

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

The Trans-Texas Corridor (TTC) is a proposed multi-use, statewide network of transportation routes in Texas that would incorporate existing and new highways, railways and utility rights-of-way (ROW). This summary provides an overview of the process used to evaluate alternatives for the TTC corridor that will run from Oklahoma to Mexico and/or the Texas Gulf Coast Corridor (TTC-35). As envisioned, TTC-35 would include separate lanes for passenger vehicles and large trucks, freight railways, high-speed commuter railways, and a corridor for utilities including water lines, oil and natural gas pipelines, and transmission lines for electricity, broadband and other telecommunications services.

Plans call for TTC-35 to be completed in phases over the next 50 years with facilities prioritized according to Texas' transportation needs. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) will oversee planning, construction and ongoing maintenance of TTC-35, although private vendors may be responsible for much of the daily operations.

This Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) has been prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and in compliance with the NEPA regulations issued by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) (40 CFR Part 1500-1508) and by the FHWA (23 CFR Part 771). The CEQ (40 CFR 1508.28) and FHWA regulations allow NEPA studies for large, complex projects to be carried out in a two-stage or tiered process. This tiered approach to transportation decision-making under NEPA involves the preparation of a first (Tier One) NEPA document that makes a decision at a broader level. As stated in 40 CFR 1508.28 regarding tiering:

*Agencies are encouraged to tier their environmental impact statements to eliminate repetitive discussions of the same issues and to focus on the actual issues ripe for decision at each level of environmental review.*

At the Tier One level, broad issues are addressed, while taking into account the full range of potential effects to both the human and natural environments. After the broad issues are assessed in Tier One, the focus would shift to Tier Two environmental studies (NEPA documents) and to issues associated with a more exact determination of effects and the avoidance and mitigation of adverse effects. The difference in focus is one of degree.

The information presented in this Executive Summary is discussed in more detail in the TTC-35 Tier One DEIS.

### **What is the decision to be made in the Tier One Environmental Impact Statement?**

The purpose of the Tier One EIS is to select a preferred alternative for the proposed TTC-35 project at a corridor level of analysis. Alternatives analyzed in detail in this document include twelve corridor alternatives and a No Action Alternative. The level of detail in this DEIS reflects the broad nature of the decision to be made through the Tier One environmental process. Approval of this Tier One NEPA document would not establish a specific route for the proposed TTC-35 nor authorize any construction-related activities.