

# ABILENE MPO INSIDER

*The Official Newsletter of the Abilene Metropolitan Planning Organization*



## Welcome!

*By Emma Darby, MPO Office Assistant III*

Thank you for taking the time to look at this issue of the Abilene MPO's quarterly newsletter, *The Abilene MPO Insider*. Spring will bring plenty of change and growth over the next three months, and transportation is no exception!

This issue will help you learn how to get a sober ride home and how to find interesting information using the TxDOT Statewide Planning Map. If you're just here for the Fun & Games, we won't judge. The *Insider* has something for everyone.

As always, we welcome any feedback or ideas for future newsletters, so feel free to contact us via the information listed on the "Get Involved" page.

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## THE TXDOT TRAVEL SURVEY

The Texas Department of Transportation is conducting travel surveys in Abilene. These surveys provide information about local travel patterns which will assist planning of future transportation projects.

These travel surveys are broken up into two categories:

**household & establishment**

Household surveys recruit residents through postcards mailed out by a contracted vendor, Westat. To participate (*and potentially earn a \$10 reward!*), you can sign up on their website:

**[www.texastravelsurvey2021.com](http://www.texastravelsurvey2021.com)**

Establishment surveys recruit local businesses through an introductory letter and a follow up phone call by a contracted vendor, ETC institute, to schedule an on-site survey by their trained staff.

For further information about the travel survey program, please visit the TxDOT landing page at:

**<https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/transportation-planning/travel-survey.html>**

or contact

**TxDOT Survey Program Manager, Sonya Solinsky at (512) 486-5120.**



## Celebration Safety: How to Thrive When You Shouldn't Drive

The months of March, April, and May are packed full of fun celebrations, such as Spring Break, St. Patrick's Day, Cinco de Mayo, and Memorial Day. Holidays are always enjoyable, but driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol can often turn a good time deadly.

March 17th is St. Patrick's Day, but this holiday doesn't always end with rainbows and pots of gold. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, "In 2019 alone, 57 people were killed in drunk-driving crashes over the St. Patrick's Day period."

Spring Break is a similarly dangerous holiday. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) reports that "Over last year's spring break, Texas saw 872 DUI-alcohol related traffic crashes. These crashes resulted in 30 fatalities and 107 serious injuries" (Brown).

Memorial Day is rarely as rowdy as Spring Break or St. Patrick's Day, but drunk driving nonetheless remains a problem during this time.



## THE REAL COST OF A DUI IN TEXAS

Apart from death and injury, there are also significant legal and financial costs, as well as other potential consequences for those who choose to drink and drive...

- Up to \$17,000 in fines and fees
- Loss of current employment
- Difficulty finding housing and future employment due to background checks
- Loss of driver's license, and potentially other licenses
- With a felony, loss of right to vote or own a gun

**Now we know the consequences. On the next page, we'll focus on some of the strategies you can use to ensure you make it home safely...**

## TIPS TO FIND A SOBER RIDE

### PLAN AHEAD.

Before you start drinking, know how you're getting home. Planning ahead can save you time, money, and even someone's life.



### USE A RIDESHARE SERVICE.



Leave your car at home and call a rideshare service to and from the bar. Be prepared by having the rideshare app downloaded on your phone and your phone battery fully charged.

### TAKE TURNS AS A DESIGNATED DRIVER

Whether you're heading out for a night out with buddies or meeting up with coworkers for happy hour, take one vehicle with a designated driver. This will save you on parking fees and ensures your friends will not get behind the wheel after drinking.

Remember, the designated driver is the one who has not consumed any alcohol.



### CALL A FRIEND FOR HELP.



Friends and family members are a good option for a sober ride home. A call asking for a ride home is much better than a call asking to be bailed out of jail after getting a DWI.

### DON'T DRINK.



No matter the case, don't feel like you have to drink to enjoy your evening out, especially if you know you'll be driving yourself home.

### TALK TO YOUR BARTENDER.

Ask the bartender to secure you a sober ride home. Bar staff are happy to help their customers get home safely, and some will help ensure your car is still there in the morning.



### SLEEP IT OFF.



Drinking and driving is never safe, even when going back to a house that is "just a few streets down." If possible, ask to sleep on a friend's couch until the alcohol has worn off.

Links to all resources can be found on page 11.  
For more information, visit [www.soberrides.org](http://www.soberrides.org).





# TAC TIME

MEET THE MEMBERS OF THE MPO  
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE



*"Being a commissioner is  
the most rewarding job I  
have ever held."*

## RANDY WILLIAMS

TAYLOR COUNTY COMMISSIONER

Randall D. Williams is the Taylor County Commissioner for Precinct 1. He received his B.S. in Administration of Justice from California State College in 1979. He worked with the county's juvenile justice department for 28 years before beginning his first term as Commissioner in 2008. Williams is currently in the midst of his fourth consecutive term. He has been married to his wife, Gaye Lynn, for over 41 years, and together they have three kids and seven grandkids. During the most recent 2020 election, Williams was quoted as saying: "Being a commissioner is the most rewarding job I have ever held" (Bethel).

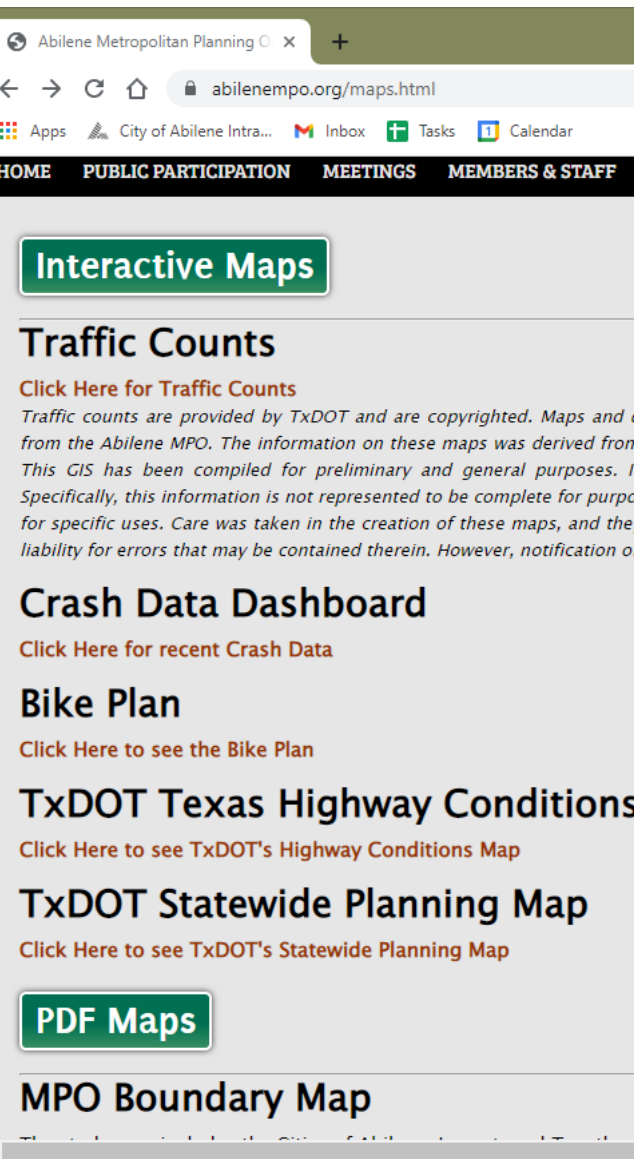
An advisory committee may provide technical analysis, specialized knowledge, and citizen input on specific issues. The technical advisory committee may recommend specific strategies or projects to the MPO Policy Board. It is common for an MPO to have a Technical Advisory Committee and Citizen Advisory Committee, and to have subcommittees on specific issues such as system performance, environmental justice, bicycle issues, and travel demand modeling.

What is the TAC?



# WHAT'S MAPPENING?

## A CLOSER LOOK AT THE TxDOT STATEWIDE PLANNING MAP



The screenshot shows the Abilene Metropolitan Planning Organization website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links to HOME, PUBLIC PARTICIPATION, MEETINGS, and MEMBERS & STAFF. Below this is a green button labeled "Interactive Maps". Underneath, there's a section for "Traffic Counts" with a link to "Click Here for Traffic Counts" and a disclaimer about the data's accuracy. This is followed by a "Crash Data Dashboard" with a link to "Click Here for recent Crash Data". Then, there's a "Bike Plan" section with a link to "Click Here to see the Bike Plan". Below that is a section for "TxDOT Texas Highway Conditions" with a link to "Click Here to see TxDOT's Highway Conditions Map". The main feature is the "TxDOT Statewide Planning Map" with a link to "Click Here to see TxDOT's Statewide Planning Map". At the bottom, there's a green button labeled "PDF Maps" and a section for "MPO Boundary Map". On the right side of the screenshot, there's a map of Texas with a red box highlighting the Abilene area, labeled "Abilene 8".

The "Maps" tab on the Abilene MPO website is your one-stop-shop to learn more about transportation in the Abilene area. In this issue of the Abilene MPO Insider, we're looking at the TxDOT Statewide Planning Map. Read more to discover what kind of information is available and how to interpret the data.

The capabilities of the TxDOT Statewide Planning Map are vast and varied. Not only can you visualize and compare data from different categories, but you can even sketch and estimate costs for potential transportation projects. With the exception of transportation professionals, most of us on a day-to-day basis have no need to plan roadway reconstruction projects. However, the information that can be found in the [50 different map overlays](#) is both interesting and useful. Let's explore a few of the many types of data available, and see how this information can be used to more fully understand how we as Texans get from Point A to Point B.

## First, a word from TxDOT:

The Statewide Planning Map displays data in support of planning operations at TxDOT.

Although we try to update information as often as possible, we are not assuming any responsibility for any damages or inaccuracies if you rely on it.

We offer no warranty that this application is accurate or complete. The information shown is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes.

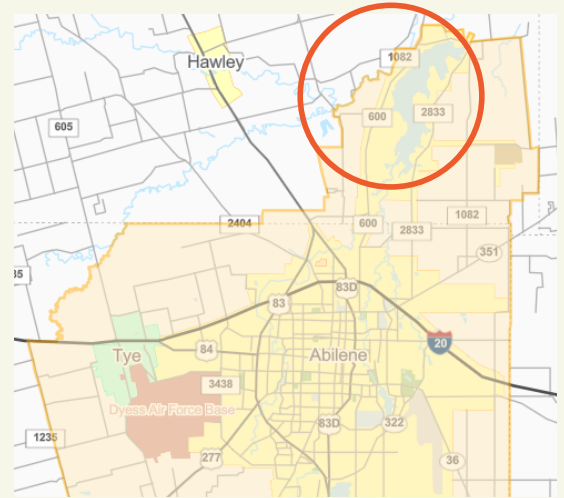
It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property/administrative boundaries.

# NAVIGATING THE STATEWIDE PLANNING MAP

In the last issue of the *Insider*, we discussed all the tools available in the ARCGIS System in-depth, including layers and the map legend. Each of these details is also present in the TxDOT Statewide Planning Map. Use the exercises below to familiarize yourself with the map overlays and to try your hand using the ARCGIS tools. *Before beginning, make sure all overlays are cleared and the basemap is set to the default "TxDOT."*

What is the name of the large body of water located within the northwest corner of the Abilene MPO border?

- Select the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) map overlay.
- Find and zoom in on the area highlighted within the Abilene TxDOT District (8).
- Use the zoom tool to get closer to the northwest border (circled).



What is the name of the TxDOT Facility located in Abilene near N 10th Street and FM 3438?

- Select the TxDOT Facilities map overlay
- There are two TxDOT facilities within Abilene City limits (shown in yellow). Click the dot for each to learn more details.



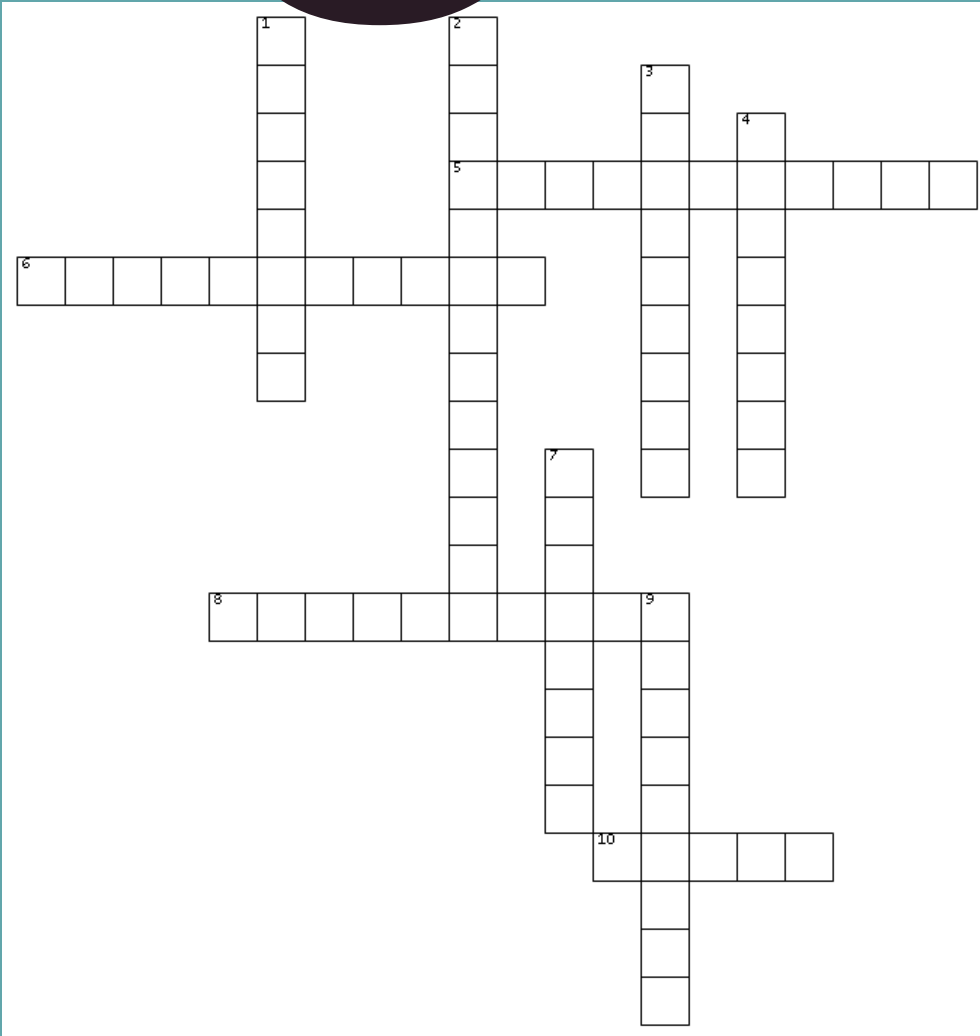
Which of the 5 listed Alternative Fuels is not transported through Abilene, and which roadway do the other 4 follow?

Overlays
Clear Overlays
AADT
Air Quality
Alt Fuels - Compressed Natural Gas
Alt Fuels - Electric
Alt Fuels - Hydrogen
Alt Fuels - Liquefied Natural Gas
Alt Fuels - Propane

**Want more? You can test your map skills more at Fun & Games (pages 7-8)**

# Fun & Games

## MPO Insider Investigation



### ACROSS

5. On the TxDOT Statewide Planning Map, there are 5 different map overlays related to what kind of fuel?
6. Which MPO meetings are open to the public?
8. Getting convicted with a DUI can make it difficult to find housing and future \_\_\_\_\_.
10. The TxDOT Statewide Planning Map features how many different map overlays?

### DOWN

1. Who is Commissioner Randy Williams' wife?
2. In 2019, 57 people were killed in drunk-driving crashes during which holiday?
3. One way to find a sober ride home is to talk to your \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The Abilene MPO is located at 209 S. \_\_\_\_\_ Dr., Suite B-212.
7. Randy Williams worked with the county's \_\_\_\_\_ justice department for 28 years.
9. TAC stands for \_\_\_\_\_ Advisory Committee.



# Fun & Games

**Which of the following railroads run(s) through TxDOT's Abilene District? (Select all that apply)**

- A. BNSF Railway Company
- B. Kansas City Southern Railway
- C. Texas Pacific Transportation Limited
- D. Union Pacific Railroad Company

**What is the fastest speed limit in Texas?**

- A. 75 mph.
- B. 80 mph.
- C. 85 mph.
- D. 90 mph.

**BONUS CHALLENGE!**

On which road is the fastest speed limit in Texas located?

(Hint: It runs between the Austin and the San Antonio TxDOT districts.)

*Test your skills and answer the questions using the TxDOT Statewide Planning Map!*

## MAPQUEST

**TRAVEL TRIVIA**

**Which president signed the Pacific Railway Act allowing money and land for the development of the Transcontinental Railroad?**

- A. William Howard Taft
- B. Abraham Lincoln
- C. Theodore Roosevelt
- D. Andrew Jackson

# WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

## *How can I get involved?*

Don't forget: **MPO Policy Board meetings are open to the public!** Members of the public are encouraged to join meetings and voice your concerns and opinions on transportation.

Can't come in person? No problem. All MPO Policy Board meetings are **streamed live on the Abilene Television Network**, or you can watch a meeting by visiting the City of Abilene's website at

**[www.abilenetx.gov/561/Live-Archived-Video](http://www.abilenetx.gov/561/Live-Archived-Video)**

Our next meeting will be on April 19, 2022.  
For more details, visit [abilenempo.org/meetings](http://abilenempo.org/meetings)

## *Come visit us!*

209 S. Danville Dr.  
Suite B-212  
Abilene, TX 79605

(325) 437-9999



**@AbileneMPO**



**Abilene MPO**



**abilenempo.org**



**ABILENE**

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

# Resources & Answer Key

## Notable News (Resources)

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Text provided by TxDOT.

Links:

[www.texastravelsurvey2021.com](http://www.texastravelsurvey2021.com)

<https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/transportation-planning/travel-survey.html>

Contact:

Sonya Solinsky

TxDOT Survey Program Manager

(512) 486-5120

## Celebration Safety (Resources)

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Brown, Tanya. "DEATHS OVER 2021 SPRING BREAK SHOW TRUE CONSEQUENCES OF DRIVING DRUNK." News Release, TxDOT. 08 March, 2022. <https://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/media-center/statewide-news/005-2022.html>

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. "March 17, 2022 / St. Patrick's Day Drunk Driving Prevention." Traffic Safety Marketing, United States Department of Transportation. <https://www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov/get-materials/drunk-driving/buzzed-driving-drunk-driving/saint-patricks-day>

TxDOT. "The Legal and Financial Costs of a DWI in Texas." <https://www.soberrides.org/cost-of-a-dwi/>

TxDOT. "Tips to Find a Sober Ride." <https://www.soberrides.org/tips-to-find-a-sober-ride/>

Graphics on page 4 created by TxDOT.

## TAC Time (Resources)

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Bethel, Brian. "Primary: Randy Williams says experience matters in Precinct 1 county commissioner's race." *Abilene Reporter News*. 09 February, 2020. <https://www.reporternews.com/story/news/2020/02/09/randy-williams-says-experience-matters-precinct-1-commissioner-race/4557047002/>

Jaklewicz, Greg. "Randy Williams, Taylor County Commissioners Court, Precinct 1, incumbent." *Reporter-News*. Picture. [https://www.gannett-cdn.com/presto/2020/01/30/PARN/7691d705-d0b4-483e-bf15-ad70453b2eb4-Commish\\_-\\_Randy\\_Williams.jpg?width=300&height=576&fit=crop&format=pjpg&auto=webp](https://www.gannett-cdn.com/presto/2020/01/30/PARN/7691d705-d0b4-483e-bf15-ad70453b2eb4-Commish_-_Randy_Williams.jpg?width=300&height=576&fit=crop&format=pjpg&auto=webp)

Williams, Randy. "BIO/VITA." *Taylor County*. <https://www.taylorcountytexas.org/DocumentCenter/View/17/Williams-Bio?bidId=>

Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation. "What is a Metropolitan Planning Organization?" *The Transportation Planning Process Briefing Book*. [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/publications/briefing\\_book/index.cfm#toc22294541](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/publications/briefing_book/index.cfm#toc22294541)

## What's Mappening? (Resources)

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The TxDOT Statewide Planning Map.

[https://www.txdot.gov/apps/statewide\\_mapping/statewideplanningmap.html](https://www.txdot.gov/apps/statewide_mapping/statewideplanningmap.html)

# Resources & Answer Key

## Fun & Games (Resources)

Crossword created using "Puzzlemaker" provided by *DiscoveryEducation*.

<https://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/criss-cross>

Travel Trivia question and answer provided by the National Museum of Transportation.

"Museum for Educators - Classroom Activity Downloads - Transportation Trivia."

<https://tnmot.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Transportation-Trivia-Game.pdf>

## What's Mappening? (Answer Key)

What is the name of the large body of water that is located within the northwest corner of the Abilene MPO border?

Answer: Lake Fort Phantom Hill

What is the name of the TxDOT Facility located in Abilene near N 10th Street and FM3438?

Answer: Abilene Area Engineer and Maintenance Facility

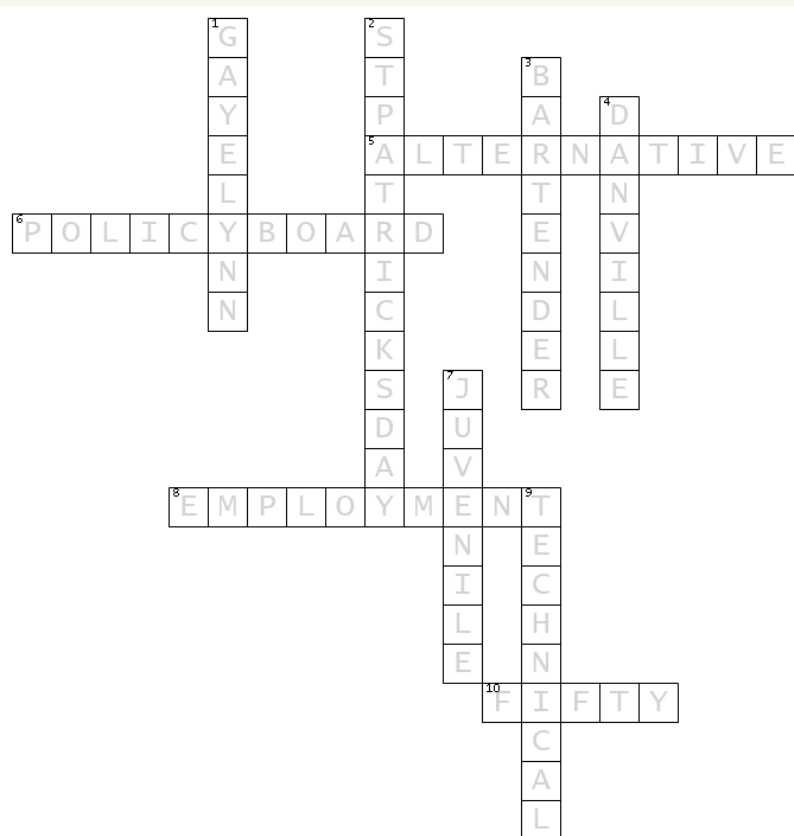
Which of the 5 listed Alternative Fuels is not transported through Abilene, and which roadway do the other 4 follow?

Answer: Hydrogen

Answer: I-20

## Fun & Games (Answer Key)

### MPO Insider Investigation



### MapQuest

Which of the following railroads run(s) through TxDOT's Abilene District? (Select all that apply)

Answer: A. BNSF Railway Company; D. Union Pacific Railroad Company

What is the fastest speed limit in Texas?

Answer: C. 85 mph.

BONUS CHALLENGE: On which road is the fastest speed limit in Texas located?

Answer: SH 130

### Travel Trivia

Which president signed the Pacific Railway Act, allowing money and land for the development of the Transcontinental Railroad?

Answer: B. Abraham Lincoln