source for the West Texas Intermediate benchmark pricing for crude oil. Cushing is also known as the pipeline crossing of the world, with 20 inbound, 16 outbound, and 30 intra-regional pipelines converging.<sup>50</sup>

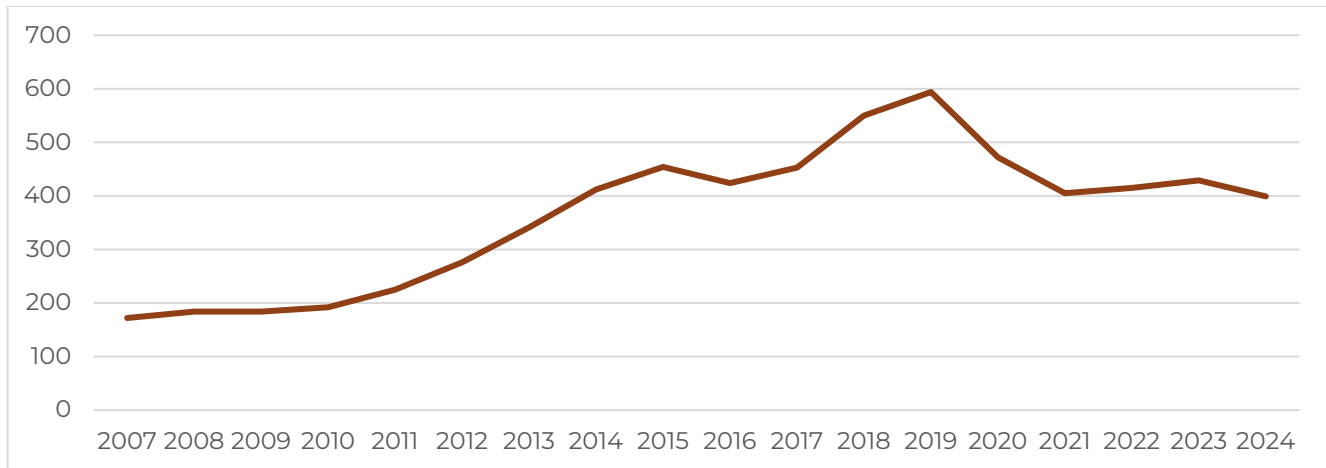
Oklahoma holds 1.6 billion in proven crude oil reserves, or 3 percent of total U.S. reserves. State production significantly increased starting in 2007 and peaked in 2019 (Figure 2-47). Between 2021 and 2024, production settled at approximately 400,000 barrels per day.

<sup>50</sup>

U.S. Energy Information Administration. **Oklahoma Overview.** <https://www.eia.gov/states/ok/overview>.



**Figure 2-47. Oklahoma Crude Oil Production in Barrels per Day**



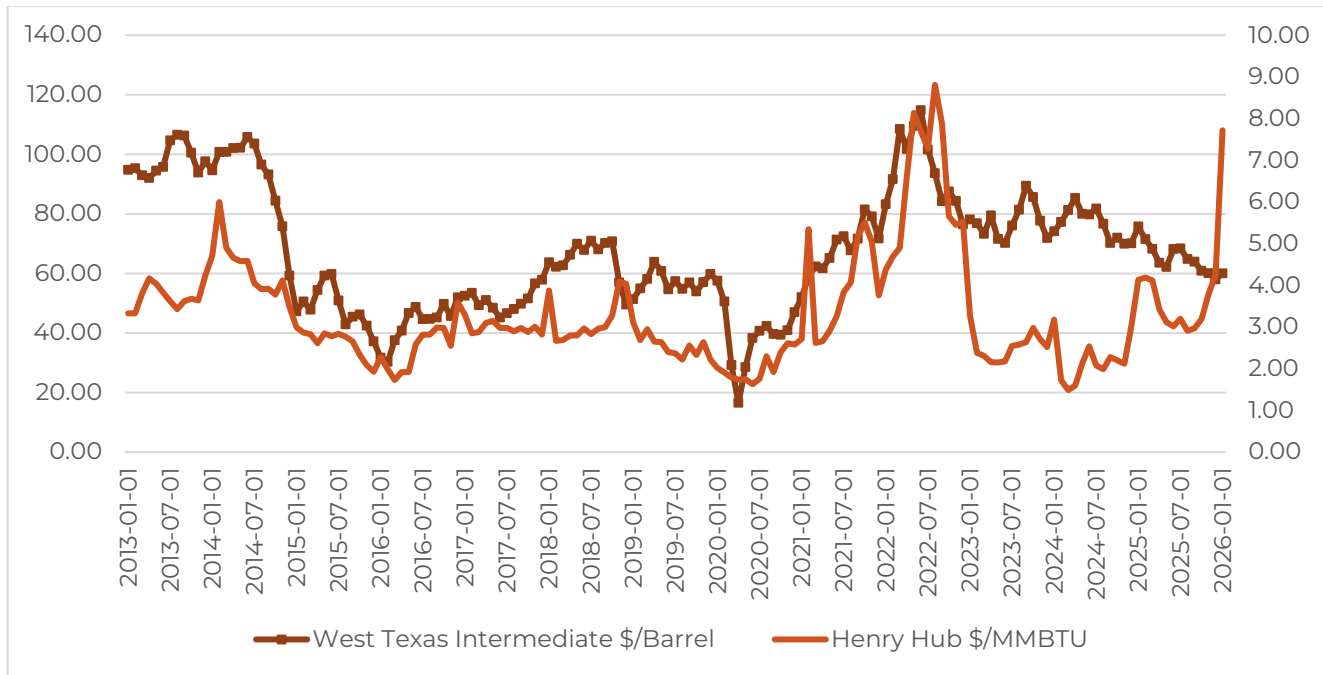
Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Oklahoma Fact Sheets

Energy prices influence Oklahoma's economy. Figure 2-48 notes a drop in per capita personal income in Oklahoma compared to that of the United States, which occurred in 2015. Economists at the Oklahoma State University noted that the dramatic decline in oil prices at the time and associated job losses in the energy sector were a drag on Oklahoma's economy.<sup>51</sup> Oil and gas were 8 percent of the Oklahoma GDP compared to 1 percent of the U.S. GDP in 2024 and contributed 18 percent of state tax revenue in 2023.<sup>52</sup> As shown in Figure 2-48, both natural gas prices and crude oil prices remained below 2013 prices during most of the period between 2015 and 2025.

<sup>51</sup> Dan Rickman and Hongbo Wang, Center for Applied Economic Research, Spears School of Business, Oklahoma State University, July 30, 2015, [https://business.okstate.edu/site-files/archive/docs/economy/SummerUpdate\\_2015.pdf](https://business.okstate.edu/site-files/archive/docs/economy/SummerUpdate_2015.pdf).

<sup>52</sup> Cortney Cowley and Chase Farha of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, **Increasingly Bullish: Oklahoma Natural Gas Rebounds on Rising Demand and Infrastructure**, July 16, 2025, <https://www.kansascityfed.org/pdf/article/articlepage/15744/>.

**Figure 2-48. Crude Oil Prices (West Texas Intermediate) and Natural Gas Prices (Henry Hub)**



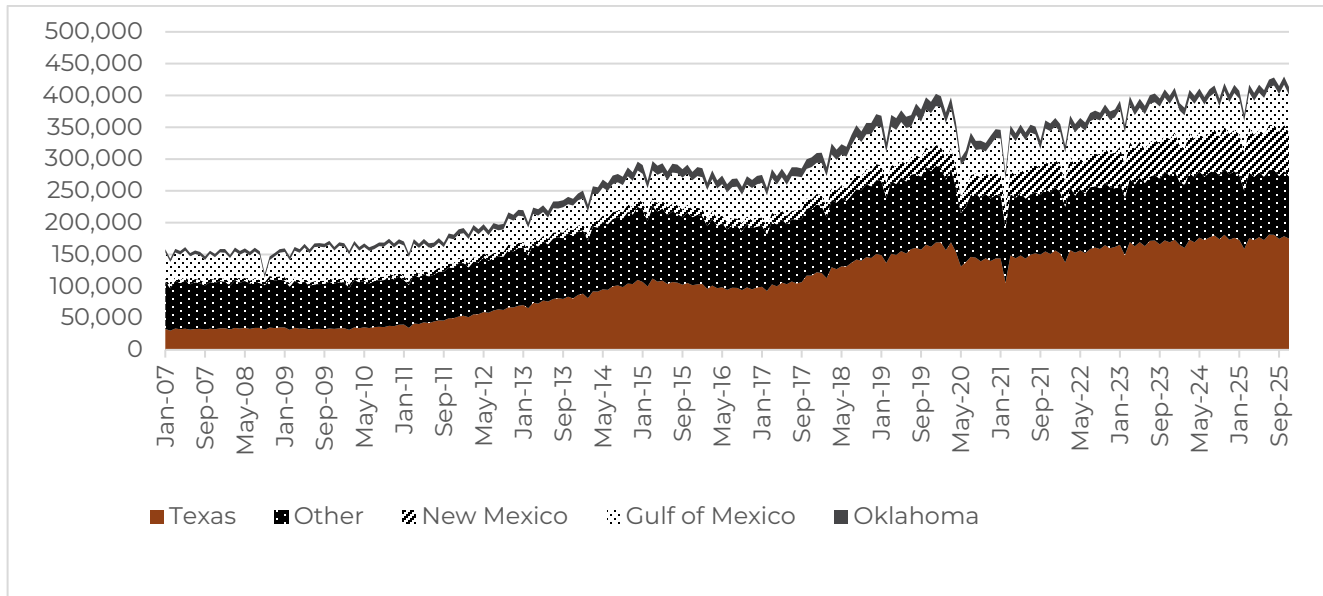
Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Oklahoma Fact Sheets

U.S. oil production has increased dramatically, and much of this growth is attributable to the Permian Basin in Texas and New Mexico. For example, production in these two states was 37.8 million barrels in January 2007, increasing to 244.5 million barrels in November 2025, a 547 percent increase (Figure 2-49). This increase in crude production has tended to lower natural gas prices, because natural gas is a byproduct of crude oil production, thus increasing supply without dedicated drilling. The scale of the Permian Basin has also permitted productivity improvements. According to industry publications, the productivity of the Permian Basin improved from 3 barrels of oil per foot of depth to 6 barrels of oil per foot of depth, compared to the Anadarko Basin in Oklahoma, which still yielded only 4 barrels per foot of depth.<sup>53</sup> Lower prices and competitive options from nearby alternate sources has tended to limit energy production in Oklahoma.

<sup>53</sup> Cowley, C. and C. Farha. (2025). "Increasingly Bullish: Oklahoma Natural Gas Rebounds on Rising Demand and Infrastructure," *Oklahoma Economist*. July. Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City. <https://www.kansascityfed.org/pdf/article/articlepage/15744/>.



**Figure 2-49. Crude Oil Production (Thousands of Barrels per Month)**

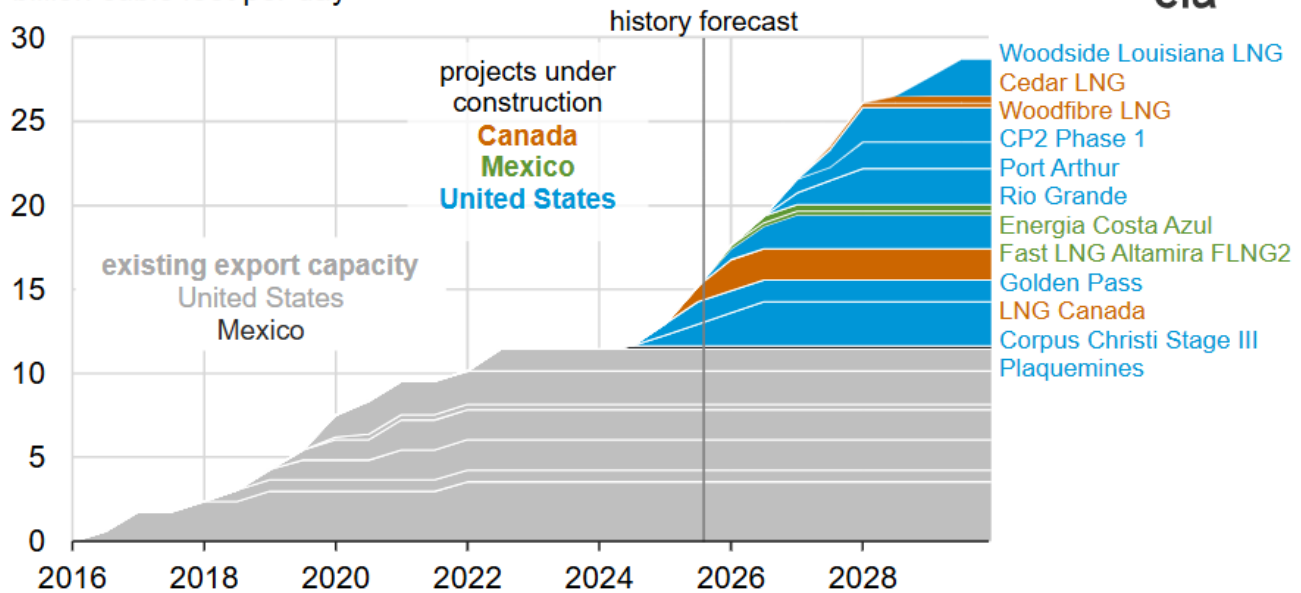


Source:

One factor that could increase natural gas demand for Oklahoma producers is the growth in liquid natural gas exports, for which significant capacity is being added. As shown in Figure 2-50, natural gas export capacity is expected to more than double between 2024 and 2029.

**Figure 2-50. Natural Gas Liquid Export Capacity**

**North America liquefied natural gas export capacity by project (2016–2029)**  
billion cubic feet per day



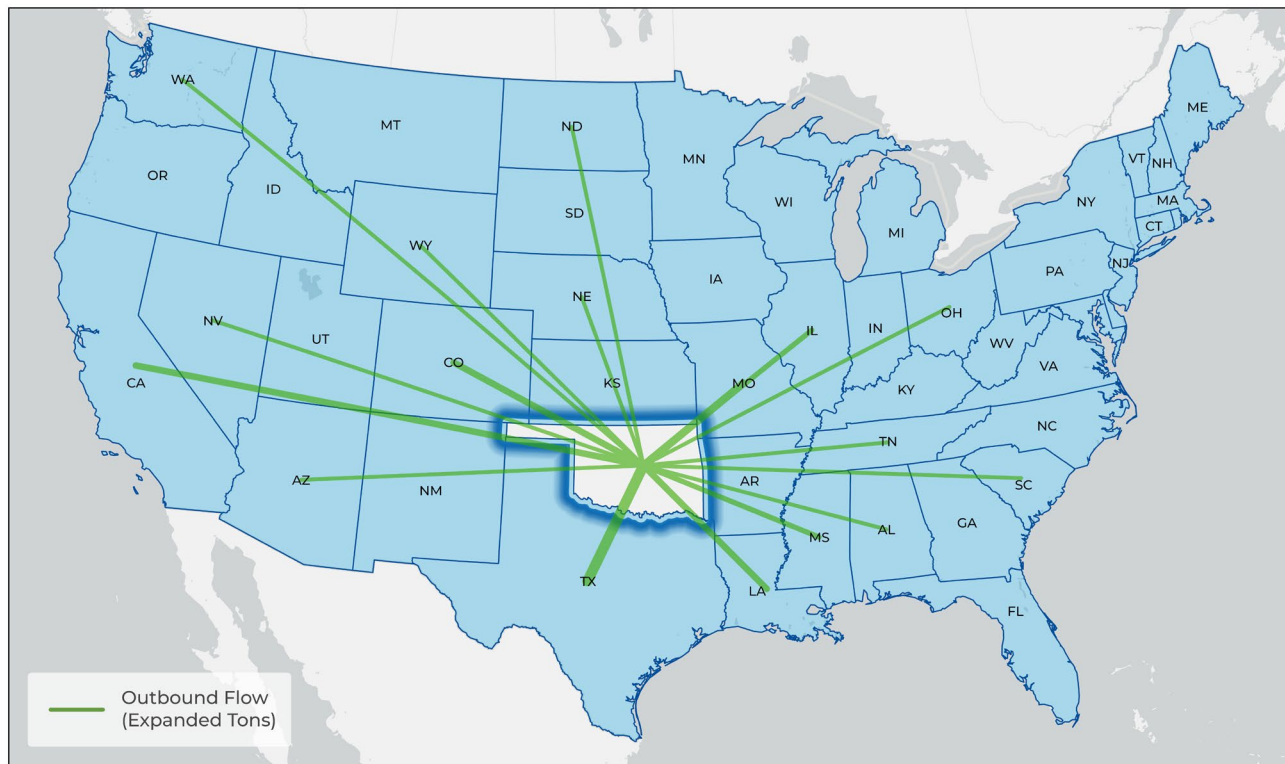
Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration In-Brief Analysis

Crude oil and natural dry natural gas are generally transported by pipeline rather than rail. However, rail is used for transporting supplies used for oil and gas development, such as sand, and it is likely that the reduction in nonmetallic mineral shipments by rail to Oklahoma noted in Figure 2-51 relates to the reduction in new oil or gas wells in Oklahoma due to low prices. Rail is also used for shipping petroleum products, such as natural gas liquids, fuel oil, etc., and an increase in production would tend to increase shipments of these products.

**NONMETALLIC MINERALS**

In 2024, Oklahoma shipped over 13.2 million tons of nonmetallic minerals to 17 states, with a significant share terminating in Texas (Figure 2-51). Most of these shipments consisted of broken or crushed stone, followed by gravel or sand and miscellaneous materials. Oklahoma (intrastate), Missouri, and Colorado were the next largest receiving states. Intrastate shipments were primarily broken or crushed stone, with gravel or sand accounting for most of the remainder. Shipments to Missouri consisted almost exclusively of broken or crushed stone with small amounts of gravel or sand, whereas shipments to Colorado were made up of gravel or sand and miscellaneous minerals.

**Figure 2-51. Nonmetallic Minerals Originating in Oklahoma, 2024**

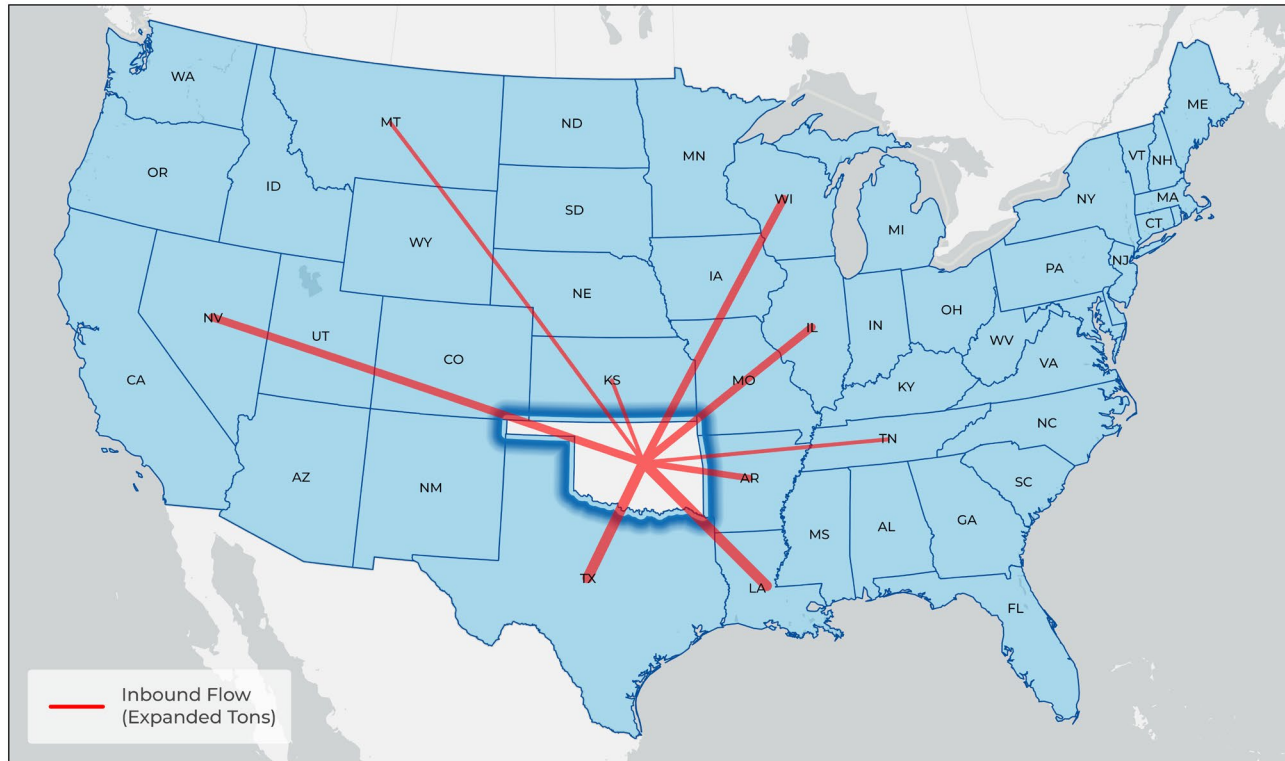


Source: STB Waybill Sample

In 2024, Oklahoma received approximately 1.3 million tons of nonmetallic minerals from ten states. Most of these movements came from within the state, consisting mainly of broken or crushed stone, with smaller amounts of gravel or sand. Louisiana, Texas, and Wisconsin were the next largest sources (Figure 2-52). Louisiana shipped chemical or fertilizer minerals exclusively, while Texas primarily shipped chemical or fertilizer minerals and small amounts of gravel or sand. Wisconsin

shipped gravel or sand exclusively. It is likely that a significant portion of the inbound interstate shipments of these commodities were used for energy development.

**Figure 2-52. Nonmetallic Minerals Terminating in Oklahoma, 2024**



Source: STB Waybill Sample

Oklahoma's geological history created abundant deposits across the state including non-fuel minerals such as lead, zinc, gypsum, limestone, salt, sand, gravel. According to the Oklahoma Department of Mines, as of 2023, all 77 Oklahoma counties had mining activity of some kind, with 770 unique mines permitted across the state.<sup>54</sup> Limestone, sand, and gravel are the highest volume (by tonnage) commodities that are mined or quarried in Oklahoma (Table 2-16). Production of these commodities has been growing.

An interview with representatives of the aggregates industry suggested that most companies within this industry are not facing major issues with existing rail service. Their concerns relate more to environmental permitting. Mines and quarries have a limited amount of rock and sand. Some have remaining resources to fulfill demand for decades. Others will be depleted sooner. It is a challenge to find new locations to establish mines and quarries, particularly given the need to protect impacted aquifers and meet the concerns of local communities. A rail-related issue is the availability of rail service at new locations that can be developed.

<sup>54</sup>

Oklahoma Department of Mines

Shipments by rail of Oklahoma nonmetallic minerals are primarily destined for construction projects in Texas, which has been growing rapidly and therefore requiring construction materials. Therefore, demand for raw materials has been high, as reflected in the growing rail shipments of nonmetallic mineral products (Table 2-16).

**Table 2-16. Oklahoma Mining and Aggregates, 2019 through 2023**

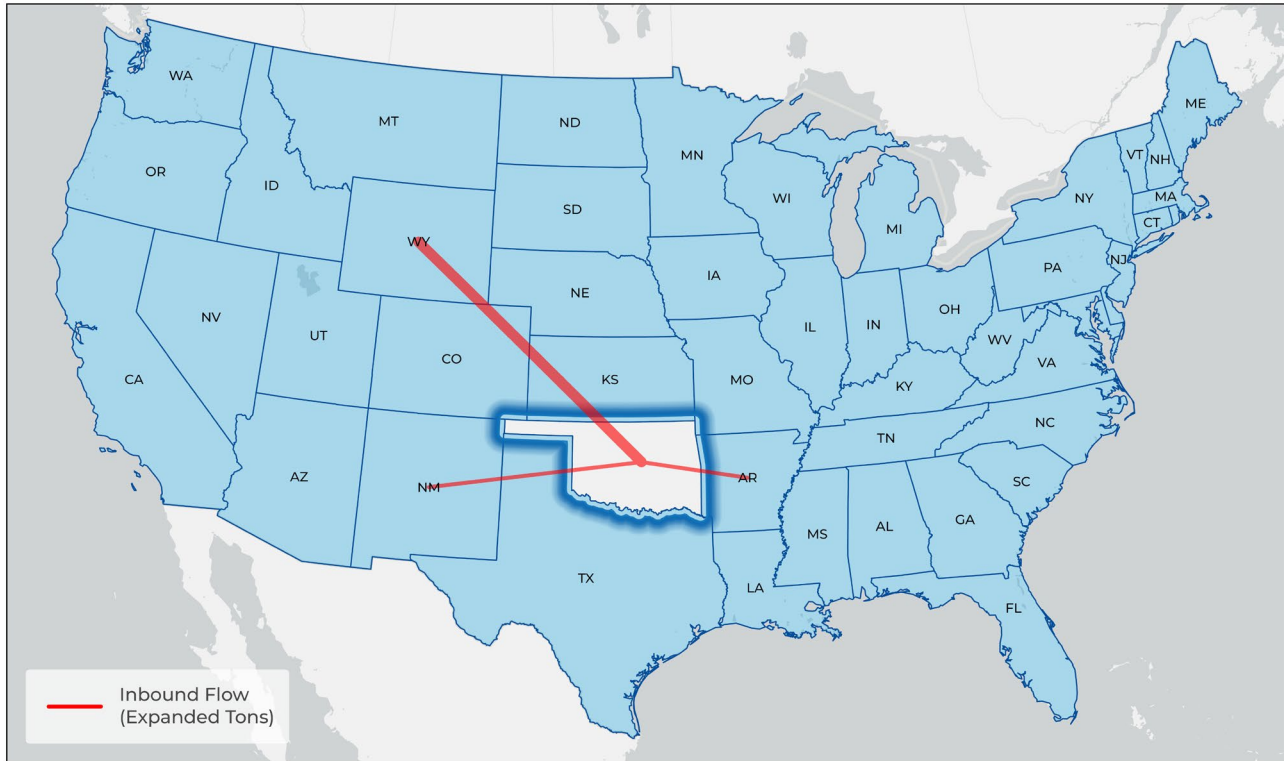
Commodity	2019		2023	
	Tons	Percent	Tons	Percent
Caliche	6,246	0%	—	0%
Chat	142,777	0%	—	0%
Clay	1,661,423	2%	1,603,704	2%
Coal	294,344	0%		0%
Dimensional Stone	1,121,896	1%	1,215,814	1%
Granite	9,629,110	11%	10,851,075	13%
Gypsum	5,280,332	6%	4,020,263	5%
Limestone	44,544,765	53%	43,478,375	52%
Salt	166,037	0%	116,328	0%
Sand & Gravel	19,255,178	23%	22,394,433	27%
Select Fill	1,020,763	1%	1,444,728	2%
Shale	566,829	1%	461,559	1%
Tripoli	50,269	0%	16,149	0%
Dolomite	—	0%	136,294	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>83,739,969</b>		<b>85,738,722</b>	

Source: Oklahoma Department of Mines

**COAL**

In 2024, Oklahoma received over 2 million tons of bituminous coal. Nearly all of these shipments originated in Wyoming, with the remainder consisting of intrastate shipments and shipments from Arizona and New Mexico (Figure 2-53). Nearly all coal received in Oklahoma is low-sulfur subbituminous coal mined in the Powder River Basin area of Wyoming. Coal received is used for electric generation.

Figure 2-53. Coal Terminating in Oklahoma, 2024



Source: STB Waybill Sample

### 2.2.3 Passenger Travel Demand and Growth

The demand for passenger rail travel is influenced by the overall demand for passenger travel. Highway is by far the largest mode of passenger travel in Oklahoma, so trends in roadway travel are presented as a proxy for overall travel. Per data by the FHWA, annual vehicle miles traveled (VMT) declined in Oklahoma by five percent between 2014 and 2024 (Table 2-17). The decline was led by decreases in VMT on collectors and local roads, as well as urban arterials. Partially offsetting these declines were increases in VMT on interstates and rural arterials. The trends suggest that local traffic in Oklahoma decreased somewhat, but longer distance traffic increased.

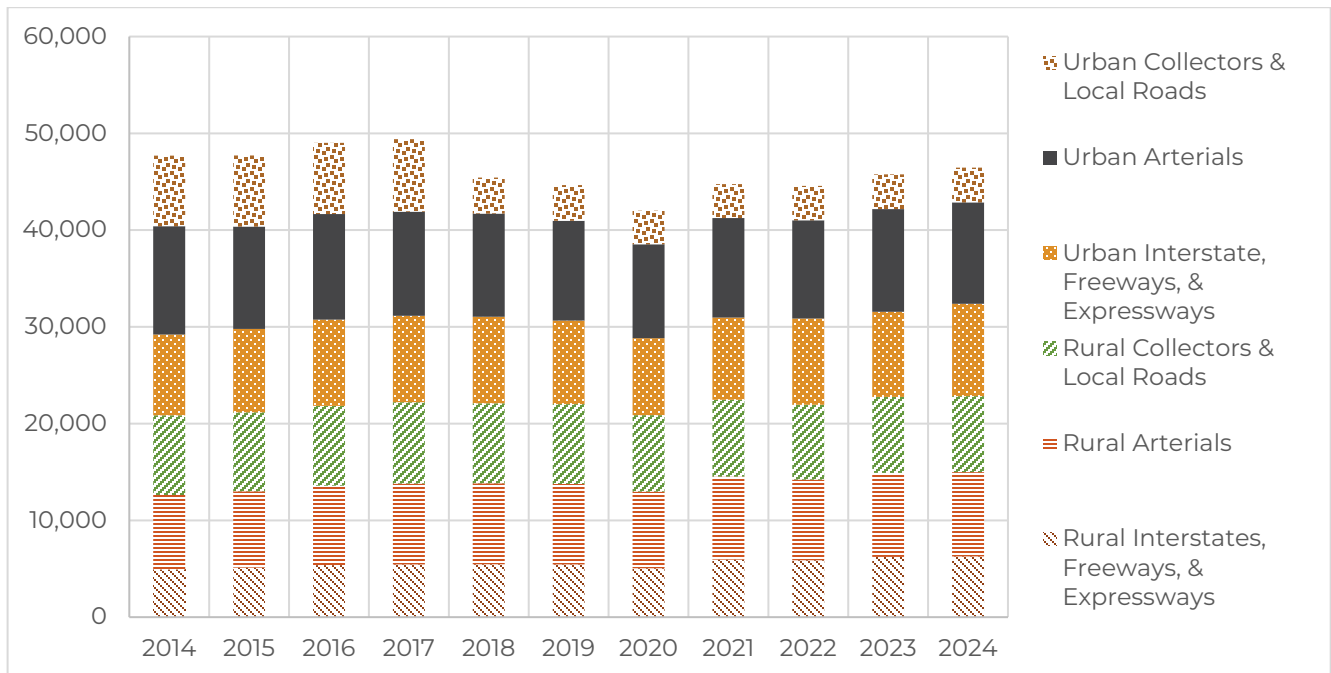
**Table 2-17. Annual VMT on Oklahoma Roadways by Classification, 2014 and 2024**

Functional Class	Existing Miles of Roadway	2014 Average Annual VMT (millions)	2024 Average Annual VMT (millions)	% Growth
Rural Interstates, Freeways, & Expressways	2,715	4,915	6,273	28%
Rural Arterials	12,708	7,705	8,711	13%
Rural Collectors & Local Roads	181,668	8,233	7,855	-5%
Urban Interstate, Freeways, & Expressways	2,437	8,363	9,539	14%
Urban Arterials	10,421	11,181	10,489	-6%
Urban Collectors & Local Roads	30,985	7,301	3,590	-51%
<b>Total</b>	<b>240,934</b>	<b>47,699</b>	<b>45,456</b>	<b>-5%</b>

Source: Federal Highway Administration, Highway Statistics Table HM-60 (2024) and Table VM-2 (2014, 2024)

As shown in Figure 2-54, VMT declined starting in 2018 and into the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, and has since increased, but not to 2017 levels.

**Figure 2-54. Annual Vehicle Miles Traveled on ODOT Roadways by Classification, 2014 through 2024**



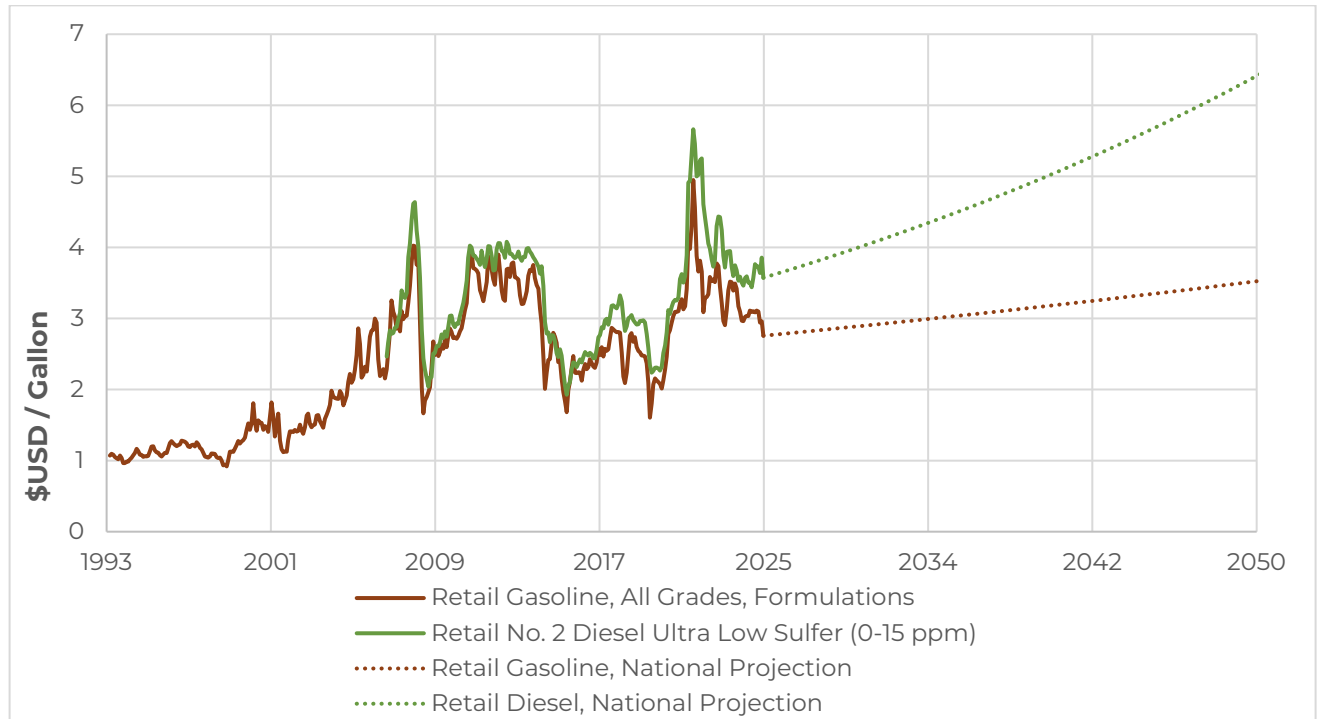
Source: Federal Highway Administration, Highway Statistics Table VM-2 (2014-2024)

### 2.2.4 Fuel Cost Trends

Figure 2-55 illustrates historical trends in retail gasoline and diesel prices in the Midwestern United States. While with Midwest region trends similarly to the national average for fuel prices, Oklahoma consistently ranks among the states with the lowest fuel costs for both gasoline and diesel.

Gasoline and ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel costs have shown significant volatility over the past five years, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). Both gasoline and diesel prices are forecast to increase with faster growth in diesel prices.

**Figure 2-55. Gasoline and Diesel Price Trends from 1993 to 2025**



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Petroleum & Other Liquids (2026); Annual Energy Outlook 2025 (2024)

In 2022, petroleum-based fuels accounted for approximately 89 percent of total transportation sector use.<sup>55</sup> Specifically, gasoline and distillate fuels (e.g., diesel) represent nearly three-quarters of all energy consumption. Even as the fuel efficiency of vehicles improves, total fuel consumption continues to increase due to more total vehicles in use and the rise in popularity of larger passenger vehicles such as light pickup trucks, minivans, and sport utility vehicles.<sup>56</sup> However, long-term projections predict reversals in these trends. In Q3 of 2024, combined sales of hybrid and battery electric vehicles represented over 21 percent of new light-duty vehicle sales. The U.S. Energy

<sup>55</sup> U.S. Energy Information Administration, Use of energy explained: Energy use for transportation (2023) <https://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/use-of-energy/transportation.php>

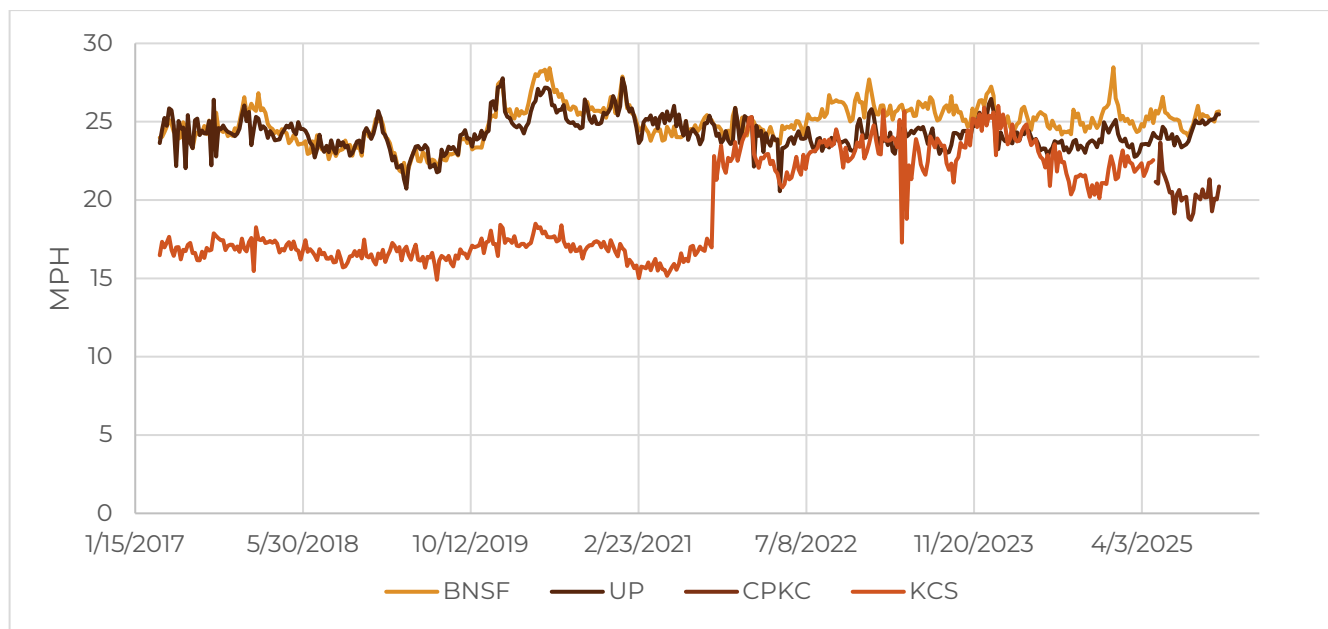
<sup>56</sup> Center for Sustainable Systems, University of Michigan, Personal Transportation Factsheet (2025) <https://css.umich.edu/publications/factsheets/mobility/personal-transportation-factsheet>

Information Administration (EIA) predicts that increased electric vehicle adoption, breakthroughs in hydrogen fuel technology, and further improvements in fuel economy will lead to a decrease in motor gasoline consumption through the 2030s and 2040s. Electrification and alternative fuels are driving a structural shift in transportation energy demand, reducing petroleum's market share.<sup>57</sup> All else being equal, an increase in fuel prices would tend to boost demand for rail, since as outlined in Section 2.1.7, rail is less fuel intensive than highway transportation modes. In contrast, a decrease in fuel prices would tend to reduce demand for railroad transportation.

### 2.2.5 Rail Congestion Trends

Train speeds can indicate rail congestion, since trains speeds will increase with low congestion and decrease with high congestion. Figure 2-56 displays system-wide average train speeds for Class I railroads that operate in Oklahoma. Class I railroads provide this information to the U.S. Surface Transportation Board; speeds are calculated by dividing total train-miles by total train-hours. Beyond an increase in train speeds of the merged CPKC compared to the standalone KCS, no consistent other pattern is apparent. Interestingly, UP and BNSF train speeds often move together even though they are two different railroads.

**Figure 2-56. Average Train Velocity Over Time by Railroad, 2017 to 2025**



Source: U.S. Surface Transportation Board

One recent issue with regard to train speeds and rail network congestion has been an increase in the average train size. According to statistics by the Association of American Railroads, the median train length has increased from around 4,500 feet in 2010 to around 5,250 feet in 2023.<sup>58</sup> In 2010,

<sup>57</sup> U.S. Energy Information Administration, Annual Energy Outlook (2025) <https://www.eia.gov/outlooks/aeo/>  
<sup>58</sup> Association of American Railroads, "Freight Train Length Explained," <https://www.aar.org/issue/freight-train-length/>

trains were generally no longer than 10,000 feet, whereas in 2023 the longest trains were nearly 14,000 feet. As shown in Figure 2-3, most rail lines in Oklahoma are single track. Railroads rely on passing sidings to permit trains to pass one another, either in opposing directions or one train overtaking another. But many of the passing sidings are built to accommodate smaller trains than those that Class I railroads operate today. This can cause congestion if no sidings are available of sufficient length to allow one train to pass another.

### 2.2.6 Highway and Airport Congestion Trends

Recent transportation plans determine that roadway congestion in Oklahoma is concentrated in the Oklahoma City and Tulsa metropolitan areas. The 2050 Oklahoma Long Range Transportation Plan identifies congestion reduction as a statewide priority.<sup>59</sup> COVID-19 pandemic-era reductions in driving temporarily decreased congestion. However, this led to higher operating speeds and more severe crashes, increasing fatality rates year-over-year.

The Texas A&M Transportation Institute created the 2025 Urban Mobility Report to quantify mobility and congestion in the largest cities in the United States. Oklahoma City and Tulsa were included in the analysis, and Table 2-18 includes key mobility metrics. In the table, each city is compared to the average value of other cities of similar sizes.

**Table 2-18. Urban Mobility Report Metrics and Rankings**

Mobility Metric	Oklahoma City	Average of Large Urban Areas	Tulsa	Average of Medium Urban Areas
<b>30-minute Total Urban Coverage</b>	34.3%	24.6%	36.3%	30.0%
<b>Annual Person-Hours of Delay per Commuter</b>	64	63	48	49
<b>Excess Fuel Consumed per Commuter (Gallons)</b>	19	20	15	16
<b>Annual Congestion Cost per Commuter (2024 \$)</b>	1,132	1,481	928	1,143
<b>Annual Person-Hours of Truck Delay</b>	2,734	3,613	1,349	1,471

Source: Oklahoma Department of Transportation, 2050 Oklahoma Long Range Transportation Plan (2025).

Oklahoma City and Tulsa both perform approximately at or better than the average of their peer urban areas for all mobility metrics. Specifically, residents in each city can reach over one-third of the urban area within 30 minutes, a figure enabled by relatively flat topography and robust freeway

<sup>59</sup> ODOT, **2025 – 2050 Oklahoma Long Range Transportation Plan**, <https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/odot/programs-and-projects/programs/transportation-programs/lrtp/lrp-2025-2050/resources/final-plan/2050%20Oklahoma%20Long%20Range%20Transportation%20Plan.pdf>.



networks. Commuters in both cities experience similar or lower delays compared to similarly sized metropolitan areas.<sup>60</sup>

American Airlines operates nine daily, round-trip flights between Oklahoma City's Will Rogers International Airport and Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport, while Southwest Airlines provides two additional round-trip flights between Oklahoma City and Dallas Love Field. These services include approximately 1 hour of in-air travel time. In contrast, taking the **Heartland Flyer** between Oklahoma City and Fort Worth typically requires about 4 hours end-to-end, similar to driving but without the need to navigate traffic. Flying (once boarding, security, and airport access are included) often approaches 3–4 hours total door-to-door for such a short corridor. The **Heartland Flyer** offers convenience and comfort advantage: no TSA security screening, no invasive baggage inspections, and minimal boarding time, whereas air travel requires advance arrival (often 60–90 minutes), security checks, and restrictions on liquids and carry-ons. Driving provides maximum flexibility and point-to-point access, but exposes travelers to I-35 congestion, fuel costs, and parking considerations. With reliable service, the **Heartland Flyer** can effectively divert tens of thousands of vehicle trips from the corridor annually.

Rail travel from Oklahoma City beyond Fort Worth requires transfers to other long-distance routes such as Amtrak's **Texas Eagle**. Flights between Oklahoma City and Los Angeles range from \$180 to \$370 round trip and take 3 to 6 hours, depending on routing and carrier. In contrast, a rail itinerary between Oklahoma City and Los Angeles, requiring a **Heartland Flyer** trip plus a transfer, takes 36 to 53 hours and costs roughly \$180 to \$300 for most departures. Passenger rail is not more affordable for trips such as this and is therefore usually chosen for the rail experience rather than for fast/convenient transportation.

### 2.2.7 Land Use Trends

One significant land use trend is that the amount of urban area in Oklahoma decreased from 2010 to 2020 by about 20 square miles. Urban areas are densely settled census blocks with housing unit density and/or population density of at least 2,000 housing units or have a population of at least 5,000, including adjacent non-residential urban land uses. The state also lost about 40 percent of its defined urban areas, dropping from 88 in 2010 to 53 in 2020. However, some urban areas grew, including the five largest cities in the state (Table 2-19). Oklahoma City grew the most, gaining about 10 square miles of urban area, followed by Tulsa, Lawton, and Norman (Table 2-20). While the number of urban areas decreased, the average size of an urban area grew from 15 square miles to just under 25 square miles, suggesting that small urban areas are declining while big urban areas are growing. This suggests that future freight rail development activity, not dependent on a specific raw material, will tend to focus around the larger, growing, urban areas. On the other hand, development can also create conflicts between rail and surrounding communities, as previously seldom-used highway-rail grade crossings see more traffic and new housing is built near rail lines and yards where they were not present before. It becomes important to maintain available industrial sites near rail lines as these areas could otherwise be used for different types of development.

<sup>60</sup> Texas A&M Transportation Institute. (2025). **2025 Urban Mobility Report**. August. <https://static.tti.tamu.edu/tti.tamu.edu/documents/mobility-report-2025.pdf>.

Table 2-19. *Urban Area Change between 2010 and 2020*

Category	2010	2020
Urban Areas (sq. mi.)	1,322	1,303
Portion Urban	1.25%	1.24%
Number of Urban Areas	88	53
Average Urban Area Size (sq. mi.)	15.0	24.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table 2-20. *Change in Area for Major Cities in Oklahoma between 2010 and 2020*

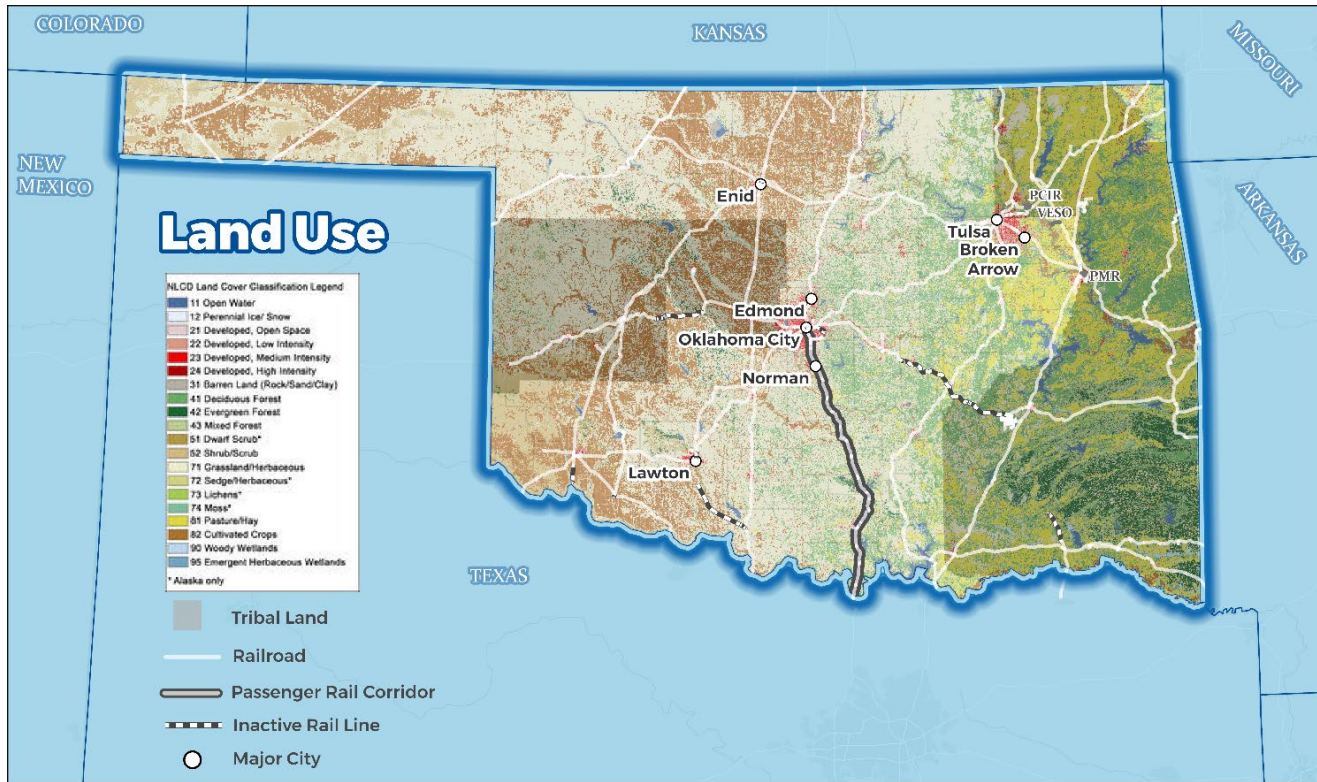
Major Cities	2010	2020	Change (sq. mi.)
Oklahoma City, OK	418.5	429.4	10.9
Tulsa, OK	339.5	343.8	4.3
Lawton, OK	44.1	46.9	2.8
Norman, OK	45.7	46.5	0.8
Muskogee, OK	28.1	30.7	2.6
Enid, OK	24.0	29.5	5.5
Stillwater, OK	20.9	25.5	4.6
Bartlesville, OK	24.5	19.8	-4.7
Shawnee, OK	22.2	18.9	-3.3
Ponca City, OK	19.0	18.3	-0.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Land use can also be evaluated by exploring land cover data captured from satellite imagery as seen in Figure 2-57. Developed areas are symbolized in shades of red, with tribal land highlighted in the grayed portions. Three-quarters (75 percent) of the state is available for farming and ranching

(Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom)<sup>61</sup>, which can be seen in the various shades of brown, green, and yellow. Most of the state is not among the areas classified as developed with varying shades of red or pink, and with a large mileage of rail lines traveling through non-urban areas, tribal land, or both.

**Figure 2-57. Land Use in Oklahoma (2024)**



Source: National Land Cover Database

These findings suggest that Oklahoma has plenty of land available for rail-related development.

### 2.3 Rail Service Needs and Opportunities

Rail service needs and opportunities have been incorporated into Chapters 3 and 4, which present passenger and freight needs, opportunities, and projects, including initiatives that have been proposed to address those needs and opportunities.

<sup>61</sup> Oklahoma Agriculture in the Classroom, Oklahoma Agriculture Facts, <https://oklahoma.agclassroom.org/resources/agricultural-facts/ag-facts/>.



## 3 PROPOSED PASSENGER RAIL IMPROVEMENTS AND INVESTMENTS

### 3.1 Heartland Flyer Funding

The **Heartland Flyer** has been in service since 1999, providing a single daily round trip between Oklahoma City and Fort Worth with interim stops.

As with nearly all other passenger rail services in the U.S., the Amtrak **Heartland Flyer** service relies on public operating support to deliver service. Per Figure 2-19, revenues earned through ticket sales and other sources cover between 23 and 28 percent of the **Heartland Flyer** operating costs, in a given year. As described in Chapter 2, the **Heartland Flyer** is categorized as a regional rail service in that the route is less than 750 miles. And since the 2008 Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act, states and local partners are responsible for funding regional rail routes.

As shown in Table 2-6, Oklahoma provided exclusive operating support for the **Heartland Flyer** service between 1999 and 2006. Beginning in 2007, Texas shared the cost of the service. Between 2007 and 2020, the Oklahoma and Texas shares were roughly equal. In 2015, a new split of approximately 57 percent from Oklahoma and 43 percent from Texas began.

As shown in Table 2-7, the Oklahoma Tourism and Passenger Rail Revolving Fund—funded at \$2.85 million per year—has been the primary source for Oklahoma’s share of the **Heartland Flyer**. This funding source was sufficient to cover ODOT’s portion of the service, but with inflation and rising service costs, it now does not cover Oklahoma’s Amtrak contract cost. ODOT has supplemented this gap primarily through previous surpluses in the revolving fund; however, these surpluses are expected to be exhausted after fiscal year 2026. In Texas, the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) utilized Regional Toll Revenue funds, with approval from the Texas Transportation Commission, to support the Texas share through the 2026 calendar year. Any Texas funding after that will require further approval by the Texas Transportation Commission.

ODOT maintains an open position to pursuing partners and funding streams to secure sustainable revenue sources for the **Heartland Flyer** service.



Figure 3-1. **Heartland Flyer at Oklahoma City**



Source: ODOT

Without full state funding, the remaining alternatives for funding the **Heartland Flyer** service generally fall within two categories:

- Federal Funding – As discussed in Chapter 2, the IJA included the Restoration and Enhancement Grant Program, which provides temporary operating support for restoring passenger rail service on corridors that had previously had passenger service. However, IJA is due to expire in FY 2026, and it is uncertain whether this program will continue.
- Local Funding – Local funding for the **Heartland Flyer** would most likely come from the two major metropolitan areas on the route, namely Oklahoma City and Dallas/Fort Worth.

## 3.2 Heartland Flyer Alternatives

Given the funding situation, it is useful to consider two interrelated questions:

- What is (or has been) the impact of the **Heartland Flyer** service?
- What alternative configurations could augment service to boost the impact to Oklahoma?

January 2026, ODOT completed the **Heartland Flyer Economic Impact Analysis**, which explored the economic impact of the existing service, and of scenarios for enhanced service.<sup>62</sup> The study found

<sup>62</sup> Oklahoma Department of Transportation, **Heartland Flyer Economic Impact Analysis**, January 30, 2026.



that with its current configuration, over the coming years, the **Heartland Flyer** is expected to generate about \$11.7 million per year in direct impacts to Oklahoma primarily associated with tourism and visitor spending in Oklahoma (Table 3-1).

**Table 3-1. Average Annual Direct Impacts over Forecast 2033-2053 Period**

Direct Impact	Amount (\$Millions)
The <b>Heartland Flyer</b> brings <b>visitors</b> to Oklahoma who <b>spend money</b> and <b>support the Oklahoma economy</b>	\$9.0
The <b>Heartland Flyer</b> <b>reduces roadway fatalities, injuries, and property damage</b> from highway crashes by diverting passengers from roadways	\$1.6
By taking the <b>Heartland Flyer</b> , <b>passengers save money</b> compared to auto travel	\$1.5
Passengers require slightly <b>longer travel time</b> to use the <b>Heartland Flyer</b> service compared to highway travel	-\$1.0
By diverting passengers from roadway travel, the <b>Heartland Flyer</b> <b>reduces roadway congestion</b>	\$0.5
Because rail is more fuel efficient than highway travel, the <b>Heartland Flyer</b> <b>reduces fuel costs</b>	\$0.1
By diverting passengers from roadways, the <b>Heartland Flyer</b> <b>reduces roadway infrastructure maintenance costs</b>	\$0.01
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$11.7</b>

Source: ODOT 2026

The study notes several qualitative impacts in addition to those quantified in Table 3-1. The **Heartland Flyer** provides:

- **An Affordable Transportation Mode** for residents in smaller communities along the route.
- **Comfortable and Stress-Free Travel** with large seats, the ability to move around the train, and a snack bar.
- **Education and Heritage Value** since the National Park Service and volunteers from the Chickasaw National Recreation Area provide programs onboard.

The service provides a transportation alternative to those who are unable to drive a car. It also potentially boosts productivity for some individuals. For those that can work remotely, they can work on a train whereas it is not possible to work while driving.

The study also reviewed several alternatives to the **Heartland Flyer** service.

- **Scenario 1a:** Add a new station stop in Thackerville, OK, providing access to the WinStar Casino and serving the local community
- **Scenario 2:** Increase service frequency (adding a second daily round trip)
- **Scenario 3:** Extend service to Newton, Kansas for a connection to the **Southwest Chief**, with interim stations north of Oklahoma City and in Wichita.

Figure 3-2 displays the locations of Scenarios 1a and 3.

**Figure 3-2. Heartland Flyer with Potential Thackerville Station and Proposed Extension to Newton, KS**



Source: ODOT 2026

The study estimated the change in ridership that would result from each alternative, but considered only the change in ridership for stations in Oklahoma, not in Kansas or Texas. As shown in Table 3-2, ridership impact of adding the Thackerville station and of extending the rail line to Newton, KS (Oklahoma ridership only), were about equivalent, increasing ridership by 17 percent each. Adding a second daily trip was estimated to boost ridership by 50 percent.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>63</sup> This could be conservative. For example, the **Borealis** service, which added an additional frequency beyond the long-distance **Empire Builder** to Amtrak service between Chicago and Minneapolis, tripled ridership. Similarly, additional frequencies on Amtrak trains in Virginia have in some cases boosted ridership by a nearly one-to-one relationship with the additional trains.



**Table 3-2. Ridership Impacts of Scenarios on Heartland Flyer Ridership**

Statistic	Current Service	Thackerville Station	Second Round Trip	Extension to Newton (OK Stations)
<b>2033 Ridership</b>	89,292	104,356	133,936	104,332
<b>% Change from Current Service</b>	0%	17%	50%	17%

Source: ODOT 2026

The study estimated a Return on Investment (ROI) for each of the alternatives, examining the total economic impact that would result from each dollar invested. A ROI of 1.3 would suggest that for each \$1 invested, the service would generate \$1.30 in economic impact. As shown in Table 3-3, the highest ROI would result from the new station in Thackerville. This analysis focused specifically on impacts in Oklahoma, so that rankings of the alternatives could differ if Texas and Kansas impacts were included. For example, a second frequency could allow Texas residents to visit Oklahoma City and return home the same day.

**Table 3-3. ROI of Heartland Flyer Alternatives**

Statistic	Current Service	Thackerville Station	Second Round Trip	Extension to Newton (OK Stations)
<b>Return on Investment</b>	\$1.3	\$1.7	\$1.2	\$0.5

Source: ODOT 2026

### 3.3 Passenger Rail Initiatives in Adjoining States Relevant to the Heartland Flyer

Several initiatives in states adjacent to Oklahoma could have impacts on alternatives for the **Heartland Flyer**. Most of these initiatives are in development under the FRA Corridor Identification and Development Program (Corridor ID). The intent of this program is to create a process by which intercity passenger rail initiatives can advance from concept to implementation. The program consists of three steps:

- Step 1 – Develop a scope, schedule, and budget for a Service Development Plan. The FRA provided grants of up to \$500,000 with no required matching.
- Step 2 – Prepare a Service Development Plan (SDP), which is a highly detailed planning study. The FRA requires a 10 percent match for the SDP.
- Step 3 – Prepare preliminary engineering and gain environmental approvals. These are the final steps before the infrastructure needed to support the passenger rail service enters final design and construction. The FRA requires a 20 percent match for this step.

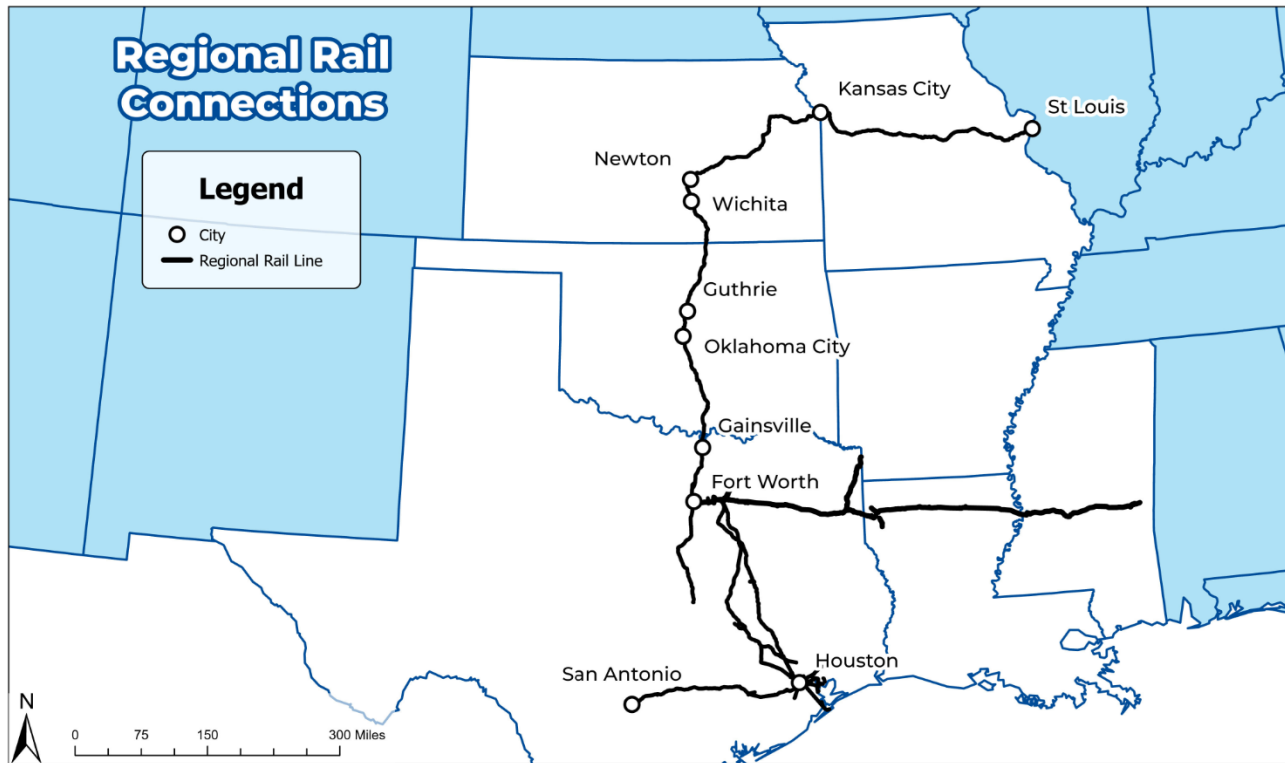
In 2023, the FRA announced the selection of 69 corridors to be funded under this program. Corridor ID initiatives in adjoining states are listed below, and described on the following pages, along with



other rail plans in Kansas and Texas. As of early 2026, each of these are in Step 1, meaning that the scope, schedule, and budget of the SDP is being prepared or awaiting approval from the FRA.

- **Heartland Flyer** Extension
- Fort Worth to Houston High Speed Rail Corridor
- I-20 Corridor Intercity Passenger Rail Corridor
- Texas Triangle: Dallas-Fort Worth-Houston Intercity Passenger Rail Corridor

**Figure 3-3. Regional Rail Connections Studied in the Southcentral Region**



Source: FRA



### 3.3.1 Kansas Initiatives

#### **Heartland Flyer Extension Corridor (OKC-Wichita-Newton)**

The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), in coordination with ODOT, Amtrak, and BNSF, is preparing to enter Step 2 (Service Development Plan) for an extension of the **Heartland Flyer** north from Oklahoma City to northern Oklahoma communities and Wichita and Newton, Kansas. The service is similar to Alternative 3 from the **Heartland Flyer Economic Impact Analysis**, described above. Wichita, as a mid-sized metro area with approximately 650,000 residents, is a logical market for state-supported passenger rail. Newton is a destination due to a connection with the Amtrak **Southwest Chief**. The project would replace or supplement the current Thruway bus connection between Oklahoma City and the **Southwest Chief** in Newton. A corridor map is provided in Figure 3-4.

**Figure 3-4. Heartland Flyer Extension**



Source: KDOT 2024<sup>64</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) (2024). "KDOT Passenger Rail Meeting #2". ArcGIS StoryMaps page (virtual public meeting information for the December 11, 2024, meeting). Accessed April 17, 2026, at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/634ffe5c81774e92bac9218346196477>



Through previous planning work, KDOT has estimated necessary capital investments for the extension to be about \$311 million for maximum speeds of 55 mph, and \$573 million for maximum speeds of 79 mph (2024 dollars).<sup>65</sup> These estimates exclude annual operating costs. A conceptual service plan assumes an extension of the daily **Heartland Flyer** round trip. Anticipated travel time is about 3.5 hours between Oklahoma City and Newton, and would be subject to host-railroad agreements.

#### **Wichita-Newton-Kansas City**

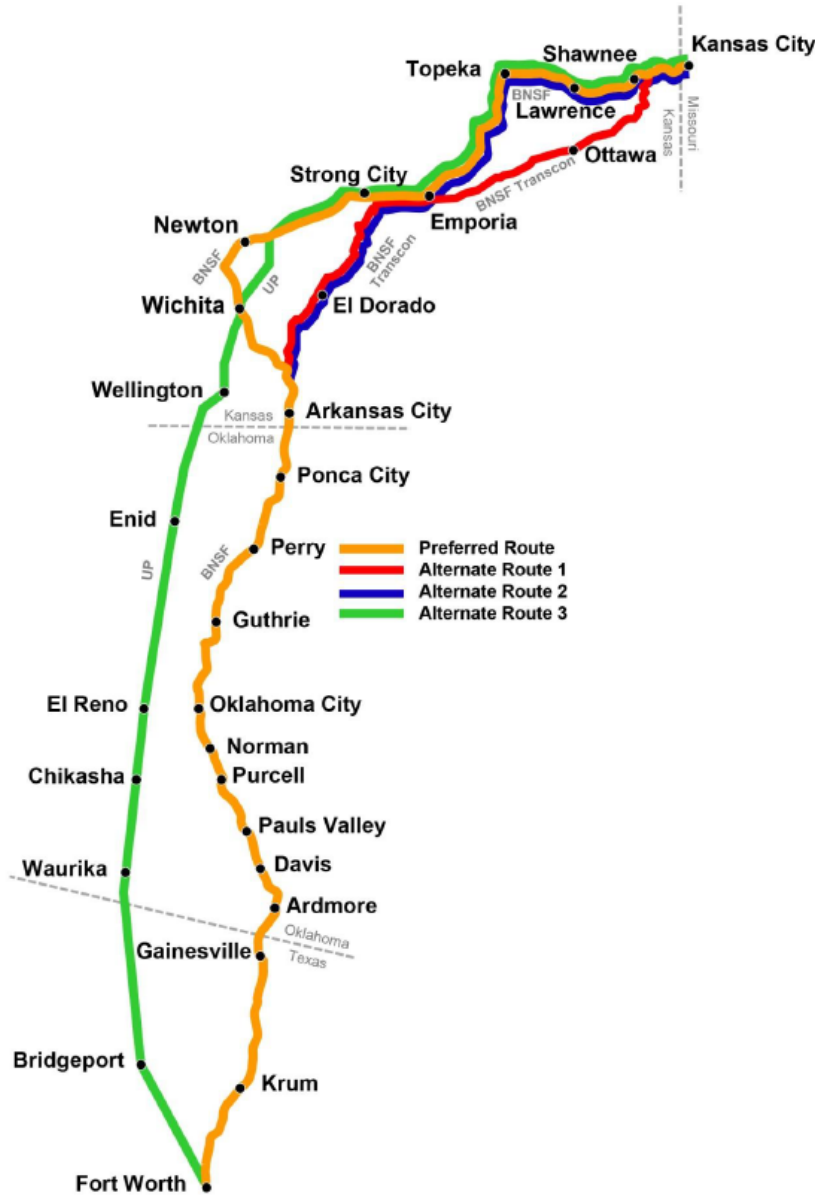
In 2011, prior to the Corridor ID program, KDOT prepared a feasibility study for the Kansas City-Wichita-Oklahoma City-Fort Worth corridor. The study proposed a daylight train with early morning departures from both Kansas City and Fort Worth, thus providing daytime service through Oklahoma City. The study projected a Kansas City-Fort Worth travel time of 12 hours 20 minutes and 270,500 annual riders for the daytime train. The service would connect with the Amtrak Missouri River Runner state-supported service between Kansas City and St. Louis, MO, with additional connection to the St. Louis to Chicago, IL high-performance service. Route alternatives were evaluated, as shown in Figure 3-5.

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<sup>65</sup> Carpenter, Tim (2024). "KDOT pegs cost of closing gap in Oklahoma, Kansas passenger rail service at \$311 million". Kansas Reflector story, published December 11, 2024. Accessed April 17, 2026 at [https://kansasreflector.com/2024/12/11/kdot-pegs-cost-of-closing-gap-in-oklahoma-kansas-passenger-rail-service-at-311-million/#:~:text=Kansas%20officials%20estimate%20the%20infrastructure%20cost%20of,City%20to%20Newton%20could%20be%20\\$311%20million](https://kansasreflector.com/2024/12/11/kdot-pegs-cost-of-closing-gap-in-oklahoma-kansas-passenger-rail-service-at-311-million/#:~:text=Kansas%20officials%20estimate%20the%20infrastructure%20cost%20of,City%20to%20Newton%20could%20be%20$311%20million)



**Figure 3-5.** Kansas City-Wichita-Oklahoma City-Fort Worth Passenger Rail Service Development Plan, Routes Evaluated



Source: KDOT 2011



### 3.3.2 Texas Initiatives

Texas agencies and regional partners are advancing several rail initiatives that could boost **Heartland Flyer** ridership by creating a regional network that enables connections beyond Fort Worth:

- **I-20 Corridor** The Southern Rail Commission was awarded Step 1 Corridor ID funding for a new passenger rail service linking Fort Worth and Dallas to Meridian (MS), following an existing railroad corridor. The alignment would serve existing Amtrak stations in Texas cities including Longview and Marshall, and extend service through northern Louisiana (including Shreveport) and into central Mississippi (including Jackson and Meridian). The study proposes a single daily round trip with the potential to add future trips. The corridor is a component of an overall vision to link Fort Worth to Birmingham (AL) and Atlanta (GA).
- **Dallas-Fort Worth to Houston (Conventional) Intercity Passenger Rail Corridor:** TxDOT was awarded Corridor ID funding to explore reestablishing conventional passenger rail service on existing trackage between Fort Worth and Houston via Dallas. The initial concept envisions three daily round trips at speeds up to 79 mph. A short list of proposed stations includes Corsicana, Hearne, College Station (at Texas A&M University) and Navasota.
- **Texas High-Speed Rail Corridor:** NCTCOG, through the Corridor ID program, is investigating a new high-speed rail line between downtown Dallas and northwest Houston, with an intermediate station in the Brazos Valley to serve Bryan-College Station and Huntsville. The High-Speed Rail project proposes a new rail service on a dedicated right-of-way that would provide train service every 30 to 90 minutes in each direction, at speeds up to 220 mph
- **DFW Core Express Alternatives Analysis:** TxDOT and FRA completed the DFW Core Express Alternatives Analysis in 2017 to evaluate a limited-stop passenger rail service between Fort Worth and Dallas. This effort would improve the **Heartland Flyer's** connectivity to Dallas.

These studies are complemented by the existing 2008 FRA designation of a South Central High-Speed Rail Corridor in 2008, making the project eligible for federal capital investment. That corridor consists of a spine linking San Antonio, Austin and Fort Worth, with branches extending north to Oklahoma and Arkansas. One of those branches would provide service connecting Texas with both Oklahoma City and Tulsa.<sup>66</sup>

## 3.4 Tulsa and Oklahoma City Regional/Commuter Rail Initiatives

### 3.4.1 Oklahoma City-Tulsa Corridor

Regional passenger and commuter rail prospects between Oklahoma City and Tulsa have been considered for decades. Several stakeholders consulted for this Rail Plan indicated that the idea is popular. The drive along the Turner Turnpike (I-44) between the two metropolitan areas is viewed as unpleasant, and passenger rail could be a compelling alternative.

<sup>66</sup> Federal Railroad Administration High-Speed Rail Timeline, [High-Speed Rail Timeline | FRA](#).



Most previous planning efforts have assumed that passenger rail service would be provided over the Sooner Subdivision, an existing rail line that spans most of the distance between the two metropolitan areas. This 97.5-mile rail line is currently owned by Watco’s Stillwater Central Railroad and formerly owned by ODOT. On the north end, the Sooner Subdivision ends at Sapulpa, to the southwest of Tulsa, while on the south end, it terminates at Midwest City, just to the east of Oklahoma City. Service would access downtown Oklahoma City on the UP, and downtown Tulsa on the BNSF. Several studies have also considered a new high-speed rail alignment along the Turner Turnpike.

Figure 3-6, *Tulsa-Oklahoma City Corridor*



Source: WSP Analysis

Infrastructure and legal arrangements have been made to support establishment of passenger rail between Tulsa and Oklahoma City:

- The I-244 Downtown Tulsa Double-Decker Bridge, which opened in 2012, includes room for a dedicated passenger rail track on its lower level.
- When ODOT acquired the Sooner Subdivision in 1998, the purchase agreement included a clause that contractually obligates BNSF to provide access for a passenger carrier to use its track between the Sooner Subdivision connection in Sapulpa and downtown Tulsa near the former Union Depot.
- A condition in ODOT’s sale of the Sooner Subdivision to the Stillwater Central Railroad in 2014 required the railroad to upgrade the rail line to FRA Track Class 3 standards, allowing freight



speeds up to 40 mph and passenger speeds up to 60 mph. The Stillwater Central was also to arrange for a pilot demonstration program of passenger rail service within five years. Although Stillwater Central paid a penalty fee instead of providing passenger service, ODOT retains an easement to provide passenger service over the line.

### 3.4.2 Tulsa and Oklahoma City Commuter Rail Initiative

ONE Transit, formerly the Regional Transportation Authority of Central Oklahoma (RTA), has prepared the ONE Transit System Plan a transit plan for its member municipalities of Edmond, Norman, and Oklahoma City. Among the corridors identified as a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) is a north-south commuter corridor on the BNSF between Norman and Edmond through Oklahoma City (Figure 3-7).

Figure 3-7. ONE Transit, Future Transit System



Source: ONE Transit System Plan



Several infrastructure projects and plans would support this initiative. A key implementation issue for commuter rail on an active freight corridor is managing safety and community impacts at grade crossings. As discussed in Chapter 4, ODOT is providing matching funds for a ONE Transit-sponsored project funded by the federal Railroad Crossing Elimination Fund. The project will evaluate options for 52 highway-rail grade crossings along a proposed commuter rail corridor on the BNSF. The project will propose treatments to these crossings and prioritize crossings for potential grade separations. The 2021 Oklahoma State Rail Plan included a project to double track the BNSF line to support various passenger rail initiatives, including the ONE Transit commuter rail project. This is carried forward in the current Rail Plan.

In the Tulsa region, commuter-oriented corridor concepts are documented in INCOG's Regional Transit System Plan (RTSP) (Figure 3-8). The RTSP establishes a long-range, corridor-based framework, and organizes candidate corridors into Circulator, Urban, and Commuter market groups, which are then further prioritized into Foundation, Enhanced, and Extended networks to guide future study and implementation sequencing. Within the commuter market group, INCOG identifies corridors including Broken Arrow, Airport/Owasso, Jenks/Bixby, Sapulpa, US 169, Sand Springs, and State Highway 51. Broken Arrow is identified as a priority commuter corridor within the Foundation network. Although the RTSP is from 2011, INCOG staff indicated that as of 2026, interest in these routes continues, and that these commuter rail concepts are still current.



Figure 3-8. INCOG Regional Transit System Plan

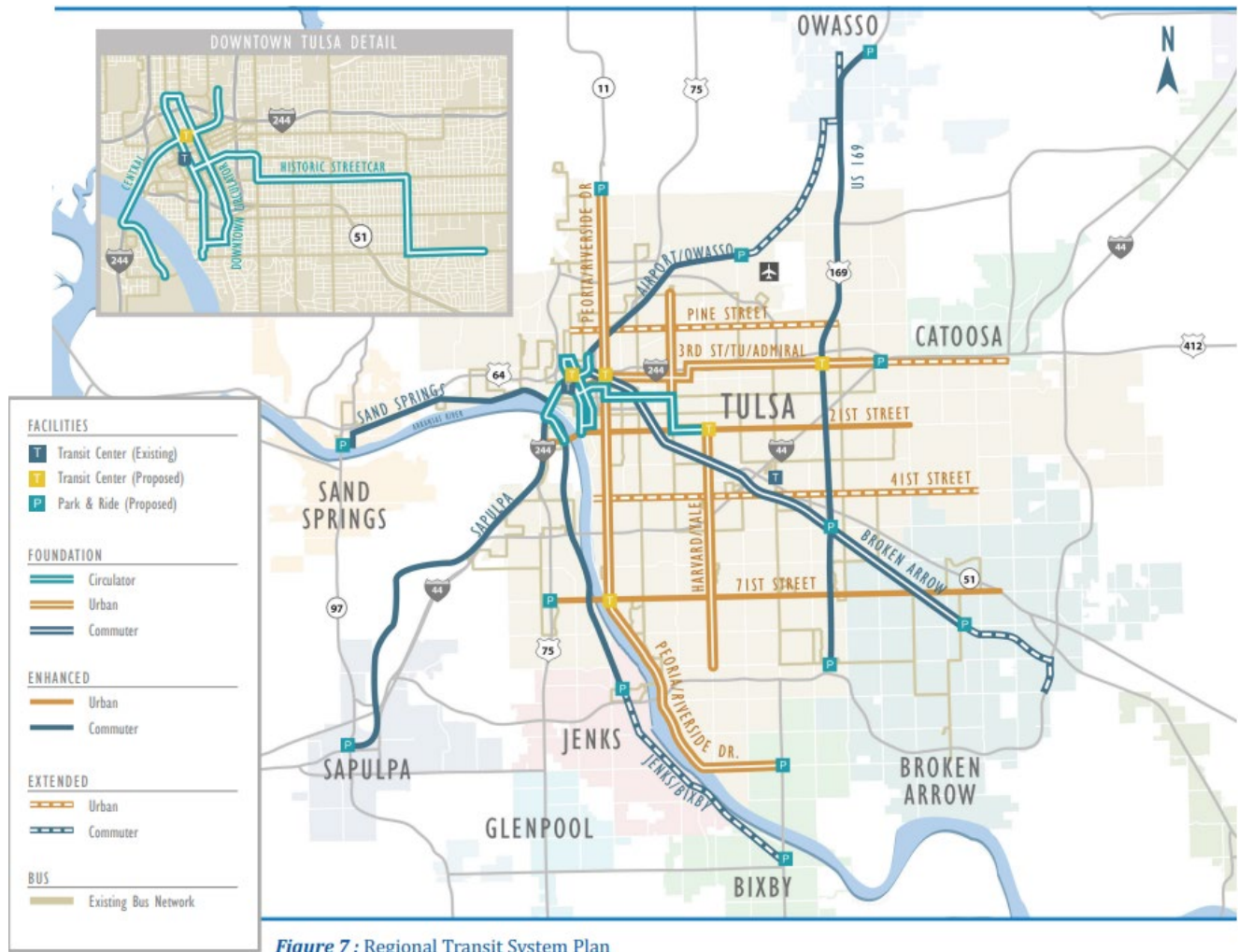


Figure 7 : Regional Transit System Plan

Source: INCOG Regional Transit System Plan

### 3.5 FRA Amtrak Long-Distance Service Study

The FRA released the Amtrak Long-Distance Service Study to Congress in January 2025. The study explored:

- Options to restore daily intercity passenger rail service on Amtrak long-distance routes (greater than 750 miles, with no more than one daily round trip, with federal operating support) that currently operate less than daily or were discontinued in recent decades; and
- Opportunities for long-distance service enhancement or expansion.

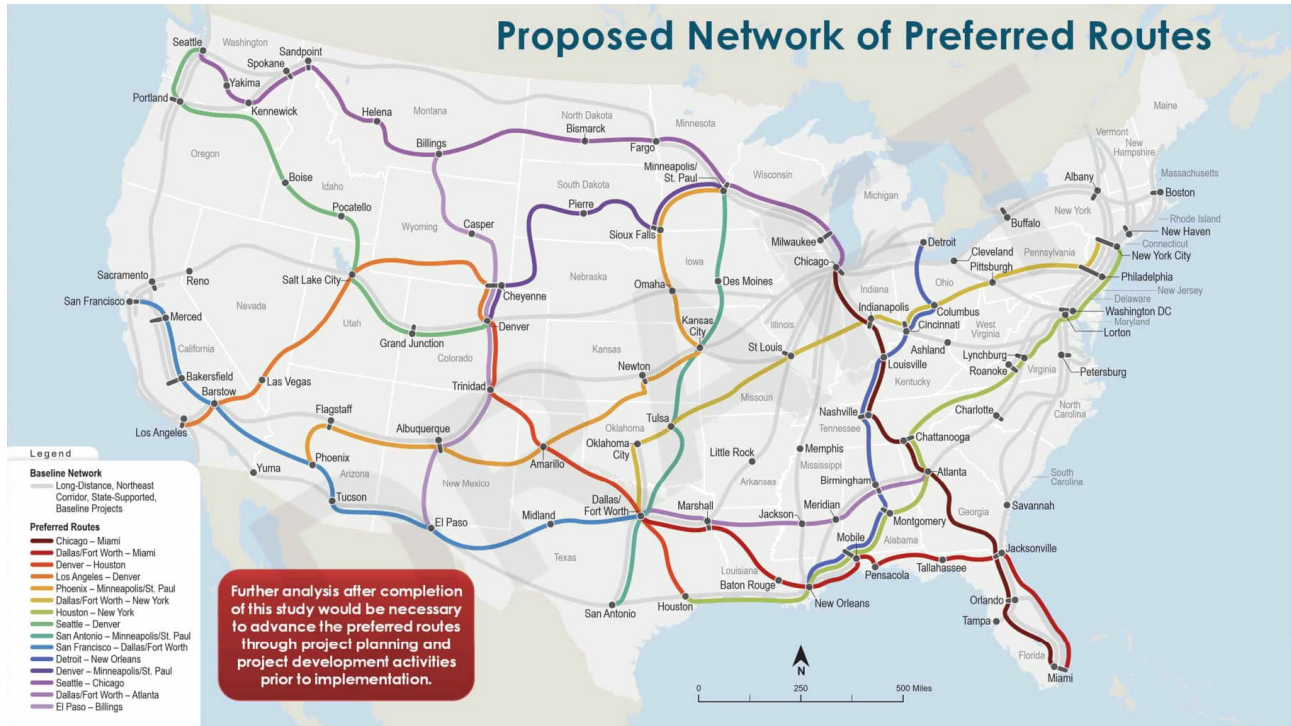
The study does not evaluate changes to existing daily long-distance routes, state-supported routes (such as the **Heartland Flyer**), Northeast Corridor services, or high-speed rail.

The study identified a network of preferred new routes for implementation (Figure 3-9), two of which would serve Oklahoma City and/or Tulsa. The preferred network would elevate Fort Worth to a



network hub, with as many as seven routes converging. Access to this hub would expand travel options for Oklahomans. The study notes that no dedicated, sustained financial support or standing program currently exists to construct or operate the selected preferred route options, and that advancing routes from planning to operations could require 15 years or more.

**Figure 3-9. FRA Amtrak Long-Distance Service Study Preferred Routes**



Source: Federal Railroad Administration

For Oklahoma, the proposed Dallas/Fort Worth to New York City long-distance service would have the most relevance. The corridor would link Oklahoma City and Tulsa, connecting both to a Fort Worth terminus. The service would likely pass through Oklahoma during daylight hours to facilitate connections in Fort Worth (Figure 3-10).



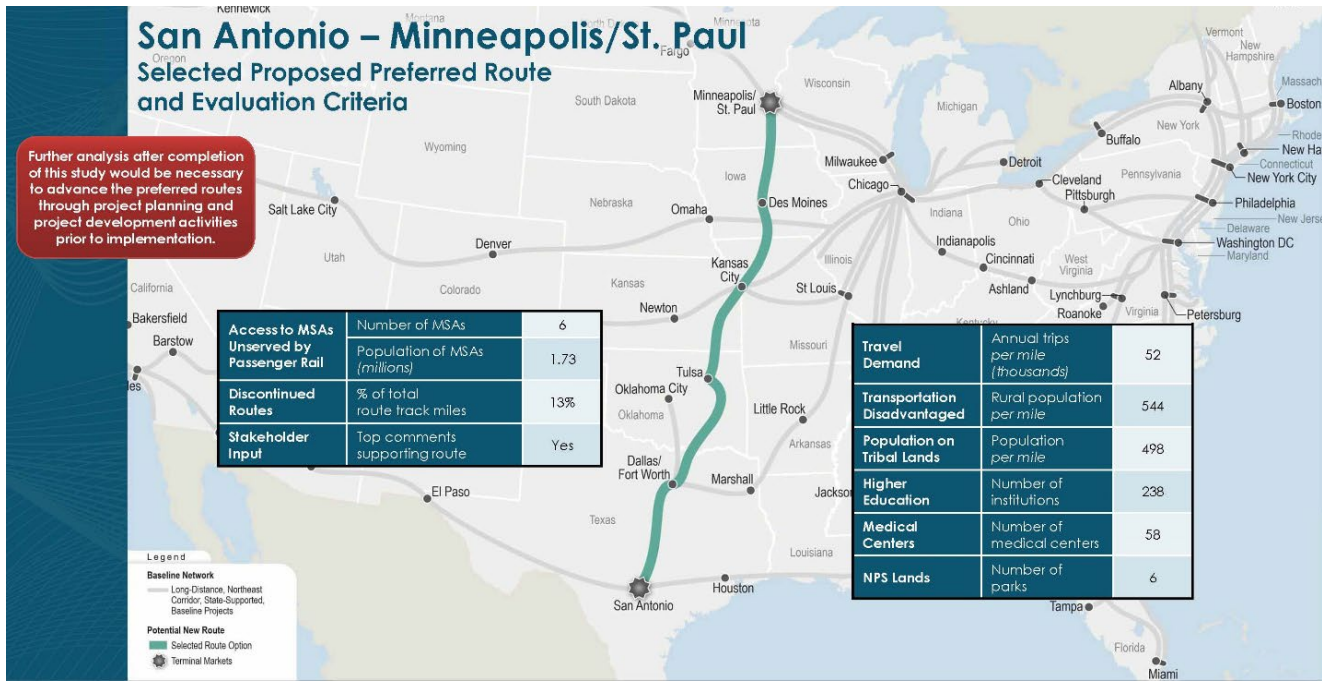
**Figure 3-10. FRA Amtrak Long-Distance Service Study, Dallas/Ft. Worth-NYC Service via Oklahoma City and Tulsa**



Source: Federal Railroad Administration

A second preferred route would link Tulsa and Fort Worth without serving Oklahoma City (Figure 3-11). The proposed end points for this service are San Antonio (TX) and Minneapolis/St. Paul (MN), and the alignment passes through McAlester, Muskogee and Bartlesville.

Figure 3-11. FRA Amtrak Long-Distance Service Study, San Antonio-Minneapolis/St. Paul Service via Tulsa



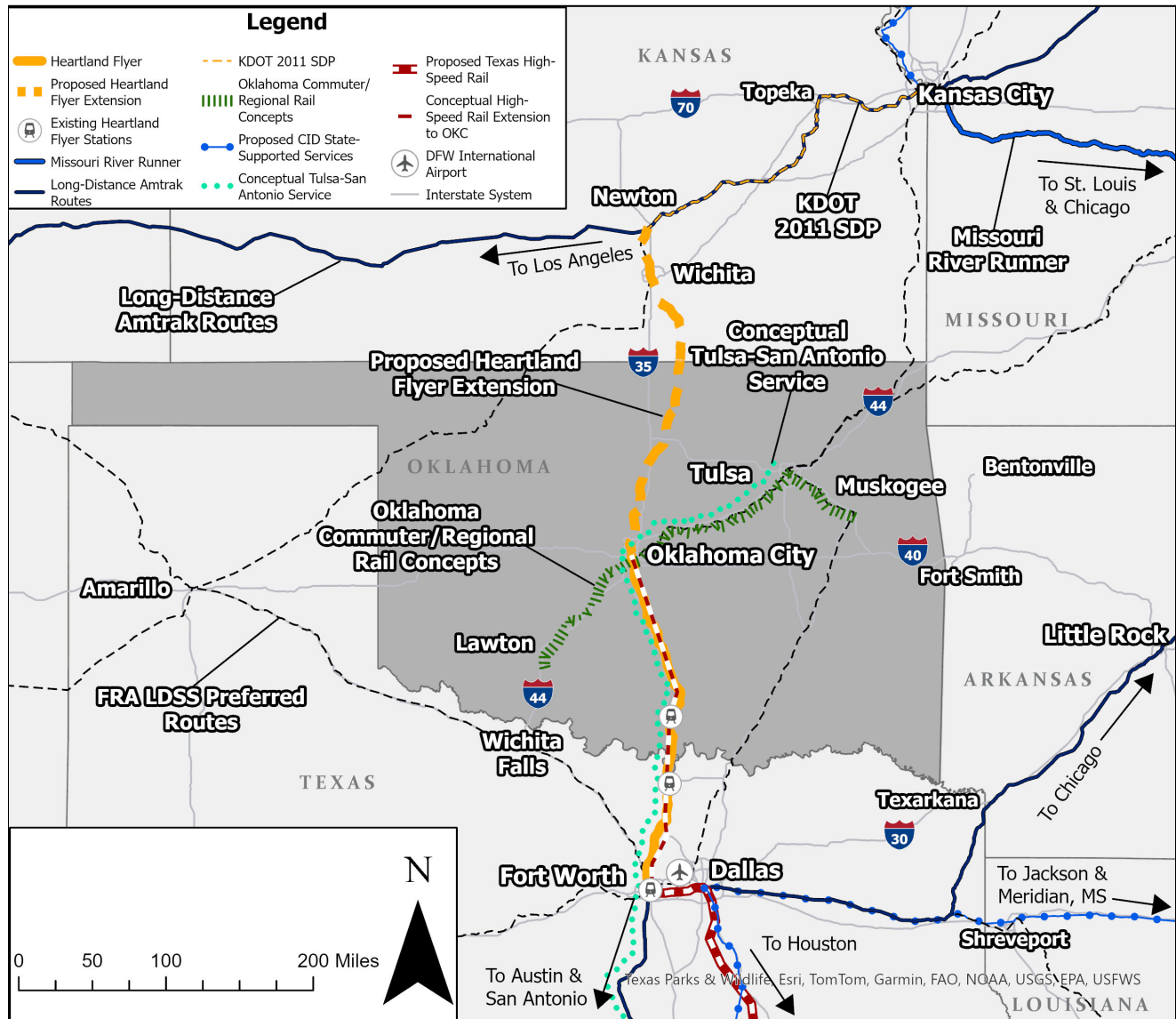
Source: Federal Railroad Administration

### 3.6 Relevance of Passenger Rail Studies to Oklahoma

If realized, the rail studies referenced in this chapter would offer significantly more passenger rail options to Oklahomans. The emergence of dedicated passenger track segments in Texas raises the prospect of a one-seat ride (i.e., no transfer required) along a reimagined **Heartland Flyer** to destinations such as Dallas and, conceivably, Houston. The emergence of high-speed rail in Texas would likely prompt a fresh assessment of an extension toward Oklahoma City. The plans, corridor designations, and opportunities discussed in this chapter are reflected in Figure 3-12.



Figure 3-12. Network of Passenger Rail Plans and Designations Relevant to Oklahoma



Source : WSP Analysis



## 4 FREIGHT RAIL NEEDS, OPPORTUNITIES AND PROPOSED INVESTMENTS

This chapter describes opportunities and needs identified through review of data and planning documents, as well as consultation with stakeholders. Investments and improvements have been proposed along with their operations, service requirements, funding, and internal planning. Categories of needs, opportunities, investments, and improvements include:

- Opportunities for freight rail support for economic development
- Multimodal opportunities
- State of good repair/modernization
- Rail corridor preservation/reactivation
- Safety and grade crossings
- Rail industry trends

These six categories are discussed in the sections below.

### 4.1 Freight Rail Support for Economic Development in Oklahoma

Rail is important to economic development in Oklahoma. Cost competitive transportation is a key competitive factor for attracting/retaining businesses in Oklahoma, and rail is a major component of this cost-competitive transportation network. Many of the industries identified by Oklahoma Department of Commerce (ODOC) as target industries for recruitment are major rail users, including:

- Energy
  - » Oil & gas
  - » Renewables
  - » Energy generation and transmission
- Agriculture & food production
  - » Agricultural commodities, including beef, wheat, cotton, chicken, pork, etc.
- Manufacturing
  - » Agriculture, food and forestry products
  - » Chemicals, petroleum, and plastics products



- » Metalworking and foundries
- » Machinery and equipment products
- » Electronics and transportation products
- Transportation and distribution

According to ODOC, 15 – 20 percent of company inquiries for industrial sites in Oklahoma request rail access. Rail access helps economic development officials promote industrial sites within the state. Railroads also have a role in marketing industrial sites. For example, UP designates “Focus Sites” across its system, shovel ready industrial sites available for large-scale development, with utilities, road access in place, and rail design approved by UP. Among these are the Tulsa Port of Inola and the Iron Horse Industrial Park in Shawnee. Short line railroads also take an active role in marketing industrial sites on their systems, with one railroad representative stating that she feels almost like an economic development agent for the municipalities in which her railroad operates. The importance of rail to economic development was underlined by the Oklahoma Legislature’s SIDE Act, which provides tax credits for rail industrial access projects in approved areas.

Some rail-served industrial locations are within industrial parks, which are specially-zoned, planned areas designed to cluster factories, warehouses, and distribution centers in order to enable infrastructure sharing, including railroad infrastructure. The ODOC website identifies 90 industrial parks across Oklahoma. Among the largest is the MidAmerica Industrial Park, approximately 45 miles west of Tulsa, the fifth largest industrial park in North America, where about one eighth of the tenants are rail served.

Projects that improve or establish new rail access to shipper facilities have the most direct impacts on economic development. Of the projects recommended for this Rail Plan (Appendix F), 16 projects would reactivate, improve, or establish new rail access to shipper facilities.

## 4.2 Multimodal Opportunities in Oklahoma

Of the projects proposed in this Rail Plan, 11 improve connections between rail and other modes, specifically between rail and barge transportation and rail and truck transportation.

### 4.2.1 Port Opportunities

Ports are a major component of Oklahoma’s logistics advantage. In some cases, freight is transferred between rail and barge transportation at Oklahoma’s ports. In other cases, port tenants use rail and water transportation in parallel, benefiting from multiple modal options. Several stakeholders consulted for this Rail Plan stressed the importance of port facilities. For example, the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture indicated that Oklahoma’s ports are vital to Oklahoma’s wheat producers, and the Kansas Department of Transportation stated that Kansas agricultural shippers value access to Oklahoma ports as well.

Oklahoma ports actively invest in rail infrastructure. Some of their initiatives have the potential to provide a major boost to railroad traffic at Oklahoma’s port facilities as described below.

**Unit train infrastructure.** Unit trains move between one origin and one destination as a unit, generally as a single shipment of one commodity to a customer. Unit trains differ from “manifest”



trains which consist of multiple car types with different origins and destinations. Facilities capable of loading and unloading entire train loads require significant infrastructure.

With the help of the State of Oklahoma, Tulsa Ports has invested \$35.7 million in unit train infrastructure at the Port of Catoosa as discussed in the funding section of Chapter 2. This facility will have the capability of loading/unloading two unit trains, each as many as 100 cars long, and could improve the economics of rail for Oklahoma shippers. Rail tends to be more economical compared to truck transport over longer distances, and less so over shorter distances, which is why only one percent of Oklahoma freight rail traffic moves intrastate. But, because unit train service is more efficient than manifest, unit train service at the Port of Catoosa could enable and incentivize shorter rail moves and enable Oklahoma shippers to deliver to the Port by rail more economically and efficiently.

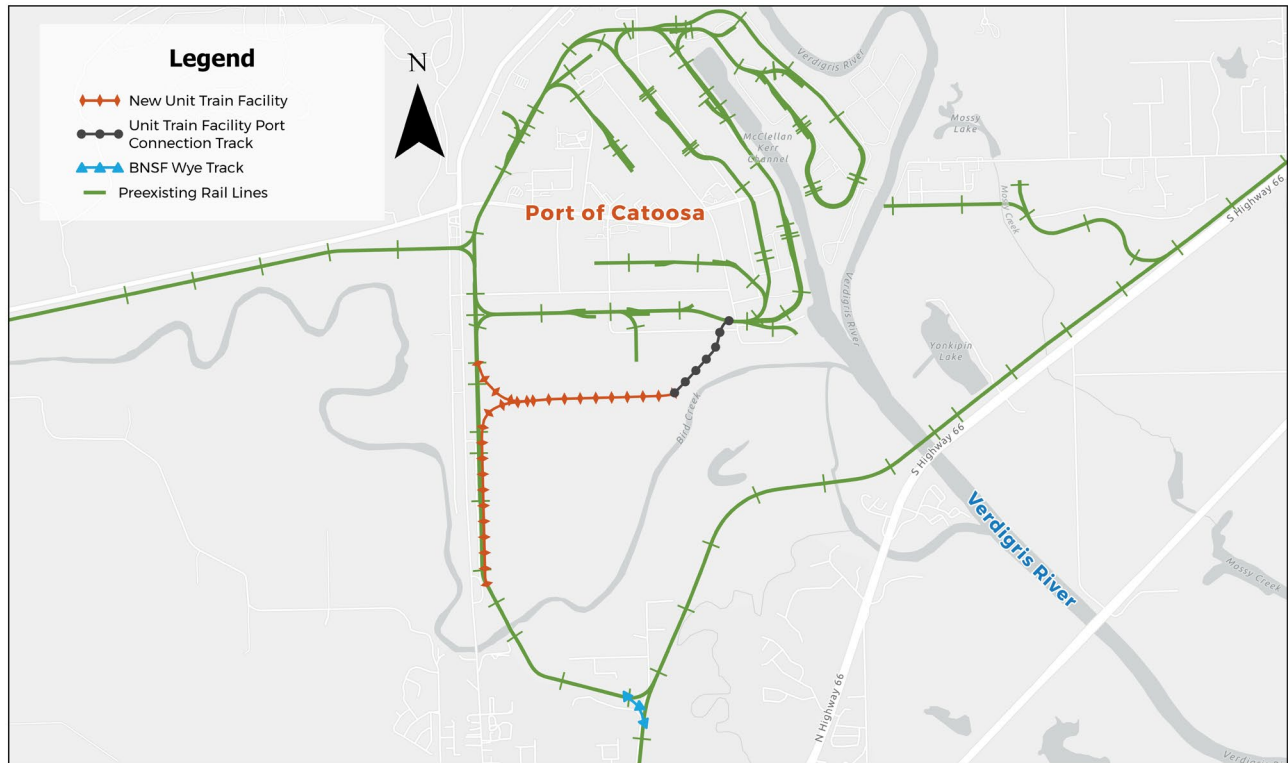
Tulsa Ports is continuing to improve the unit train handling capabilities at the Port of Catoosa, with plans to extend the unit train loading facility into the terminal area and to add material handling equipment to facilitate transfers.

Other infrastructure improvements outside of the Port can also improve unit train handling ability. Currently, the Port of Catoosa is served by SKOL and BNSF by separate connections. The SKOL line cannot handle unit trains. The BNSF line can handle unit trains, but the “Y” connection to the BNSF only connects to the north and not to the south. Tulsa Ports proposes to add a new connection that would accommodate unit trains heading south. Figure 4-1 displays rail infrastructure in the Port of Catoosa and proposed improvements.

Tulsa Ports would also like to establish unit train capability at the Port of Inola. Ideally, this would be a “loop track”, a configuration that enables unit trains to load/unload with the locomotive remaining in the same position on the train.



**Figure 4-1. Southern Portion of the Port of Catoosa Rail Network, Existing and Planned**

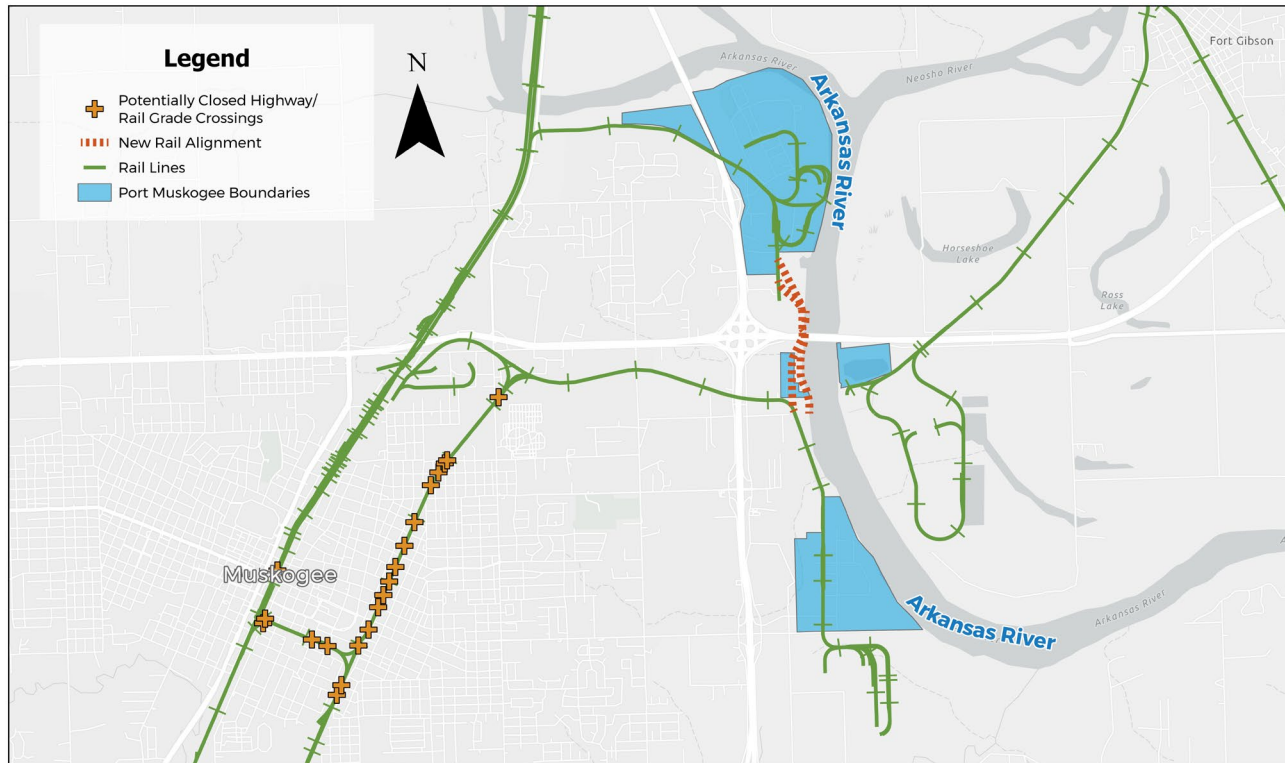


Source: Tulsa Ports, WSP Analysis

**New Rail Connections.** Both Tulsa Ports and Port Muskogee are establishing new rail connections. Tulsa Ports opened its new 4.4-mile rail line into the Port of Inola in 2024. Port Muskogee will be building a new rail line from Port Muskogee to an 80-acre industrial site, Port Muskogee South, as shown in Figure 4-2. In addition to providing rail access to a new industrial area, the new connection at Port Muskogee will enable trains serving the Port to avoid traveling through a residential area, thus improving safety and quality of life for residents. The project could enable the closure of 21 highway-rail grade crossings.



**Figure 4-2. Connections between Port Muskogee and Port Muskogee South**



Source: Port Muskogee, WSP Analysis

**Improvements to Connecting Lines.** The Port of Catoosa maintains Class I railroad connections to the UP and CPKC through the SKOL. The Port is accessed over the SKOL through a connecting line owned by the Port and leased to the SKOL. This rail line cannot handle unit trains into the Port because curves on the line limit the number of railcars per train. Another project proposed by Tulsa Ports would improve track geometry on this rail line to accommodate unit trains. The connection over the SKOL is also limited by UP and SKOL tracks that can only carry 263,000-pound railcars instead of the industry standard 286,000-pound railcars. Infrastructure on both railroads needs to be upgraded to correct these limitations.

#### 4.2.2 Intermodal Service

Intermodal is the rail service where speed and level of service compete most closely with trucking. To ensure faster service, railroads generally ship intermodal containers on dedicated trains. Ideally, these trains move directly from one origin to a single destination to minimize transit time, but in practice, intermodal trains sometimes stop at intermediate locations to be partially loaded/unloaded.

The 2021 Oklahoma State Rail Plan recommended projects to bring intermodal terminals to Oklahoma saving shippers the cost of trucking containers to terminals in neighboring states. Since then, the intermodal situation has changed. Oklahoma’s cotton producers are significant intermodal rail users, since nearly all of Oklahoma’s cotton is exported, much of it overseas. The most economical way to ship bales to ports for export is by intermodal rail. Previously, Oklahoma cotton producers



were required to truck cotton bales bound for export to intermodal terminals in other states, primarily Dallas, TX. At Dallas, containers would be loaded onto trains for shipment, mostly to the ports of Los Angeles/Long Beach. Using SIDE Act tax credits, the Plains Cotton Cooperative (PCCA) opened a private intermodal facility in Altus in 2021. Cargill helped to facilitate the service. The facility is located on the Farmrail System, with trains transferred to BNSF, which brings containers to the Ports of Los Angeles/Long Beach for export. The facility ships about 16 trainloads per year, each train holding as many as 220 containers. The facility enables PCCA members to reduce costs compared to trucking containers to Dallas.

Another development is an agreement between BNSF and Hobby Lobby to provide limited transload/intermodal service at its Flynn Yard to support Hobby Lobby's logistics hub in Oklahoma City. This rail service diverts freight that would otherwise travel by truck from Los Angeles, CA. According to BNSF, the railroad intends to market this facility more generally to shippers in the future.

Intermodal terminals are expensive to build and serve, so that the associated investment and operating costs are only justified if:

- The volume of freight traffic served by the terminal is substantial, ideally justifying multiple dedicated trains per week
- Both the owners of intermodal containers, and the railroads want to serve the intermodal terminal
- Inbound and outbound traffic is sufficiently balanced, so that freight rates do not need to absorb the cost of repositioning
- The intermodal terminal fits logically within the serving railroad's intermodal network.



**Figure 4-3. PCCA Loading Facility in Altus**



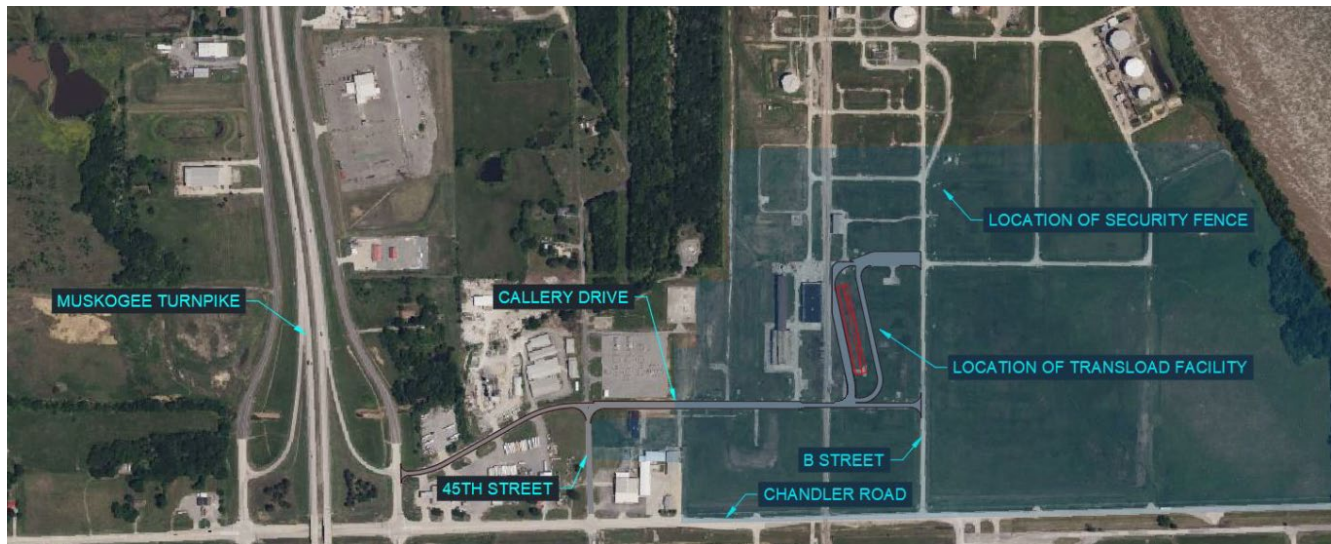
Source: PCCA

### 4.2.3 Transload Facilities

Transload facilities are locations where non containerized freight is transferred between truck and rail. These facilities provide access to rail for shippers that lack rail infrastructure directly on their premises. When asked in a survey to name their greatest freight traffic opportunities, several short line railroads in Oklahoma responded that transload facilities were among the top opportunities. Among the projects recommended by stakeholders for this rail plan, three were for constructing or improving transload facilities. These projects include one by Port Muskogee to establish a new transload facility in its Port Muskogee South industrial area, as shown above in Figure 4-5.



Figure 4-4. Port Muskogee South, including Transload Facility



Source: Port Muskogee

### 4.3 State of Good Repair/Modernization

As mentioned in Chapter 2, not all rail lines in Oklahoma can accommodate industry standard 286,000-pound railcars. A total of 384 miles (11.5 percent) of Oklahoma's rail network is restricted to 263,000-pound railcars, and 283 miles (8.4 percent) of the rail network is restricted to 268,000-pound railcars. Therefore, about a fifth of Oklahoma's rail network cannot accommodate industry standard 286,000-pound railcars. In other states, this issue is largely confined to small Class III railroads that cannot afford to upgrade. However, in Oklahoma, certain Class I rail lines also cannot accommodate 286,000-pound railcars. As shown in Figure 2-7, the BNSF Chickasha Subdivision in southwest Oklahoma, the UP Tulsa Subdivision between Tulsa and Muskogee, and the UP Lawton Subdivision between Lawton and Chickasha cannot accommodate 286,000-pound railcars.

The inability to accommodate 286,000-pound railcars places railroads and their customers at a disadvantage. Shippers pay the same amount to ship less per railcar. The problem will become worse in the future as smaller, older, railcars cease to be available and shippers must use more expensive, larger railcars but only partially load them. Several organizations indicated they were disadvantaged by rail lines that cannot accommodate 286,000-pound railcars, including an agricultural shipper and Tulsa Ports.

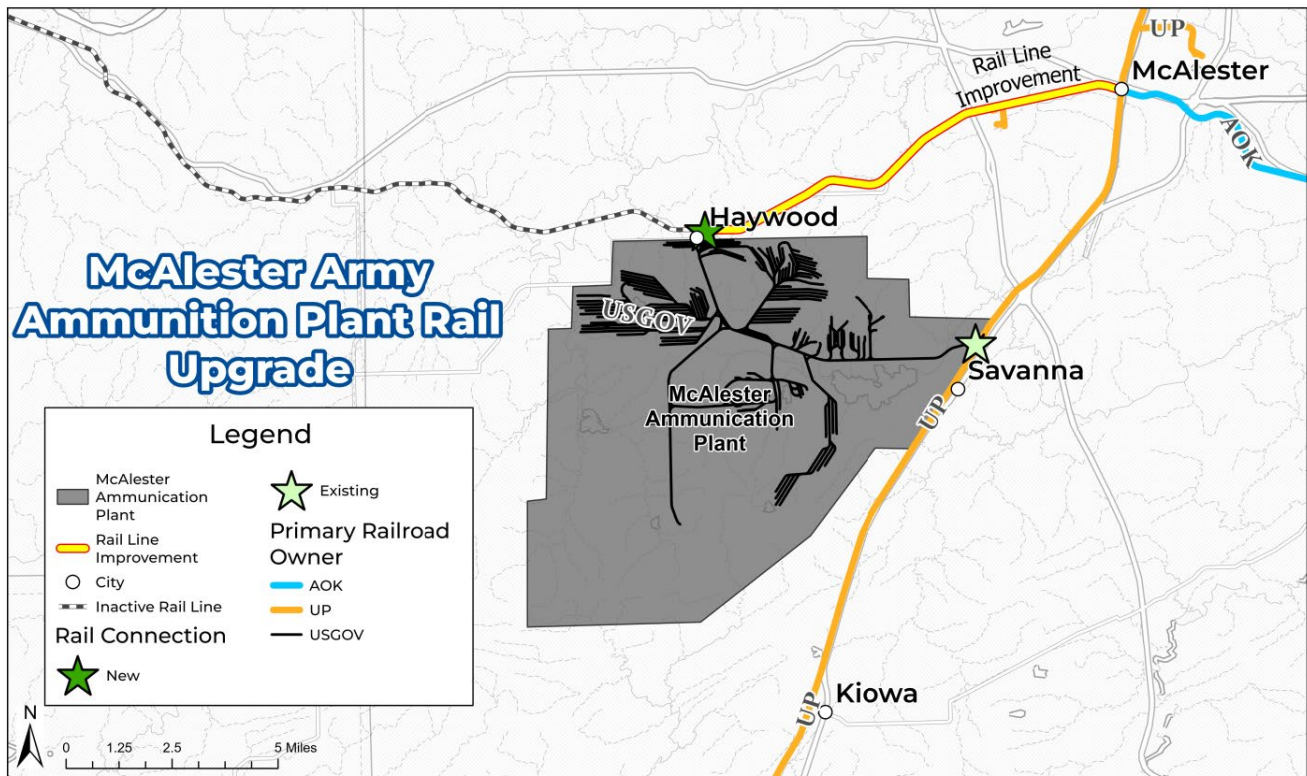
Of the projects put forward for this Rail Plan, three would upgrade rail lines to 286,000-pound capacity. Other projects aimed at bringing rail lines to a state of good repair were recommended as well. For example, nine projects would improve rail lines by replacing crossties and resurfacing rail ballast, while four would upgrade the quality of rail. Rail Corridor Preservation/Reactivation

A total of about 97 miles (approximately 3.5 percent) of rail lines in Oklahoma are not considered abandoned but are not currently used for rail service. A concern with inactive rail corridors is the possibility that they could be abandoned and lost as transportation corridors. Unused rail lines bring no benefits and can incur costs to their owners, thus creating the incentive to abandon these lines.



Several proposals have been put forward to restore service to unused corridors. One proposal would reestablish a connection between McAlester and the north gate of the McAlester Army Ammunition Plant (MCAAP) in Haywood. UP currently serves the MCAAP through a connection in Savannah on the east side of the installation, but the Oklahoma Strategic Military Planning Commission (OSMPC) recommends adding redundancy to rail access to MCAAP through the Haywood connection (Figure 4-6).<sup>67</sup> The 10.5-mile rail line between Haywood and McAlester, owned by UP and leased to AOK, is currently out of service and is used only for car storage. This line cannot currently accommodate the weight of railcars loaded with munitions from MCAAP. An analysis by the OSMPC estimates that restoring the line would cost \$9.75 million. The new connection could improve operations when a surge capacity is needed, such as a significant national security concern. In a situation of great need, empty trains could arrive through one connection, be loaded, and then exit through the other connection.

**Figure 4-5. Haywood Rail Connection to the McAlester Ammunition Plant**



Source: WSP representation of OSMPC project

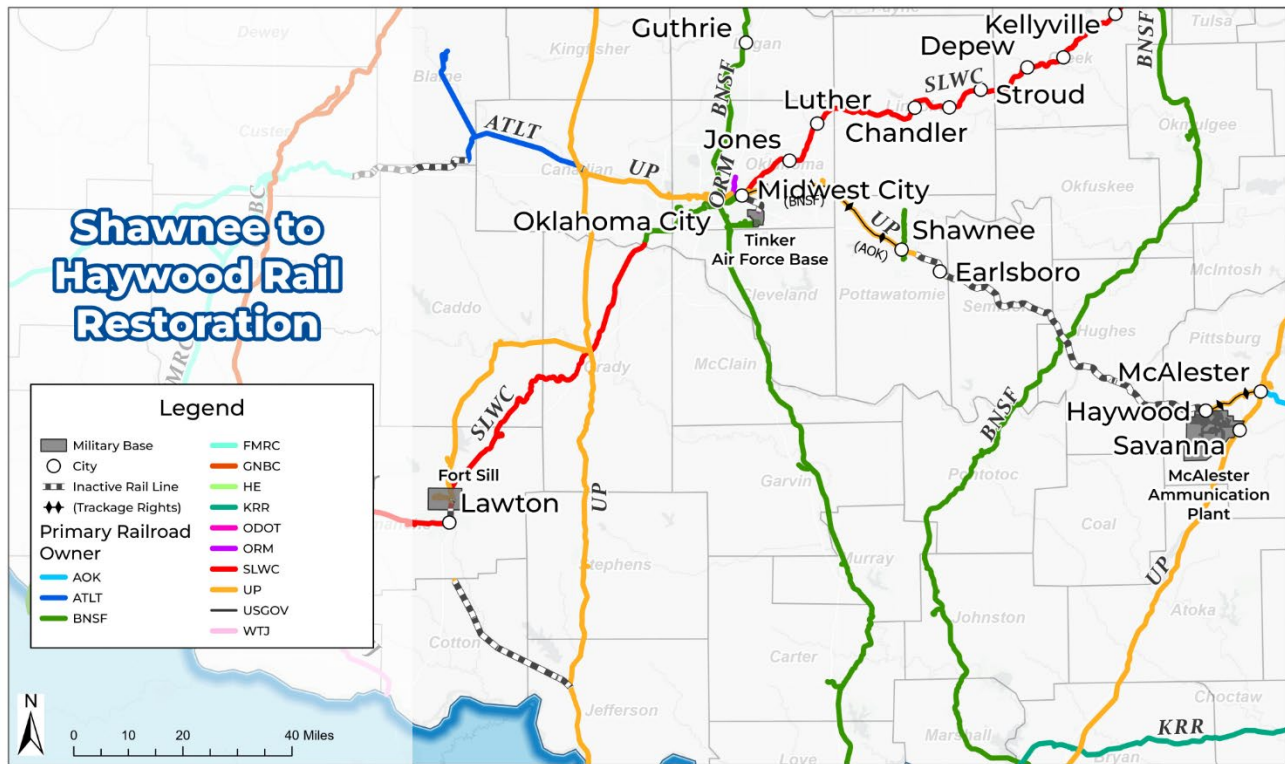
An additional project that would provide the MCAAP with more connectivity would be to restore the UP-owned rail line between Haywood and Shawnee. This reconstruction would provide additional routing options and a more direct connection to Fort Sill and Tinker Air Force Base. It could also

<sup>67</sup> 2024 OSMPC Report, <https://oklahoma.gov/militarycommission/resources/2024-osmpc-report.html>



potentially aid economic development for communities along the line, establishing options to use freight rail transportation. This would be a much more ambitious endeavor since portions of the rail line would need to be entirely rebuilt, including roadway crossings, bridges, etc.

**Figure 4-6. Haywood – Shawnee Out of Service Rail Line**



Source: WSP representation of the project

## 4.4 Safety and Grade Crossings

### 4.4.1 Grade Crossing Safety

As shown in Chapter 2, 15 (21 percent) of rail-related fatalities between 2020 and 2024 were collisions at highway-rail grade crossings, between trains and vehicles, pedestrians, or bicycles. ODOT’s administration of the federal Railway-Highway Crossings (Section 130) Program is designed to address safety at these crossings. ODOT’s strategies to improve safety under this program are described in Section 2.1.6.

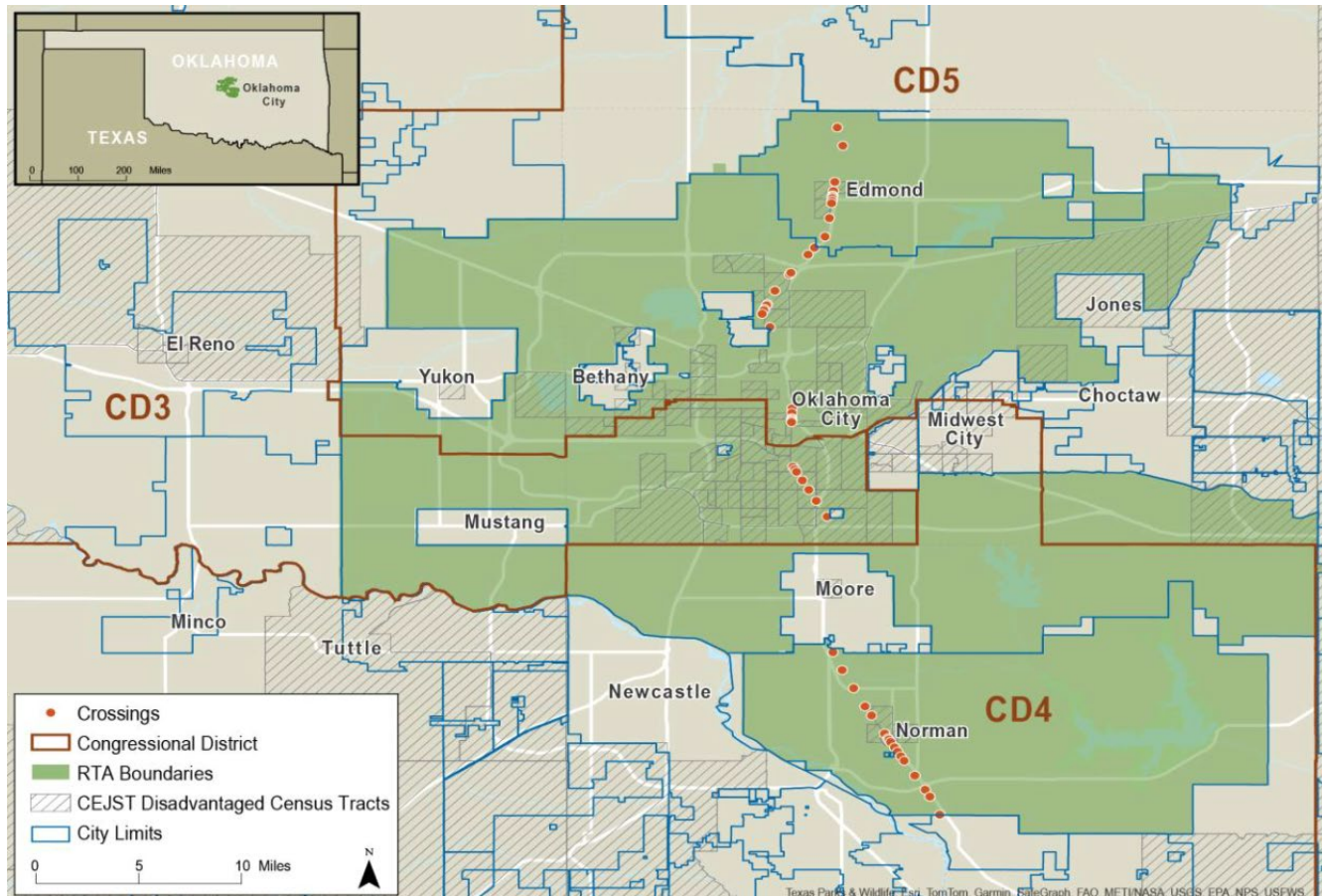
Traditionally, the focus of highway-rail grade crossing safety was improved warning devices at crossings, such as installing gates and lights at crossings with only passive warning devices. But today the incremental benefits of upgrading additional crossings has declined, since the worst crossings have already been upgraded with gates and lights through past projects funded by the Section 130 program. As discussed in Chapter 2, a higher portion of Oklahoma highway-rail grade crossing crashes occur at crossings equipped with gates and lights than was the case 20 years ago. Recently, a new emphasis has been placed on crossing elimination either through closing the



crossing, or altering the roadway to pass under or over the rail line (grade separation). These types of projects are the focus of the federal Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) program created under IIJA in 2022.

ODOT has sponsored several projects under the RCE program. In cooperation with ONE Transit of Oklahoma City, ODOT won a \$400,000 grant to evaluate 52 highway-rail grade crossings on the BNSF corridor through Oklahoma City (Figure 4-8). The project will develop a prioritization matrix identifying recommended grade separations, safety improvements, and closures.

**Figure 4-7. Location of Oklahoma City Prioritization Project**



Source: ODOT Grant Application

Another motivation for crossing elimination is the increased incidence of crossings being blocked by stationary trains for extended periods of time. Blocked crossings not only reduce mobility of communities but also represent safety issues if emergency vehicles cannot respond to calls because they are blocked or when impatient pedestrians crawl through stationary trains.

Oklahoma attempted to discourage railroads from blocking crossings through a state law passed in 2019 to fine railroads if their trains occupied public crossings longer than 10 minutes. This law was struck down in 2022 by a U.S. District Court, and the U.S. Supreme Court declined to review the decision.



Railroads block crossings for a range of reasons, including the need to park trains, or where the process of building/breaking down trains extends beyond a rail yard. The City of Claremore has frequent instances of blocked crossings caused by trains waiting to pass through a rail-rail grade crossing of UP and BNSF rail lines (Figure 4-9), and received a \$424,000 federal grant to assess the feasibility of potential grade separations on four roadways with seven highway-rail grade rail crossings that are considered critical to Claremore’s transportation system.

**Figure 4-8. UP and BNSF Crossing in Claremore**



Source: ODOT Grant Application

Grade separations are not the only solutions to address blocked crossings. For example, a project sponsored by ODOT in Davis will move a rail siding so that BNSF can park trains without blocking State Highway 7. According to a spokesman from BNSF, moving the siding in Davis was less expensive and faster to build than the grade separation alternatives that were considered.

A total of seven projects to improve safety features at grade crossings are proposed as part of this rail plan, as were five projects to grade separate highway-rail grade crossings.

#### 4.4.2 Homelessness and Trespasser Prevention

As presented in Chapter 2, 49 (67 percent) of rail-related fatalities between 2020 and 2024 were unauthorized people on the railroad rights-of-way struck by trains, excluding suicides. The problem of trespasser fatalities prompted the Oklahoma City Police Department (OKCPD) to obtain a \$120,000 grant from the FRA Railroad Trespassing Enforcement and Suicide Prevention Grant Program. This project will help fund the Operation Keep Oklahoma City Rails Safe program. Under



this program, OKCPD is identifying trespassing “Hot Spots,” and will use foot patrols, drone reconnaissance, vehicle patrols, interviews, and data analysis to identify the root causes of these Hot Spots. FRA funding will enable additional staff shifts for targeted patrols to address trespasser and safety concerns through enforcement and relocation. The OKCPD will work in conjunction with BNSF and SLWC Railroad Police Departments.

One factor that increases the risk of trespasser fatalities is the increase of homeless encampments on railroad rights-of way. According to stakeholders, homeless encampments on railroad property are a significant safety hazard in Oklahoma, as well as a nuisance to railroad personnel. At least one fatality in 2026 was a homeless person struck by a train.<sup>68</sup> Multiple railroads report homeless encampments on their property. Railroad personnel have been threatened by homeless people, and railroad property has been vandalized near homeless encampments. The issue suggests the need to develop a policy to facilitate the coordination between railroads and local and state police departments across Oklahoma.

## 4.5 Impact of Changes in the Rail Industry on Oklahoma

As of 2026, several railroad industry developments are impacting or could impact Oklahoma’s rail network in the future.

### 4.5.1 Long Trains

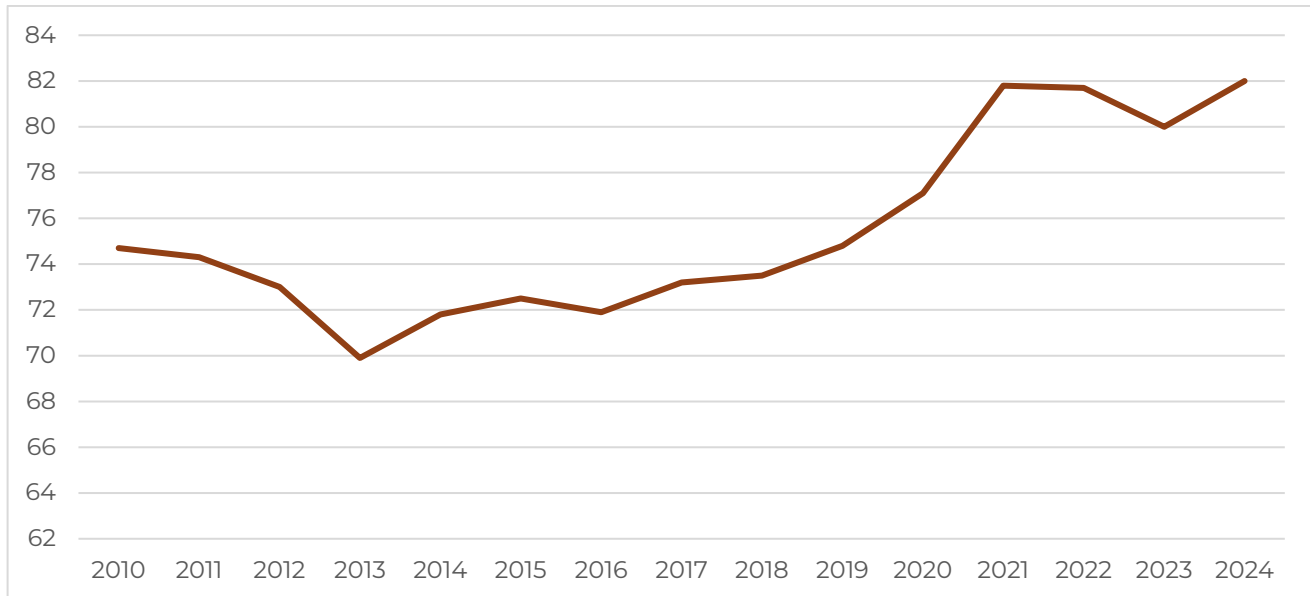
Per Figure 4-10, the average number of railcars per train increased by 10 percent between 2010 and 2024. The trend generally stabilized between 2021 and 2024, but railroads and communities are still adjusting to longer trains.

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<sup>68</sup> Federal Railroad Administration, **Report to Congress: National Strategy to Prevent Trespassing on Railroad Property**, October 2018, [https://railroads.dot.gov/sites/fra.dot.gov/files/fra\\_net/18320/ROA%206310005\\_Congress\\_TrespasserPreventionStrategy\\_2018.pdf](https://railroads.dot.gov/sites/fra.dot.gov/files/fra_net/18320/ROA%206310005_Congress_TrespasserPreventionStrategy_2018.pdf).



**Figure 4-9. Average Railcars per Class I Railroad Freight Train**



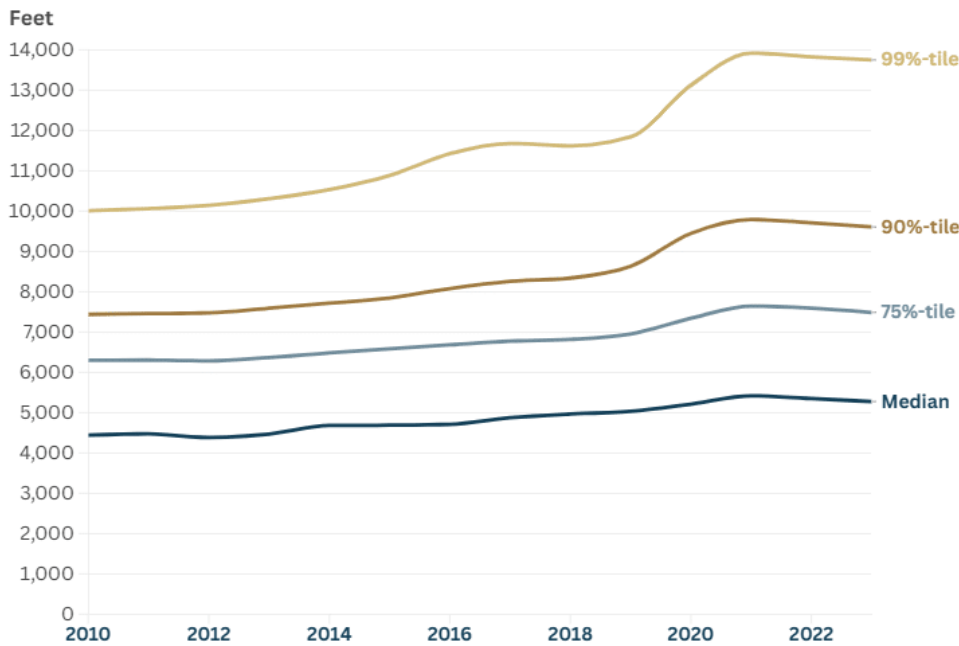
Source: Association of American Railroads, Railroad Facts 2025 Edition

Importantly, not only has the average or median length of trains increased, but per Figure 4-11, the maximum length of trains has increased faster than the average. Previously, almost no trains were longer than 10,000 feet (1.9 miles), but now trains are as long as 14,000 feet (2.7 miles). Railroads operate longer trains because it is less expensive per car-mile. A single train crew can haul more railcars, and longer trains are often more fuel efficient. However, it is more difficult to find places to park long trains where the trains will not block crossings. In some cases, trains may also need to wait longer to access sections of track. Per Figure 4-11, most of Oklahoma’s rail network is single track, and railroads rely on passing sidings to allow trains to pass one another. But the length of the sidings has not always kept up with the length of trains. Trains may wait longer to access segments of track because they cannot fit into an available passing siding, further aggravating crossing blockages.

Generally, there is mutual benefit across different stakeholders to investing in siding extensions to accommodate longer trains. Railroads benefit from more fluid networks, increased routing options for trains, and less system congestion. Lineside communities typically see fewer crossing blockages because trains can be more efficiently dispatched. Shippers benefit from more reliable service from railroads.



**Figure 4-10. Class I Railroad Train Lengths (Feet)**



"Long trains" have operated safely for decades and the industry's safety record has dramatically improved during that period. The median train length increased by 19% in 2023 since 2010 and 6% since 2018, decreasing overall since 2021. Source: AAR analysis of industry data.



Source: Association of American Railroads Website

#### 4.5.2 Union Pacific/Norfolk Southern Proposed Merger

On December 19, 2025, UP filed an application with the STB to acquire the Norfolk Southern Railway (NS). The application was rejected by the STB as incomplete, and Union Pacific Railroad filed a revised application on April 30. Ultimately, the STB can either:

- Approve the merger
- Reject the merger
- Accept the merger subject to conditions

Merger approval would fundamentally change the U.S. railroad industry. Since 1999, two railroads, NS and CSX have controlled most railroad infrastructure and traffic east of the Mississippi River, while BNSF and UP have controlled most railroad traffic and infrastructure west of the Mississippi River. The proposed UPNS merger will create a transcontinental U.S. railroad network, as shown in Figure 4-12. Many industry observers believe that a UPNS merger will likely compel the other two of the "big four" railroads, BNSF and CSX, to also merge. Thus, two railroads would control most U.S. freight rail traffic, reducing competition and potentially increasing costs for rail customers.



Figure 4-11. UP and NS Rail Systems



Source: WSP Analysis

The primary rationale for the merger, as articulated in the merger application, is the resulting reduction in shipments involving multiple Class I railroads (interline service). Because the new railroad would cover both the eastern and western U.S., the merged railroad could deliver most shipments on one railroad (single-line service). According to the merger application, single-line service is fundamentally more efficient than interline service because interline service suffers from the following limitations:

- **Poor incentives.** Two railroads sharing a single shipment lack incentives to provide cost-effective, efficient service, since no one railroad controls the whole rail move (e.g., the handling of a shipment) or obtains revenue from the entire shipment
- **Inefficient routing.** Each railroad optimizes routing for its portion of interline moves, but the overall routing is inefficient.
- **Poor coordination and visibility.** Participants of interline rail moves do not know the operating situation on the other railroad and cannot plan accordingly.
- **Added time and unreliability.** The hand off between railroads is usually inefficient and time consuming. Intermodal containers being trucked between intermodal terminals owned by different railroad companies in Chicago are a prime example.



- **Lower modal share.** Evidence suggests that where only interline service is available, rail's modal share compared to trucking is significantly less relative to similar freight moves where single line service is available.
- **Harm to shippers near interchanges.** Interline service is particularly inefficient for shippers within 250 miles of a Class I railroad interchange because railroads prefer not to handle shipments within 250 miles.

The merger application does not identify Oklahoma as being impacted, although parts of Oklahoma are relatively close to areas accessed by both NS and UP.

According to the application, the efficiencies of the merger would result in an 11 percent increase in rail traffic of which 82 percent would represent truck traffic shifting to rail.

Since UP and NS announced their intent to merge, a range of representatives from the public sector, from shippers and shipper associations have supported or opposed the merger. Other Class I's oppose the merger. Arguments against the merger fall into several categories:

- **Merger is unnecessary.** Many of the stated benefits of the merger could be achieved by railroads cooperating with one another, rather than merging into a single company.
- **Merger is risky.** With one company controlling 40 percent of U.S. rail traffic, the U.S. rail network would be highly dependent on one company. UP and NS would need to merge their operations, and during previous railroad mergers, this process has been problematic. Major service problems have accompanied past mergers, and this time, the merger would be on an unprecedented scale, potentially creating larger problems.
- **Merger would harm competition.** The merged company would have significant market power. NS and UP do not compete in most areas where they operate since the NS rail network is generally east of the Mississippi River, while the UP network is generally west of the Mississippi River. However, the merger could still impact competition. Theoretically, an eastern railroad that interchanges with two western railroads would be indifferent between which railroad handles the western portion of the rail move. Similarly, a western railroad that interchanges with two eastern railroads would be indifferent to which eastern railroad handles the eastern portion of the rail move. But a railroad that can handle both the eastern and western portions of a rail move, and which has exclusive control over one portion of the rail move, it could control the entire rail move. It could use its control over one segment to ensure that any option involving a competitor is not cost effective.

For Oklahoma, several potential impacts of the merger are possible:

- Risk that the merged railroad would experience service problems during the integration of the two railroads
- Opportunity for better rail service and rates between Oklahoma and locations in the eastern United States
- Decreased competition, primarily associated with traffic between Oklahoma and the eastern United States



The extent to which the merger impacts Oklahoma depends on how much Oklahoma freight rail traffic travels to/from eastern locations served by NS. An analysis of the STB Waybill Sample (Table 4-1) suggests that about a third of rail traffic handled by Oklahoma’s rail system could be impacted by the merger. The vast majority of impacted traffic rail traffic (97 percent) is passing through Oklahoma between other states and would not impact Oklahoma businesses. But a significant amount of inbound (16 percent) and outbound (7 percent) would be impacted as well, potentially affecting Oklahoma shippers.

**Table 4-1. Oklahoma Rail Traffic to/from States Served by NS (2024 Tons)**

Direction	State Not Served by NS	NS States	Percent NS States	Total Tonnage
Inbound	8.8	1.7	16%	10.5
Intrastate	2.5	0.0	0%	2.5
Outbound	18.9	1.3	7%	20.2
Pass Through	142.7	86.6	38%	229.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>172.9</b>	<b>89.5</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>262.4</b>

Source: WSP Analysis of STB Carload Waybill Sample

Railroad merger guidelines adopted by the STB in 2001 require that railroad mergers not only not harm competition between railroads, but that they enhance competition. The merger takes place within the context of declining rail modal share. The UP merger application of January 16, 2026 mentioned this trend and argued that the merger would help to reverse it.

### 4.5.3 Decline in Rail Modal Share

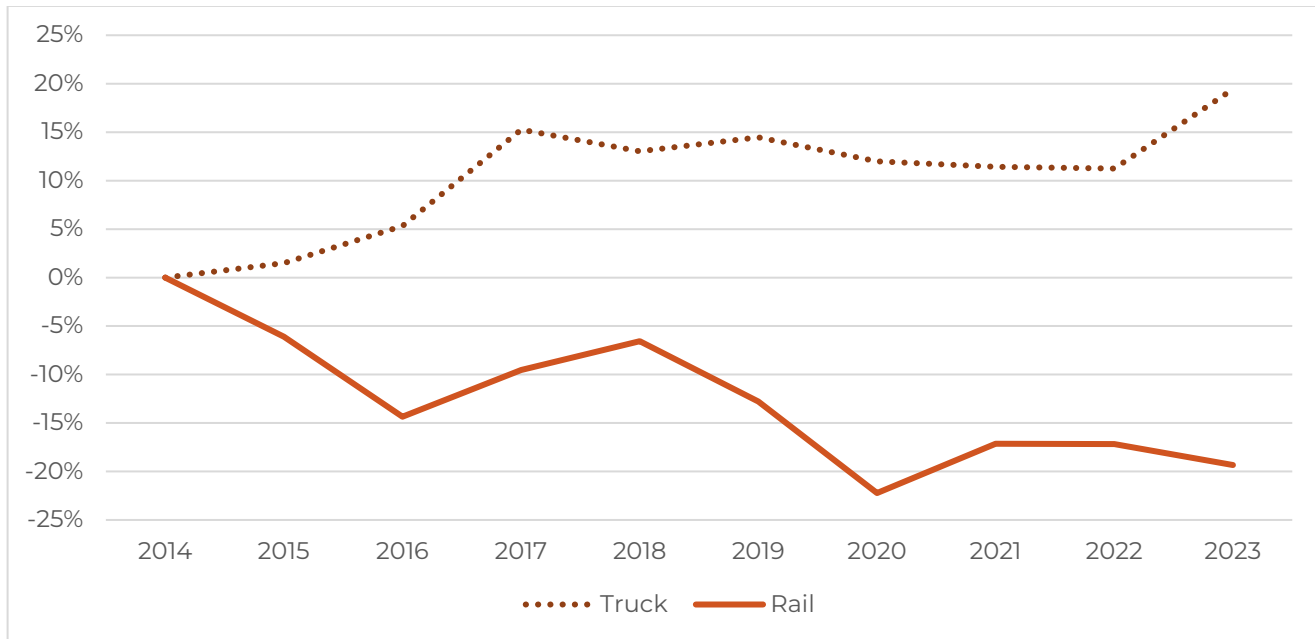
As shown in Figure 4-13, according to the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics, rail ton-miles of freight (a ton-mile is one ton of freight moved one mile) declined nearly 20 percent between 2014 and 2023, while truck ton-miles increased by almost 20 percent. Therefore, trucking gained modal share at the expense of rail.

To some extent, this could relate to the types of commodities carried by rail. As discussed in Chapter 2, coal shipments have declined, and this was a key commodity handled by the rail industry. As energy production shifted from coal toward natural gas, the modal transportation of fuel shifted away from rail and toward pipeline.

Some industry observers are concerned over metrics by which investors evaluate the industry, namely the emphasis on operating ratio (operating expenses divided by operating revenues) in evaluating railroad financial performance. The emphasis on operating ratio does not provide railroads an incentive to increase freight volumes. If a railroad increases freight volumes and grows revenue, but the operating expenses needed to serve the new business grow commensurately, the railroad has not improved its operating ratio.



**Figure 4-12. Percentage Change in U.S. Rail and Truck Ton-Miles since 2014**



Source: U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics

Several stakeholders mentioned instances of Class I railroads picking and choosing only the least costly freight to handle. For example, several agricultural shippers said that they could not obtain competitive rates for rail moves unless they shipped in unit train quantities, which require fewer resources per railcar shipped. Some would like to ship fertilizer by rail but find it difficult to accumulate enough fertilizer to fill entire trainloads, so the fertilizer is trucked instead.

Several strategies could help to address the reluctance of Class I railroads to handle less than trainload quantities:

- Support Class III railroads which actively pursue small rail shipments and can consolidate shipments to forward to Class I railroads
- Look for opportunities to consolidate rail demand, such as industrial parks served by their own Class III railroads. Also, improve freight access to industrial parks and other freight facilities so that they are easy for Class I railroads to serve, with quick access off of railroad mainlines.



# 5 OKLAHOMA RAIL SERVICE AND INVESTMENT PROGRAM

This chapter articulates the long-term vision, goals, and objectives for Oklahoma’s rail system, and presents projects and studies that are recommended to achieve them. It describes recommended financing for projects and studies, and discusses their financial, economic, and environmental impacts.

## 5.1 Vision, Goals, and Objectives

The Oklahoma State Rail Plan is guided by a strategic direction shaped by its vision, goals, and objectives. The sources of each are described below.

The vision is a statement of a desired future state of rail transportation in Oklahoma. It incorporates elements of the vision statement from the previous Rail Plan, as well as from the 2050 Oklahoma Long Range Transportation Plan, a document that provides a policy blueprint for transportation decisions across modes.

The vision statement for this Rail Plan is as follows:

“A safe, secure, and efficient rail system that ensures Oklahoma’s economic competitiveness and improved quality of life by maintaining rail infrastructure and providing rail access and multimodal connectivity.”

Supporting the vision are goals, which are broad statements that incorporate elements of the vision. For this Rail Plan, goals are adopted from Oklahoma’s 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan to be consistent with ODOT’s overall multimodal strategic direction. As discussed in Chapter 1, ODOT’s goals are also aligned with national transportation goals. Objectives provide actionable steps to implement the goals. This Rail Plan’s goals and objectives are listed in Table 5-1.



**Table 5-1. Oklahoma State Rail Plan Goals and Objectives**

Goals	Objectives
<p><b>Ensure a safe and secure railroad system</b></p>	<p>Continue to upgrade warning devices at highway-rail grade crossings</p> <p>Look for opportunities to eliminate crossings, either through closure or through grade separation</p> <p>Continue to support rail safety education and enforcement efforts.</p> <p>Identify opportunities to improve the safety of roadway approaches to highway-rail grade crossings</p> <p>Investigate opportunities to reduce trespassing and improve pedestrian safety near the railroad network, including coordination with local law enforcement on enforcement efforts and identification and diagnosis of problem areas.</p>
<p><b>Preserve and modernize railroad infrastructure</b></p>	<p>Work with railroads on needed maintenance for state-owned rail lines</p> <p>Promote efforts to upgrade rail lines to 286,000-pound standard, developing a program of recommended improvements</p> <p>Support efforts to ensure that inactive or low-density rail corridors remain viable rail transportation corridors.</p> <p>Promote projects that establish new transportation connections by restoring service to previously inactive rail lines.</p>
<p><b>Support community mobility and access to the rail network</b></p>	<p>Where funding is available, support efforts to provide passenger rail options.</p> <p>Work with railroads and municipalities to reduce instances of crossings occupied by stationary trains over extended periods of time.</p>
<p><b>Leverage the rail network to support a healthy and competitive Oklahoma economy</b></p>	<p>Promote better multimodal connections between the rail network and other modes, including port connections and truck/rail connections.</p> <p>Identify and advance opportunities for rail to better tie Oklahoma to national and international markets.</p> <p>Support rail access to industrial hubs and employment generators.</p>
<p><b>Promote collaboration to fund and improve rail system performance</b></p>	<p>Look for opportunities to develop innovative partnerships to fund transportation projects and initiatives.</p> <p>Capitalize on federal funding programs to aid investment in the rail system.</p>
<p><b>Minimize and mitigate rail impacts on communities</b></p>	<p>Support efforts to mitigate negative impacts of railroad operations on communities in ways that benefit both railroad operators and surrounding communities.</p>



Goals	Objectives
<b>Support reliability of rail by enhancing resiliency and adaptability</b>	<p>Help to mitigate rail bottlenecks to support a more fluid network.</p> <p>Promote the resilience of the rail network to extreme weather events and other environmental conditions.</p>

Source:

## 5.2 Program Coordination

The Rail Plan coordinates with the Oklahoma Long Range Transportation Plan by adopting elements of that plan's vision, goals, and objectives. The Rail Plan has been coordinated with adjacent states' plans, as well as multistate planning efforts, in particular the passenger rail planning of other South Central states.

The Rail Plan also includes input from the planning work done by MPOs and RTPOs across the state, as described in Chapter 1.

## 5.3 Rail Agencies

As described in Chapter 1, ODOT's Freight Mobility Branch (formerly Rail Programs Division) has responsibility for managing Oklahoma's state-owned rail lines, administering federal Railway-Highway (Section 130) Program funds, administering the **Heartland Flyer** contract with Amtrak, coordinating ODOT construction projects with railroads, securing federal grant funding, and conducting rail planning.

No new Oklahoma rail programs or rail agency organizational, policy or legislative changes are anticipated at the time of this Rail Plan's publication.

## 5.4 Project Types and Program Effects

This chapter of the Rail Plan provides a list of potential projects that support the Plan's vision, goals, and objectives. This list is known as the Rail Service and Investment Program (RSIP). Generally, the projects in the RSIP divert people and freight from highway to rail transportation, which generates a series of benefits, such as reducing vehicle crashes, traffic congestion, and fuel costs - which are priorities for ODOT. Other benefits relate to the specific nature of the individual projects, which have been categorized as follows:

- **286K projects and program.** These projects upgrade rail lines to accommodate industry standard 286,000-pound railcars. This reduces costs for shippers on these lines and improves the viability of rail as a modal option. The identified projects are those that were recommended by railroads and other stakeholders. The "286K program" includes locations that need to be upgraded but were not recommended by a stakeholder.
- **Capacity projects.** Capacity projects increase the number of trains or railcars that freight rail facilities can accommodate. These projects can improve the fluidity and operations of the rail network and/or enable more freight to be transported. They can reduce operating costs, fuel consumption, and rail congestion of alternate transportation modes such as highway.



- **Crossings and safety.** Most of these projects reduce potential conflicts between rail and other users at highway/rail grade crossings. They include grade separations, crossing improvements, and equipment renewal at crossings. One project would extend a rail siding so that trains can park where they no longer block crossings. These projects improve safety by reducing the risks of crashes at highway-rail grade crossings. Some improve mobility by addressing frequent crossing blockages by stationary trains.
- **Industrial access.** Industrial access projects improve existing, or establish new, rail access to customer locations. These projects help to divert traffic that might otherwise travel by highway to the rail system and support economic development by providing shippers with additional and improved transportation options.
- **Modernization.** Modernization projects upgrade rail lines to modern standards, often replacing antiquated, lighter rail with heavier, modern rail, or upgrading rail lines to accommodate trains of modern dimensions. These projects increase efficiency and reduce operating costs and make rail a more viable option.
- **Multimodal, multimodal studies.** Multimodal projects improve or establish facilities where freight is transferred between rail and truck or rail and barge. Multimodal studies investigate whether such facilities are warranted. These projects support economic development by providing shippers with new or improved multimodal options. As noted above, by diverting freight movements away from highways, these projects reduce crashes and congestion.
- **Passenger rail projects and studies.** Passenger projects improve host freight lines in anticipation of passenger rail services. Passenger rail studies investigate the feasibility and benefits of passenger services, and define future service characteristics. Passenger rail service provides communities with additional transportation options and promotes economic development.
- **Quiet Zones.** Quiet zone projects add safety features to highway/rail grade crossings and in return, train crews are no longer required to sound train horns as they approach the crossings. This reduction in noise improves the quality of life for surrounding communities.
- **Reactivation.** Reactivation projects refurbish or rebuild rail lines along existing inactive rail corridors, providing communities along these corridors with transportation options and/or new routing options for existing shippers. In Oklahoma this also takes on a national security component, facilitating movement of military supplies to and from bases.
- **State of good repair.** State of good repair projects improve railroad infrastructure which has fallen into disrepair. Most of these projects replace railroad crossties and resurface ballast.

## 5.5 Summary of Freight and Passenger Element

This Rail Service and Investment Program (RSIP) includes proposals, issues, and opportunities that were identified in preparing the Rail Plan. They vary significantly to the extent that they are defined or require additional study, and are categorized as follows:

- **Fully Defined Projects.** Defined infrastructure projects are sufficiently described so that project budgets can be developed, and typically include projects proposed by railroads and port



authorities. Fully defined projects could be candidates for federal discretionary construction grants.

- **Conceptual Projects.** These are specific types of projects that have been identified by planning agencies and other stakeholders. The need for the project, and the type of project proposed to address the needs, have been identified, but the project has not been specifically defined enough to develop a cost estimate. Planning studies may be needed further define the project.
- **Identified Need.** In these cases, a need has been identified, which would suggest one or several types of projects, but not enough is known to assign a project to that need. This Rail Plan generally recommends studies to further define solutions to these needs. In some cases, studies are ongoing, and the specific project will be recommended once the study is completed.

During outreach, additional project ideas were put forward, but without a clearly identified need for the project. If no specific need was identified, the feedback is noted in this Rail Plan, but not featured in the RSIP. The 107 projects in the RSIP are summarized below, and listed in Appendix F.

Table 5-2. *Projects by Type and Status*

<b>Project Type</b>	<b>Defined Project</b>	<b>Conceptual Project</b>	<b>Identified Need</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
State of good repair	9	1		10
286K upgrade	3	1		4
286K upgrade program			9	9
Modernization	5	2		7
Capacity	3	4		7
Industrial access	3	14		17
Multimodal	7	2		9
Multimodal study			2	2
Reactivation	2	1		3
Passenger projects and studies		3	8	11
Crossings and safety	6	17		23
Crossings and safety study			4	4
Quiet zones		1		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>107</b>

Source : WSP Analysis



The total value of the 38 projects for which cost estimates were available is \$675 million, of which multimodal, modernization, and reactivation projects are the largest components (Table 5-3).

**Table 5-3. Projects with Estimated Costs**

Defined Project	Number of Projects	Estimated Cost
286K upgrade	3	\$67,000,000
Capacity	3	\$62,500,000
Industrial access	3	\$27,900,000
Modernization	5	\$144,156,373
Multimodal	7	\$109,485,038
Reactivation	2	\$159,750,000
State of good repair	9	\$47,889,000
Crossings and safety	6	\$56,584,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>\$675,264,411</b>

Projects have been separated into long term and short term per PRIIA legislation and FRA State Rail Plan Guidance. Short term projects are those that would be completed in years 1 – 4 of the Rail Plan’s planning horizon, while long term projects would be completed in years 5 – 20. With the horizon of this Rail Plan, short term projects would be completed in 2026 – 2029, while long term projects would be completed 2030 – 2045. Where specified, the timing reflects feedback from the stakeholders that proposed the projects. Many of the conceptual projects were assumed to have long term horizons, but projects that consist of a planning study were assumed to have a shorter time horizon. Table 5-4 displays project types and time horizons.

Table 5-4. *Projects by Type and Time Horizon*

Project Type	Short Term	Long Term
State of good repair	7	3
286K upgrade		4
286K upgrade program		9
Modernization	5	2
Capacity	1	6
Industrial access	10	7
Multimodal	8	1
Multimodal study	2	
Reactivation		3
Passenger projects and studies	8	3
Crossings and safety	19	4
Crossings and safety study	4	
Quiet zones		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>43</b>

## 5.6 Financing

Funding sources are described in Section 2.1.5 many of which are restricted in the types of projects for which they can be used. The discussion below covers the most likely funding sources that could be used for the fully defined projects, conceptual projects, and identified needs as defined above.

### 5.6.1 Fully Defined Projects

For these projects, capital grants, loans, and tax credit programs can be used to support funding and financing of final design and construction phases. For Class I railroads, applicable funding programs are limited to USDOT discretionary grant programs. The Section 130 funds can only be used for grade crossing improvements or elimination for crossings that score high in crash risk forecasts.



For Class III railroads and Port Authorities, Oklahoma's tax credit programs (Rail Modernization Tax Credit, SIDE Act, and P3) can be used for capital improvement projects that support economic development and other program goals. USDOT discretionary programs are also available to Class III and Port Authority projects.

### 5.6.2 Conceptual Projects

Some of the projects listed under this category are under study and could soon be eligible for construction grants, loans, or tax credits. For many, planning grants would be an appropriate next step before applying for construction/implementation funding. The availability of planning grants in the USDOT discretionary programs varies by year, but have recently been available under the CRISI, RCE, and BUILD programs. Federal formula funding, such as CMAQ, is also available for use on rail infrastructure planning.

### 5.6.3 Identified Need Projects

Local funding is ideal for early planning studies that examine needs and develop a conceptual project. The conceptual project can then be submitted for funding for planning and design before seeking funding for construction and implementation.

For identified needs that are complex and require expertise, ODOT's rail division can be consulted. In addition, it is also possible to apply for planning grants.

### 5.6.4 Passenger Rail

Potential funding sources for passenger rail capital projects are similar to those noted above for freight rail, with the addition of USDOT's Federal State Partnership (FSP) discretionary grant program, and the Federal Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program. Corridor ID is to be only available for planning, environmental and preliminary engineering. Any federal infrastructure funding would need to be paired with funding for ongoing operations,

### 5.6.5 Suggested Funding Sources by Project

Potential funding sources are identified in Appendix F as suggestions. Each of the funding sources are limited and cannot fund all listed projects. While many funding sources overlap in types of projects covered as well as project costs, in general, the rubric used in Appendix F is as follows:

- Crossing elimination projects – Rail Crossing Elimination program (RCE), Section 130 if low cost (such as a closure), or BUILD for expensive grade separations
- Crossing improvement projects and signal upgrades – Section 130 Rail Highway Crossing Program
- New spurs to industrial parks and similar economic development projects – US EDA grants and ODOT programs such as Rail Modernization Tax Credit, SIDE Act, and P3
- Capital projects over \$30 million – MEGA/INFRA
- Capital projects between \$1.25 million and \$31.25 million – BUILD, CRISI, and Oklahoma tax credit programs
- Capital projects under \$1.25 million – Oklahoma tax credit programs



- Planning projects – BUILD, CRISI and local funding
- Passenger rail – BUILD, Federal-State Partnership (FSP), or Corridor ID if the project is related specifically to the **Heartland Flyer** extension. Also, CRISI if project involves track improvements that would benefit a shared freight corridor.
- Excursion trains – US EDA grants and local funding

### 5.7 Studies and Reports

Many of the projects included in the Rail Service and Investment Program are studies. These would accomplish a range of objectives. Examples include:

- Investigate the best options for addressing highway/rail grade crossing that is frequently blocked by stationary trains
- Design a grade separation, reaching agreement between all impacted parties, developing the project sufficiently to pursue a construction grant
- Plan a service design, funding plan, governance structure for new passenger rail service
- Investigate the need for, and feasibility of, establishing a multimodal facility
- Determine the upgrades required to enable a rail line to accommodate 286,000-pound railcars
- Design a rail spur to an industrial location, reach agreement between all parties

Although not on the project list, a logical study, or investigation would be a review of options to fund the **Heartland Flyer**. This would involve conversations with municipalities and regional planning agencies along the route, a review of potential governance and funding structures, and how any arrangement would fit into the rules and regulations of Oklahoma and Texas.



## 6 COORDINATION AND REVIEW

Numerous stakeholders and the general public were involved in the preparation of this Rail Plan. Input was used to better understand the current conditions of the rail system, its needs and opportunities, and trends that will impact Oklahoma rail in the future. Stakeholders and the public were also engaged to review preliminary findings of this Rail Plan.

### 6.1 Approach to Public and Agency Participation, Issues and Opportunities Raised

Different approaches were used to engage different types of stakeholders, depending upon their knowledge and interest in rail. Activities were as follows:

- Stakeholder workshops x 2
- Railroad interviews x 3
- Stakeholder interviews x 14
- Railroad surveys x 12
- Virtual public meetings X 2
- Online survey

#### 6.1.1 Stakeholder Workshops

Two stakeholder workshops were held, one on December 11, 2025, and another on May 12, 2026.

##### **Meeting 1**

The purpose of the first workshop was to gain an understanding of the needs and opportunities for rail from key organizations with an active role in rail in the state. The workshop was attended by representatives from two Class III railroads, Tulsa Ports, and a representative from the Oklahoma Corporation Commission. Topics discussed included:

- Multimodal opportunities – Tulsa Ports sees significant opportunities from shippers in Oklahoma and Kansas. Improvements are needed for both rail and roadway access.
- Economic development – Oklahoma is a great place to do business, but in a competitive environment, Oklahoma needs to offer businesses an incentive to locate. Railroads play a role in economic development. Railroad connections help to market sites as more competitive. Communication is important, so that railroads know the status of utilities, etc.
- Traffic trends – Class III railroads need to be nimble. For example, during a recent drought, any railroad that relied on agricultural shipments needed to find other traffic.
- Homeless encampments – This is a problem for railroads, on rights-of-way and yard properties, and railroads have limited options for enforcing trespasser laws.



- Cost of doing business – The cost of doing business for railroads has increased dramatically recently.
- Railroad safety - The Oklahoma Corporation Commission enforces sight lines but only has jurisdiction over railroads not adjacent properties.

### **Meeting 2**

During the second meeting, held on May 12, 2026, the preliminary findings of the Rail Plan were presented to railroad representatives and other organizations with a specific interest in rail. Several railroad representatives mentioned issues they would like to be included in the Rail Plan. One individual mentioned that motorists need education regarding responsibilities around railroads. In rural areas with low density rail lines, motorists assume that no train will be at crossings and drive through crossbucks without stopping or slowing down. While this behavior is illegal, violators are rarely given a citation. Another issue is illegal dumping of trash on rail lines.

### **6.1.2 Railroad Interviews**

The planning team held interviews with three railroads including Union Pacific Railroad (UP), BNSF Railway, and Farmrail to gain insights into their concerns and issues. An interview was held with UP on January 6, 2026, with BNSF on January 15, 2026, and with Farmrail on May 18, 2026. Common themes throughout the interviews included:

- Possible multimodal opportunities.
- Major industrial parks are sources of significant opportunity.
- Discussed blocked crossing issues where there could be less expensive alternatives to grade separations. Examples include the potential relocations of rail sidings, so that trains can be parked away from crossings.
- When vehicles break crossing gates, it can create operational problems for railroads, especially when equipment age is a factor
- At one crossing, trucks end up backing onto the roadway, which causes accidents as other vehicles strike the stationary trucks.
- The rail/rail grade crossing in Claremore causes blocked crossings as trains wait to get through the crossing.

### **6.1.3 Railroad Survey**

A survey was sent to short line railroads within Oklahoma to gather information about railroad infrastructure, needs, issues, and opportunities. Ten completed surveys were received. The survey was divided into two sections, one asked for data about the characteristics of the railroads, and the other asked for general views on railroad transportation in Oklahoma and their railroad's issues and opportunities. Common themes were:

- **Rail markets**
  - » Uncertainty in markets prompts customers to lock in volumes at a set price.
  - » Demand for transload facilities.



- » Growth in the oil and gas sectors.
- » Expected growth in agriculture and intermodal shipments.
- » Relationship between opportunities and the condition of the rail line: some opportunities require rail line upgrades.
- **Highway/rail crossings**
  - » The traffic density criteria of the Section 130 crossing program can prevent rural areas from benefitting from the program, since rural areas seldom have sufficient traffic to justify improvements.
  - » Rural areas with older equipment and poor surface conditions need crossing renewals.
  - » Problems with blind spots at crossings.
  - » Limited replacement parts for older equipment, increasing repair time, maintenance costs for crossing signals.
- **Trespassing**
  - » Problems with trespassing.
  - » Altus, Clinton, Weatherford have high trespass foot traffic, leading to vandalism and tampering with equipment.
  - » Homeless populations on railroad rights-of-way is a problem.
- **Policy**
  - » Establish a rail needs inventory that can be constantly updated.
  - » State programs should provide grants and tax incentives for track upgrades, siding additions, and facility expansions.
  - » Need for incentives for rural development.

#### 6.1.4 Public Meetings

Two public meetings were held.

##### **Meeting 1**

On December 9, 2025, the first public meeting was held to introduce the Rail Plan, answer questions, and encourage participants to complete an online survey. The meeting, attended by 26 people, consisted of a presentation by the Rail Plan team, followed by a question and answer session. Themes covered included:

- **Passenger rail**
  - » Commentors expressed support for the **Heartland Flyer**, Amtrak, and commuter and passenger rail in general. Participants asked questions about funding for these services; extending service into smaller towns, participation in FRA strategic passenger rail planning, and ownership of the rail lines on which the **Heartland Flyer** operates.
- **Rail line restoration**
  - » Comments in support of restoring the Shawnee – McAlester rail line.



- **Freight rail**

- » Comment in support of intermodal terminal in Oklahoma. Questions about how ODOT could encourage usage of freight rail to move freight off of highways.

**Meeting 2**

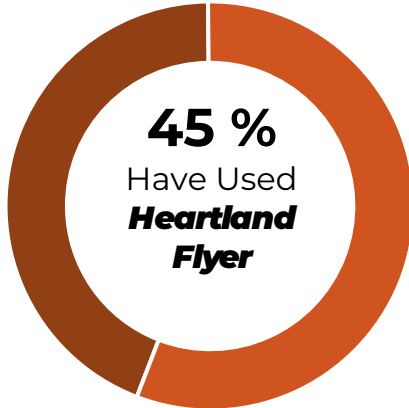
To be completed in June 2026 after the next meeting

6.1.5 Public Survey

An online survey was conducted for the Oklahoma State Rail Plan using Social Pinpoint software. It was available for responses between November 24, 2025 and January 31, 2026. The survey was advertised through a press release and social media. The survey had two components: a series of survey questions, and the ability to place virtual pins on a map to indicate potential rail projects, issues, and opportunities. A total of 562 unique contributors provided 1,354 responses. For the multiple-choice question section, 488 contributors completed the survey 516 times, for an average of 1.05 surveys per contributor. The interactive map section had 319 contributors who provided 838 contributions. The infographics in Figure 6-1 highlight key information gathered regarding the **Heartland Flyer**.

Figure 6-1. **Online Survey Heartland Flyer Question Results**

**Have You Traveled on the  
Heartland Flyer?**





Of those who have traveled on the *Heartland Flyer*, how often do you use the service?

**73.2%** Ride Once per Year

**23.2%** Ride Several Times a Year

Of those who have traveled on the *Heartland Flyer*, they do so because:

Figure 6-2. *Heartland Flyer Riders Reason to Ride*

An average of **70.4 percent** said that they use the *Heartland Flyer* because:

It was a fun experience  
(86.5 percent)

It was affordable  
(74.4 percent)

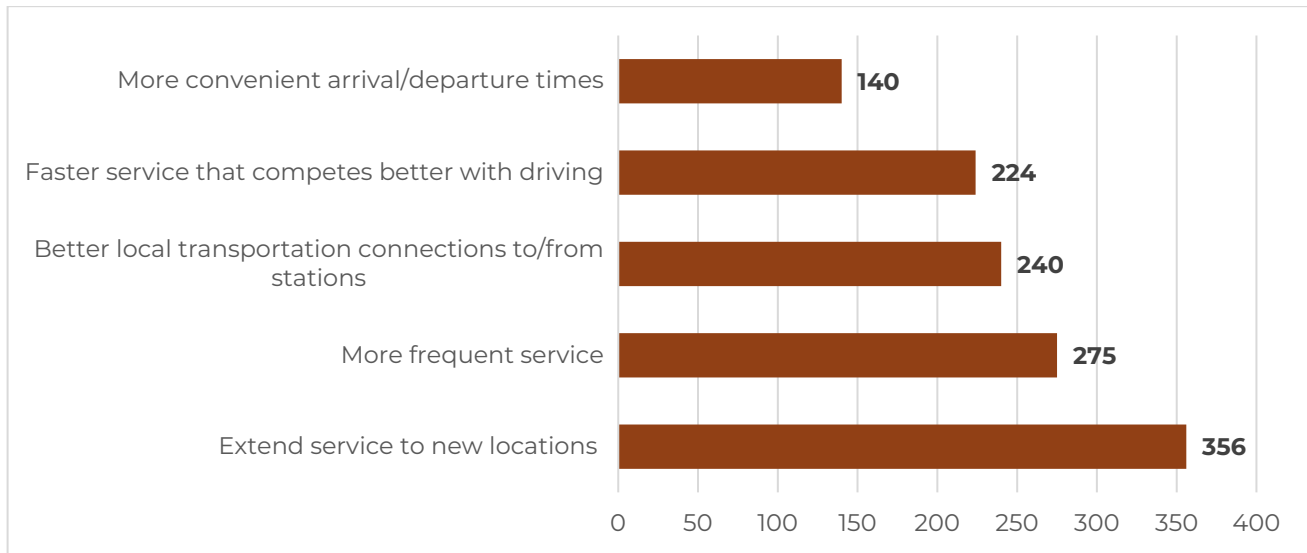
It was convenient  
(63.6percent)

It was environmentally friendly  
(59.3 percent)

Individuals were provided with a list of changes or improvements that would make them more likely to use the *Heartland Flyer* in the future. Figure 6-3 shows the results of the question; individuals could add multiple changes/improvements for the response. The leading change was “Extend service to new locations” with 356 entries, followed by “More frequent Service” with 275 entries.

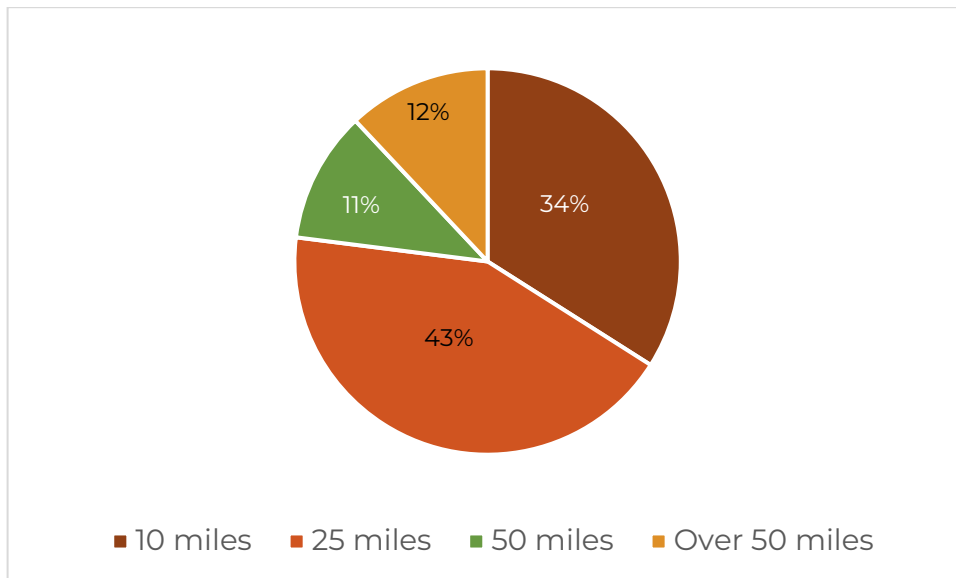


**Figure 6-3. Changes or Improvements that Would Make Respondents More Likely to Use the Heartland Flyer**



Participants were asked “How far would you be willing to travel to reach an Amtrak Station?” The results are shown in in Figure 6-4.

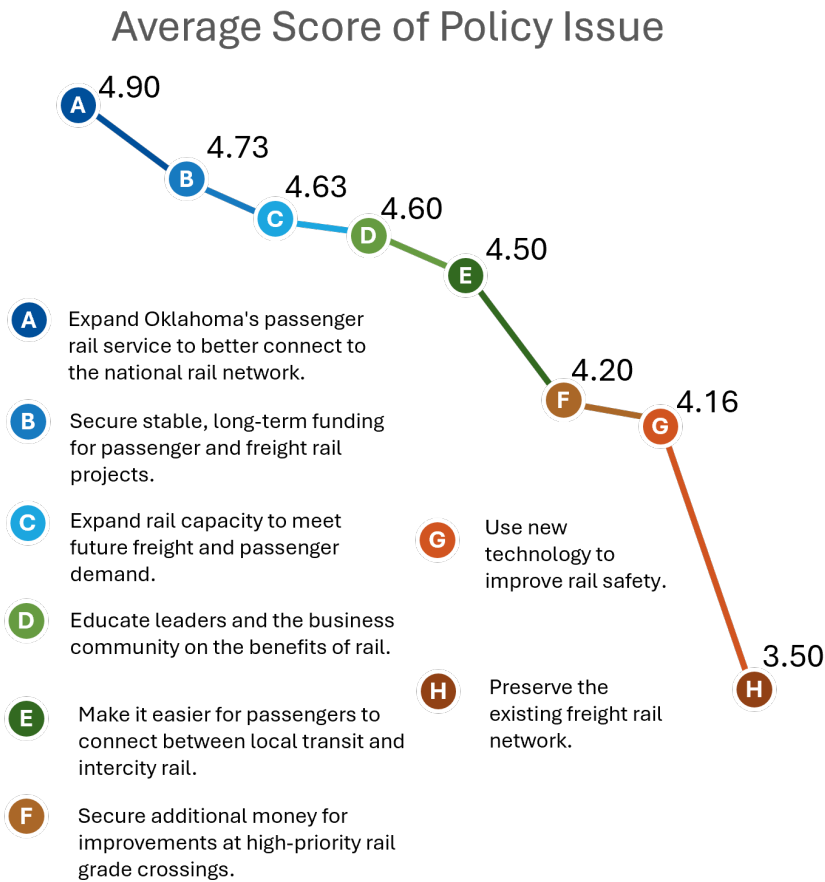
**Figure 6-4. How far would you be willing to travel to reach an Amtrak Station?**



Individuals were asked to rate a series of policy issues on a scale of one to five, one being the least important and five being the most important. Figure 6-5 shows the results. Expanding Oklahoma’s passenger rail service to better connect to the national rail network scored the highest, with an average score of 4.90. The policy issue that scored lowest was preserving the existing freight rail network, with an average score of 3.50.



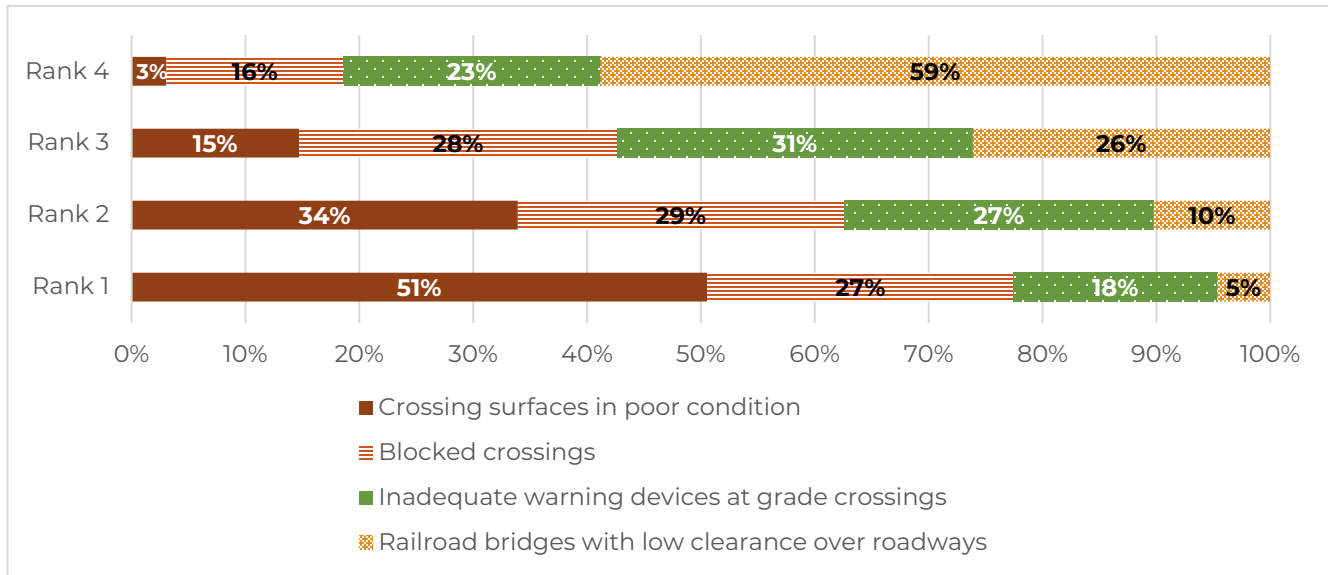
Figure 6-5. Average Score of Policy Issues' Importance



The survey also asked respondents to rank four railroad crossing-related issues from most important to least important. As shown in Figure 6-6, 51 percent of respondents noted that their top issue was crossing surfaces in poor condition. By contrast, 59 percent of respondents noted that railroad bridges with low clearance over roadways was their lowest priority. Blocked crossings and inadequate crossings rankings were evenly distributed, with neither of these issues making up a third of any ranking.

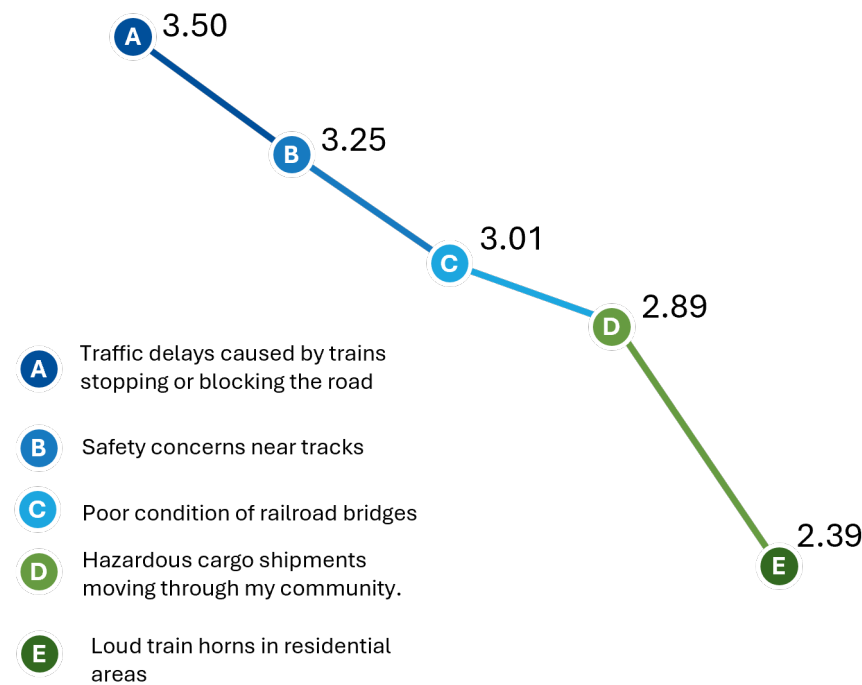


**Figure 6-6. Issue Rankings**



Respondents were also asked to rate five other concerns by importance. As shown in Figure 6-7, traffic delays caused by stationary trains blocking crossings scored the highest. The concern that scored lowest was loud train horns in residential areas.

**Figure 6-7. Key Concerns Average Ranking**





### 6.1.6 Interactive Map Summary

The interactive map allowed respondents to place pins on a virtual map and to comment on issues, opportunities, and potential projects at locations within Oklahoma under the following categories: 1) Freight Access or Multimodal Improvements, 2) New Passenger Rail Service or Station, 3) Rail Infrastructure Improvements, and 4) Safety Improvements. Within these four categories, respondents could further specify subcategories. A total of 838 virtual pins were dropped on the map. Table 6-1 provides the breakdown by category. A majority, 70.6 percent, related to new passenger rail service or stations, followed by safety improvements with 13.3 percent. Figure 6-8 shows the location of the comments.

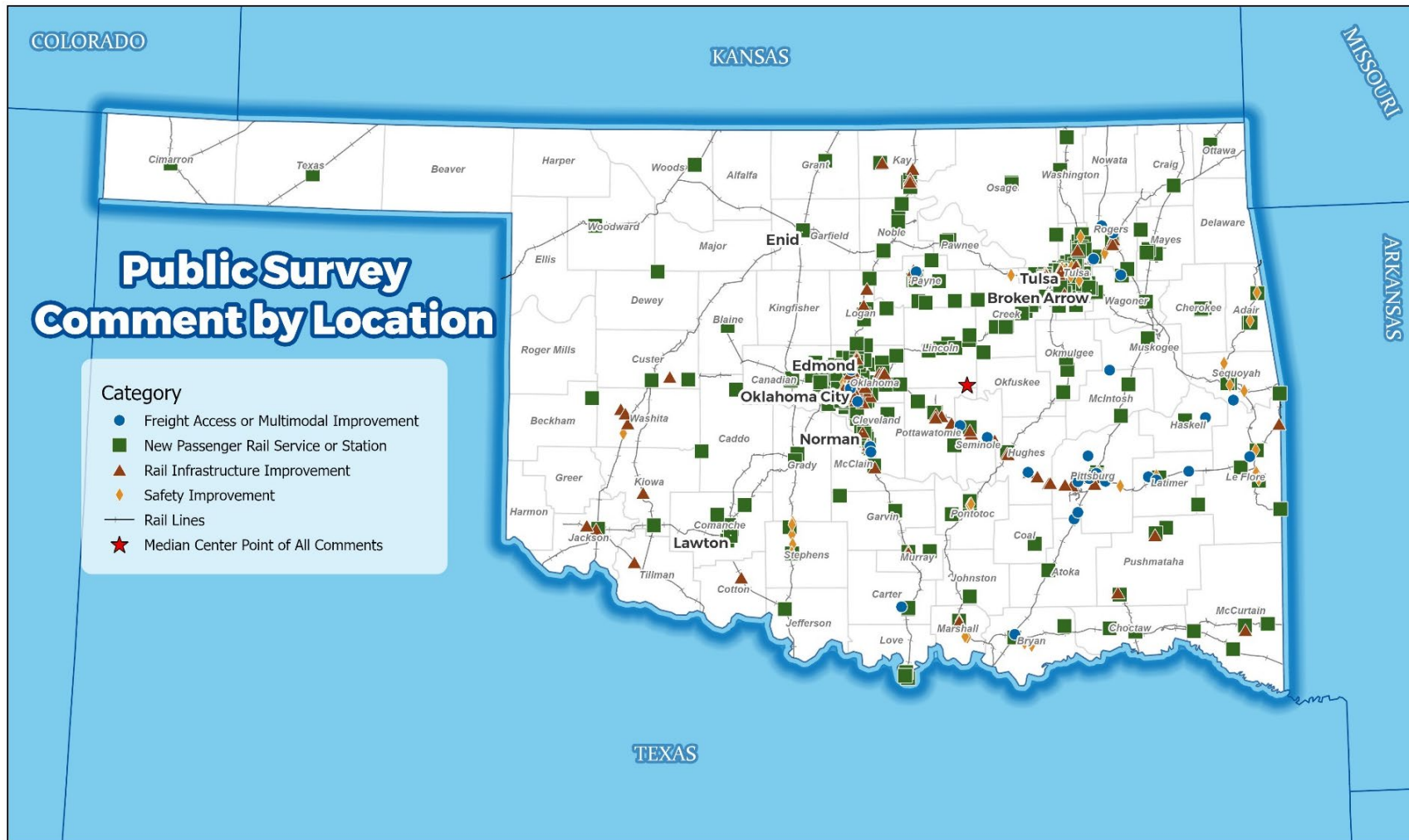
**Table 6-1. Survey Responses by Category**

Category	Number of Pins	Share of Total
<b>New Passenger Rail Service or Station</b>	592	70.6%
<b>Safety Improvement</b>	112	13.3%
<b>Rail Infrastructure Improvement</b>	101	12.1%
<b>Freight Access or Multimodal Improvement</b>	33	3.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>838</b>	<b>100%</b>

Passenger rail, freight and multimodal pins were concentrated in the major metropolitan areas. Safety and rail infrastructure comments were also concentrated in the major metropolitan areas, but were somewhat more evenly distributed across the state. The results of the interactive map survey are described in more detail in Appendix G



Figure 6-8.. Interactive Map Comments





### 6.1.7 One on One Interviews

The Rail Plan team held a series of meetings with specific organizations. Categories of feedback are summarized below.

- **Commodity and industrial trends**
  - » Fuel prices impact truck/rail modal decision.
  - » Class I railroads have been pricing manifest traffic out of existence.
  - » Opportunities for more rail to military bases, such as Altus AFB which could be shipped fuel by rail.
  - » Agricultural producers from western Oklahoma are shipping through ports in the eastern part of the state.
  - » Oklahoma is known for hard red winter wheat. In Oklahoma, wheat is used for both forage for cattle and for harvest. Oklahoma State University produces strains that suit this purpose well. Oklahoma is to the south end of wheat producing states, so has an earlier harvest than other states.
- **Rail infrastructure issues**
  - » Major Oklahoma industry in some places faces 286,000-pound railcar capacity issues and has to light load railcars. This harms their ability to compete with other sources of materials.
  - » BNSF bridge between La Quinta and El Dorado is not rated to accommodate 286,000-pound railcars due to fire. Have applied for grants.
  - » Concern over lightly used rail lines. Would like to railbank unused rail lines.
  - » Old historic depot buildings are valuable and should be preserved.
- **Multimodal facilities**
  - » PCCA intermodal terminal, constructed using SIDE Act tax credits.
  - » Need for transload facilities.
- **Policy Issues**
  - » Railroad industry supports short line tax credit, SIDE Act.
- **Economic development**
  - » 15 – 20 percent of industrial prospects need rail.
  - » 10 of 80 tenants at a specific industrial park are served by rail.
  - » Low costs (energy, taxes, labor) are benefits of locating in Oklahoma.
  - » Being in the middle of the nation, close to Texas (Dallas), but not in Texas benefits Oklahoma.
  - » Aluminum smelter recently built in Oklahoma because of inexpensive energy costs.
  - » MidAmerica Industrial Park benefits from being near, but not in, Tulsa. Foreign Trade Zones help boost economic development.



- **Crossings and Safety Issues**

- » Shunting trains causes backups at blocked crossings.
- » Homeless camps next to rail yards are a problem.
- » Railroads object to adding sidewalks to rail crossings, but this is awkward because a sidewalk is on either side of the crossing, so now pedestrians must walk over the crossing on the street.
- » Former crossing locations where crossing is removed, but pedestrians still cross, are dangerous.
- » Crossings are often blocked in Hugo and Mannford.

### 6.1.8 Incorporation of Feedback in the Rail Plan

Feedback received through all outreach approaches was incorporated into the Rail Plan. Identified issues and opportunities were incorporated into the discussion of passenger rail and freight rail issues, needs, and opportunities in Chapters 3 and 4. Projects and project needs were considered for inclusion in the Rail Service and Investment Program, as described in Chapter 5.

## 6.2 Coordination with Neighboring States

Coordination was undertaken with the neighboring state rail offices to share information about the development of the Oklahoma State Rail Plan and to solicit input, particularly regarding issues/opportunities, areas of collaboration that span state borders. In February 2026, meetings were held with the Kansas and Texas Departments of Transportation, as well as the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

The following issues and opportunities were identified during these meetings:

- **Kansas Department of Transportation**

- » Interest in bringing short lines up to 286,000-pound standard.
- » Expressed interest in accessing the Ports of Catoosa and Muskogee, although one issue for shippers in western Kansas is a lack of north-south connectivity. Most rail lines there run east-west.
- » Discussed local interest in extending passenger rail service to Topeka and Wichita.

- **Texas Department of Transportation**

- » TxDOT coordinates with OKDOT on rail-related grants and projects.
- » Texas has a dedicated grade separation program funded at approximately \$250 million, with demand far exceeding available funding.
- » Regarding the **Heartland Flyer**, there are perceptions in Texas that the service disproportionately benefits Oklahoma passengers, although it also increases economic activity in Texas.





- » TxDOT recognizes untapped demand for passenger rail services in the Texas Triangle, but notes that this is a more difficult sell in Texas than in areas of the country more receptive to passenger rail.
- » Communities remain resistant to long sidings and trains parked within town limits.
- **North Central Texas Council of Governments**
  - » The **Heartland Flyer** remains a central concern, especially the lack of stable funding.
  - » Service enhancements that could improve ridership on the **Heartland Flyer** were noted:
    - Enhancing performance, particularly for business travelers
    - Adding a second daily train to allow same-day round-trip from Dallas-Fort Worth was identified as a key potential improvement.
  - » NCTCOG cautioned that the national Amtrak system map creates a false sense of connectivity, masking gaps in frequency, timing, and convenience.
  - » Discussed Texas initiatives that could impact Oklahoma and the **Heartland Flyer**.

### 6.3 Coordination with Other Transportation Planning Efforts

This Rail Plan has been coordinated with other transportation planning efforts. All recent MPO and RTPO Transportation Improvement Plans, Long-Range Transportation Plans, and Freight Plans have been reviewed for this Rail Plan. The Rail Plan also incorporates elements of the statewide multimodal 2025 – 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan. Given the timing, the Rail Plan will provide input for the 2027 – 2034 Oklahoma Statewide Freight Plan, to be released in early 2027.

