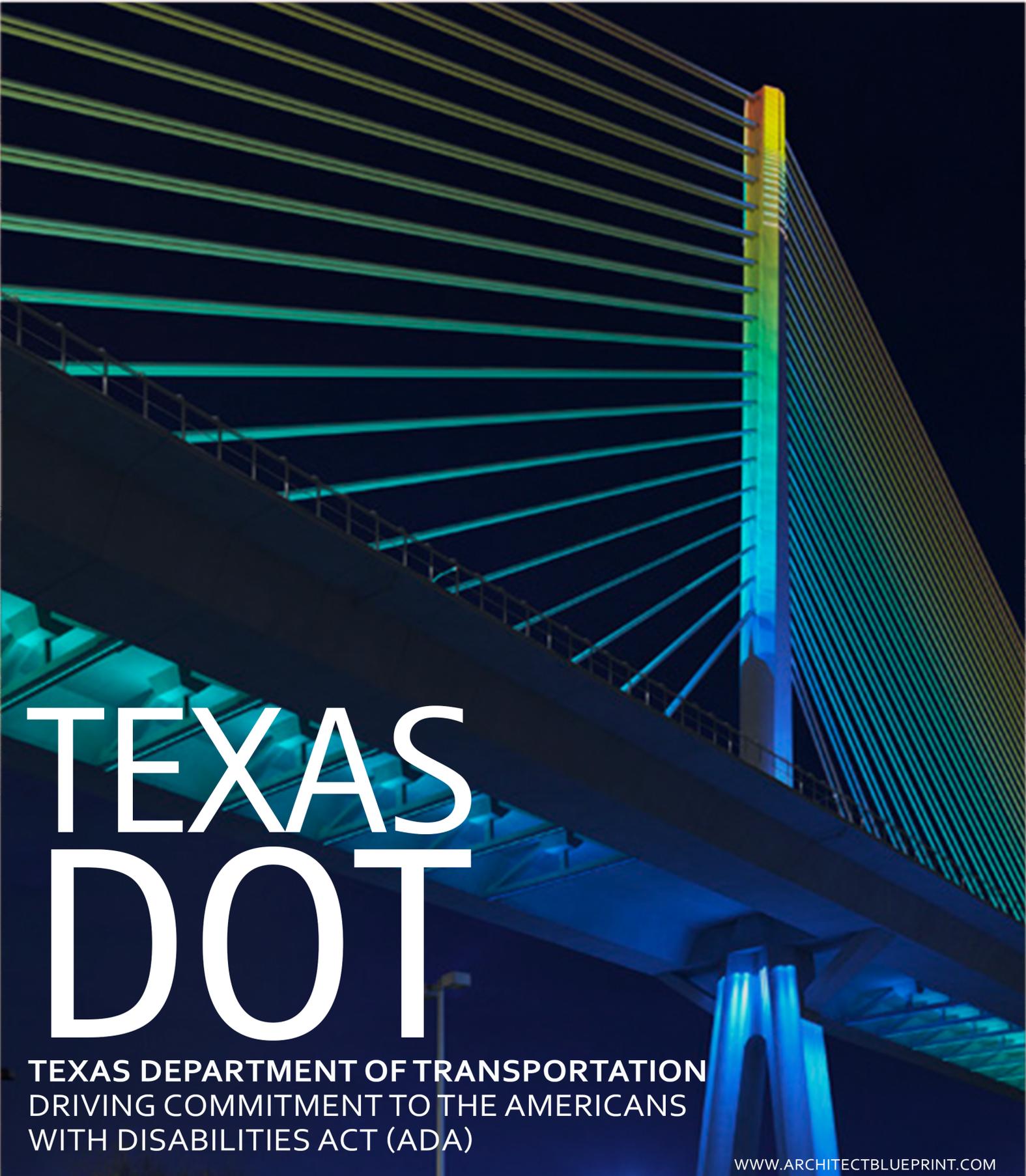


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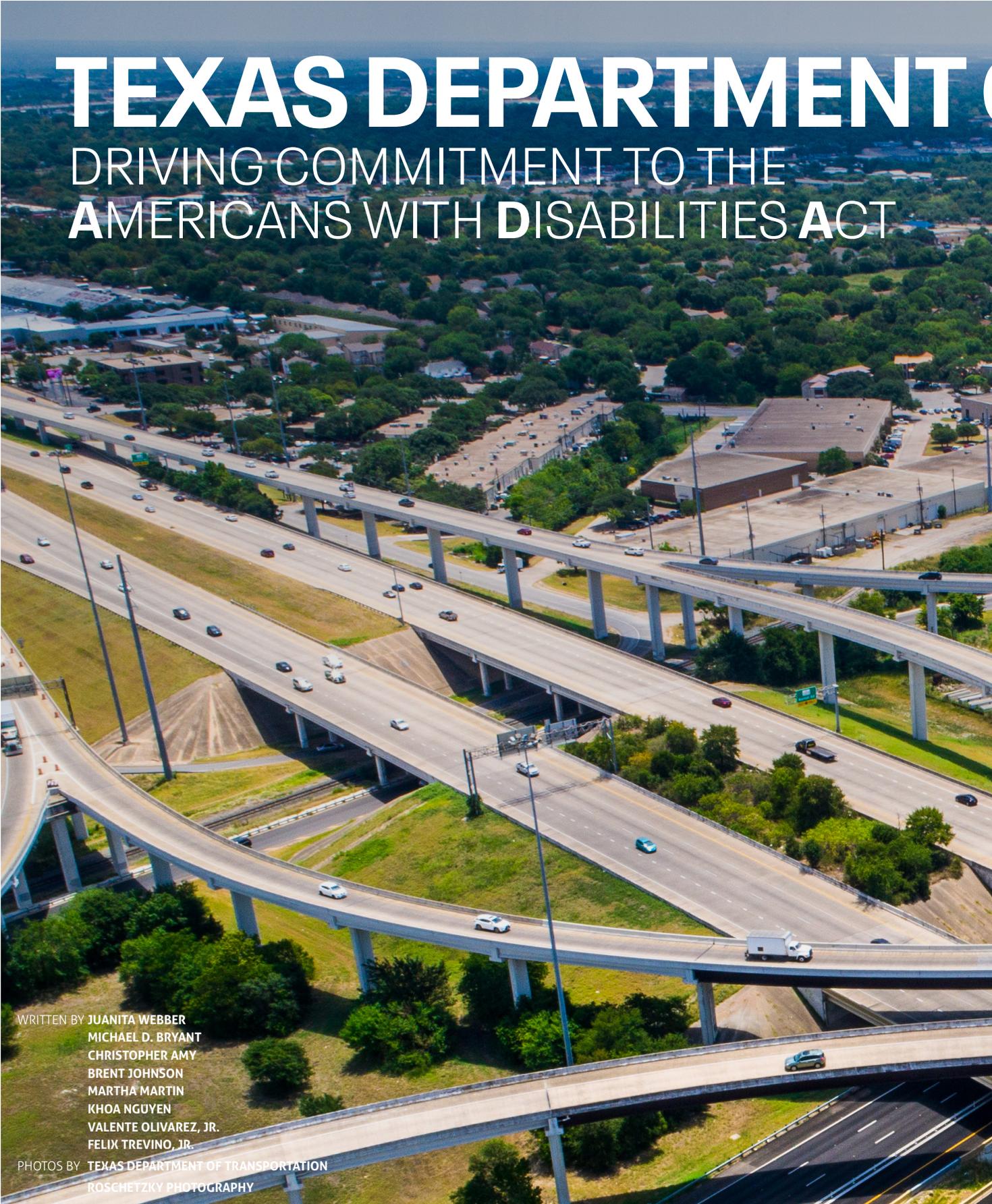
SPECIAL ISSUE



TEXAS DOT

**TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
DRIVING COMMITMENT TO THE AMERICANS
WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)**

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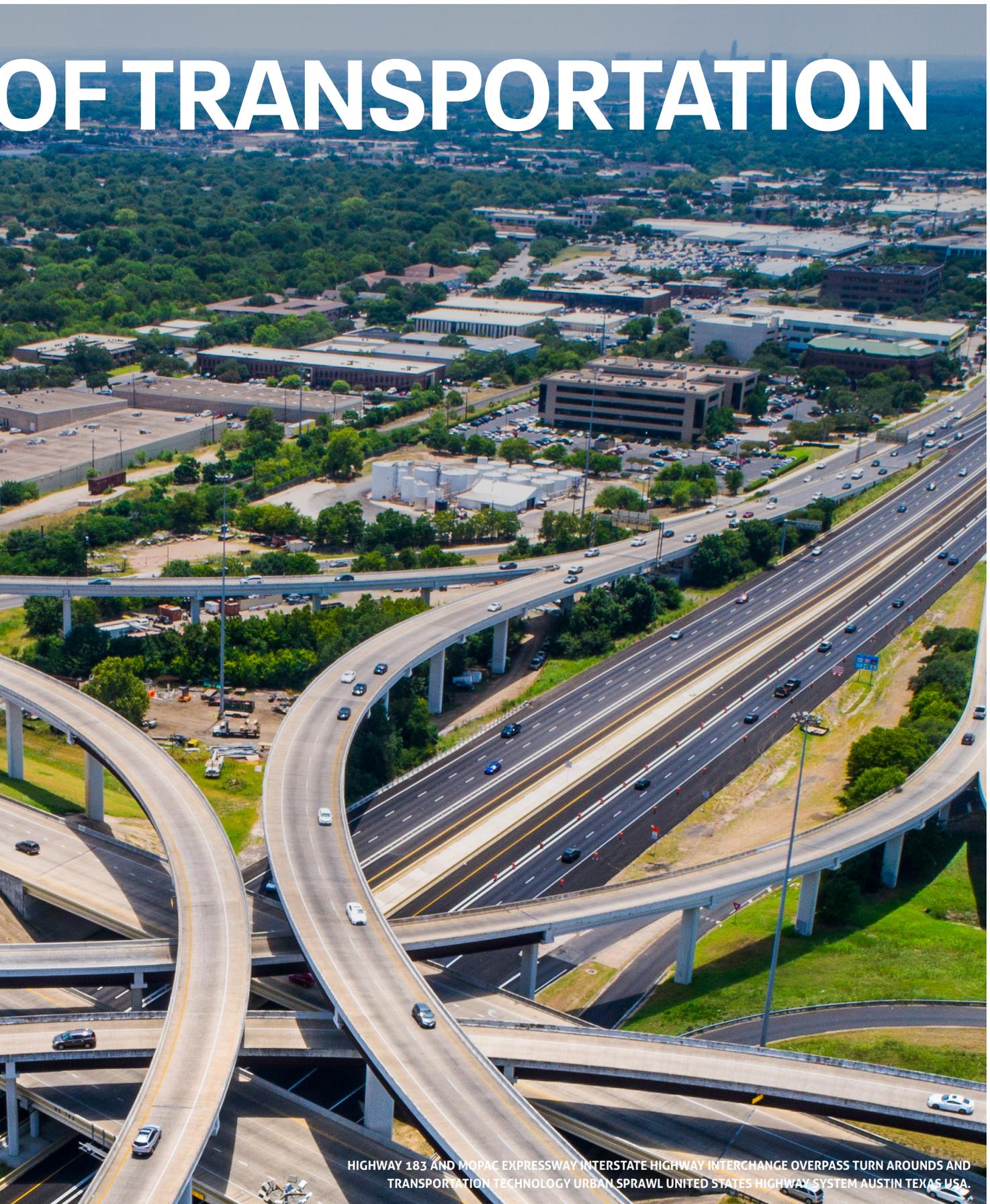
TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

DRIVING COMMITMENT TO THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

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PHOTOS BY TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
ROSCHETZKY PHOTOGRAPHY

OF TRANSPORTATION



HIGHWAY 183 AND MOPAC EXPRESSWAY INTERSTATE HIGHWAY INTERCHANGE OVERPASS TURN AROUNDS AND
TRANSPORTATION TECHNOLOGY URBAN SPRAWL UNITED STATES HIGHWAY SYSTEM AUSTIN TEXAS USA.

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) has a long history of being committed to providing for the safety, reliability and accessibility to the public it serves. The people of Texas have come to expect the best highway system in the United States from this agency and should be able to now expect the best transportation system for all of its citizens. TxDOT is proud to be a part of changes and

progress that can unite, serve and further the safe and efficient movement of goods, services and people that ensure everyone is included in this process.

TxDOT is responsible for the operation and management of more than 195,000 lane miles of roadways on the State Highway System. This responsibility includes more than 53,000 bridges, 3,400 miles of interstate, an estimated 26,000 miles

of sidewalks and other pedestrian facilities and more than 2,500 Department-owned buildings across the State.

The Department understands its duty to provide accessibility for all users of its services and programs, including persons with disabilities. TxDOT continually strives to provide accessible public services and facilities for persons using Texas's state roadways and other transportation



facilities. Projects and activities include local agencies, advocacy groups and coordination with other agency civil rights programs, such as Disadvantaged Business Enterprises, Equal Employment Opportunity, On-the-Job Training, and Title VI/ Nondiscrimination.

Overview

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil rights law that mandates an equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities. The ADA prohibits accessibility discrimination to jobs, public accommodations, government services, public transportation, and telecommunications. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is required to conduct a comprehensive re-evaluation of its policies, programs, and facilities to determine the extent to which individuals with disabilities may be restricted in their access to services and activities.

Access to civic life by people with disabilities is a fundamental goal of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). To ensure this goal is met, Title II of the ADA requires state and local governments to make their programs and services accessible to persons with disabilities (28 CFR 35.149-35.151). This requirement extends not only to physical access at government facilities, programs, and events, but also to pedestrian facilities in public rights-of-way.

Background

Adopted on July 26, 1990, the

ADA is a federal civil rights law that provides protection for persons with disabilities against discrimination by public and private entities. The ADA extends similar, earlier protections provided by the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504).

- Section 504 requires entities that receive federal financial assistance to ensure they do not discriminate against persons with disabilities when providing their services, programs and activities.

- The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability for operations conducted by State and local governments and for facilities owned by private businesses, even if they do not receive federal financial assistance.

- Title II of the ADA requires State and local governments to ensure their services, programs and activities are accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities.

- Title III requires public accommodations and commercial facilities to ensure their buildings and sites are designed, constructed and altered in compliance with accessibility standards.

As a State Transportation Agency (STA) and government entity, the operations of the Department are subject to both the requirements of Section 504 and Title II of the ADA. In addition, the Department provides oversight of, information and resources to, and coordinates

transportation-related activities with other Title II agencies in Texas, including city and county governments; metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and public transit providers.

As an employer within Texas State Government, and a provider and user of public and private services, the Texas Department of Transportation is also subject to requirements of ADA Title I (employment), Title III (contracts with private consultants and contractors) and Title IV (telecommunications services).

Texas Department of Transportation Projects

As a multi-modal transportation provider, TxDOT engages in a variety of projects to ensure the efficient movement of people, services and goods. Generally, when people think of “facilities”, a road, bridge, vessel, travel information center or safety rest area does not come to mind. TxDOT provides direct and indirect assistance in such areas as Aviation, Rail, Maritime, and Public Transit. Many citizens participate in services offered in various public buildings, TxDOT leases or owns.

All persons must be able to participate in everyday civic life. As required by 28 CFR 35.107(1), the Department employs a Statewide ADA/504 Coordinator, Michael D. Bryant who has oversight of the grievance process and investigating complaints; training; providing technical assistance; customer

service and other program services and activities. Juanita J. Webber, the Department's ADA Compliance Program Administrator since October, 2016 was hired to provide specialized knowledge and skill and guidance to transform the ADA/504 Accessibility Program. Webber spearheads all initiatives related to the grievance process and investigating complaints, training, technical assistance, customer service and other ADA activities. She is instrumental in directing outreach activities related to accessible transportation services and facilities. In addition, Webber guides the self-evaluation of TxDOT's policies, procedures and practices in all services, programs activities and facilities to identify and eliminate barriers to accessibility.

Design and Construction Phase

The Construction Division performs inspection and testing and provides administrative oversight for all department construction contracts. The division is responsible for contractor pre-qualification, bid proposal issuance and awarding (letting) construction and maintenance contracts. It provides consultation to districts on project management, administration and inspection and testing throughout the project life cycle. Registered Accessibility Specialists (RAS) inspect projects for accessibility compliance during the construction phase.

Pecos West Safety Rest Area (I-10, approx. 25 miles west of Ft. Stockton)

The Pecos County Safety Rest Area is located on each side of Interstate 10 approximately 25 miles west of Fort Stockton. The project is a highway roadside rest area designed to invite in fatigued passing drivers that have been traveling the long West Texas highways.

The design is influenced by the native geological shapes, roadside mountains that have been cut away by erosion or man and the local history. Both the site and building run longitudinal in the East/West direction reflecting the westward expansion spirit of the past. A dry creek and greenbelt of vegetation run through the middle of the site paying tribute to the natural springs that once flowed through this area that was the lifeline for humans and animals in this harsh desert environment. Limestone is utilized for the building and landscape material creating a timeless structure that appears to be growing out of the ground. The roof structures blend into the landscape following the contours of the distant mountain range. Corten steel is used for the picnic arbors allowing the steel to patina creating a timeless rustic appearance.

As the visitors approach the building they will notice how the building structure is suggestive of the surrounding mesas and built with layers of limestone similar to what









they have just seen driving through the mountains cut away for the interstate. Walking through the lobby, the guest will experience the sound of the wood floor beneath their feet giving a sense of the past. Painting murals suspended on a sliding rail system depict the local history and features that allude to the westward movement. A south glass wall frames the view of the Davis Mountains on the horizon.

As visitors walk the site they will be able to reflect upon the unique vegetation display in the area. Paths along the dry creek bed that lead to picnic arbors and eventually to the undisturbed nature path where the

expansive raw beauty West Texas is evident for close viewing. Along the path from the parking are steel pedestrian bridges that cross the dry creek bed creating a physical transition into a space that mentally suggests the spirit of the region past and present.

The ultimate goal of the rest area is to both energize the body with respite and to energize the mind through imagination and appreciation of this unique place resulting in a more alert driver ready to continue the journey down Texas highways.

Harbor Bridge Replacement Project

The Corpus Christi District is

responsible for the operation and maintenance of state transportation facilities within the 10-county South Texas region known as the Coastal Bend. This includes responsibility for more than 7,000 lane miles of roadway and management of nearly \$500 million in construction and maintenance operations in 2017. In addition, the District is also responsible for the delivery of the \$803 million Harbor Bridge Replacement Project. This design-build project addresses structural deficiencies and navigational restrictions of the current bridge and improves safety and connectivity at the SH 286/US 181/IH 37 interchange. The new bridge





is currently not named. The existing bridge is commonly known as the “Harbor Bridge;” so the construction project is referred to as The Harbor Bridge Replacement Project. The Texas Department of Transportation has partnered with Flatiron/Dragados, LLC for the design and construction of the project. TxDOT awarded the project to Flatiron/Dragados, LLC in September 2015.

From the outset of the scoping

phase of the project that was initiated in 2011, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) undertook proactive efforts to ensure that all stakeholders, including the adjacent minority communities, had meaningful opportunities for public participation in the decision-making process for the new bridge. TxDOT engaged the community through a series of neighborhood meetings and visits to stakeholder groups to

determine their views as well as hear their ideas regarding the project. This outreach, which culminated in 95 public involvement events, provided meaningful input that stressed the need for better connectivity and ADA access in and around the project area.

As a result of the feedback, TxDOT required that existing pedestrian access would be maintained adjacent to and across the project





construction corridor. In addition, TxDOT included the installation of new ADA compliant sidewalks and curb ramps within the project limits, consistent with the city of Corpus Christi's ADA Master Plan. Signalized intersections will feature pedestrian signal elements, taking into account ambulatory, visual and auditory needs as well as detection equipment fully compliant with ADA and Texas Accessibility Standards.

A project highlight is the 10-foot-wide shared-use path that will traverse the entire length of the new bridge and connect two communities cohesively on either side of the bridge. The path will provide the highest viewpoint for a pedestrian in all of South Texas and a panoramic view of Corpus Christi Bay and Downtown. This feature is sure to be popular both with locals and tourists. Consequently, TxDOT worked closely with the Developer to design a trail head system to provide better community access to the shared-use path. These trail heads provide parking and ADA accessible ramps for easier access to the bridge.

Weather, undoubtedly, is always a challenge during a construction project. Due to its location in a coastal region, the project has to deal with not only rain, but also the constant gusty prevailing winds of the Gulf of Mexico. Working at the heights required by the new bridge makes this especially challenging.

Amadeo Saenz Ferry Vessel

More than 8 million passengers ride the Port Aransas and Galveston-Port Bolivar ferries annually. The two routes operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, weather permitting. The Port Aransas route runs between two and six ferries a day and connects travelers on SH 361 a link across the Corpus Christi Channel between Aransas Pass, on the mainland, and Port Aransas, on Mustang Island. The quarter-mile route typically takes less than ten minutes, although peak summer hours may require drivers to wait longer.

Each ferry can carry up to 20 regular passenger vehicles. Combined vehicles, such as a truck towing a boat, may not be longer than 80 feet, wider than 13 feet or taller than 13 feet 6 inches. Single-axle vehicles may weigh no more than 20,000 pounds, tandem axles no more than 34,000 pounds and combination vehicles may not exceed a total of 80,000 pounds. Since 2011, the ferry operations team at Port Aransas has chosen to utilize a 2-car ferry based on the amount of traffic and the number of tourists visiting the area.

When it is determined that a new vessel is needed, in compliance with the Code of Federal Regulations and the American Bureau of Shipping, then a naval architect is sought through the procurement process. TxDOT supplies a design plan to the naval architect based on size requirements and technology



upgrade requirements and then retrofitted with the landings in Port Aransas. The new vessel is always designed consistently with all other TxDOT 'sister' vessels.

The Coast Guard plays a pivotal role regarding ADA compliance. Vessel size and routes falls under the C.F.R.s governing the Coast Guard

and the ADA. The distance of the route impacts whether a restroom must be included in the vessel design. For example, if the route is less than a ¼ mile or takes less than 3 minutes to transport passengers, a restroom is not required on the vessel. Other variables such as accessibility to and through door entrances,



circulation path, approach, signage and effective communication must be considered for persons with disabilities. Effective communication on ferries poses one of the biggest challenges TxDOT and persons with disabilities face.

Many vessels are older and cannot be retrofitted with new technology.

TxDOT is currently working to provide effective communication on all of its vessels. New technologies and methods are being evaluated at the time of this article. It is TxDOT's goal to ensure ADA compliance and inclusion for everyone.

Former employees who have served the Department in the Executive

Director capacity are honored after serving by having a vessel named for them. The vessels are usually named in the order in which a former executive director served. Amadeo Saenz, Jr. P. E. served in the capacity from 2007 to 2011. One of the newest vessels, The Amadeo Saenz was dedicated in March 2018.







Amarillo Travel Information Center

The Travel Information Division is tasked with promoting travel and tourism and travel safety in Texas while preserving the environment. This division administers programs

such as Drive Clean Texas and Don't mess with Texas to keep Texas air clean and highways litter-free. It publishes Texas Highways, the state's official travel magazine, as well as the Texas Official Travel Map, Texas State Travel Guide,

and other travel publications. Also under this division's oversight is DriveTexas.org, the state's official portal for highway conditions and emergency travel information, along with the associated toll-free Travel Information Line at 1-800-452-9292.



Finally, TxDOT operates 12 Travel Information Centers to welcome visitors at points of entry to the state and at the Capitol Visitor Center in Austin and the Judge Roy Bean Visitor Center in Langtry. These centers welcome approximately two

million visitors per year, and provide travel and tourism recommendations and travel literature, as well as highway conditions and emergency travel information by answering the toll-free DriveTexas Travel Information Line. All of TxDOT's Travel Information

Centers are named for the city or town where they are located.

The Travel Information Centers first opened in June 1936 as a temporary amenity to assist travelers coming to Texas for the World's Fair and Texas Centennial celebrations in Dallas. They proved so useful and popular that the 44th Legislature moved to make them permanent that October. Some locations have changed, and all facilities have been expanded and upgraded numerous times over the years; but their core mission of welcoming visitors, providing them with ideas of what to see and do in Texas, and keeping them safe on their travels through the state, remains the same.

The first Travel Information Centers were simply roadside booths staffed with Texas A&M Cadets. These attendants provided carhop-style service to travelers who never left their automobiles, so no accommodations were needed. All centers have been upgraded and expanded at various dates many times through the years. In Amarillo, the most recent design began in the late 1990s, well after the initial implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the standards put forth in 1991. During the design process, the Maintenance and Travel Information Divisions made a point of ensuring that the facility, intended for public use, would not only meet, but exceed existing standards. The redesigned facility opened in 2002. Because of



considerations taken in the design, the facility is in full compliance with and partially exceeds 2010 ADA standards.

Because the center maintains a close working relationship with the Amarillo District office, it is prioritized for plowing and ice melt during adverse winter weather conditions. In the past, the center has even remained open overnight to shelter stranded travelers. Weather was the primary challenge in the design and construction of the Amarillo Travel Information Center. The Texas Panhandle is subject to

high winds, extreme heat during the summer, and extreme cold, ice and snow during the winter. Additionally, the building's design, with its copper roof and layers of different-colored bricks representing the strata of rocks in nearby Palo Duro Canyon, posed challenges during the build.

The key players in this phase were the Maintenance Division Roadside Facilities Branch (the group that designs and maintains the state's unstaffed Safety Rest Areas) and Travel Information Division leadership. The design and construction and land acquisition

costs was \$3.8 million and \$1.4 million, respectively, totaling a cost of \$5.2 million.

The end result fully justified these challenges. The Amarillo Travel Information Center was the recipient of the Brick Industry Association's 2003 Brick in Architecture Award, was featured in the July/August 2003 issue of Texas Architect magazine, and went on to win the 2004 Texas Society of Architects Design Award and the 2006 National Council of State Tourism Directors Mercury Award in the Travel Information/Welcome Center Programs category.

Inside TxDOT (Texas Department of Transportation)

Find out more about the diverse range of TxDOT's divisions.

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