



El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail Interpretive Plan

December 2024



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National Park Service
Department of Interior



On the cover: **Mission Tejas State Park, located in Houston County, TX.** Courtesy photo.

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Executive Summary

Context

El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail (hereinafter the Trail) commemorates historic routes that were used by explorers, missionaries, soldiers, and settlers as they traveled along a long-established network of Indigenous footpaths that became caminos reales, a road network extending from central Mexico northward, connecting Spanish missions, presidios, and trading posts throughout the provinces of New Spain.

One of the earliest Euro-American trade networks in North America, this collection of routes—and their impacts on the natural, economic, social, and political landscapes of the United States—spans three and a half centuries of significant change and traces our connections to Mexico and the world beyond. The 2,580 miles of El Camino Real de los Tejas that are located in the U.S. are recognized by the Federal government as a National Historic Trail (Trail)—a long distance historic route that shaped the development of the U.S.

The National Park Service (NPS) administers the Trail but owns and operates only a small percentage of publicly-accessible sites and has minimal enforcement authority. In planning for the Trail's future, the NPS must call on and collaborate with Trail partner organizations, individuals, and the visiting public.

Need for an Interpretive Plan

In 2011, Trail administrators finalized a Comprehensive Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement that identified the purpose of the Trail, statements of significance, primary interpretive themes, and evaluated the impacts of the preferred alternative, which relies heavily on Trail development through partnership.

This overarching interpretive plan is intended to provide comprehensive guidance to Trail administrators and partners and outline a unified approach to interpretation for the foreseeable future. It will be periodically updated.

Trail Themes

The interpretive themes that appear in this document apply across the entire length of the Trail (and perhaps beyond). As site-specific interpretive planning efforts are conducted by individual partners, location-specific storylines should tier to the themes and support the overall system of messages that follow. The following themes were updated in 2024 from those identified in the 2011 Comprehensive Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement.

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Theme 1: Protection, Control, and Development

El Camino Real de los Tejas was a conduit of Spanish colonial power and influence with long-term consequences—modifying the landscape to meet the needs of armies, missionaries, and settlers that led to community and trade development, changing the lifeways of people and use of the environment.

Theme 2: Lasting Change

Because of their exposure to other cultural groups, those who traveled and lived along El Camino Real de los Tejas experienced profound change—affecting family and community life, language, religious practices, intertribal relations, and resource use—which continues to shape communities to this day.

Theme 3: Paths Traveled

The Trail follows the lifeways and physical paths of Indigenous people who constructed trails in concert with the ecology and topography of their modified by Spanish, French, Mexican, Tejano, American, and African American travelers.

Theme 4: Shifting Routes

The Trail was ever-changing—varying routes were developed to meet the changing needs of travelers affected by weather, Native American relations, terrain, availability of and access to water, settlement, seasonal foodstuffs, and modes of transportation. These multiple paths chart the area’s development through time.

Theme 5: Changing States

The Trail is representative of the dramatic socioeconomic changes from a completely Indigenous landscape to one influenced by Europeans in the 1700s and 1800s, involving political unrest, military action, Mexico’s independence from Spain, Texas’ independence from Mexico, and the 1845 annexation of Texas by the United States.

Summary of Recommendations

This plan represents the first Interpretive Plan developed for the Trail. It considers how visitors interact with the Trail—exploring nationally significant history and personal interests, driving on highways, visiting with a school group, and “collecting” heritage experiences—and makes recommendations that address the following needs:

1. Get the Word Out
2. Prioritize Interpretive Media
3. Promote Trail-wide Youth and Educational Programming
4. Build Capacity

These recommendations were synthesized from a variety of input sources—stakeholder workshops, interviews with individual stakeholders and partners, and inventory of existing and potential opportunities.

Implementation of these recommendations will require effort by and collaboration between Trail administrators and partners.

Foundation for Planning



Trail Terminology

Camino Real is a Spanish phrase that translates to “royal road” and was used to refer to the travel routes used by the Spanish crown throughout New Spain.

Carreta is a two-wheeled cart drawn by horses, mules, or oxen.

Carro is a four-wheeled wagon drawn by horses, mules, or oxen.

Creole is a term used to describe a distinct culture that arose in Louisiana as a result of French, Spanish, African, and Native American cultures interacting and exchanging. Historically, Creole referred to people born in Louisiana during the colonial period, who spoke French, Spanish, and/or creole languages, and practiced the Roman Catholic faith regardless of their ethnicity. The term is also used to describe foodways, music, folklore, family traditions, architecture, the Catholic faith, and genealogy.

Empresario was an Anglo land agent, such as Stephen F. Austin, who worked within Mexican law to implement large-scale colonization schemes.

Indigenous and Native American are the preferred terms¹ to refer to the groups of Native people whose ancestors lived in or traveled through the area that became the United States and Mexico before European contact.

Interpretive Media are the multiple methods used to communicate interpretive messaging to visitors—including wayside exhibits, interior exhibits, immersive and hands-on activities, films, audio, imagery, audio description and/or Braille, web-based storytelling, virtual exploration, and Trail retracement routes.

Mission is a term to describe an important economic institution that contributed to the development of the region and included cultivated fields, ranches, and water systems. Its most important purpose, however, was converting Indigenous people to Catholicism—often by force. In addition to religious conversion, missionaries also extracted unpaid labor from Indigenous neophytes, often under brutal conditions, and prevented them from leaving of their own accord. The mission as an institution aimed to provide training not only in Catholicism, but also vocational skills.

Paraje is often translated as campsite, but a broader definition includes any place where a traveler stops overnight.

Presidio is a military installation established to protect a mission, guard the coasts and frontiers, and control trade.

Tejano describes Texan Mexican Americans whose identity connects to southern Texas prior to the Republic of Texas or its establishment as a US state. Tejano culture is unique, ethnically a mix of Spanish and Native American people, with its own style of music, art, and dress. Historically, they were the Spanish settlers of Texas when it was part of colonial New Spain or Mexico whose descendants formed the mixed-heritage communities, economies, and cultural practices referred to as Tejano today.

Trail Resource includes the land, buildings, artifacts and other tangible elements that collectively represent the story of the Trail.

Villa is a village created by civilian settlers around the missions and presidios. This type of settlement and outlying ranches provided the foundation and subsistence for the province’s permanent occupation.

¹ Terms such as these are regularly reviewed by the National Park Service and updated as needed in the [NPS editorial style guide](#) developed by the Harper Ferry’s Center. Readers should refer to the website for the most up-to-date terminology recommendations.

Previous: **Treviño-Urbe Rancho, located in San Ygnacio, TX.** Courtesy photo.

Royal Road of the Tejas

Spaniards arrived in the New World in 1492 and maintained a vast empire for nearly 350 years. As they moved northward from central Mexico, explorers, missionaries, soldiers, and settlers traveled on a long-established network of Indigenous footpaths that became *caminos reales*, a road network connecting Spanish missions, presidios, and trading posts throughout the provinces of New Spain.

Added to the National Trails System in 2004, El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail (Trail) commemorates approximately 2,580 miles of historic routes extending from the United States-Mexico international border at the Río Grande to the eastern boundary of the Spanish province of Texas in Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana. The period of significance is 1680-1845¹—an era that includes the Spanish colonial period, Mexico's independence from Spain, Texan independence, and ending with the 1845 annexation of Texas by the United States.



El Camino Real de los Tejas map. NPS.

Spanish interest in Texas began because of the expedition of Rene Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, a French explorer who established a fort along the Texas coast in 1685. The Spanish Crown saw this incursion as a threat to its silver mines and shipping routes through the Gulf of Mexico, and moved to protect its territory from France by increasing its presence.

The Trail's name is derived not only from its geographic extent but also from some of its original users. Spaniards referred to a prominent group of Caddo people as the

¹ El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail Comprehensive Management Plan/Environmental Assessment (2011)

Defining El Camino Real

El Camino Real de los Tejas was the north and easternmost segment of a network of royal roads radiating from Mexico City. Terrain, weather, and relations with local tribes influenced travel, and many routes developed over time. The historic routes that make up the nationally designated Trail include: the Upper Road, the Lower Road, El Camino Pita, Lower Presidio Road, La Bahia/Goliad Road, and the San Antonio Laredo Road. El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro from El Paso, TX, to Santa Fe, NM was also a Camino Real (established prior to El Camino Real de los Tejas).

Timeline of Relevant Events

- 1519** Spanish explorer Alonso Alvarez de Pineda maps the Texas coast
- 1520s** Spanish explorer Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca chronicles the Texas interior
- 1540** Spanish explorer Francisco Vázquez de Coronado crosses the Texas panhandle
- 1542** Spanish expedition of Hernando de Soto encounters Caddo people
- 1685** Frenchman René LaSalle establishes outpost on Garcitas Creek
- 1686-89** Spanish expeditions search for LaSalle's colony, which they find in ruins
- 1690-1773** Spaniards establish presidios and missions in an effort to convert numerous Indigenous people who lived in the area
- 1731** Canary Islanders settle at San Antonio
- 1762** France cedes Louisiana to Spain
- 1800** Spain cedes Louisiana to France
- 1803** US acquires Louisiana from France, opening door to influx of new settlers
- 1812** Louisiana admitted to US as the 18th state
- 1821** Mexico gains independence from Spain
- 1823** Mexico allows foreign immigrants to settle in Texas
- 1835** Texas Revolution begins with the Battle of Gonzales
- 1836** Republic of Texas is created
- 1840** Republic of the Rio Grande is formed in a border region, claiming independence
- 1845** Texas is admitted to the US as the 28th state
- 1848** Mexico and US sign Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, ending war between the two nations
- 1853** The first railroad established in Texas
- 1859** Caddo people are removed to Indian Territory in Oklahoma
- 1861-65** US Civil War; Texas joined Confederacy
- 1915-1917** V. N. Zively conducts the first modern survey of the Trail
- 1991** Texas Department of Transportation initiates study of the Trail
- 2004** El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail is added to the National Trails System

Tejas, a word derived from the Hasinai Caddo term for ‘friend’ or ‘ally.’ Thus, the Spanish province of *Tejas*, the Mexican state of Coahuila y Tejas, and the historic trail traversing them owe their name to the Caddo language.

Representatives of the Spanish Crown established missions and presidios in areas near good water resources. They also looked for places where Spain might Christianize Caddo people and other potentially “friendly” Native American peoples and where they could place strategic military defenses to counter French incursions. Most tribes resisted this Christianization, but some—decimated by European diseases and attacked by stronger tribes—used mission life to meet specific needs, like food and protection. This protection, in some cases, compromised tribal cultural and ethnic identity.

For nearly 150 years, eastern Texas went through cycles of Spanish development and retreat, owing largely to the shifting alliances of Caddo peoples in the imperial borderlands.

After Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821, the Trail retained its importance as ranchers continued to bring cattle into the region to develop large *ranchos*. In the 19th century, large numbers of Anglo settlers traveled southwestward on this route between Natchitoches, LA, and San Antonio, TX—referred to as the Old San Antonio Road—en route to their new homes in Texas. Their arrival eventually led to revolt against Mexico, during which armies from both sides used the Trail as a main travel route. Others who traveled the route included captive Native Americans and enslaved people fleeing their enslavers. By the time the United States annexed Texas in 1845, other routes had been developed and the Trail was no longer the primary path.

Many of the historic *parajes* (campsites) and missions became today’s modern cities. While some evidence of early travel can still be seen in the form of swales and ruts on the landscape, large portions of El Camino Real de los Tejas have become part of our modern network of streets, roads, and highways.

The underlying story of the historic travel route is visible and told at numerous historically significant sites and segments owned and managed by cooperating federal,

The National Trails System Act of 1968, as amended, calls for establishing trails in both urban and rural settings for people of all ages, interests, skills, and physical abilities. The National Trails System promotes the enjoyment and appreciation of trails while encouraging greater public access. The system includes national scenic trails, national historic trails, and national recreation trails.

—NPS: National Trails System

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationaltrailssystem/index.htm> (accessed December 2023)

state, and local agencies, along with private organizations and land owners. Many of the publicly-accessible visitor contact opportunities associated with El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail stand on their own as significant features—Caddoan mounds, missions, presidios, museums, and historic sites, for example—yet collectively represent the history embodied by the Trail.

The National Park Service (NPS) is the federally-designated administrator of the Trail, establishing standards and guidelines designed to create consistency and direction for the Trail as a whole. With 97% of the state of Texas privately owned, relatively few sites along the Trail corridor remain publicly accessible in modern times. Multiple private landowners, however, make their land available for visitation (to various extent) by the public in recognition of the significance to the Trail. NPS owns and operates less than one percent of publicly accessible sites along the Trail corridor (all part of San Antonio Missions National Historical Park) and has minimal enforcement authority.

Administration responsibilities include:

- providing technical assistance, oversight, and coordination among agencies and partnership organizations in planning, resource protection, trail marking, and interpretation
- identifying high potential sites and segments
- initiating and maintaining agreements (partnership, cooperative, and interagency)
- setting and maintaining signage and interpretive standards
- advising partners and providing resources to help ensure consistent preservation, education, and public-use programs
- managing the use of the official Trail logo
- encouraging and supporting the work of volunteers; and
- providing limited financial assistance to other cooperating government agencies, landowners, interest groups, and individuals.

The designated Trail has the potential to become a powerful educational tool, with people of all ages and cultures interested in learning about it and working to protect it.

—El Camino Real de los Tejas
National Historic Trail Comprehensive
Management Plan/Environmental
Assessment (2011)

Management of each significant site, however, falls to the landowners of each individual property. If they choose, owners, directors, and caretakers of individual publicly-accessible sites and segments are responsible for management of their own site. This management role includes: inventorying resources; mapping, planning, and developing Trail segments and sites; ensuring compliance with federal and state laws; providing appropriate public access; developing site interpretation; overseeing Trail

maintenance; carrying out Trail marking; protecting resources and viewsheds; and managing visitor use.

Creating the Trail's First Interpretive Plan

As a discipline, interpretive planning is unique to parks, trails, wildlife refuges, cultural heritage or historical sites, and other public lands or natural areas set aside for the visiting public. Unlike other plans that focus on finances, management, operations, or facilities, an interpretive plan focuses directly on visitors and how they use and enjoy a site or area. This plan considers the following questions:

- Why would a person want to visit El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail?
- Can visitors find it?
- What's their first impression?
- Where/how can visitors get information about El Camino Real de los Tejas and its key messages?
- What are those key messages?
- Can visitors find their way along the Trail, and from one site to the next?
- What will visitors want to do, feel, learn, and experience during their visit?
- What do Trail administrators and partners hope visitors will do, feel, learn, and experience?

How can Trail administrators and partners meet the interpretive goals identified herein in the most cost-effective manner, considering long-term costs, visitor trends, and sustainable values?

The interpretive planning process for the Trail aims to answer those questions. Trail administrators, partner agencies, and a contracted consulting team began meeting virtually in summer 2022 to conduct an orientation to the Trail and the National Trails System and plan for stakeholder engagement. This group, along with additional NPS and partner representatives (including a contingent from Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia) met in December 2022 in San Antonio, TX, to conduct a binational kick-off meeting and site visits to Trail resources.

Consultants conducted an inventory of existing and potential visitor contact sites along the length of the Trail in 2023 and 2024, complemented by a series of in-person stakeholder meetings in August 2023. A digital stakeholder input survey was also developed. Planning foundations were submitted to Trail administrators and partners for review and comment in January 2024. After comments were received in

May 2024, a revised draft with initial recommendations was submitted in July 2024. Comments from Trail administrators and partners were received at the end of August 2024. The revised 75% document was made available to the larger community of Trail stakeholders in November 2024, alongside a series of virtual stakeholder input sessions.

Barring legislative changes, the plan elements in Section 1: Foundation for Planning are expected to remain fairly constant through the years, though the Trail's important stories and audience information may need to be revisited and confirmed periodically.

Legislative and Planning Background

El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail was added to the National Trails System by Public Law 108-342¹ on October 18, 2004, following a 1998 feasibility study prepared by NPS. In 2011, a Comprehensive Management Plan/Environmental Assessment (CMP/EA) established the preferred alternative for management of the Trail which relies on partnerships to develop the Trail and its visitor opportunities, including interpretation. This overarching interpretive plan is intended to provide comprehensive interpretive guidance to Trail administrators and partners, outlining a unified approach to interpretation moving forward. It will be revised periodically.

The Preferred Alternative outlined in the 2011 CMP/EA includes a vision of collaboration with partners to identify, protect, and interpret the significant resources associated with these routes, and to provide Trail users with educational and recreational opportunities, so that they can understand and enjoy the authentic sites and segments associated with these routes and the history of the Trail. Administrators will actively pursue partner certification and will continue to provide technical and funding assistance as available, as well as support for training and coordination of volunteer efforts. Implementation would rest mainly with volunteer members and willing partners of the Trail community to take the lead in proposing interpretive projects and programs. The CMP/EA suggests that high potential sites and segments would receive priority for interpretation, with resource protection messages incorporated into interpretation. As directed by the enabling legislation and the CMP/EA, bi-national coordination with Mexico is also underway to identify, protect, and interpret resources located along the Mexican section of the Trail.

¹ Pursuant to the National Trails System Act (P.L. 90-543 of October 2, 1968, as amended)

Purpose of Trail

A statement of purpose defines why a particular trail or park has received official recognition. The purpose of the Trail is stated in *El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail Comprehensive Management Plan/Environmental Assessment* (2011):

“The purpose of El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail is to commemorate the development of a network of trails, based upon American Indian¹ routes, which linked Spanish missions, presidios and trading posts in a travel corridor from the Río Grande to Louisiana. This network of trails was used throughout the Spanish Colonial period, the Mexican period, and up to Texas nation and statehood.”

¹ This purpose statement is shown exactly as it appeared in the 2011 CMP/EA. The preferred terminology has been updated and is described in the Trail Terminology sidebar on page 10 of this document.

Trail Community

The Trail community includes:

- National Park Service
- Texas Historical Commission
- Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
- El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail Association
- Louisiana and Texas departments of transportation
- Mexico’s Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia
- Federally recognized tribes whose homelands are crossed by the Trail¹
- International Boundary and Water Commission
- Institutions of higher learning
- Museums
- Visitor centers
- Private owners of Trail resources
- Trail scholars
- Public and private educational institutions
- Private organizations
- Other willing partners

¹ The three federally recognized tribes in TX are not original to TX.

Examples of Tangible Assets Associated with the Trail

- Swales and ruts
- Buildings, infrastructure, and sites where they once existed (missions, bridges, river crossings, presidios, temples, mounds, towns, ruins, lodges and inns, campsites/parajes, houses, mills, workshops, cemeteries, churches, quarries, archaeological sites, pictographs, caves and rock shelters, corrals)
- Natural features that functioned as landmarks
- Specific plants and foods
- Specific animals
- Textiles
- Tools and weapons
- Religious objects
- Acequias, creeks, and irrigation systems
- Household goods, including pottery
- Items of adornment
- Livestock (horses, sheep, cattle, goats, pigs, chickens), domestic pets (cats and dogs), wild game (buffalo, deer, beaver), and other specific animals
- Documents, maps, records, etc.

Examples of Intangible Aspects of the Trail

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| • Languages | • Myth and legend |
| • Culinary traditions | • Tradition |
| • Music | • Ideas about property, society, rules, and law |
| • Festivals and celebrations | • Borders/boundaries |
| • Religious and spiritual beliefs | • Cosmology |
| • Architecture | • Literature |
| • Technological advancements | • Family and marriage |
| • Idea of pilgrimage | • Identity |
| • Trade | • Enslavement |
| • Place | • Freedom Seekers |
| • Migration | |
| • Oral history | |

Goals for Interpretation

As part of the interpretive planning process, the planning team worked with Trail managers, partners, and stakeholders to identify interpretive goals for El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail. These goals, which drive the recommendations found later in this document, have been identified as follows:

- Establish the interpretive plan as the road map for Trail partners to individually and collectively interpret the Trail.
- Build partner and public awareness of the Trail and its significance.
- Increase awareness of NPS' and partners' roles in Trail administration and interpretation and encourage increased cooperation and collaboration.
- Help partners identify the best stories along the Trail and provide an accessible and inclusive visitor experience through a variety of interpretive media.
- Provide opportunities for the public to understand the contributions made by and heritage of the diverse variety of people involved in the development of the Trail and its lasting cultural influences.



A transparent panel installed onsite at the Mission Nuestra Señora del Rosario State Historic Site shows a transparent etching overlay to illustrate the structures that once stood here, near Goliad, TX. Courtesy photo.

Statements of Significance

Statements of significance express the Trail's importance to the natural and cultural heritage of the United States, and were established in the 2011 Comprehensive Management Plan/Environmental Assessment based on the National Trails System Act legislation. Please note that the sequence of the statements does not reflect each statement's level of significance.

El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail is significant as a unit of the National Trails System because:

- Spanish settlement of the northeast corner of the province of New Spain was triggered by the 17th-century struggle with France for territorial control in North America: The establishment of missions and presidios along El Camino Real de los Tejas demonstrated Spain's determination to discourage French intrusion.
- The network of routes that became El Camino Real de los Tejas followed established American Indian¹ trails. It fostered the convergence of European and Indian cultures by linking cultural and linguistic groups, introducing a foreign religious system (Catholicism), and serving as an agent for cultural diffusion, biological exchange, and communication.
- For more than 160 years, El Camino Real de los Tejas facilitated the conquest, colonization, and development of the region and was a key feature of the Spanish Colonial empire in what later became the states of Texas and Louisiana.
- The location of El Camino Real de los Tejas shaped the physical and legal patterning of land grants, settlements, and subsequent transportation networks in Texas and Louisiana.
- El Camino Real de los Tejas served as a critical travel corridor for Mexican and Texan military forces during the first half of the 19th century.
- The Old San Antonio Road, from the Red River settlement of Natchitoches, Louisiana, to San Antonio, Texas, was the primary overland route for early 19th century Anglo and African American migration into Texas, and supported the development of the cotton economy in eastern Texas and northwestern Louisiana.

¹ These statements of significance are shown exactly as they appeared in the 2011 CMP/EA. The preferred terminology has been updated and is described in the Trail Terminology sidebar on page 10 of this document.

Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes provide powerful and relevant ways to connect people to places when telling the stories of the Trail, helping visitors recognize the significance of the route while placing themselves into the history of the Trail.

Themes are derived from and capture the essence of the Trail’s purpose, significance, resources, and values. Depending on the complexity of a site’s resources and the breadth of its offerings, each major theme may accommodate several concepts or subthemes that help interpreters delve deeper into the stories and resources. Effective interpretation is achieved when visitors are able to connect the concepts with the resources and derive something meaningful from their experience.

The storylines collected within these concepts illustrate the Trail’s “big ideas” in ways that invite people to listen, learn, and care. Themes answer the all-important question, “So what?” or “Why would our visitors want to know this—why would they care?”

The 2011 Comprehensive Management Plan/Environmental Assessment for the Trail presented five primary interpretive themes to guide partners in developing consistent, cohesive programming for the Trail. The interpretive planning team for the current planning process started with the five primary themes from the 2011 CMP/EA, updated them in 2024, and then developed the following interpretive theme matrix with the guidance of Trail administrators, stakeholder input, and review of existing interpretation at numerous sites located along the Trail’s length.

An interpretive theme matrix is a chart that shows detail and the scope of potential storylines that might be told along the Trail within the framework of the Trail’s interpretive themes. The matrix is a format that offers an easy way for people to see the concepts, ideas, and stories that are represented by the Trail interpretive themes organized in a flexible, easily updated format that can be customized as needed. It should not be considered exhaustive or limiting—rather a practical and ongoing way of capturing meanings as they evolve. It should also be noted that some stories relate to multiple themes, so please keep that in mind when reading through the theme matrix.

This guidance is intended to be useful as a guide for Trail partners and others who develop interpretive programming and media.

Theme 1: Protection, Control, and Development

El Camino Real de los Tejas was a conduit of Spanish colonial power and influence with long-term consequences—modifying the landscape to meet the needs of armies, missionaries, and settlers that led to community and trade development, changing the lifeways of people and use of the environment.

Concepts and Ideas <i>Examples to be explored within each theme, written as objectives</i>	Topics and Storylines <i>Examples or sample storylines within this theme</i>		
Describe the extent and role of missions.	• Stories about converting Indigenous people to Catholicism, often by force • Missions were located strategically and sometimes moved to more favorable areas • Stories about missions as economic institutions • Stories about locations and durations of missions • Stories about building missions • Stories about agricultural efforts and infrastructure to support the missions, including cultivated fields, ranches, and water systems • Stories demonstrating various Indigenous as well as other perspectives on the establishment of missions and changing social systems • Stories about vocational skills training and extraction of unpaid labor from some Indigenous neophytes, often under brutal conditions		
Help visitors understand how communities developed along the Trail.	• Stories about land grants • Stories about presidios/forts • Stories about villas and ranchos • Stories about acequias and mills • Stories about how communities developed near some large Native American settlements • Stories of displacement of Native American ranges and settlements • Stories about how the Spanish desire to counter expansion by the French encouraged settlement across the Trail • Stories about how these settlements and developments became today's Texas and Louisiana		
Describe the Trail's influence on culture and lifestyles today.	<table border="0"> <tr> <td> • Food • Music • Religion • Language • Architecture • Place names </td><td> • Holidays and traditions • Festivals and celebrations • Thoughts and ideas • Land • Vocations • Economy </td></tr> </table>	• Food • Music • Religion • Language • Architecture • Place names	• Holidays and traditions • Festivals and celebrations • Thoughts and ideas • Land • Vocations • Economy
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Theme 1: Protection, Control, and Development

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Concepts and Ideas <i>Examples to be explored within each theme, written as objectives</i>	Topics and Storylines <i>Examples or sample storylines within this theme</i>
Help visitors understand the origins and impact of Tejano culture.	• Stories about expressions of Tejano culture, including food, language, customs, beliefs, and music
Help visitors understand the origins and impact of Creole culture.	• Stories about expressions of Creole culture, including food, language, customs, beliefs, and music
Help visitors understand the origins and impact of ranching culture.	• Stories about the introduction and expansion of cattle ranching, and the influence of Tejano culture on cowboy culture • Stories about the influence of ranching culture on the division/ownership of land today • Stories about the introduction of horses, horseshoeing, and saddle making • Stories about Spanish cattle drives along the Camino Real in support of the American Revolution
Describe the Trail's role as a critical trade route.	• Stories about the Indigenous trade routes that preceded the Trail • Stories about the Trail's role in facilitating communication • Stories about the different types of trade goods that were transported and exchanged along the Trail • Livestock • Grain • Iron • Copper • Weaponry • Religious wine • Chocolate • Tobacco • Textiles • Sugar • Medicine • Indigo • Ceramics • Metal cookware • Tanned hides • Rare goods like silk and porcelain from other continents • Stories about the length of time it took to travel the Trail and the various methods used, including freight wagons

Theme 1: Protection, Control, and Development

El Camino Real de los Tejas was a conduit of Spanish colonial power and influence with long-term consequences—modifying the landscape to meet the needs of armies, missionaries, and settlers that led to community and trade development, changing the lifeways of people and use of the environment.

Concepts and Ideas <i>Examples to be explored within each theme, written as objectives</i>	Topics and Storylines <i>Examples or sample storylines within this theme</i>
Describe the Trail’s role as a critical trade route (continued).	• Stories about how trade triggers shifts in norms related to cultures and interactions • Stories about the political “rules” regarding trade and whether or not they were followed • Stories about who is trading and with whom, and who benefits and how • Stories about the need for formal relationships between the Spanish and Indigenous communities to ensure safe passage along trade routes • Stories about trade connections to the Mississippi River (via the Red River) and on to French Canada and the Gulf of Mexico • Stories about the overall impact of the introduction of European cultures via trade into North America

Theme 2: Lasting Change

Because of their exposure to other cultural groups, those who traveled and lived along El Camino Real de los Tejas experienced profound change—affecting family and community life, language, religious practices, intertribal relations, and resource use—which continues to shape communities to this day.

Concepts and Ideas <i>Examples to be explored within each theme, written as objectives</i>	Topics and Storylines <i>Examples or sample storylines within this theme</i>
Illustrate the impacts of cross-cultural exposure.	• Stories of conflict, including claims to resources and warfare • Stories of cooperation, such as Tonkawa protecting Austin
Describe changes faced by Native Americans when Europeans and Americans arrived.	• Stories about how the newcomers and the changes they brought may have been perceived by Indigenous people • Stories of instances in which Spaniards were forced to adapt to Indigenous residents of Texas • What did/do Indigenous people call the Trail? • Stories about the European diseases that devastated Indigenous communities • Stories about forced removal of Native Americans • Stories about how intertribal relations changed with European and American influence, including how some smaller tribes sought refuge with the Spaniards, French, and Americans to counter threats by stronger tribes • Stories about how imports such as horses and guns changed Indigenous lifeways • Stories of African American lives and settlements
Describe mission life for Native American conscripts.	• What is a conscript? • Describe how expectations regarding work, language, religious practices, and living arrangements were new and different

Theme 2: Lasting Change

Because of their exposure to other cultural groups, those who traveled and lived along El Camino Real de los Tejas experienced profound change—affecting family and community life, language, religious practices, intertribal relations, and resource use—which continues to shape communities to this day.

Concepts and Ideas
Examples to be explored within each theme, written as objectives

Topics and Storylines
Examples or sample storylines within this theme

Describe conditions settlers faced.	• Stories about abundant natural resources, like water, vegetation, and wildlife • Stories about limited access to trade goods • Stories about interactions with and attitudes about Indigenous people • Stories about conflict and cooperation between various groups of people along the Trail: • Spaniards and French • French and Indigenous • Mexican, Tejano, American, African American, and Indigenous • Stories about <i>convivencia</i> (coexistence)
Illustrate how various religions were introduced by those traveling the Trail.	• Religions and belief systems of Tonkawa, Coushatta, Alabama, Caddo, Natchez, Osage, Bidai, Sana, Mayeye, Yojuane, Emet, Lipan Apache, Coahuiltecan, Karankawa, Mascogo, Kickapoo, Carrizo/Comecrudo, Alazapas, Jumanos, Comanche, Akokisa, Quapaw, Natchitoches, and Adai people • Catholicism • Protestantism • Judaism
Help visitors understand that the Trail facilitated new identities for people.	• Stories about loss of livelihood, possessions, and territory • Stories about new beginnings and their positive and negative effects • Stories about cultural exchange • Stories about how the Trail facilitated new identities that people carry today
Illustrate how these lasting cultural changes are relevant to today.	• Stories about how communities have a mix of practices in all aspects of daily life due to this lasting change

Theme 3: Paths Traveled

The Trail follows the lifeways and physical paths of Indigenous people who constructed trails in concert with the ecology and topography of their Tejas environment. As part of the Camino, these same trails were later traveled and modified by Spanish, French, Mexican, Tejano, American, and African American travelers.

Concepts and Ideas <i>Examples to be explored within each theme, written as objectives</i>	Topics and Storylines <i>Examples or sample storylines within this theme</i>
Illustrate the different groups of people who traveled the Trail.	• Where people came from/went to: • Native Americans • Mexicans • Spanish and other European explorers • Tejanos • Early Texas settlers • African Americans
Introduce the tribes indigenous to the region.	• Stories about Tonkawa, Coushatta, Alabama, Caddo, Natchez, Osage, Bidai, Sana, Mayeye, Yojuane, Emet, Lipan Apache, Cohuilecan, Karankawa, Mascogo, Kickapoo, Carrizo/Comecrudo, Alazapas, Jumanos, Comanche, Akokisa, Quapaw, Natchitoches, and Adai people¹ • ²Stories about archaeological evidence found dating to Paleoindian (11,500 – 8,800 BCE), Archaic (8,800 – 1,200 BCE), Late Prehistoric (1,200 – 450 BCE), and Proto-historic (450 – 250 BCE) periods
Help visitors understand that the Trail encompasses different eras of migration.	• Stories about Indigenous migration that occurred shortly before and during Spanish presence in Texas • Stories about the various waves of migration that occurred through Spanish exploration and colonialism (including religious aspects), Westward expansion, military expeditions, and by freedom seekers
Help visitors understand the physical and emotional experiences of traveling the Trail.	• Stories about springs, rivers, creeks and other waterways • Stories about smugglers, bandits, and land pirates • Personal stories about the experience • Stories about environmental factors such as heat, rain, and insects

¹ Per <https://native-land.ca/> and additions from stakeholder feedback

² Care should be taken when choosing language in interpretive media to avoid “monolithization” of Native people, as Native nations are not one group and have a variety of histories and experiences. For example, Native people had different experiences with the missionaries, while other Native people had no experience with them. Those who are implementing this plan and developing interpretive media are advised to be as specific as possible when referring to Native people (e.g. Caddo, Apache, etc).

Theme 3: Paths Traveled

The Trail follows the lifeways and physical paths of Indigenous people who constructed trails in concert with the ecology and topography of their Tejas environment. As part of the Camino, these same trails were later traveled and modified by Spanish, French, Mexican, Tejano, American, and African American travelers.

Concepts and Ideas
Examples to be explored within each theme, written as objectives

Topics and Storylines

Examples or sample storylines within this theme

Help visitors understand the physical and emotional experiences of traveling the Trail (continued).

- Stories related to the vastness of the geography
- Stories related to danger, scarcity, and abundance

Describe how the biology and ecology along the Trail has changed over time.

- Stories about environmental changes
- urban growth
- increased runoff
- new (and sometimes invasive) species of plants and animals
- decreased herbivore and predator populations (including loss of bison)
- water features and availability (fewer springs, man-made reservoirs, etc)
- resource use such as grazing, fracking, groundwater pumping, and logging
- land acquisition and partitioning (impacts of wealth, land, and status)
- fencing
- wildfire and suppression

Illustrate the different experiences of time and distance throughout the history of the Trail.

- Stories describing how long it took to travel distances compared to today

Explain how early travelers navigated the landscape before the advent of modern technology.

- Following existing pathways
- Indigenous guides
- Rivers and other landmarks
- Stars and constellations in the night sky

Describe how scientific studies add to the understanding of the Trail and its legacy.

- Stories about archaeological discoveries
- Stories about ongoing historical research that brings new understandings of the Trail to life
- Stories about past historic research and surveys

Theme 4: Shifting Routes

The Trail was ever-changing—varying routes were developed to meet the changing needs of travelers, who were affected by weather, Native American relations, terrain, water access, settlement, seasonal foodstuffs, and modes of transportation—and the multiple paths chart the area’s development through time.

Concepts and Ideas <i>Examples to be explored within each theme, written as objectives</i>	Topics and Storylines <i>Examples or sample storylines within this theme</i>
Help visitors read the landscape for evidence of the Trail by identifying swales, settlements, and waterways.	• Stories explaining what swales are, how to identify them, and what they represent • Stories explaining the logic of locating settlements and significant places past and present • Stories about the importance of water and paralleling Trail routes
Describe the various routes of the Trail and their various histories and patterns of use.	• Stories about how the various individual routes had different names at different times, in different places, and with different directions (for example, the road for someone going eastward from San Antonio to Nacogdoches might be called the Camino a Nacogdoches, but the same road for someone traveling westward might be called the Camino a San Antonio) › Old San Antonio Road/El Camino de Arriba › El Camino Pita › Lower Presidio Road/El Camino de en Medio › San Antonio-Laredo Road › La Bahia Road/Goliad Road › Upper Road › Lower Road
Illustrate why travelers chose different paths.	• Stories about flooding waterways, finding drinking water, accessing seasonal foodstuffs, and terrain features • Stories about peaks (such as Red Mountain), springs, rivers, and other landforms significant to Native Americans and other travelers • Stories about relations between Trail travelers and Native American people, including how Indigenous people used alternate routes to avoid Spanish and Anglo people • Stories about locations and extent of <i>parajes</i>, or campsites, that provided water, respite and sources for goods and services
Remind visitors today that they are still traveling the historic road.	• Several of today’s highways trace these old routes • Historic <i>parajes</i> and missions became today’s cities and towns • The Trail is a long, linear National Park

Theme 5: Changing States

The Trail is representative of the dramatic socioeconomic changes from a completely Indigenous landscape to one influenced by Europeans in the 1700s and 1800s, involving political unrest, military action, Mexico's independence from Spain, Texas' independence from Mexico, and the 1845 annexation of Texas by the United States.

Concepts and Ideas <i>Examples to be explored within each theme, written as objectives</i>	Topics and Storylines <i>Examples or sample storylines within this theme</i>
Describe the geopolitical interests that led to the Trail's development as a "camino real" and the resulting settlement and military expeditions.	• Stories related to mineral and other resource exploration by the Spanish • Stories about La Salle and the hunt to find the fort he established • Stories explaining the French and Spanish efforts to colonize the region, as well as results • Stories about the explorers, missionaries and soldiers who sought to make contact with the Native inhabitants, referred to as the "Tejas" • Stories about how the route's status as a "camino real" changed with Mexican independence in 1821 • Stories about how settlements and development became the Texas and Louisiana of today
Help visitors understand the various jurisdictions that existed over the history of the Trail.	• Stories about Indigenous territories and alliances • When Texas was ruled by the Spanish Empire, all roads led to Mexico City • Stories about the Neutral Ground • Stories about various battles and power struggles that occurred in an attempt to control this region
Help visitors understand how the existence of the Trail led to Texas statehood.	• Stories about Mexico's quest for independence from Spain • Stories about the Texas Revolution and resulting declaration of independence from Mexico • Stories about the Republic of the Rio Grande • Stories about the Louisiana Purchase • Stories about Texas joining the United States, including the role of slavery as a factor that influenced its admission • Stories about the Mexican-American War and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo • Stories about the effect of US, Spanish, and Mexican land policies on Texas settlement, including the awarding of land grants to empresarios such as Stephen F. Austin

Theme 5: Changing States

The Trail is representative of the dramatic socioeconomic changes from a completely Indigenous landscape to one influenced by Europeans in the 1700s and 1800s, involving political unrest, military action, Mexico's independence from Spain, Texas' independence from Mexico, and the 1845 annexation of Texas by the United States.

Concepts and Ideas <i>Examples to be explored within each theme, written as objectives</i>	Topics and Storylines <i>Examples or sample storylines within this theme</i>
Help people to understand that borders are fluid and have changed over time.	• Stories about how families continued to live in a place even after international borders changed • Stories about how early Texas settlers had to be willing to become Mexican citizens and adopt Catholicism • Stories about how Mexico encouraged settlement by US citizens in Texas initially, and how that stance changed due to ongoing dynamics between settlers in Texas and the Mexican government • Stories about the interdependence between Mexico and the United States historically, with impacts that continue today

Essential Questions

In addition to identifying interpretive themes to guide interpretation along the Trail, the National Park Service invites visitors to discover their own insights into the meaning of the Trail through consideration of thought-provoking questions related to the resources preserved along the Trail.

Effective interpretation often explores controversial and complex issues as a means of finding natural and cultural resources' evolving relevance in today's communities. Interpretation honors and incorporates different types of truth—personal, forensic/academic, societal, and reconciliatory—and invites the visitor to consider different perspectives.

Audience-centered programs and media must be dynamic and flexible, with intentional design and clear purpose. Finding meaning for the audience may be achieved by exploring an essential question or idea supported by a purposeful interpretive framework.¹

The following essential questions are by no means exhaustive in considering the meanings associated with the Trail. However, the questions posed here, as examples, align with the interpretive themes and may be used by all Trail partners to invite dialogue, foster awareness, investigate truths, and encourage collaborative meaning-making related to the Trail. In short, these are questions that help people figure out why the Trail matters and develop appreciation for its places and stories.

Landscape & Geography

- How does landscape and geography influence travel routes and settlement patterns?
- How do we respect differences in the cultural value of land and water?
- How has the natural world shaped human culture and society along the Trail?
- What are the tangible effects of county, parish, state, and international borders?
- What kinds of separations happen as a result of having borders?
- Does colonization impact the ways we relate with and think about the land that makes up and surrounds the Trail?
- How does geography influence religion and politics?
- What are modern perspectives on land use and land ownership today? Did they vary in the past?
- Why does “place” matter?

¹ Adapted from Foundations of 21st Century Interpretation (NPS Common Learning Portal), Version 2017

Periods of Conflict and Violence

- How do past violent acts against individuals, groups, and cultures impact people alive today?
- Can the past violent acts of one culture, group, or society against another be forgiven in the present? Whose responsibility is it to offer and to accept forgiveness?
- When is violence justified? Who gets to decide this?
- Who has the right to define “justice”?
- Does the process of forgiveness and peace-making ever end?
- How do individuals, communities, and societies reconcile the past with the present?

Culture Significance & Identity

- Why do you think it’s important to connect with the cultural history of the Trail?
- Who gets to decide what is culturally significant?
- What identities are prominent along the Trail? What identities are missing or lacking?
- What did Indigenous people call these travel routes? What were the meanings behind those names?
- How are belief systems represented and reproduced through the history, literature, art, music, food, and cultural traditions that were and continue to be created along the Trail?
- What is the legacy of the Trail? Do all of the cultures along the Trail share the same or differing legacies?
- Do our present perceptions inform how we view and understand the history of the Trail?
- How are diverse cultural identities celebrated across the length of the Trail?
- What sacrifices would you make to protect your family, community, culture?
- How do religious beliefs and practices influence how we see ourselves, others, and the world?

Freedom & Independence

- Is there a price for freedom? If so, what is it?
- What does it mean to have independence in the United States?
- What happens when one group’s desire for freedom intersects with another’s?
- How did the Trail impact Native American populations’ sovereignty?

Social Change

- Why are sense of place and community belonging important?
- How might it feel to live through a conflict that disrupts your entire way of life?
- How do our individual and collective memories shape how we perceive each other in the present?
- How are people transformed through their relationships with others?

Trade & Cultural Exchange

- Do you know where your food, water, and the supplies to make your home and clothing come from?
- In what ways does the exchange of ideas and goods improve lives?
- How does trade influence or instigate cultural exchange?
- Does commerce influence cultural and technological innovation? If so, how?
- How do past violent acts against individuals, groups, and cultures impact people alive today?

Trail Audiences and Visitor Data

Millions of people walk, bike, or drive the various segments of the Trail every year, many of whom are likely unaware that they are on a nationally significant trail. Given the nature of El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail, with its 2,580-mile length and many entrance points, precise visitation numbers are impossible to obtain. We can, however, gain insight into the differences in visitation between urban vs. rural sites by looking at visitor data from the following history-focused specific sites along the Trail.¹ For example:

- San Antonio Missions National Historic Park, designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2015, experienced 1.33 million visitors in 2021, an increase of 16% over 2019. According to the City of San Antonio World Heritage Office, the economic impact of this World Heritage designation is expected to generate an additional \$44 to \$105 million in activity and create more than 1,100 jobs.
- Goliad State Park and Historic Site experienced 48,677 visitors.
- Mission Tejas State Park experienced 18,586 visitors.
- Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Historic Site experienced 6,350 visits.
- Fort Jesup State Historic Site experienced 1,385 visitors.

The 2017 Market Assessment and Report of Mission San José and Mission San Juan conducted by the University of Texas at San Antonio, recommended in its market analysis of cultural heritage tourism, to connect visits to the San Antonio Missions to other authentic experiences.

By using the Trail for marketing and thematic connections, visitors would then know about opportunities to build their understanding of the Trail by experiencing an urban, heavily visited site, like San Antonio Missions NHP, and rural less busy heritage sites. Examples include a day trip to Goliad, drive the El Camino Real, visit El Rancho de las Cabras², or see sites on foot, by bike, or on horseback.

The sites along the Trail can be expected to draw increasing numbers of both US and international travelers to Texas and Louisiana, as culture and heritage opportunities attract the vast majority (76%) of adult leisure travelers in the United States (Mandala Research, 2015).

¹ All figures except those cited for San Antonio Missions National Historical Park are for 2022.

² El Rancho de las Cabras is a site owned and administered by the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park and can only be accessed via guided tour.

Visitor Needs and Expectations

When planning and designing visitor experiences, it's important to remember that visitors need to know where they are and what's expected of them. As psychologist Abraham Maslow stated in 1954, people need to have their basic needs met—food, water, safety, and security—before they can attend to personal growth or take in new information. Access to restrooms, wayfinding, orientation, and etiquette information all contribute to creating an environment where visitors are relaxed and able to receive new information. Visitors need to feel welcome, comfortable, and clear about how they should interact with any of the park sites. Any facilities that are open to the public must be well maintained, sanitary, and safe.

Target Audiences for Interpretation

In general, participants in the workshops for this plan identified a number of broad categories of target audiences for interpretation:

- Heritage enthusiasts with some knowledge of or interest in the history of the Trail;
- People interested in information about their ancestry, ancestral ties to the Trail landscape, and/or cultural practices;
- Enthusiasts interested in visiting sites associated with NPS;
- Trail users (local and non-local) engaging in recreational activities such as hiking, walking, biking, paddling, and equestrian use;
- Local residents who visit existing parks, museums, and heritage sites and/or use parts of the Trail or its landscape features for recreation, including nature observation;
- K-12 and higher education students and educators on field trips;
- International tourists drawn to high profile heritage sites, such as the San Antonio Missions;
- Religious visitors (local and international) participating in church services as well as pilgrimage opportunities;
- Tourists discovering the Trail by accident;
- Private property owners who own a significant site or segment;
- Policymakers who have influence on community development and historic preservation;
- Individuals who “collect” experiences, including those who seek to add another stamp to their NPS passport; and
- Virtual visitors who may never physically explore any of the Trail sites or segments

Tourism & Travel Impacts

Texas Travel Impacts

In 2019, domestic and international travelers spent \$82 billion while visiting Texas. As the state's eighth-largest workforce, the travel industry supported 710,402 jobs through visitor spending, representing 6.6% of the state's total private sector employment. Essential and invaluable jobs and public programs such as firefighters, teachers, road projects and more were funded through the \$11.7 billion in taxes generated from travel spending. (US Travel Association, 2021)

According to Texas tourism data from 2020, travel spending by visitor residence shows that Texas residents accounted for 50% of all traveler spending in the state. Domestic travelers from outside the state contributed 45% and international travelers made up 5% of traveler spending. (Dean Runyan Associates, 2020)

Louisiana Travel Impacts

In 2019, domestic and international travelers spent \$16.9 billion while visiting Louisiana. Travel spending directly funded 121,010 jobs, making the travel industry the state's 6th largest workforce and constituting 7.5% of the state's total private sector employment. Travel spending supplied \$2.3 billion in taxes to state and local governments, supporting essential services and public programs. (US Travel Association, 2021)

In December 2021, Louisiana's leisure & hospitality industry is reported to have supported 208,400 jobs with an 8% increase since the beginning of the year. In that same year, the state's leisure & hospitality employment ended with a 7% increase year over year but was still down 12.6% over 2019. (Louisiana Office of Tourism, 2021)



Floresville El Camino Trail, Floresville, TX. Courtesy photo.

Communities Along the Trail

*This analysis is intended to show how each major city along the US portion of El Camino Real de los Tejas is situated in terms of its unique demographic profile. This analysis uses the most recent US census data to describe the unique demographic profiles of five primary cities located throughout the Trail.

Laredo, TX

Located on the north bank of the Río Grande in South Texas, Laredo has a population of 256,153, according to 2020 US Census data. Laredo has a high proportion of Hispanic residents, with over 95% of the population identifying as such. Compared to the other cities in this analysis, Laredo is home to the highest population of foreign born residents (25.6%), with about 90% of residents speaking a language other than English at home.

San Antonio, TX

With 1,434,625 residents, the sprawling and highly populated city of San Antonio is the second-most populous city in Texas and is the seventh-most populous city in the US. Since the previous US Census in 2010, the population of San Antonio increased by 1.2%. San Antonio has a slightly older population, with about 12% of residents aged 65 and older. Compared to the other cities in this analysis, San Antonio follows Laredo in its percentage of Hispanic residents (64.7%) as well as residents who speak a language other than English in the home (41.8%).

Austin, TX

The state capital of Texas, Austin is home to a population of 964,177. This population has increased considerably in the last decade, ranking Austin 5th among 15 other US cities with the largest numeric increase between 2010-2019. Austin has the highest housing costs of the cities in this analysis, with median gross rent reaching \$1,346 and owner-occupied homes priced at a median value of \$358,600. Austin has a highly educated population, with 53% of residents having earned a Bachelor's degree, compared to the US average (about 32.9%).

Nacogdoches, TX

Located in East Texas, the small city of Nacogdoches has a population of 32,118 residents. It is a sister city of the smaller, similarly named Natchitoches, Louisiana. Among the other cities in this analysis, Nacogdoches has the most residents under the age of 65 with a disability, at 13.5%. Designated as a Texas Certified Retirement Community, Nacogdoches has an older population, with about 11% of residents aged 65 years or older.

Natchitoches, LA

With a population of 17,662, Natchitoches is the smallest city of the five Trail communities presented in this analysis and the only city in Louisiana. It is the parish seat of Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana. Natchitoches has the lowest median household income and per capita income of the cities discussed, at \$23,967 and \$18,240, respectively. The rate of poverty is the highest among the five Trail cities at about 40%. Among the five cities in this analysis, Natchitoches has the highest proportion of African American residents, at 59.6%.

Visitor Motivations

Visitor experiences are influenced by visitors' mindsets, motivations, and identity-related needs.

Having observed parallels in the ways that visitor identity is connected to how they visit museums, author and researcher John H. Falk presents five categories of visitor types: Experience Seekers, Explorers, Facilitators, Rechargers, and Professionals/Hobbyists. Outlined in the table below, these visitor types shed light on visitors' motivations for visiting the historic sites and natural areas along El Camino Real de los Tejas.

Falk's Visitor Motivation Types	
Experience Seekers	Motivated by sensory experiences Example: Recreationists and tourists
Explorers	Motivated by curiosity and discovery Example: Children
Facilitators	Motivated by social meaning and a desire to meet the needs of others Example: Parent(s) with children
Rechargers	Motivated by a need for relaxation Example: Local resident
Professionals/Hobbyists	Motivated by their interest and knowledge of a subject Example: History enthusiasts, scholars

Visitor Experience Goals

What motivates visitors to explore El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail? What experiences are they looking for? How can Trail partners support or enhance visitors' experiences along the way?

Interpretive planning seeks to enable a high level of visitor engagement for all visitors, regardless of age, ability, or background, at every contact point along El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail. All visitors should have multiple opportunities for memorable, meaningful experiences as they explore any of the individual sites. Along the entire length of this network of routes, different visitors will experience its offerings in many different ways:

- Exploring regional museums, visitor centers, historic sites, and heritage centers;
- Attending guided programs, lectures, field trips, festivals, or educational excursions;
- Recreational hiking, biking, boating, fishing, camping, horseback riding, off-road driving, or bird watching;
- Exploring local parks and trails;
- Going on pilgrimages to significant religious sites;
- Communing with nature and/or ancestors;
- Sightseeing and commuting by car and bus; or
- Virtually via online and audio-visual materials such as websites, films, podcasts, virtual tours (including interactive maps), and online museum collections.

Whatever approach or activity they prefer, all visitors to El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail should have ample, accessible opportunities to explore key resources and appreciate the intrinsic values and meanings of this vast landscape.

Based on analysis of the Trail's resources and input from workshop participants, the following visitor experience goals have been identified for the trail. To guide partners in creating multi-faceted, universally accessible programming, the Trail's visitor experience goals are presented here in four ways: what visitors can do, physically, along the Trail (experiential goals); what visitors can learn (cognitive goals); what universal human feelings might be evoked along the Trail (emotional goals); and how visitors' behavior might change as a result of encountering the Trail (behavioral goals). Ideally, most interpretive offerings for the Trail will be designed in ways that support multiple goals across these categories, thereby accommodating persons of differing abilities and interests as they explore the Trail.

Experiential Goals: What should visitors have the opportunity to do along El

Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail?

Trail interpretation will help enable visitors to:

- Explore the Trail physically and virtually.
- Recognize and locate features of the Trail, including viewing historic structures, swales and river crossings.
- Experience parts of the Trail through walking, riding, cycling, and other on-site physical recreational activities.
- Connect with historical experts.
- Discover cultural aspects of the Trail, many of which are a direct result of the Trail's impacts on the population of the region.
- Explore tribal relationships with, and stories about, the French, Spanish, and other colonial eras and resulting cultural changes.
- Ask questions and participate in active, hands-on learning about the Trail and its impact on American history.
- Find and use the NPS app.
- Participate in youth and family activities.
- Identify volunteer opportunities along the Trail.

Cognitive Goals: What should visitors have the opportunity to learn when they visit El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail?

Trail interpretation will provide visitors with opportunities to:

- Orient themselves along the Trail and understand how to find sites and available opportunities.
- Identify physical features of the Trail on the landscape.
- Know how an individual site is connected to a larger story.
- Explore and learn about the historical influences that shaped the Trail.
- Leave the Trail with new perspective on how the Trail shaped the history of Indigenous tribes, Texas, Louisiana, and the nation, as well as international relations with Spain, France, and Mexico.
- Acquire or renew basic understanding of the way US borders have changed over the centuries.
- Gain insight into the diversity of tribal cultures associated with the region, their individual histories related to the Trail, continued presence, and their perspectives on the Trail.
- Understand the impact of the Trail on the culture and settlement patterns along the Trail through the centuries.
- Appreciate the various cultures present along the Trail and how they have related to each other through time.
- Learn how the Trail was established and its influence on lifestyles today.

- Gain an understanding of the scope and scale of the journey along the Trail in its era—before automobile or airplane travel, reliable mapping, and telecommunications.
- Understand that private landowners have the ability to preserve Trail resources.

Emotional Goals: What emotions or feelings might El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail evoke among visitors?

Trail interpretation will support opportunities for visitors to:

- Feel a sense of welcome, safety, and belonging.
- Feel a sense of adventure, personal discovery, and empathy while traveling the Trail.
- Feel some of the universal emotions that may have been experienced by Indigenous and Mexican people as new people entered their communities and claimed their lands—fear, anger, curiosity, courage, sorrow, conflict.
- Feel some of the universal emotions that may have been associated with leaving home, undertaking a difficult journey, and experiencing new landscapes and cultures—excitement, fear, curiosity, courage, admiration, pride, connection, sorrow, conflict, anger.
- Feel a sense of awe for the immense undertaking of traveling the Trail.
- Gain a sense that migration is an integral part of the human experience.
- Feel connected to the Trail through increased understanding of the significance of the Trail.
- Find solitude and solace in nature.
- Be motivated to continue exploring the Trail, both on site and from afar.
- Gain a sense of responsibility and recognition for protection of Trail resources.

Behavioral Goals: How might visitors' lives or behaviors be changed from their encounters with El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail?

Trail interpretation will encourage visitors to:

- Develop or renew personal appreciation for history and our multicultural heritage.
- Leave the Trail experience asking questions and knowing where to turn in-person or virtually to experience more.
- Attend additional interpretive programs and events about the Trail and its era of significance.
- Become ambassadors and advocates for the Trail and its scenic, historical, and cultural resources.
- Act in ways that protect and preserve irreplaceable Trail resources, whether through personal acts, legal, financial, or symbolic measures.
- Share the Trail experience with friends and family.
- Return to the Trail, or visit additional parks and trails.



Bastrop Visitor Center & Museum, located in Bastrop, TX. Courtesy photo.

Other Planning Considerations

While this interpretive plan focuses directly on interpretation of the Trail and its sites, it is important to note that contemporaneous planning activities and organizational goals among the partners and stakeholders may also address aspects of interpretation.

Agency Directives

The most recent Strategic Plan outlines, goals, strategies, and actions that direct the work of the National Trails Intermountain Region and which influence the recommendations appearing in this plan, including the following relevant directives:

Goal 1. To increase visitor use opportunities for enjoyment and education.

Strategy 1A. Prioritize trail development in urban¹ areas

Strategy 1B. Prioritize opportunities for public use at/on high potential sites and segments

Goal 2. To increase public awareness for the benefit of current and future generations.

Strategy 2A: Engage new audiences (youth, urban, diverse, underserved, and underrepresented audiences)

¹ Urban is defined to include metropolitan areas, with populations of 50,000 or greater, as defined by the US Census Bureau.

Strategy 2B. Prioritize social and digital media

Goal 3. To increase protection of historic resources for public benefit.

Strategy 3A. Emphasize protection of high potential sites and segments

Goal 4. To increase collaboration with partners to achieve shared goals.

Strategy 4A. Leverage and increase existing partner capacity

Strategy 4B. Cultivate new, diverse, and high-potential partnerships

The Director of the National Park Service Charles F. “Chuck” Sams III has also issued a list of his priorities that include the following:

1. Connect and empower a thriving and diverse workforce
2. Invest in the future of parks
3. Confront the climate crisis using science and traditional ecological knowledge in stewarding our resources
4. Advance equity, inclusion, and access in carrying out the NPS mission
5. Respect and strengthen Indigenous connections, enhance our nation-to-nation relationships, and fully uphold our trust and treaty responsibilities
6. Create an NPS experience that meets visitor expectations into the future
7. Greatly improve, streamline, and modernize NPS management and business practices, and ensure accountability to ourselves, our partners, and the American people

State Park, Historic Commission, and Other Institutional Planning

In addition to this NPS-sponsored interpretive plan, planning documents by Trail partners may also influence Trail interpretation. The Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, Texas Historic Commission, and Louisiana State Parks each have their own mission statements, strategic plans, and/or interpretive plans, and some individual parks and other interpretive sites have plans in place as well. Throughout this planning process, partners have been invited to share their organizations’ plans regarding interpretation along the Trail.

El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail Association

El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail Association, founded in 2007, is the primary nonfederal partner for the Trail. The non-profit association is dedicated to promoting and protecting El Camino Real de los Tejas, providing advocacy, education, and supporting tourism and economic development along the Trail.

The Association serves as a vital resource for all Trail partners, facilitating collaboration, education, and awareness of the Trail, and serving as a liaison with the National Trails Office.

The mission of the Association “seeks to protect the historic integrity of the trail, to educate and engage the public about its significance, and to promote resource development, interpretation, and tourism along its path.” The goals stated in its 2021-2025 Strategic Plan are to:

Goal 1: Build capacity to further enhance the organization’s sustainability.

Strategy 1: Identify diverse funding priorities and pursue appropriate funding pathways.

Strategy 2: Improve organizational structure for more effective operation.

Goal 2: Elevate the identity of El Camino Real de los Tejas NHT as a recognizable, significant historical asset for users and stakeholders.

Strategy 1: Develop a communications plan that includes branding and messaging for specific audiences, including potential funders.

Strategy 2: Expand educational and outreach opportunities for targeted audiences.

Strategy 3: Create a structured, volunteer-driven, collaborative community approach to enrich and sustain local trail experiences.

Strategy 4: Expand engagement through enhanced use of social media and regular email communications.

Goal 3: Facilitate the identification and protection of authentic sites and segments.

Strategy 1: Acquire and/or engage other means of protection of properties.

Strategy 2: Develop a trail protection program to help landowners become good stewards.

The Association is supported by member dues and contributions, as well as funding from NPS. The dedicated Association staff and volunteers maintain an informative website and social media accounts, produce quarterly newsletters, host an annual meeting, network with numerous agencies and private property owners, and represent the Trail at various conferences and events. The organization regularly creates Trail-wide and site-specific brochures and rack cards and works with landowners to develop, fabricate, and install orientation and interpretive signage.

The Association has also given occasional lectures, developed a set of educational curriculum about the Trail, coordinates with researchers, maintains a traveling exhibit for the Trail, and successfully acquired Lobanillo Swales, a high potential site located in East Texas where physical remnants of the Trail are evident, as part of its protection efforts. Recently, the Association assisted the Tonkawa tribe in its acquisition of Red Mountain, representing 60 acres of the tribe's ancestral homeland after it was expelled during the 19th century. The Association is partnering with the tribe to open the site to public access—it is owned by the tribe and managed by the Trail Association.

The Association has also begun forming local chapters of volunteers, who conduct additional outreach, programming, and representation on a more local level.



Casa Navarro State Historic Site, located in San Antonio, TX. Courtesy photo.

Existing Conditions



Existing Conditions

El Camino Real de los Tejas is the second oldest route of European travel in the country and one of the oldest Indigenous routes within it. It is also one of the most recently designated National Historic Trails in the National Trails System. Designated good foundation from which to build future interpretation. Many sites and partner organizations have been interpreting the Trail (and its related topics of Indigenous heritage, Spanish colonialism, Mexican rule, African American experience, and Texas independence) for years.

There are hundreds of interpretive stopping points along the Trail, with stories provided by municipal, county, and state governments, federal agencies, and non-profit organizations.

At present, visitors can tour meticulously preserved or replicated Indigenous and historic structures; walk, ride, or drive the route that travelers have traversed since time immemorial; see replicas of the *carros* and *carretas* that were used to make the journey and transport goods along the Trail; load an interactive pack animal with trade goods; play a Trail-themed interpretive pinball game; and examine authentic documents and artifacts in climate-controlled museum environments. Additionally, countless roadside monuments and markers memorialize significant sites and events relevant to this era of history.

At the same time, significant challenges remain before this Trail will have an optimal level of interpretive products and programming from end-to-end. Along this 2,580-mile route, there are hundreds of distinct locations that are identified to be physically associated with the Trail—a small percentage of which are being interpreted directly at the site today, typically via permanent wayside and interior exhibits or through scheduled or pre-arranged tours. By assessing the range of existing conditions, this planning process can identify gaps in the visitor experience, resulting in recommendations that appear in the following section.

Sites and Facilities

Existing interpretive facilities along the Trail include an array of state park, state historic site, federal, and tourism-focused visitor centers; museums; and historical societies. Three Texas State Park visitor centers dedicate most, if not all,



Mission Tejas State Park, located in Grapeland, TX. Courtesy photo.

Previous: **McKinney Falls State Park, located in Austin, TX.** Courtesy photo.

of their exhibits to El Camino Real de los Tejas: McKinney Falls State Park near Austin, Goliad State Park & Historic Site in Goliad, and Mission Tejas State Park in Grapeland.

Numerous other sites have vehicular or pedestrian access with pull-offs, informational kiosks, and interpretive signage. Still others have interior exhibits, many of which charge a fee. Some of these installations (interior and exterior) are aging, with non-personal interpretation that does not meet current standards for accessibility, and are in need of an update in messaging and materials.

Personal Interpretive Services

Personal interpretive programming describes programs delivered “live and in person” by interpretive rangers, volunteers, educators, or subject experts. In most locations, such personal programming varies by audience, visitation levels, staffing, and seasonal needs. Personal interpretive services may include guided tours, storytelling, ranger talks, supervised hands-on activities, living history, first person reenactments, educational programs, artisan or crafts demonstrations, or other face-to-face activities. Communities and individual sites sometimes host special events that directly speak to the Trail and/or the cultural traditions that have arisen from it, including the planned World Heritage Festival in San Antonio.

The Trail Association, Texas Historical Commission, and Friends of Texas Historical Commission have all periodically offered in-person and virtual programs focused on various Trail topics. Visitors can also attend programs delivered by interpreters or volunteers at selected sites. Examples include:

Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Historic Site, LA:

- Ranger-led programs about the site’s history during school field trips
- Living history demonstrations
- Roving interpretation

Los Adaes State Historic Site, LA:

- Ranger-led programs, including the history of foodways and the significance of the Trail
- Ranger-led programs about the site’s history during school field trips
- Las Posadas: An Adaeseños Celebration and other events

Mission Dolores State Historic Site, TX:

- Ranger-led programs, including foraging along the Trail, the life of women during the Spanish Colonial period, storytelling and stargazing
- Hands-on demonstrations, including weaving and archaeology

Mission Tejas State Park, TX:

- Ranger-led programs, including prehistoric weaponry, edible plants, pioneer tools

Goliad State Park & Historic Site, TX:

- Annual fall festival and other special events
- Hands-on demonstrations, including grinding corn, creating cordage, roping and ranching, and archaeology

San Antonio Missions National Historic Park, TX:

- Roving interpretation
- Ranger-led programs, including guided hikes
- Guided tours of Rancho de las Cabras
- Hands-on demonstrations, including clay with an artist-in-residence
- Ranger-led programs about the site's history during school field trips

Casa Navarro State Historic Site, TX:

- Guided programs, including foodways and the history of adobe
- Speaker series
- Ranger-led programs about the site's history during school field trips

Interpretive Media

The term 'interpretive media' refers to any visitor communication method that depends on media (wayside panels and other graphic signage, interior and exterior exhibits, social media postings, brochures and other publications, websites, mobile applications, and audiovisual programs). These resources allow self-directed learning along the Trail. Dedicated partners offer interpretive materials at numerous sites along the Trail. Below is a sample of what is available to visitors.

Print Publications

The primary printed publication associated with the Trail is a standard NPS unigrid fold-out brochure and map featuring the official Trail logo (shown at right). This publication is distributed in bulk and free of charge to partners to enable them to better serve their visitors and provide general orientation and information about the Trail. Several NPS-created rack cards are also widely available.

Most Trail partners also have unique and individual printed materials, ranging from quick,



Official Trail logo

informal hand-outs to high-end glossy publications. Such publications follow graphic identities unique to each site, with some featuring the Trail logo. Printed products for events or other special occasions developed by partners receive permission to use the Trail logo. For more information about the logo and its use, see Appendix D.

Audiovisual, Digital, and Social Media

Audiovisual and emerging digital media are rapidly changing fields, combining email, audio, film, video, photography, websites, podcasts, smartphone apps, interactive maps, distance learning, social media (Facebook, X, Instagram, Youtube, etc), and instant messaging—all able to be delivered to a smartphone or computer. This makes sharing of information readily attainable and makes remote delivery of site interpretation commonplace.

The Trail has a robust online digital media presence, with a number of offerings for visitors to learn more about the Trail—created by both the National Trails Office and partners. The NPS website for the Trail (www.nps.gov/elte) provides an overview of the significance of the Trail, as well as an interactive map featuring associated places to visit, articles, and serves as the official repository for digital media related to the Trail (including a series of virtual interpretive exhibits, photographs, and a number of themed itineraries that suggest sites to visit based upon a visitor’s interest, such as visiting museums or mission sites, hiking, or scenic driving).

Any interpretive media hosted or linked to on the official Trail website—whether created by NPS or partners—must meet federal accessibility requirements. See the text box below for more information.

Accessibility and Digital Content

Accessibility is the design of products, devices, services, or environments for people with disabilities. Meeting accessibility standards and applying universal design concepts ensures the greatest number of people have access to Trail stories and experiences. There are many resources about the Trail available online, but many are not fully accessible. In order for NPS to link to external sites that contain Trail topics, digital content must meet Section 508 compliance for page layout, alternate text, video captioning, audio description, and PDF readability. National Trails office staff can provide technical assistance to help partners meet these standards so that content can be promoted on NPS digital media such as the NPS website, NPS app, and social media. Contact ntir_information@nps.gov for more information.

FURTHER READING [To learn more about accessibility requirements for digital media, visit us on the web.](#)

The Trail Association maintains a website (www.elcaminorealdelostejas.org) featuring information about the Trail, along with a gallery of historic imagery and detailed maps, and links back to the main nps.gov/elte website.

The NPS also maintains a helpful smartphone NPS app for travelers on-the-go, including orientation, wayfinding, and trip planning information, and features a map that allows the visitor to zoom in, click on a specific site for information, and access driving directions for all sites and trails administered by the National Park Service. It is [free to download, available here](#).

The following social media opportunities also connect visitors to the Trail:

- Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com/ElCaminoRealdelosTejasNPS>
<https://www.facebook.com/elcaminorealdelostejas>

Both pages are specific to the Trail.

- Instagram
<https://www.instagram.com/nationaltrailsnps/>

This page includes all of the historic trails administered by the National Trails Office.

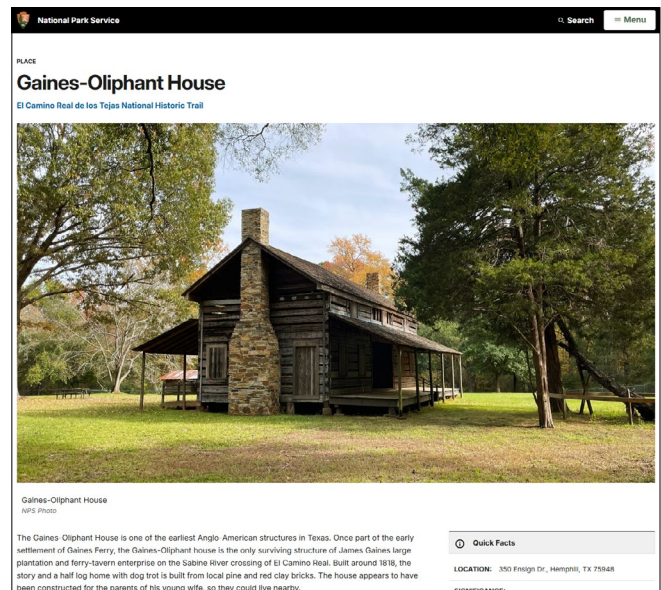
- Instagram
<https://www.instagram.com/elcaminotejas/>

This page is specific to the Trail Association.

As of July 2024, Instagram users consistently tag Trail related posts with two unique hashtags: #elcaminotejas (460 posts) and #elcaminorealdelostejas (392 posts).

- Flickr
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/150851199@N02/>

This page includes all of the historic trails administered by the National Trails Office.



Screenshot of Trail website. Courtesy image.

- X (formerly Twitter)

<https://twitter.com/NTIRNPS>

This page includes all of the historic trails administered by the National Trails Office.

- YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/user/NTIRNPS>

This page includes all of the historic trails administered by the National Trails Office.

Other partners including state and county tourism offices and historic commissions maintain social media accounts and webpages and sometimes feature information related to the Trail. For examples of partner-created media, see Appendix B.

Exterior Exhibits/Waysides

With more than 2,500 miles of Trail and dozens of individual sites and partners, there are many variations of exterior exhibits that interpret the Trail. As part of this project, consultants worked to document existing visitor contact points and associated interpretive media¹. An accompanying database details information about existing Trail sites and exhibits, including an assessment of condition and whether the official Trail logo is employed.

Exterior exhibit kiosks and low-profile wayside signs offer simple, relatively inexpensive ways to present consistent, readily available interpretation for a wide range of visitors.

Where exterior exhibits have been created by or in collaboration with the NPS, they often depict consistent National Historic Trail branding and NPS branding (along with the names of any partner organizations). However, partners that have their own branding and design guidelines incorporate the Trail logo and information as appropriate. Because many of the interpretive products pre-date the Trail's designation as a National Historic Trail, many sites do not yet feature the official Trail logo. Lobanillo Swales is the only location along the Trail where exterior exhibits currently focus exclusively on the Trail.

Interior Exhibits (Museums and Visitor Centers)

Trail partners offer a wide variety of interior exhibits in different settings across the length of the Trail, ranging from small installations to large multi-gallery immersive experiences. Well-funded institutions are able to employ a range of technology and a curated approach to collections, yet are always faced with the challenge of staying

¹ Generally, engraved stone or cast metal roadside markers installed by Daughters of the American Revolution and/or the State of Texas are not included.

relevant and creating engaging experiences, responding to visitor trends and preferences, and keeping up-to-date with technology.

Other institutions struggle to create an optimal visitor experience due to an overabundance of artifacts and information, and have been unable to keep up with changing visitor expectations related to content and presentation. The interpretive theme matrix included in this document is intended to assist with this effort.

There is a pressing need to digitize collections and upgrade many interior exhibits along the Trail to respond to visitor needs and expectations and incorporate available technologies.

Interior interpretive exhibits currently found along the Trail can be categorized as follows:

Primary

The story of El Camino Real de los Tejas is a primary part of the story and exhibits related to the Trail are a significant part of the exhibits.

Secondary

The story of El Camino Real de los Tejas is a secondary part of the story and exhibits related to the Trail are only a portion of the exhibits.



Mission Tejas State Park Visitor Center, Grapeland, TX. Courtesy image.



Stone Fort Museum, Nacogdoches, TX. Courtesy image.

Marginal

Exhibits dedicated to El Camino Real de los Tejas are minimal or temporary and only account for tertiary interpretive themes, yet these are still important in telling a complete story.

As of July 2024, there are no facilities where interior exhibits are entirely dedicated to telling the story of El Camino Real de los Tejas.

In addition, the Trail Association maintains a traveling exhibit available for use by interested partners.¹

Public Art

A number of creative, thematic public and performance art pieces exist that express themes related to the Trail, such as the “Camino Crankie” performance piece. In addition, partners report that an opera about Bernardo de Galvez is in development.²

Special Events

In October 2024, the Trail Association organized the first annual El Camino Real Day in recognition of the 20th anniversary of the designation of the Trail (October 18, 2004).

Youth and Educational Programming

Junior Ranger Program

An online Junior Ranger activity, available in Spanish and English, about the Trail is available from the NPS Trail website. Participants who complete the activities and email their responses to the National Trails Office will subsequently receive a Junior Ranger badge in the mail.

The Junior Ranger activity is also offered periodically at events by National Trails Office staff and partners such as the Trail Association and San Antonio Missions National Historical Park.

Curriculum-based Educational Programming

A number of educational resources from a variety of partners cover a wide range of concepts related to the Trail, touching on cultural groups, historical events and people, and early life. These curriculum resources have been evaluated against current learning standards for Texas and Louisiana, as well as the proposed interpretive theme structure for the Trail. This assessment appears in Appendix A.

¹ <https://www.elcaminorealdelostejas.org/travel-the-trail/camino-real-traveling-exhibit/>

² Galvez conducted cattle drives along the Trail in support of the American Revolution.

Issues and Influences

A number of factors that affect interpretation and the visitor experience were noted by the planning team, including:

Competing Interests

Both interpreters and visitors along the Trail must balance a variety of interests. Most often, El Camino Real de los Tejas will be only one among many topics for interpretation, and the Trail not of the highest priority.

At many of the sites offering Trail-related interpretation, the overall significance (or even mention of the name “El Camino Real de los Tejas”) of the Trail gets lost, especially at sites that are important to Texas’ journey to independence. At present, the frequency or depth of Trail interpretation at different sites varies widely, perhaps largely dependent on the knowledge and/or interests of site staff.

While it is important to preserve knowledge of the sequence of events for these important milestones in state history, these sites would benefit from a greater sense of context as well as a revisiting of interpretive principles to ensure that visitors’ time and attention spans are well considered.

Some sites are currently, or in the near future, revisiting their interpretive master plans (such as Presidio La Bahia). With guidance from this interpretive plan, Trail administrators, partners, and stakeholders can work together to ensure that Trail interpretation is delivered consistently and strategically, to levels of detail and with varying methods as appropriate. Collaboration in these planning efforts with Trail administration and partners could help improve interpretation of the Trail and optimize the visitor experience at the individual site level.

The aim should be to create a baseline level of using the Trail as context along its entire length that increases visitors’ comprehension and curiosity, complementing rather than taking away from a site’s other interpretive needs.

Trail Wayfinding

While a relatively young Trail (designation occurred just 20 years ago in 2004), directional or wayfinding road signage is in place in all Trail counties’ rights-of-way in Texas, as well as along the main corridor of the Trail in Sabine and Natchitoches parishes in Louisiana. Development of road signage is led by the National Trails Office and Trail Association and facilitated by each county and parish. With the continued efforts of these entities, Trail marking will continue to improve over time. For more information about the pedestrian and road family of signs, see Appendix D.

Trail Awareness

The name “El Camino Real” is well known along its length. Less commonly understood is what the Trail actually is and why it is important. There is a need to clarify the significance, purpose, value, and recreational opportunities of the Trail (as a National Historic Trail and why that is significant) for the surrounding communities and the visiting public. Providing this information will help people plan how they use the Trail, understand and share what they know with others, and, perhaps, become stewards of the Trail.

Many sites are currently interpreting the Trail, but may not realize it. When visiting sites along the Trail, this planning team had a number of encounters with site staff who did not think El Camino Real de los Tejas applied to their site, even though the topics being interpreted are directly related. Conducting targeted outreach to individual sites could help bridge this gap in awareness.

Resource Protection

Physical remnants of the Trail are important features to preserve; once they are destroyed, they cannot be replaced. Individual structures and lengths of swales may be at risk from private property owners or their agents who are unaware of the significance of the Trail and the need for protection. On a larger scale, industrial, commercial, or residential development remains as a threat to the Trail’s integrity. Interpretation can play a crucial role in educating both visitors and the general public about the need to protect significant resources along the Trail.

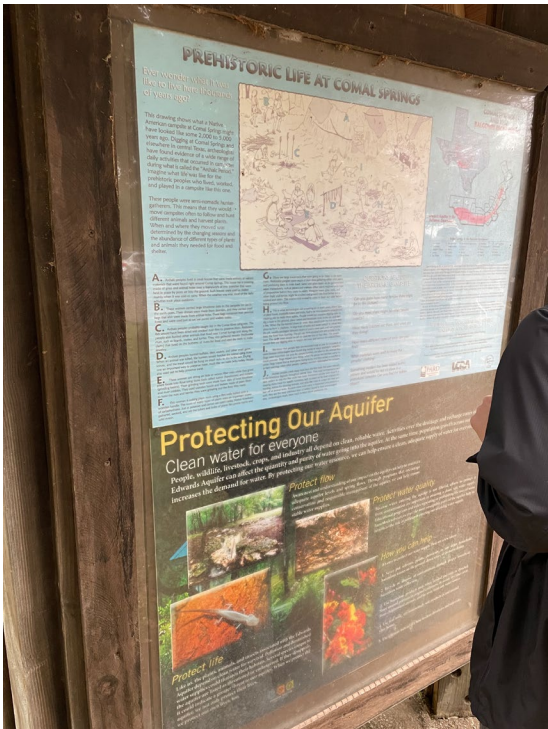
In an effort to bring greater awareness to this threat, the Trail Association will soon release a Trail Resource Protection guide for the corridor between San Antonio and Austin—the most rapidly developing area along the Trail.

A Trail With Many Collaborators

El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail is administered by the National Park Service, but the sheer number of miles of Trail and number of individual partners makes it a challenge to coordinate. The Trail Association has been successful in its dedicated efforts to create a sense of connection and cohesion among partners—efforts to continue and expand this work, including the continued development of chapters, should be supported.



El Camino Real de los Tejas Visitor Center at Goliad State Park, Goliad, TX. Courtesy image.



Comal Springs, New Braunfels, TX. Courtesy image.



Fort Saint Jean Baptiste State Historic Site, Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana. Courtesy image.



McKinney Falls State Park Visitor Center, Austin, TX. Courtesy image.

Recommendations



Recommendations

El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail offers visitors a wealth of existing and potential opportunities to explore and enjoy the Trail's many significant touchstones—from cultural, military, and natural history to personalities, historic settings, persistent artifacts of trade, cultural events, and recreational opportunities, among others.

The following recommendations were synthesized from a variety of input sources—stakeholder workshops, interviews with individual stakeholders and partners, and inventory of existing and potential opportunities. During this process, several major categories of suggestions emerged as critically important. While the specifics varied, the majority of partners and stakeholders wanted recommendations related to these focus areas:

1. Get the word out
2. Prioritize interpretive media
3. Promote Trail-wide youth and educational programming
4. Build capacity

To address these focus areas, the planning team has identified a number of strategies to implement over the foreseeable future. Implementation of these recommendations will require effort by and collaboration between Trail administrators and partners.

Previous: **Witte Museum, San Antonio, TX.** Courtesy photo.

FOCUS ONE: Get the Word Out

1. Facilitate greater public awareness of the Trail.
 - a. Continue efforts to mark and maintain marking of the Trail.
 - i. Continue enhancing route and site identification signage.
 - ii. Consider adding a short phrase to site identification signage that introduces the interpretive theme.
 - b. On the main Trail website, tag or otherwise indicate which sites offer interpretation, are located on the Trail, and/or offer information about the Trail (without interpretation). For example, the Natchitoches Parish Convention and Visitors Bureau offers information to visitors in the form of brochures, pamphlets, rack cards, and perhaps a desk attendant, but no interpretive information.
 - c. Pursue opportunities to bring Trail outreach and interpretation into community venues and institutions (libraries, senior centers, city parks, community gardens, walking and biking paths) along the Trail.
 - d. Explore opportunities to partner with state tourism offices to feature the Trail in multimedia and advertising campaigns.
 - e. Emphasize that the Trail is “under our feet” in many locations and help visitors understand where they can go to experience sites associated sites.
 - f. Emphasize that the Trail is binational and existed as a key trade route between north and south before the advent of US and Mexico borders.
 - g. Explore opportunities to host “get acquainted” programs or conversations with local elected and administrative officials to introduce the Trail.
 - h. Have a birthday party! The Trail Association will be 20 years old in 2027. Association chapters and affiliates can coordinate with the Trail Association to mark the occasion with events, special programs, guest speakers, etc. in honor of this non-profit organization that continues to play a critical role in preserving and interpreting the sites along the Trail.
 - i. Have another birthday party! The National Historic Trail will be 25 years old in 2029. This could be marked with a year-long series of special events, field trips, and programming to generate increased awareness and engagement in the communities along the Trail.
 - j. Explore opportunities to get the Trail included in travel-focused guidebooks and websites (Lonely Planet guides, AAA TourBook for Texas, Fodor’s, and more).
2. Facilitate greater communication and collaboration amongst Trail partners.
 - a. Create opportunities for partners to network and share resources.
 - i. Create and maintain a directory of all Trail partner sites with site names, ownership/affiliation, addresses, phone numbers, institutional email addresses, Trail passport stamp availability, and key staff members’ contact information.

- ii. Determine a method for an up-to-date seasonal calendar of interpretive programs, tours, and events hosted by all Trail partners to be available for visitors. Ideally, this capability could be automated, even if hosted by the Trail Association or other partner.
- iii. Encourage partners to cross-promote other sites (in print, digital, and social media).
- iv. Encourage partners to work together on special events and initiatives that increase the reach of individual efforts, such as El Camino Real Day.
- v. Encourage partners to affiliate and engage with the Trail Association, either through social media, email newsletter, or other methods.
- vi. Encourage the Trail Association to host or facilitate a publicly-accessible database or clearinghouse of Trail-related resources, including photos, maps, and other information. (The main Trail website is unable to serve as this resource due to various limitations, including capacity.)
- vii. Consider developing a Trail partner-focused website with a blog feature for various partners to provide updates on initiatives at their site. This would help other partners see other initiatives and happenings along the length of the Trail. Each time an interpretive sign or other media is finalized, it could be shared with all the partners along the Trail, too, to facilitate ideas and resource-related information. This could serve as a publicly-accessible clearinghouse of Trail-related resources, including photos, maps, oral histories, and other information (see additional suggestions related to training described in Focus Four). This could be developed and maintained by the Trail Association as part of its existing website or by another entity, and would require periodic reminders to partners that these resources exist.
- viii. Encourage collaboration between different sites that tell the same or similar stories.
- b. Cultivate new partner engagement.
 - i. Conduct outreach to new partners to increase awareness of the Trail and its locational and topical relevance. A separate spreadsheet detailing potential new partners has been developed as part of this interpretive plan.

Partner Resources

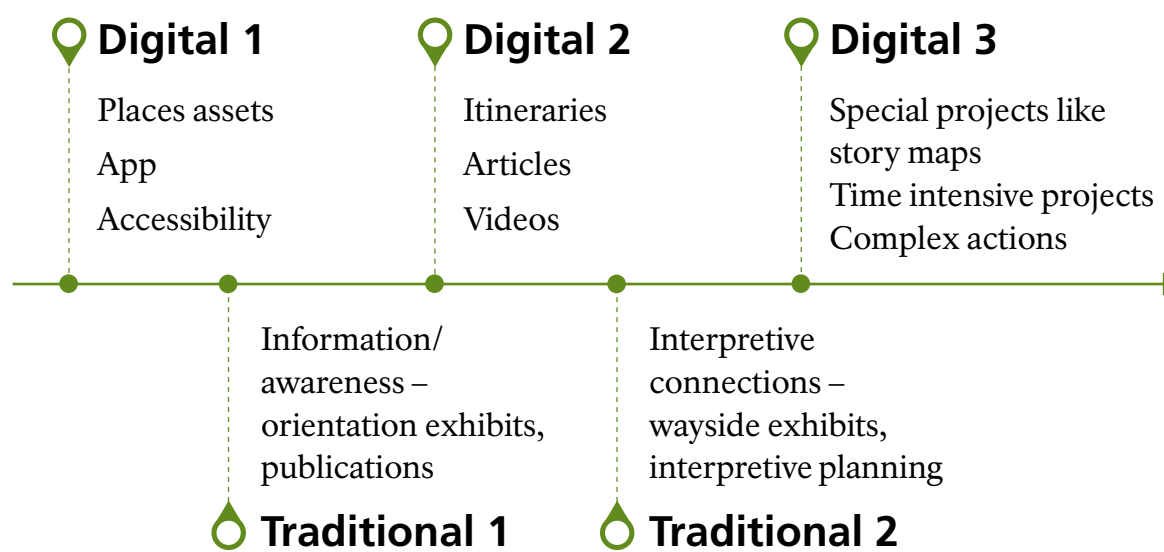
[NPS partner website](#)

[Available National Trails Products](#)

[National Historic Trails Digital Interpretive Media Opportunities](#)

FOCUS TWO: Prioritize Interpretive Media

1. Continue developing digital Trail media products.
 - a. Continue enhancing the main nps.gov website for the Trail. Partner websites (including the Trail Association) should link to and enhance content available on the main site. (For example, a Trail-wide events calendar and links to Google street views of Trail sites may be appropriate additions.)
 - b. Promote the addition of new Places Assets as a primary step in developing new and enhancing additional partnerships.
 - c. Make existing media more widely available.
 - i. Increase Section 508 compliance so that digital media created by partners may be shared by NPS.
 - d. All NPS-generated visitor-oriented print materials (site bulletins, etc) about the Trail or individual sites should be available on the website.
 - e. Promote and consider enhancing the existing series of web-based themed itineraries that focus on different aspects of the Trail.
 - f. Explore the development of downloadable, self-guided audio and/or multimedia tours to enrich the visitor experience of the Trail.
2. Continue offering interpretive publications for the Trail.
 - a. Revise Trail materials.
 - i. Ensure the NPS-produced unigrid brochure is updated periodically and distributed widely.



Interpretive media offered by the National Trails Office Interpretation Team

What is a Places Asset?

The first step in the process of partnering with NPS on interpretive digital media is a places asset created specifically for an individual Trail site. This is a combination of text, geographic description, and one or more photos entered into a database. Once created, the places asset is shared on NPS.gov (the National Park Service Trail website) and the NPS app.

For Trail development and partner site promotion, places assets are the only way for sites to be featured on the Trail website and in the NPS app. The benefits of having a places asset for a Trail site include recognized connection with the National Park Service, improved ranking of a site in internet searches, and visibility in the NPS app. The Trail website and app are trusted and primary trip-planning sources for visitors.

El Camino Real de los Tejas NHT website (NPS.gov) uses “places assets” to identify locations of resources, whether they are actively available for the public to visit or not. These places are often sites for the public to visit, but occasionally they also serve to share important sites that are key to understanding the Trail that are not open to public visitation. Sites that are not regularly open to the public may list conditions for visiting or viewing. If not available for visiting or viewing, or if sites may contain sensitive resources, the exact location may not be listed.

Digital Project Options for NPS Websites and Mobile App

The National Trails Office offers a variety of interpretive digital media opportunities to help share your Trail site and history with the public. Most opportunities are hosted on the [National Park Service Trail website \(NPS.gov\)](https://www.nps.gov/trails) and the National Park Service (NPS) app. These include:

- Places Asset
- Videos
- Exhibits with Audio Description
- Historical Articles
- Tours & Itineraries
- Digital Exhibits
- StoryMaps

Details, including [how to request a Places Asset \(site webpage\)](#) or [plan additional digital projects, are available here](#).

3. Continue supporting social media engagement.

All partners and volunteers can take an active part in promoting the Trail through social media, including Facebook, Instagram, and X. On the official NPS Facebook page (El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail), for example, individuals can promote the page across their own social networks, share news and observations, post photos, “like” the page, and suggest items to feature.

- a. Adopt a consistent hashtag, or series of hashtags (#elcaminotejas and #elcaminorealdelostejas).
- b. Develop and distribute a social media policy for the Trail. Include information on how to respond to critical or incorrect user-generated social media entries.
- c. Solicit partner contributions to social media pages featuring the Trail. For example, partners with an active and updated Places Asset could be asked to make at least one contribution per quarter, assigned semiannually, or some other arrangement.
- d. Invite visitors to contribute their own photos and videos related to the Trail.
- e. Regularly feature content related to the need for preservation of heritage resources.
- f. Consider implementing periodic or regularly scheduled trivia-style or other audience participation posts that invite visitors to identify a location, artifact, or other element with a connection to the Trail.
- g. Provide publication-ready social media content for partner sites.

4. Develop new or expanded wayside interpretation along the Trail, using the prioritization process described in the sidebar on the following page.

- a. At a minimum, all partners involved with the Trail should be cognizant of the need to integrate Trail interpretation into any forthcoming, new, or proposed wayside signs.
- b. Incorporate interpretation that provides a broader context for an individual site in relation to the Trail. This might be accomplished through a standardized context panel available from NPS.
- c. Trail-branded signage shall have a consistent look and feel, whether through the official NPS exhibit template (available when NPS is involved in development and design), or use of the official Trail logo. Where partners have pre-existing branding and design guidelines, incorporate the Trail logo and name as appropriate. This can best be accomplished when the managing partner determines that new wayside exhibits are needed, or that current exhibits are out-of-date, inaccurate, or in poor condition and need to be replaced. For more information about the official NHT logo, see Appendix D. For more information about exhibit project options for Trail partners, see the next page.

Exhibit Project Options for Trail Partners

If you are considering an exhibit project and are interested in working with the National Trails Office, please take these options into account. The office has limited capacity for full design projects but there are a range of alternatives through which we can support partner efforts to interpret the Trail. Contact the office for advice: ntir_information@nps.gov.

Option 1: Submit a request for a National Park Service-designed exhibit. More information is included below. Key features are NPS design features such as the recognizable black band and El Camino Real de los Tejas NHT logo.

Option 2: Ask for technical assistance to plan your project. National Trails staff are a resource to better understand the process of planning, designing, and fabricating interpretive exhibits. They can also guide you through finding a contractor that meets your needs and budget.

Option 3: Work with El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail Association to plan and design an exhibit. This connects your site to the Trail and the official Trail partner organization.

Option 4: Request a connection to the Trail through permission to use the Trail logo. These requests are taken on a case-by-case basis if your exhibit's content and location directly connect to the Trail. Products are expected to meet best practices and accessibility standards. Contact the National Trails Office.

Exhibit Project Considerations

If you or your organization decides to request a National Park Service-designed exhibit, here are some key considerations the National Trails Office applies to requests for in-house design as well as any project funded through US government sources.

- Affiliation with the Trail
- Site is welcoming, safe, accessible, and iconic
- Potential audience reach
- New or underrepresented stories
- Support from landowner or partner organization
- Readiness to initiate the interpretive planning process
- Funding availability
- Section 508 compliance
- Understanding that these are multiyear, complex projects
- Existing project queue

5. Expand interior exhibits.
 - a. Create several small, easily portable traveling exhibits (perhaps consisting of one or two roll-up stands per set) about the Trail for use at public lectures, community events, festivals, public libraries, and special events. These portable exhibits would be in addition to the larger, more extensive exhibit developed by the Trail Association and could be checked out by partners for use as needed.
 - b. Prepare a Trail-specific panel for use with partners' existing exhibits. This could be as simple as one freestanding panel with the Trail logo, brief introductory text, and a QR code linking to the main Trail website.
 - c. Continue engagement with San Antonio's World Heritage Center as exhibits are developed.
 - d. Begin discussions with Casa Navarro to incorporate the Trail into exhibits and/or programming.
 - e. Begin discussions with the Witte Museum to incorporate the Trail into exhibits and/or programming.
 - f. Begin discussions with Presidio La Bahia to incorporate the Trail into exhibits and/or programming.
 - g. Begin discussions with the Bexar Heritage Center to incorporate the Trail into exhibits and/or programming.
 - h. Begin discussions with the Republic of the Rio Grande Museum to incorporate the Trail into exhibits and/or programming.
 - i. Begin discussions with the Border Heritage Museum to incorporate the Trail into exhibits and/or programming.
 - j. Began discussions with the Institute of Texan Cultures to incorporate the Trail into exhibits and/or programming (whether online or at a new location).
 - k. Begin discussions with the Mexican American Museum of Texas to incorporate the Trail into exhibits and/or programming (whether online or at a physical location).
 - l. Begin discussions with the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame & Northwest Louisiana History Museum to incorporate the Trail into exhibits and/or programming.
 - m. Begin discussions with the Spanish Governor's Palace to incorporate the Trail into exhibits.
 - n. Begin discussions with relevant state and national parks to incorporate the Trail into exhibits and/or programming.
6. Pursue Trail-themed public art opportunities.
 - a. Work with local entities to create a series of Trail-themed murals, sculptures, and other public art installations along the Trail.
 - b. Promote existing and encourage additional Trail-related performance art.

Suggested New Waysides

The prioritized sites for new waysides fall into three categories: (1) places with higher visitation, including places where existing interpretation of the period of significance may be excellent but the Trail itself is not highlighted, (2) places with older signs that do not meet accessibility standards or are otherwise in disrepair, and (3) sites with significance that are currently lacking any level of Trail interpretation.

This list is a starting point and is not exhaustive at this stage of the planning process. Additional sites can be suggested by contacting the National Trails Office.

Trail information should be added to existing outdoor interpretation at:

- Bastrop State Park, TX¹
- Cane River Creole National Historical Park, LA
- Casa Navarro State Historic Site, TX
- Comal Springs, TX
- Downtown San Antonio and River Walk, TX
- Goliad State Park & Historic Site (including Mission Nuestra Señora del Espiritu Santo de Zuñiga)
- Historic Goliad Courthouse Square, TX
- Medina River Greenway, TX
- Mission Dolores State Historic Site, TX
- Mission San Antonio de Valero, TX (The Alamo)
- Monument Hill and Kreische Brewery State Historic Site, TX
- Presidio La Bahia, TX
- Rancho de Pérez & Dolores Applewhite Crossing, TX
- San Marcos Springs, TX

New wayside installations should be added at:

- Blair Woods Nature Preserve, TX
- Downtown Natchitoches, LA (replacement)
- El Camino Park in Milam, TX
- El Camino Real Park in Nacogdoches, TX
- El Camino Real Paddling Trail access points in Bastrop, TX
- Faust Street Footbridge, TX

¹ A new wayside addressing the Trail (text and logo) for this location is in fabrication as of December 2024.

- Fort Boggy State Park, TX
- Fort Jesup State Historic Site, LA
- Fort McIntosh, TX
- Gaines-Oliphant House, TX
- Guadalupe River Crossing Overlook, TX¹
- Hays County Courthouse, TX
- Helton Nature Park, TX
- Historic Downtown Nacogdoches, TX (including pocket park)
- La Villita Historic District, TX
- Laguna Espantosa, TX
- Main & Military Plazas, TX
- Marketplace Pavilion or Civic Building in Cuero, TX
- Nuestra Señora de los Dolores Hacienda, TX
- Nashville-on-the-Brazos, TX (DAR Centennial Park)
- Old San Antonio Road and Hwy 21 Junction, TX
- Rancheria Grande, TX
- Rye Loop Swales, TX
- Sabine Parish Tourist & Recreation Commission, LA
- San Antonio Greenway Trails, TX
- San Fernando Cathedral, TX
- San Marcos de Neve, TX
- San Pedro Creek Culture Park, TX
- Spanish Governor's Palace, TX
- St. Augustine Plaza, Laredo, TX
- Sterne-Hoya House, TX
- Toledo Bend Tourist Information Center, LA
- Treviño-Urbe Fort, TX

¹ Stakeholders have suggested additional waysides be placed at publicly accessible river and international border crossings, where appropriate.

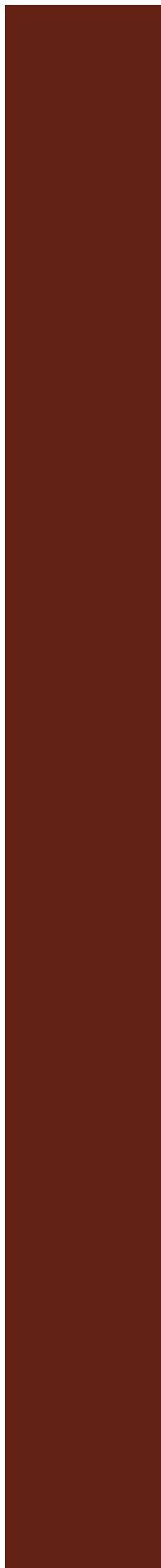
FOCUS THREE: Promote Trail-wide Youth and Education Programming

1. Create a central repository of existing and any future educational curricula related to the Trail, ideally as part of the partner-focused website described in Focus Four.
2. Market the available resources to educators and other school leaders.
3. Create and promote digital resources with which Trail sites and other entities can create their own “traveling trunks.” This list would include a list of suggested materials to compile as well as an assortment of sample activities.
4. Promote the development and facilitation of professional development opportunities across the Trail for teachers focused on the Trail. Investigate partnering with higher education institutions or other organizations to award continuing education credits for professional training, as appropriate.
5. Consider developing an NPS Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program for the Trail that offers a stipend to an educator in exchange for educational program development (such as curriculum development, outreach, virtual program development, or other capacity-building activities).
6. Continue to support the Trail-wide Junior Ranger program and distribute materials to additional partner sites.

FOCUS FOUR: Build Capacity

1. Train interpreters about the Trail.
 - a. The partner-focused website described in Focus One would have a resource library component, including an archive of presentations by subject matter experts; educational curricula; photos, maps, and documents; and examples of effective programming for different audience types that could be adapted and serve as inspiration for various partners along the length of the Trail.
 - b. Create a digital Interpreters' Toolkit for the Trail. This document should include basic factual and interpretive materials about the Trail, including the Trail's theme matrix, visitor objectives (as described in this interpretive plan), site-specific fact sheets, link to the partner directory, and sample images of Trail features.
 - c. Encourage trained interpreters to share their training with other visitor services personnel and volunteers within their site or region. These additional trainees might include front desk staff, gift shop and bookstore workers, fee collectors, safety and security personnel, and any others on the front lines of customer/visitor services.
 - d. Encourage Trail partner interpreters and volunteers to seek professional training through organizations such as the National Association for Interpretation or inexpensive online courses through the Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands at Indiana State University (www.eppley.org) and other vendors. Evaluate having one or more contractors offering this training free of charge to interested partners and volunteers.¹
2. Train other visitor contact personnel about the Trail.
 - a. Host a series of "get acquainted" programs to introduce the Trail to representatives of tourism, hospitality, and heritage interests along the Trail.
3. Support capacity building for the Trail Association.
 - a. As the official partner for the Trail, the Trail Association plays an important role in working with other partners and helping the public understand the existence and significance of the Trail. It operates through a core staff and volunteer board, attracts members and newsletter subscribers, and a number of geographically-focused chapters of volunteers. The Trail Association will need to grow capacity in order to enact recommendations contained in this report, specifically related to enhanced partner coordination and training resources.

¹ Texas Parks & Wildlife Department has interpretive trainers on staff and could be accessed for such training.



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Implementation



This implementation chart is designed to help El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail set priorities and make concrete, measurable progress on the recommendations in this plan over the next seven to ten years. Given the difficulties of predicting funding resources, it is understood that implementing these recommendations will be a gradual process, and that Trail decision makers will need to reevaluate and make adjustments in the plan periodically as circumstances change. This is as it should be: At its best, a long-range interpretive plan is a flexible, living document that inspires, rather than locks in, a Trail's continuing step-by-step progress toward realizing its interpretive goals.

The following chart summarizes the recommendations and places them in three categories:

- Short-term recommendations are proposed for action within the next three years.
- Mid-term recommendations are proposed for action within the next four to six years.
- Long-term recommendations are proposed for action within seven to ten years or more.

Recommendations with checks in all three categories should be viewed as ongoing, continuous activities.

The cost projection column provides a rough estimate of the relative costs of each recommendation. The – symbol denotes activities that can be completed without outside expenditures. The symbol \$ estimates a moderate cost (under \$50,000 per year or per project); the \$\$ indicates expenditures of \$50,000 to \$100,000; and the \$\$\$ indicates major expenditures, usually capital projects such as facilities construction or remodeling, exhibit installations, visitor transportation vehicles, or other costly items or projects.

Previous: **Faust Street Bridge, New Braunfels, TX.** Courtesy photo.

Implementation Matrix

Recommendations	Who's Involved?	Under-way?	Costs	Short-term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-6 years)	Long-term (7+ years)
FOCUS ONE: Get the Word Out						
1. Facilitate greater public awareness of the Trail.						
a. Continue efforts to mark and maintain marking of the Trail.	Trail administrators, association & partners	X	\$	X	X	X
b. Indicate which sites offer interpretation, are located on the Trail, and/or offer information about the Trail (without interpretation) on the Trail website.	Trail administrators		–	X	X	X
c. Bring Trail outreach and interpretation into community venues and institutions.	Trail administrators, association & partners		–	X	X	X
d. Partner with state tourism offices to feature the Trail.	Trail administrators, association & partners		–	X	X	X
e. Help visitors understand the Trail is “under their feet” and where they can go to experience sites associated with it.	Trail administrators, association & partners	X	–	X	X	X
f. Emphasize that the Trail is binational.	Trail administrators, association & partners		–	X	X	X
g. Host “get acquainted” programs or conversations to introduce the Trail.	Trail association & partners		\$	X	X	X
h. Have a 20th birthday party for the Trail Association (2027).	Trail administrators, association & partners		\$	X		
i. Have a 25th birthday party for the Trail (2029).	Trail administrators, association & partners		\$	X		
j. Get the Trail included in travel-focused guidebooks and websites.	Trail administrators, association & partners		–	X	X	X
2. Facilitate greater communication and collaboration amongst Trail partners.						
a. Create opportunities for partners to network and share resources.						
i. Create and maintain a directory of all Trail partner sites.	Trail association & partners		\$	X	X	X
ii. Make an up-to-date seasonal calendar of interpretive programs, tours, and events hosted by all Trail partners available for visitors.	Trail association & partners		\$	X	X	X

Recommendations	Who's Involved?	Under-way?	Costs	Short-term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-6 years)	Long-term (7+ years)
iii. Encourage partners to cross-promote other sites (in print, digital, and social media).	Trail association & partners	X	–	X	X	X
iv. Encourage partners to work together on special events and initiatives.	Trail association & partners	X	–	X	X	X
v. Encourage partners to affiliate and engage with the Trail Association.	Trail association & partners	X	–	X	X	X
vi. Host or facilitate a publicly accessible database or clearinghouse of Trail-related resources.	Trail association		\$		X	
vii. Develop a Trail partner-focused website with a blog feature for various partners to provide updates on initiatives at their site. ¹	Trail association & partners		\$	X		
viii. Encourage collaboration between different sites that tell the same types of stories.	Trail administrators, association & partners		–	X	X	X
b. Cultivate new partner engagement.						
i. Conduct outreach to new partners.	Trail administrators, association & partners	X	–	X	X	X
FOCUS TWO: Prioritize Interpretive Media						
1. Continue developing digital Trail media products.						
a. Continue enhancing the main nps.gov website for the Trail.	Trail administrators	X	–	X	X	X
b. Promote the addition of new Places Assets.	Trail administrators, association & partners	X	–	X	X	X
c. Make existing media more widely available (increase Section 508 compliance).	Trail administrators, association & partners	X	–	X	X	X
d. Make all NPS-generated visitor-oriented Trail-related print materials available on the website.	Trail administrators	X	–	X	X	X
e. Promote web-based themed itineraries.	Trail administrators		–	X	X	X
f. Explore the development of downloadable, self-guided audio and/or multimedia tours.	Trail administrators	X	\$	X	X	
2. Continue offering interpretive publications for the Trail.						
a. Revise and distribute Trail materials.	Trail administrators		\$\$	X	X	X
3. Continue supporting social media engagement.						

¹ See the full recommendation on page 62.

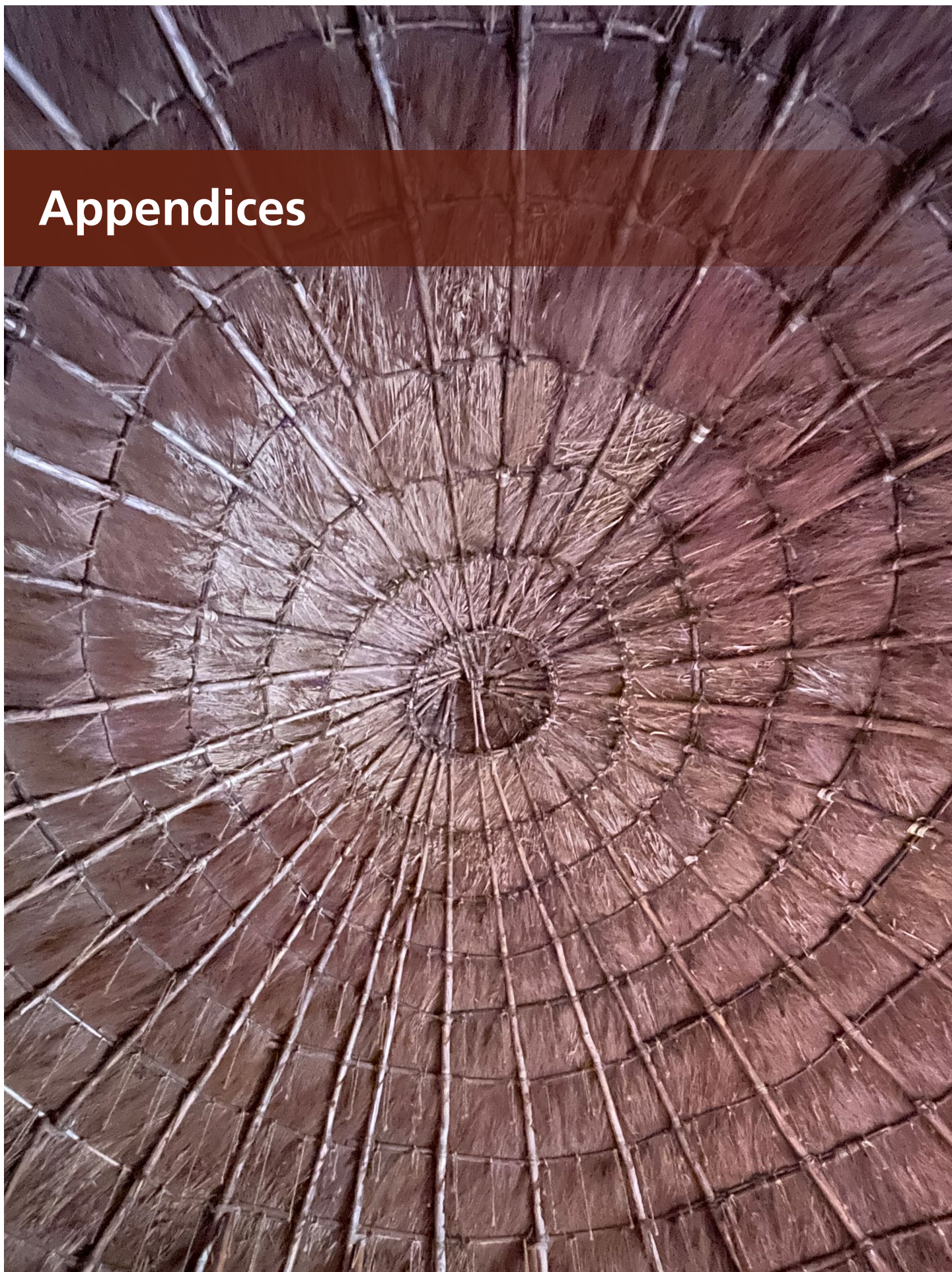
Recommendations	Who's Involved?	Under-way?	Costs	Short-term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-6 years)	Long-term (7+ years)
a. Adopt a consistent hashtag, or series of hashtags.	Trail association & partners	X	–			
b. Develop and distribute a social media policy for the Trail.	Trail administrators & association		–	X		
c. Solicit partner contributions to social media pages featuring the Trail.	Trail administrators & association		–	X	X	X
d. Invite visitors to contribute their own photos and videos related to the Trail.	Trail administrators, association & partners		–	X	X	X
e. Regularly feature content related to the need for preservation of heritage resources.	Trail administrators, association & partners		–	X	X	X
f. Consider periodic or regularly scheduled trivia-style or other audience participation posts.	Trail administrators, association & partners		–	X	X	X
g. Provide publication-ready social media content for partner sites.	Trail administrators, association & partners		–	X	X	X
4. Develop new or expanded wayside interpretation along the Trail.						
a. Integrate Trail interpretation into any forthcoming, new, or proposed wayside signs.	Trail partners	X	\$	X	X	X
b. Incorporate standardized NPS context panels, or another broad context.	Trail association & partners		\$	X	X	X
c. Trail-branded signage shall have a consistent look and feel, whether through the official NPS exhibit template (available when NPS is involved in development and design), or use of the official Trail logo. Where partners have pre-existing branding and design guidelines, incorporate the Trail logo and name as appropriate.	Trail association & partners	X	\$	X	X	X
5. Expand interior exhibits.						
a. Create portable traveling exhibits about the Trail.	Trail administrators & association		\$		X	
b. Prepare a Trail-specific panel for use with partners' existing exhibits.	Trail administrators		\$		X	
c. Continue engagement with San Antonio's World Heritage Center.	Trail administrators & association		–		X	
d. Begin discussions with Casa Navarro.	Trail administrators & association		–		X	
e. Begin discussions with the Witte Museum.	Trail administrators & association		–		X	

Recommendations	Who's Involved?	Under-way?	Costs	Short-term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-6 years)	Long-term (7+ years)
f. Begin discussions with Presidio La Bahia.	Trail administrators & association		–		X	
g. Begin discussions with the Bexar Heritage Center.	Trail administrators & association		–		X	
h. Begin discussions with the Republic of the Rio Grande Museum.	Trail administrators & association		–		X	
i. Begin discussions with the Border Heritage Museum.	Trail administrators & association		–		X	
j. Began discussions with the Institute of Texan Cultures.	Trail administrators & association		–		X	
k. Begin discussions with the Mexican American Museum of Texas.	Trail administrators & association		–		X	
l. Begin discussions with the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame & Northwest Louisiana History Museum.	Trail administrators & association		–		X	
m. Begin discussions with the Spanish Governor's Palace.	Trail administrators & association		–		X	
n. Begin discussions with relevant state and national parks to incorporate the Trail into exhibits and/or programming.	Trail administrators & association		–		X	
6. Pursue Trail-themed public art opportunities.						
a. Create a series of Trail-themed murals, sculptures, and other public art installations along the Trail.	Trail administrators, association & partners		\$\$		X	X
b. Promote Trail-related performance art.	Trail association & partners	X	–	X	X	X
FOCUS THREE: Promote Trail-wide Youth and Education Programming						
1. Create a central repository of existing and any future educational curricula related to the Trail.	Trail administrators & association		–	X	X	X
2. Market the available educational resources.	Trail association		\$	X	X	X
3. Create and promote digital resources for "traveling trunks."	Trail administrators & association		\$		X	X
4. Promote the development and facilitation of professional development opportunities across the Trail for teachers.	Trail administrators, association & partners		\$		X	
5. Consider developing an NPS Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program for the Trail.	Trail administrators & association		\$			X
6. Continue the Trail-wide Junior Ranger program and distribute materials to additional partner sites.	Trail administrators	X	–	X	X	X

Recommendations	Who's Involved?	Under-way?	Costs	Short-term (1-3 years)	Mid-term (4-6 years)	Long-term (7+ years)
FOCUS FOUR: Build Capacity						
1. Train interpreters about the Trail.						
a. Include a resource library component in the partner-focused website described in Focus One.	Trail association		\$	X		
b. Create a digital Interpreters' Toolkit for the Trail.	Trail administrators & association		\$		X	
c. Encourage trained interpreters to share their training with other visitor services personnel and volunteers within their site or region.	Trail association & partners		—	X	X	X
d. Encourage Trail partner interpreters and volunteers to seek professional training in interpretation.	Trail administrators, association & partners		\$	X	X	X
2. Train other visitor contact personnel about the Trail.						
a. Host a series of "get acquainted" programs to introduce the Trail to representatives of tourism, hospitality, and heritage interests along the Trail.	Trail association		\$			X
3. Support capacity building for the Trail Association.	Trail administrators & association	X	\$\$	X	X	X

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Appendices



Appendix A—Educational Analysis

Educational Analysis for El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail
Prepared by Kathryn M Dominguez, M. Ed. for Conservation By Design
Revised October 2023

Overview

As a means to connect El Camino de Los Tejas to various audiences, this educational report addresses alignment among the interpretive themes, educational standards, and existing lesson plans. The following overarching and compelling question guided the findings: What is the impact of El Camino Real on Texas and Louisiana History? Texas and Louisiana K-12 social studies and sciences standards were identified to correlate with each theme and lesson plans were vetted for connections to cultivate learning opportunities within each theme. Potential sites along the trail were determined as places to link lessons and themes to a location.

The preliminary report contains the following contents:

1. New Texas Educational Laws Summary
2. Texas Social Studies Standards Summary
3. Louisiana Social Standards Summary
4. Existing Educational Resources Evaluation
5. Science Standards Summary
6. Recommendations
7. Limitations

New Texas Educational Laws Summary

Review of laws impacting Texas educational standards

HB3979

On September 1, 2021, HB3979 was passed to make changes in how civics is taught in public schools. Additional topics were added to focus on American self-governance, different levels of government, and important historical documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the US Constitution, and writings by the Founding Fathers. New guidelines for teachers were included in the bill which entail:

- Schools or school districts should not force teachers to talk about current events or controversial public issues.
- However, if they do, they must present all viewpoints equally.
- Teachers can't require students to do work or get credit for being part of organizations that try to influence laws (lobbying) or promote specific social or political ideas.

- Teachers and schools can't make students do activities that involve trying to persuade government officials to take certain actions.
- Teachers and school employees can't be required to participate in training or therapy that stereotypes or blames people based on their race or sex.
- Teachers and schools can't teach certain ideas like one race or sex being superior, individuals being inherently racist or sexist because of their race or sex, or promoting discrimination based on race or sex. They also can't make students feel bad about their race or sex.
- They can't say that concepts like hard work ethics are racist or sexist.

These new rules were applied immediately in the 2021-2022 school year.

SB3

A second bill was passed by the Senate SB3 on September 2, 2021 with revisions and amendments to the proposal. This bill focuses on changes to the curriculum standards and providing teachers with additional training. The topics of the curriculum are related to civics knowledge, current events discussions, simulations of government processes, media literacy, and ways to teach civics in subjects other than social studies.

The bill updates the social studies curriculum to include topics like the foundations of American self-government, civic engagement, government structures, and historical documents. It emphasizes the ability to analyze information sources, engage in civil discourse, and participate responsibly in a democracy. It also highlights the importance of civic participation, commitment to the United States, and free speech.

Various topics were crossed out in the proposal to be removed from the education code which directly relate to the Trail, such as:

- The history of Native Americans
- The Indian Removal Act
- Even though these specific terms were removed from the educational code, the concepts were not omitted in the revised standards. A second session occurred on November 18, 2021, which made a few of the changes and added a key part that supports teachers:
- Nothing in this section may be construed as limiting the teaching of or instruction in the essential knowledge and skills (i.e., the TEKS) adopted under TEC, Chapter 28, Subchapter A. TEC, §28.0022(e).

According to SB3, the State Board of Education (SBOE) reviewed and revised the curriculum standards by December 31, 2022 to meet the changed educational codes. Training set forth by the commissioner is to be determined and become available to teachers by the school year 2025-2026.

State Board of Education Review

On November 18, 2022, Texas State Board of Education gave final approval to the revisions of the social studies Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The effective date for implementing the revised TEKS is August 1, 2024 for the 2024-2025 school year. Based on the remarks of the SBOE in the crosswalks document, removing significant documents and standards was not recommended. Therefore, standards related to Native Americans in Texas remain in the TEKS. However, the law requires teachers to give multiple unbiased perspectives when discussing events involving different races.

Texas Educational Standards

The social studies standards that relate most to the interpretive themes are part of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards. A wide range of standards correlate with the themes where second grade is at the lower end and High School United States History is at the highest level. Most of the standards are from 4th and 7th grade levels with a few from the other grades levels. Based on the standards, the target audience could range from 3rd to 8th grade.

In general, and listed in this report, the standards cover Native American tribes originated in Texas where students compare lifeways of different groups at multiple grade levels. In later grades, the impact of Spanish exploration and colonization is addressed. Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo settlement are covered as part of the Texas curriculum including specific figures and dates. For a geographical focus, numerous objectives discuss the changes to the land over time from human impact. As a final connection, standards cover annexation of Texas and independence from Mexico.

Louisiana Educational Standards

For the Louisiana social studies standards, most standards that align with the themes are from 6th and 7th grade with some at younger and older grades. The target range to meet the standards could focus from 6th through 8th but can also be part of a larger band. Standards that connect most with the themes are related to geography rather than history.

Outlined in this report, the first group of standards address the various cultural groups of Louisiana with a focus on Native Americans in the region and establishment of Natchitoches. Another set of standards concentrate on the impact of exploration and settlement of European countries in Louisiana. How environments were modified and then analyzing the motivation of settlers are both addressed in another group of standards. Following this set, the standards focus on historical events and the Mexican-American war that influenced the United States. Last, the designated standards evaluate the impact of settlement and immigration on Louisiana.

Existing Educational Resources Evaluation

There is an abundance of existing educational resources available for free from the El Camino de los Tejas National Trail Association, Texas Historical Commission, and Texas Beyond History websites. Most of the lessons have multiple standards listed in the plans thus showing standard alignment.

Discover Texas History by Lynn Dean is another online resource that must be purchased to access the content and lesson activities therefore exact alignment was undetermined. However, the course outline that is accessible online shows some potential connections.

Many of the lessons from El Camino de los Tejas National Trail Association align well, but standards may need to be updated with the educational state law changes. If lessons are to be used, they could be revised to include more content for students and possibly more PowerPoint presentations. Since these lessons directly relate to the trail in a broad sense, they could be combined with other lessons that are more specific to certain locations.

Lessons from the Texas Historical Commission provide many resources related to the Caddo people. There are lessons available that cover Spanish inquisition; however, they are not connected to specific locations along the trail, rather other parts of Texas. If new lessons are created, there are a multitude of multimedia resources that can be utilized to support learning experiences.

A handful of lessons from Texas Beyond History were correlated with the themes. This resource also has many content pieces that can be incorporated into lessons that need more reading materials. An entire Curriculum Guide For Teaching Texas History is available from San Jacinto Museum which outlines lesson plans related for primary and secondary students.

Themes, Sites, Lessons, and Standards

Theme 1—Protection, Control, and Development

El Camino Real de los Tejas was a conduit of Spanish colonial power and influence with long-term consequences—modifying the landscape to meet the needs of armies, missionaries, and settlers that led to community and trade development, changing the lifeways of people and use of the environment.

Topic Motivations of Missions (grades 4-8)

Correlating Sites San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, Mission San Juan Capistrano, Mission San Francisco de la Espada, Mission San Jose, Spanish Governor’s Palace

Lessons

El Camino de los Tejas National Trail Association (4 & 7)	Texas Beyond History	National Park Service
Resources of El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail	Digging Deeper: Mission San Sabá (7)	San Antonio Missions: Spanish Influence in Texas (7) Large lesson almost like a unit

Texas Social Studies Standards

- 4.2.A Summarize motivations for European exploration and settlement of Texas, including economic opportunity, competition, and the desire for expansion
- 4.2.B Identify the accomplishments and explain the impact of significant explorers, including Cabeza de Vaca; Francisco Coronado; and René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle, on the settlement of Texas
- 4.2.C Explain when, where, and why the Spanish established settlements and Catholic missions in Texas as well as important individuals
- 4.3.D Describe the successes, problems, and organizations of the Republic of Texas such as the establishment of a constitution, economic struggles, relations with American Indians, and the Texas Rangers;
- 5.1.B Explain when, where, and why groups of people explored, colonized, and settled in the United States, including the search for religious freedom and economic gain
- 5.8.A Describe how and why people have adapted to and modified their environment in the United States such as the use of human resources to meet basic needs;
- 7.2.B Identify important individuals, events, and issues related to European exploration of Texas such as Alonso Álvarez de Pineda, Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, the search for gold, and the conflicting territorial claims between France and Spain;

7.2.E Identify the contributions of significant individuals, including Moses Austin, Stephen F. Austin, Erasmo Seguín, Martín De León, and Green DeWitt, during the Mexican settlement of Texas; and

7.9.A Identify ways in which Texans have adapted to and modified the environment and explain the positive and negative consequences of the modifications

8.2.A Identify reasons for English, Spanish, and French exploration and colonization of North America

8.23.A Identify racial, ethnic, and religious groups that settled in the United States and explain their reasons for immigration

Louisiana Social Studies Standards

6.4 Use geographic representations and historical data to analyze events and developments in US history from 1580 to 1791, including environmental, cultural, economic, and political characteristics and changes.

6.8 Analyze European exploration and colonization of North America.

a. Explain the significance of the land claims made in North America by European powers after 1600, including England, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Spain, and Sweden and their effects on Native Americans.

b. Compare and contrast the motivations, challenges, and achievements related to exploration and settlement of North America by the British, Dutch, French, and Spanish, including the search for wealth, freedom, and a new life.

Theme 2—Lasting Change

Because of their exposure to other cultural groups, those who traveled and lived along El Camino Real de los Tejas experienced profound change—affecting family and community life, language, religious practices, intertribal relations, and resource use—which continues to shape communities to this day.

Topic Impacts on People and Natural Resources (grades 2-8, High School US History, World Geography)

Correlating Sites McKinney Falls State Park, Old San Antonio Road, Mission Tejas State Park

Lessons

Texas Historical Commission	Texas Beyond History
• El Camino Real de los Tejas (7)	• Two Ways (4 & 7)

Texas Social Studies Standards

2.5.A Identify ways in which people have modified the physical environment such as clearing land, building roads, using land for agriculture, and drilling for oil

3.1.A Describe how individuals, events, and ideas have changed communities, past and present

4.1.D Locate American Indian groups remaining in Texas such as the Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo, Alabama-Coushatta, and Kickapoo

4.8.A Describe ways people have adapted to and modified their environment in Texas, past and present, such as timber clearing, agricultural production, wetlands drainage, energy production, and construction of dams

4.8.C Compare the positive and negative consequences of human modification of the environment in Texas, past and present.

5.8.B Analyze the positive and negative consequences of human modification of the environment in the United States

6.1.A Identify and describe the historical influence of individuals or groups on various contemporary societies

6.3.B Explain ways in which human migration influences the character of places and regions

8.5.G Analyze the reasons for the removal and resettlement of Cherokee Indians during the Jacksonian era, including the Indian Removal Act, Worcester v. Georgia, and the Trail of Tears.

8.10.C Analyze the effects of physical and human geographic factors such as weather, landforms, waterways, transportation, and communication on major historical events in the United States

8.11.B Describe the positive and negative consequences of human modification of the physical environment of the United States

USH.25.B Describe the Americanization movement to assimilate immigrants and American Indians into American culture;

Louisiana Social Studies Standards

1.5 Compare life in Louisiana in the past to life today.

1.6 Describe how past events can affect the present.

3.5 Compare life in the United States in the past and present.

8.9 Analyze the social, political, and economic changes that developed in the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

8.9.b. Explain the causes and effects of immigration to the United States during the late 1800s and early 1900s, and compare and contrast experiences of immigrants.

8.10.c. Analyze how lives of Native Americans changed as a result of westward expansion and US policies, including extermination of the buffalo, reservation system, Dawes Act, and assimilation.

8.10.f.f. Analyze the ideas and events leading to the Spanish-American War and the short- and long-term outcomes, including the terms of the Treaty of Paris (1898), US acquisition of Spanish territories, and emergence of the United States as a world power.

WG.8 Analyze how people have modified or adapted to the environment locally, nationally, regionally, and globally.

- a. Analyze effects of human settlement patterns and land use on the natural environment.

Theme 3—Paths Traveled

The Trail follows the lifeways and physical paths of Indigenous people who constructed trails in concert with the ecology and topography of their Tejas environment. As part of the Camino, these same trails were later traveled and modified by Spanish, French, Mexican, Tejano, American, and African American travelers.

Topic People Along the Trail (grades 4-8)

Correlating Sites Los Adaes State Historic Site, Caddo Mounds State Historic Site, Adai Indian Nation Cultural Center, Río Grande Overlook at Arroyo San Francisco

Lessons

El Camino de los Tejas National Trail Association (4 & 7)	Texas Historical Commission
- National Historic Trails - Preservation and Development of a Trail Segment	- A Walk Along El Camino Real de los Tejas (4) - A Regional Center of the Mississippian Culture (5-HS) - Building Caddo Homes (4) - Caddo Indians (4 - primary sources need to be translated) - Caddo Traditional Stories (7) - Caddo Mounds (4)

Texas Social Studies Standards

4.1.A Explain the possible origins of American Indian groups in Texas

4.1.B Identify and compare the ways of life of American Indian groups in Texas before European exploration such as the Lipan Apache, Karankawa, Caddo, and Jumano

4.7.A Explain the geographic factors such as landforms and climate that influence patterns of settlement and the distribution of population in Texas, past and present

4.7.B Identify and explain patterns of settlement such as the location of towns and cities in Texas at different time periods

4.9.A Explain the economic activities various early American Indian groups in Texas used to meet their needs and wants such as farming, trading, and hunting

5.7.A Identify and describe the patterns of settlement such as rural, urban, and suburban

- 6.1.A Trace characteristics of various contemporary societies in regions that resulted from historical events or factors such as colonization, immigration, and trade
- 6.1.B Analyze the historical background of various contemporary societies to evaluate relationships between past conflicts and current conditions
- 6.2.B Describe the social, political, economic, and cultural contributions of individuals and groups from various societies, past and present
- 6.3.A Identify and explain the geographic factors responsible for patterns of population in places and regions
- 7.2.A Compare the cultures of American Indians in Texas prior to European colonization such as Gulf, Plains, Puebloan, and Southeastern
- 7.8.B Locate and compare places of importance in Texas in terms of physical and human characteristics such as major cities, waterways, natural and historic landmarks, political and cultural regions, and local points of interest; and
- 8.11.A Analyze how physical characteristics of the environment influenced population distribution, settlement patterns, and economic activities in the United States

Louisiana Social Studies Standards

- 4.9 Describe the characteristics of nomadic hunter-gatherer societies, including their use of hunting weapons, fire, shelter and tools.
- 4.19.C Explain how nomadic groups of people first hunted and traveled throughout what would become Louisiana.
- 6.10 Analyze the growth and development of colonial Louisiana.
 - a. Explain the significance of events that influenced pre-colonial and colonial Louisiana, including the founding of Natchitoches and New Orleans, the Treaty of Fontainebleau, and the Third Treaty of San Ildefonso.

Theme 4—Shifting Routes

The Trail was ever-changing—varying routes were developed to meet the changing needs of travelers, who were affected by weather, Native American relations, terrain, water access, settlement, seasonal foodstuffs, and modes of transportation—and the multiple paths chart the area’s development through time.

Topic Conditions of the Trail (grades 3-7 & High School World Geography)

Correlating Sites Paso del Indio Crossing, Goliad State Park and Mission Espiritu Santo State Historic Site, Floresville Hike and Bike Trail

Lessons

El Camino de los Tejas National Trail Association (4 & 7)	Texas Alliance for Geographical Education
• The History of El Camino Real • Navigation of El Camino Real de los Tejas	• Exploring and Trading Across Texas

Texas Social Studies Standards

3.3.A Describe similarities and differences in the physical environment, including climate, landforms, natural resources, and natural hazards

3.25 Describe why and how people in the United States have modified their environment.

3.3.B Identify and compare how people in different communities adapt to or modify the physical environment in which they live such as deserts, mountains, wetlands, and plains

4.8.B Explain reasons why people have adapted to and modified their environment in Texas, past and present, such as the use of natural resources to meet basic needs, facilitate transportation, and enhance recreational activities

7.1.A Identify the major eras in Texas history, describe their defining characteristics, and explain the purpose of dividing the past into eras, including Natural Texas and its People; Age of Contact; Spanish Colonial; Mexican National; Revolution and Republic; Early Statehood; Texas in the Civil War and Reconstruction; Cotton, Cattle, and Railroads; Age of Oil; Texas in the Great Depression and World War II; Civil Rights; and Contemporary Texas; and

7.1.B Explain the significance of the following dates: 1519, mapping of the Texas coast and first mainland Spanish settlement; 1718, founding of San Antonio; 1821, independence from Spain; 1836, Texas independence; 1845, annexation; 1861, Civil War begins; 1876, adoption of current state constitution; and 1901, discovery of oil at Spindletop.

7.2.C Identify important individuals, events, and issues related to European colonization of Texas, including the establishment of Catholic missions, towns, and ranches, and the contributions of individuals such as Fray Damián Massanet, Antonio Margil de Jesús, and Francisco Hidalgo;

7.2.F Contrast Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo purposes for and methods of settlement in Texas

7.8.C Analyze the effects of physical and human factors such as climate, weather, landforms, irrigation, transportation, and communication on major events in Texas.

Louisiana Social Studies Standards

1.32 Explain how the physical landscape of Louisiana affected the settlement of Native Americans and early settlers.

6.9.h Analyze cooperation, competition, and conflict among groups in North America from the late 1500s to the mid-1700s, including Dutch, English, French, Spanish, and Native Americans including the 1621 Autumn Harvest Celebration, French and Native American trade of fur, Bacon’s Rebellion, and King Philip’s (Metacom) War.

6.10 b. Describe the factors that influenced migration within and to Louisiana by various groups, including French, Spanish, Africans, Acadians, Germans, Canary Islanders/Islenos, and Haitians, and explain how individuals and groups interacted and contributed to the development of Louisiana.

c. Describe the characteristics of colonial Louisiana, including physical geography, climate, economic activities, culture and customs, and government, and analyze their importance to the growth and development of Louisiana.

WG.5 Explain the spatial relationships of human settlement, migration, and population.

a. Explain the patterns and processes of human settlement and migration.

Theme 5—Changing States

The Trail is representative of the dramatic socioeconomic changes from a completely Indigenous landscape to one influenced by Europeans in the 1700s and 1800s, involving political unrest, military action, Mexico’s independence from Spain, Texas’ independence from Mexico, and the 1845 annexation of Texas by the United States.

Topic Battles and Independence (grades 4-8)

Correlating Sites Fannin Battleground State Historic Site, Military Plaza - Plaza de Armas, Stone Fort Museum

Lessons

Texas Historical Commission	Texas Beyond History	Texas History for Teachers
El Camino Real—4th Grade	Timeline for the Western Texas Frontier (7)	Goliad Virtual Field Trip

Texas Social Studies Standards

4.4.D Explain the effects on American Indian life brought about by the Red River War, building of US forts and railroads, and loss of buffalo

4.2.D Identify Texas’ role in the Mexican War of Independence and the war’s impact on the development of Texas

5.4.C Identify significant events and concepts associated with US territorial expansion, including the Louisiana Purchase, the expedition of Lewis and Clark, and Manifest Destiny

7.2.D Identify the individuals, issues, and events related to Mexico becoming an independent nation and its impact on Texas, including Father Miguel Hidalgo, Texas involvement in the fight for independence, José Gutiérrez de Lara, the Battle of Medina, the Mexican federal Constitution of 1824, the merger of Texas and Coahuila as a state, the State Colonization Law of 1825, and slavery;

7.6.A Identify significant individuals, events, and issues, including the factors leading to the expansion of the Texas frontier, the effects of westward expansion on American Indians, the buffalo soldiers, and Quanah Parker

8.6.C Explain the causes and effects of the US-Mexican War and their impact on the United States

Louisiana Standards

7.4 Use geographic representations and historical data to analyze events and developments in US history from 1791 to 1877, including environmental, cultural, economic, and political characteristics and changes.

7.8 Analyze the influence of key events, ideas, and people on the economic, political, and social development of the United States from 1791–1850s.

7.10.H Describe the causes, course, and consequences of the Mexican-American War, including the Battle of the Alamo, Battle of San Jacinto, annexation of Texas, the Mexican Cession and Zachary Taylor’s role in the war and subsequent election to the presidency.

Science Standards Summary

A wide range of science standards connect to three of the themes with a main focus on ecosystems, landforms and geology, and natural resource use. Essentially, the various ecosystems and landforms along the trail can be studied to understand the natural conditions of the region. Human impact from migration patterns can be analyzed to understand the effects of humans on the natural environment. The following sections outline the Texas and Louisiana science standards as well as existing lesson plans that correlate with three of the themes.

Theme 2—Lasting Change

Because of their exposure to other cultural groups, those who traveled and lived along El Camino Real de los Tejas experienced profound change—affecting family and community life, language, religious practices, intertribal relations, and resource use—which continues to shape communities to this day.

Topic Impacts on Natural Resources

Lessons

- Living off the Land (grade 4)

Texas Science Standards

3.(11) Earth and space. The student understands how natural resources are important and can be managed. The student is expected to:

(A) explore and explain how humans use natural resources such as in construction, in agriculture, in transportation, and to make products;

3. (E) Organisms and environments. Students explore patterns, systems, and cycles within environments by investigating characteristics of organisms, life cycles, and interactions among all components of the natural environment. Students examine how the environment and the structures and functions of animals play a key role in survival. Students know that when changes in the environment occur, organisms may thrive, become ill, or perish.

3. (13) Organisms and environments. The student knows that organisms undergo similar life processes and have structures that function to help them survive within their environments.

4.(11) Earth and space. The student understands how natural resources are important and can be managed. The student is expected to:

(A) identify and explain advantages and disadvantages of using Earth's renewable and nonrenewable natural resources such as wind, water, sunlight, plants, animals, coal, oil, and natural gas;

5. (E) Organisms and environments. This strand focuses on identifying relationships, systems, and cycles within organisms and environments. Students describe the interactions of biotic and abiotic factors in an ecosystem. Additionally, they describe how humans impact the ecosystem.

5. (11) Earth and space. The student understands how natural resources are important and can be managed. The student is expected to design and explain solutions such as conservation, recycling, or proper disposal to minimize environmental impact of the use of natural resources.

5. (12) Organisms and environments. The student describes patterns, cycles, systems, and relationships within environments. The student is expected to:

(C) describe a healthy ecosystem and how human activities can be beneficial or harmful to an ecosystem.

7. (11) Earth and space. The student understands how human activity can impact the hydrosphere. The student is expected to:

(A) analyze the beneficial and harmful influences of human activity on groundwater and surface water in a watershed

8.1.(E) Organisms and environments. Students explore how organisms and their populations respond to environmental changes, including those caused by human activities.

8.(12) Organisms and environments. The student understands stability and change in populations and ecosystems. The student is expected to:

- (A) explain how disruptions such as population changes, natural disasters, and human intervention impact the transfer of energy in food webs in ecosystems;
- (B) describe how primary and secondary ecological succession affect populations and species diversity after ecosystems are disrupted by natural events or human activity;
- (C) describe how biodiversity contributes to the stability and sustainability of an ecosystem and the health of the organisms within the ecosystem.

HS. Earth Systems Science

(12) Science concepts. The student understands how Earth's systems affect and are affected by human activities, including resource use and management.

HS. Environmental Systems Science

(6) Science concepts. The student knows the interrelationships among the resources within the local environmental system. The student is expected to:

- (A) compare and contrast land use and management methods and how they affect land attributes such as fertility, productivity, economic value, and ecological stability;
- (E) analyze and evaluate the economic significance and interdependence of resources within the local environmental system

(11) Science concepts. The student understands how individual and collective actions impact environmental systems. The student is expected to:

- (A) evaluate the negative effects of human activities on the environment, including overhunting, overfishing, ecotourism, all-terrain vehicles, and personal watercraft

(13) Science concepts. The student knows how legislation mediates human impacts on the environment. The student is expected to: (A) describe past and present state and national legislation, including Texas automobile emissions regulations, the National Park Service Act, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act, and the Endangered Species Act;

Louisiana Science Standards

3-LS4-4 Make a claim about the merit of a solution to a problem caused when the environment changes and the types of plants and animals that live there may change.

7-MS-LS2-4 Construct an argument supported by empirical evidence that changes to physical or biological components of an ecosystem affect populations.

8-MS-ESS3-3 Apply scientific principles to design a method for monitoring and minimizing human impact on the environment

HS-ESS3-3 Create a computational simulation to illustrate the relationships among management of natural resources, the sustainability of human populations, and biodiversity.

HS-ESS3-4 Evaluate or refine a technological solution that reduces impacts of human activities on natural systems.

HS-ESS3-6 Use a computational representation to illustrate the relationships among Earth systems and how those relationships are being modified due to human activity.

Environmental Science

HS-EVS1-1 Analyze and interpret data to identify the factors that affect sustainable development and natural resource management in Louisiana.

HS-EVS1-3 Analyze and interpret data about the consequences of environmental decisions to determine the risk-benefit values of actions and practices implemented for selected issues.

HS-ESS3-3 Create a computational simulation to illustrate the relationships among management of natural resources, the sustainability of human populations, and biodiversity.

HS-ESS3-4 Evaluate or refine a technological solution that reduces impacts of human activities on natural systems.

HS-LS2-6 Evaluate the claims, evidence and reasoning that the complex interactions in ecosystems maintain relatively consistent numbers and types of organisms in stable conditions, but changing conditions may result in a new ecosystem.

Theme 3—Paths Traveled

The Trail follows the lifeways and physical paths of Indigenous people who constructed trails in concert with the ecology and topography of their Tejas environment. As part of the Camino, these same trails were later traveled and modified by Spanish, French, Mexican, Tejano, American, and African American travelers.

Topic Ecosystems Along the Route

Lessons

- Texas Ecosystems: Biodiversity and Sustainability (grades 6-8)
- Ecoregions in Texas

Texas Science Standards

4. (13) Organisms and environments. The student knows that organisms undergo similar life processes and have structures that function to help them survive within their environments. The student is expected to:

(A) explore and explain how structures and functions of plants such as waxy leaves and deep roots enable them to survive in their environment;

6. (12) Organisms and environments. The student knows that interdependence occurs between living systems and the environment. The student is expected to:

(A) investigate how organisms and populations in an ecosystem depend on and may

compete for biotic factors such as food and abiotic factors such as availability of light and water, range of temperatures, or soil composition;

(B) describe and give examples of predatory, competitive, and symbiotic relationships between organisms, including mutualism, parasitism, and commensalism; and

(C) describe the hierarchical organization of organism, population, and community within an ecosystem.

7. (12) Organisms and environments. The student understands that ecosystems are dependent upon the cycling of matter and the flow of energy. The student is expected to:

(A) diagram the flow of energy within trophic levels and describe how the available energy decreases in successive trophic levels in energy pyramids; and

(B) describe how ecosystems are sustained by the continuous flow of energy and the recycling of matter and nutrients within the biosphere.

7. (14) Organisms and environments. The student knows how the taxonomic system is used to describe relationships between organisms. The student is expected to:

(A) describe the taxonomic system that categorizes organisms based on similarities and differences shared among groups; and

(B) describe the characteristics of the recognized kingdoms and their importance in ecosystems such as bacteria aiding digestion or fungi decomposing organic matter.

HS.Environmental Systems Science

(8) Science concepts. The student knows the relationship between carrying capacity and changes in populations and ecosystems. The student is expected to: (B) identify factors that may alter carrying capacity such as disease; natural disaster; available food, water, and livable space; habitat fragmentation; and periodic changes in weather;

Louisiana Science Standards

2-LS4-1 Make observations of plants and animals to compare the diversity of life in different habitats.

3-LS4-3 Construct and support an argument with evidence that in a particular habitat some organisms can survive well, some survive less well, and some cannot survive at all.

6-MS-LS2-2 Construct an explanation that predicts patterns of interactions among organisms across multiple ecosystems.

7-MS-LS2-5 Undertake a design project that assists in maintaining diversity and ecosystem services.

8-MS-LS1-5 Construct a scientific explanation based on evidence for how environmental and genetic factors influence the growth of organisms.

Theme 4—Shifting Routes

The Trail was ever-changing—varying routes were developed to meet the changing needs of travelers, who were affected by weather, Native American relations, terrain, water access, settlement, seasonal foodstuffs, and modes of transportation—and the multiple paths chart the area’s development through time.

Topic Landforms and Geology of the Route

Lessons

- One State, Many Places (grade 4)
- Regions of Texas (grades 3-7)

Texas Science Standards

3. (D) Earth and space. Students learn that there are recognizable processes that change the Earth over time. Students compare day-to-day changes in weather. They also investigate how soil is formed through the processes of weathering and decomposition. Students model rapid changes to Earth’s surface as well as explore ways to conserve Earth’s resources.

4. (10) Earth and space. The student knows that there are processes on Earth that create patterns of change. The student is expected to:

(B) model and describe slow changes to Earth’s surface caused by weathering, erosion, and deposition from water, wind, and ice;

5. (D) Earth and space. Students continue their learning of patterns and processes on Earth while exploring weather, climate, the water cycle, the formation of sedimentary rock and fossil fuels, and the formation of landforms. Finally, students learn ways to manage natural resources to support a healthy environment.

7.1. (D) Earth and space. Students further their understanding of the geosphere by illustrating how Earth’s features change over time through tectonic movement. Students investigate how humans depend on and affect the hydrosphere.

7.(10) Earth and space. The student knows that interactions between Earth, ocean, and weather systems impact climate. The student is expected to:

(A) describe how energy from the Sun, hydrosphere, and atmosphere interact and influence weather and climate;

(B) identify global patterns of atmospheric movement and how they influence local weather;

Louisiana Science Standards

2-ESS1-1 Use information from several sources to provide evidence that Earth events can occur quickly or slowly.

2-ESS2-2 Develop a model to represent the shapes and kinds of land and bodies of water in an area.

2-ESS2-3 Obtain and communicate information to identify where water is found on Earth and that it can be solid or liquid.

3-ESS2-1 Represent data in tables and graphical displays to describe typical weather conditions expected during a particular season.

3-ESS2-2 Obtain and combine information to describe climates in different regions around the world.

4-ESS1-1 Identify evidence from patterns in rock formations and fossils in rock layers to support an explanation for changes in landforms over time.

4-ESS2-1 Plan and conduct investigations on the effects of water, ice, wind, and vegetation on the relative rate of weathering and erosion.

8-MS-ESS2-1 Develop a model to describe the cycling of Earth's materials and the flow of energy that drives this process.

8-MS-ESS2-2 Construct an explanation based on evidence for how geoscience processes have changed Earth's surface at varying time and spatial scales.

HS-ESS2-5 Plan and conduct an investigation on the properties of water and its effects on Earth materials and surface processes.

HS-ESS2-2 Analyze geoscience data to make the claim that one change to Earth's surface can create feedbacks that cause changes to other Earth's systems.

HS-ESS2-7 Construct an argument based on evidence about the simultaneous coevolution of Earth systems and life on Earth.

HS-ESS3-1 Construct an explanation based on evidence for how the availability of natural resources, occurrence of natural hazards, and changes in climate have influenced human activity.

HS-ESS2-5 Plan and conduct an investigation on the properties of water and its effects on Earth materials and surface processes.

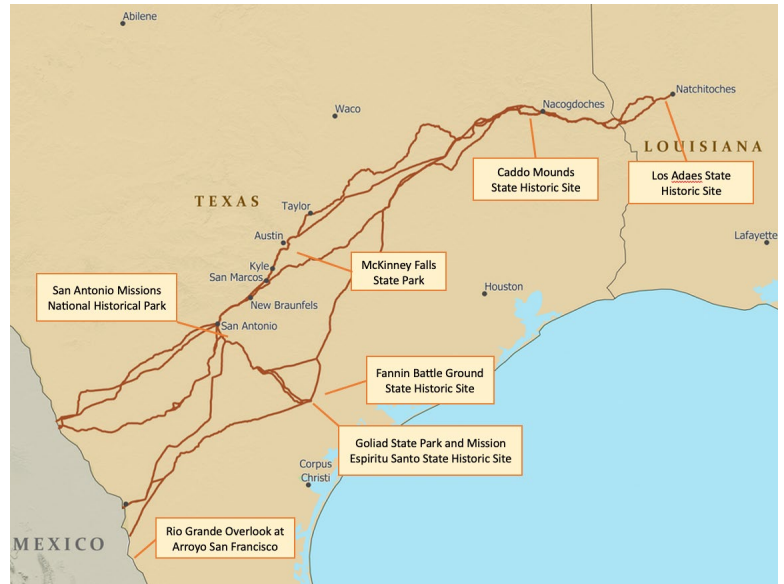
Recommendations

To ensure educational connections in schools, the following recommendations are summarized:

1. Evaluate existing educational resources to align with interpretive themes; ensure that any new educational resources also align
2. Encourage the development of new science lessons that focus on ecoregions, landforms and geology, and human impacts on the environment
3. Create a central location to access curriculum resources (map with links)
4. Ensure that resources include a virtual field trip, slideshow, and activity sheet
5. Network with school leaders to share website links and resources

There are a variety of existing social studies lesson resources; many can be readily incorporated to designated sites. However, to strengthen the connection to each theme, existing lessons can be expanded upon and/or new lessons can be designed to build a larger repository and meet a wider range of standards. For science standards, there are only a few existing lesson plans that correlate with the themes and standards. To incorporate these concepts into the themes, more lessons will need to be developed to meet the standards and ideas.

We recommend developing a website featuring a map of the chosen sites with links to lesson plans. Since the sites are spread across Texas, virtual field trips and slideshows can be incorporated for each lesson to provide consistency. This interactive map of the trail regions can be used to engage students or tie in lessons that correlate with the chosen sites. Each lesson could provide an activity sheet for students to complete as a form of engagement and assessment.



Map highlighting various sites along the Trail

Sharing the educational resources to schools is essential to implementation which requires contacting school leaders to pass on to teachers. A central location where the resources are housed will make access readily available to teachers. Creating a network to inform school leaders and teachers and make them aware of these resources is an avenue for building partnerships.

Limitations

The outlined recommendations have associated limitations involving many human resource needs. To accomplish curricular alignment, individuals will need to be hired to design lesson plans. A website to house educational resources will need to be designed as well as maintained. Many contact hours may be required to build school connections with leaders and disseminate resources.

Appendix B—Existing Sites and Interpretation

Wayside Interpretation

As of the writing of this report (early 2024), the sites featured on the main [nps.gov/](https://www.nps.gov/) website exhibit a range of interpretive information. Those sites include:

Louisiana

- Fort Jesup State Historic Site
This site has very limited hours and appears to be set up as a historic house museum with minimal interpretation.
- Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Historic Site
- Los Adaes State Historic Site
- Natchitoches Parish Convention and Visitors Bureau
- No interpretation. Marketing information only.

Texas

- Acequia del Alamo Dam
No relevant interpretation found.
- Apache Pass
- Bastrop State Park
No relevant interpretation found.
- Cabeza Creek Crossing
No access.
- Casa Navarro State Historic Site
No linkage to Trail specifically.
- Comanche Lookout
No relevant interpretation found.
- Dimmit County Public Library and Wade House Museum
- Durst-Taylor House
No linkage to Trail specifically
- Floresville El Camino Trail
- Fort Boggy State Park
No relevant interpretation found.
- Goliad State Park and Historic Site
- La Villita Historic District
- No relevant interpretation found.
- Lobanillo Swales

- Main & Military Plazas
- Limited interpretation. No linkage to Trail specifically.
- McKinney Falls State Park
- Mission Dolores State Historic Site
- Mission Tejas State Park
- Mission San Antonio de Valero 3rd Site (The Alamo)
- Montopolis Bridge
- Monument Hill and Kreische Brewery State Historic Site
No linkage to Trail specifically.
- Nuestra Señora de Rosario Mission
- Paso de los Tejas
No relevant interpretation found.
- Paso de Sabinitas
No relevant interpretation found.
- Rancho de Pérez & Dolores Applewhite Crossing
Limited interpretation.
- Republic of the Río Grande Museum
No linkage to Trail specifically.
- Río Grande Overlook at Arroyo San Francisco
- San Pedro Springs
No relevant interpretation found.
- Spanish Governor's Palace
No linkage to Trail specifically.
- Stone Fort Museum
- Treviño-Urbe Rancho
Limited interpretation.
- Villa Antigua Border Heritage Museum
No relevant interpretation found.

Information about publicly accessible sites that feature wayside interpretive content continue to be added to the main Trail website. Most do not feature the NPS or NHT logo. Where the NHT logo is present, it is noted below, in addition to the main interpretive content depicted. Those sites include:

Louisiana

- Cane River Creole National Historical Park
Exchange of cultures that created Creole culture
- Downtown Natchitoches
Birth of Catholicism, significance of the Trail

Texas

- Caddo Mounds State Historic Site
Significance of the Trail, influential figures who traveled the Trail, Caddo village contacted by the Trail (NHT logo present)
- Comal Springs
Prehistoric life at Comal Springs, a stop on El Camino Real
- Downtown San Antonio
Settlement of New Spain
- Faust Street Bridge
River crossing (NHT logo present on site identification sign)
- Goliad State Park & Historic Site (including Mission Nuestra Señora del Espiritu Santo de Zuñiga and Mission Rosario State Historic Site)
Significance of the Trail, mission life, development, and evolution (NHT logo present)
- Historic Goliad Courthouse Square
Spanish settlement
- Lobanillo Swales
Significance of the Trail (NHT logo present)
- McKinney Falls State Park
Significance of the Trail (NHT logo present)
- Medina River Greenway
Significance of the Trail (NHT logo present on site identification sign at entrance)
- Mission Concepcion
Mission life, development, and evolution (NHT logo present on site identification sign at entrance)
- Mission Dolores State Historic Site
Significance of the Trail, daily life on the Spanish frontier (NHT logo present on site identification sign at entrance)
- Mission Espada
Mission life, development, and evolution (NHT logo present on site identification sign at entrance)
- Mission Rosario State Historic Site (associated with Goliad State Park & Historic Site)
Mission development, and evolution (NHT logo present on site identification sign at entrance)
- Mission San Antonio de Valero (The Alamo)
Mission life, development, and evolution
- Mission San Jose
Mission life, development, and evolution (NHT logo present on site identification sign at entrance)

- Mission San Juan
Mission development and evolution (NHT logo present on site identification sign at entrance)
- Mission Tejas State Park
Significance of the Trail (NHT logo present on site identification sign at entrance)
- Monument Hill and Kreische Brewery State Historic Site
Texas independence, Dawson Massacre
- Presidio La Bahia
Site development and evolution
- Ranchería Grande—Baumann Family Village Site
Significance of the Trail (NHT logo present)
- Ranchería Grande—Conner Swale Site
Significance of the Trail (NHT logo present)
- San Antonio River Walk
Development and evolution of San Antonio missions, Berg's Mill
- San Marcos Springs
Archaeology at Spring Lake
- San Pedro Creek Culture Park
Early settlement
- Stone Fort Museum
Trail significance, foodways (NHT logo present)

Interior Exhibits

El Camino Real de los Tejas and/or relevant topics are included in interior exhibits in each of these settings. As might be expected, some sites have more extensive coverage than others.

Louisiana

- Adai Indian National Cultural Center, Robeline
- Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Historic Site, Natchitoches
(NHT logo present on site identification sign at entrance)
- Los Adaes State Historic Site, Robeline
(NHT logo present on site identification sign at entrance)
- Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery, Natchitoches
- Northwest Louisiana History Museum, Natchitoches

Texas

- Bastrop Visitor Center & Museum, Bastrop
- Bexar Heritage Center, San Antonio

- Caddo Mounds State Historic Site, Alto
(NHT logo present on site identification sign at entrance)
- Casa Navarro State Historic Site, San Antonio
- Durst-Taylor House, Nacogdoches
- El Camino de San Antonio Missions Padre Margil Pilgrimage Center, San Antonio
- Goliad State Park & Historic Site, Goliad
(NHT logo present on site identification sign at entrance)
- History of La Villita (museum), San Antonio
- Ignacio Zaragoza Birthplace, Goliad
- McKinney Falls State Park, Austin
(NHT logo present on site identification sign at entrance)
- Mission Concepcion, San Antonio
(NHT logo present on site identification sign at entrance)
- Mission Dolores State Historic Site, San Augustine
(NHT logo present on site identification sign at entrance)
- Mission Espada, San Antonio
(NHT logo present on site identification sign at entrance)
- Mission San Antonio de Valero (The Alamo), San Antonio
- Mission San Jose, San Antonio
(NHT logo present on site identification sign at entrance)
- Mission San Juan, San Antonio
(NHT logo present on site identification sign at entrance)
- Mission Tejas State Park, Grapeland
(NHT logo present on site identification sign at entrance)
- Monument Hill and Kreische Brewery State Historic Site, La Grange
- Nacogdoches Convention & Visitors Bureau, Nacogdoches
- Presidio La Bahia, Goliad
- Republic of the Río Grande Museum, Laredo
- Spanish Governor's Palace, San Antonio
- Sterne-Hoya House, Nacogdoches
- Stone Fort Museum, Nacogdoches
- Wade House Museum, Carrizo Springs
- Witte Museum, San Antonio

Digital Media

Notable digital offerings about the Trail created by partners include the following¹:

- All three Texas State Park visitor centers (Mission Tejas, McKinney Falls, and Goliad State Park) that focus on the Trail feature an interactive digital exploration of the Trail.
- The Texas Historical Commission offers a virtual 67-minute presentation about the Trail (<https://youtu.be/qo8SQ72roUE?si=0IBm7mu1bzKjUpDL>).
- Austin Parks & Recreation shares a 36-minute documentary about the documentation of Lobanillo Swales and other archaeological investigations that unearthed information about the Trail (https://youtu.be/MCilomiYJ1Q?si=HrUbFUdCoiS5_AoR).
- NPS offers several short videos about different sites associated with the Trail: Mission Tejas State Park (<https://www.nps.gov/media/video/view.htm%3Fid%3D06B094C6-90E1-4FEA-BCA6-CE2C23428F23>) and Lobanillo Swales (<https://www.nps.gov/media/video/view.htm%3Fid%3D7114B322-0D80-4DC9-A32B-32FCF4185759>).
- The Texas Parks & Wildlife Department shares a 16-minute documentary video on its Youtube channel (https://youtu.be/iXxhVm_y9-4?si=autVHvMtv5gyK63K).
- The Trail Association maintains active Facebook and Instagram social media accounts, with content focused on the Trail. Other partners occasionally feature Trail-related content on their social media channels.
- The San Antonio Public Library Mission Branch offers its First Peoples Project, a collection of oral histories (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLsrMu1dGT0jrpaJtMEtomG8iG8k8P70ga>) that speaks to indigenous ancestors and their experiences.
- The El Camino de San Antonio Missions Padre Margil Pilgrimage Center features an interactive exhibit that features the history of the missions, as well as information about completing the pilgrimage to all of the San Antonio Missions.
- Texasbeyondhistory.net hosts the Virtual Museum of Texas' Cultural Heritage—a wealth of information that shares the results of archaeological and historical research on the cultural heritage of Texas. Texas Beyond History (TBH) is a public education service of the Texas Archaeological Research Laboratory (TARL) at the University of Texas at Austin, developed in collaboration with many other organizations.

¹ Not all of these digital media products meet federal Section 508 compliance requirements. In order for NPS to link to external sites that contain Trail topics, digital content must meet Section 508 compliance for page layout, alternate text, video captioning, audio description, and PDF readability. National Trails office staff can provide technical assistance to help partners meet these standards so that content can be promoted on NPS digital media such as the NPS website, NPS app, and social media. Contact ntir_information@nps.gov for more information, or [visit us on the web](#).

Appendix C—Definitions

The following two terms are defined by the [National Trails System Act \(P.L. 90-543 of October 2, 1968, as amended\)](#).

Partnership Certification/Certified Sites

Partnership certification, a process specific to National Trails, is a tool used by federal trail administrators, with the consent of the landowner/manager, to officially recognize, preserve, and interpret trail resources on nonfederal lands. Partnership certification begins with a conversation between the property owner/manager and the federal trail administrators about the historical significance and management needs of a particular trail-related property. As shared interests on public recognition, preservation, and public use emerge, the landowner/manager and the National Trails office may enter into a voluntary partnership certification agreement.

Through these agreements, the federal trail administrators and the respective landowner/manager voluntarily agree to work jointly on planning, interpretation, resource management, and other matters that relate to interpretive facilities, historic trail sites, or trail segments. All parties strive to meet the goals and objectives of the Trail's Comprehensive Plan, including public use and appreciation. Certified partners receive many benefits including recognition, project assistance, limited funding, and technical assistance.

A list of current certified partner sites appears in Appendix E.

High Potential Historic Sites and Segments

High potential historic sites are those related to the route, or are in close proximity to it, which provide opportunity to interpret the historic significance of the Trail during the period of its major use and significance. Qualities of these sites may include: historic significance for the Trail, evocative historic landscape qualities, visible trail-related remnants, and relative lack of inappropriate non-visual intrusions.

High potential route segments are those segments of the Trail which may afford a high quality recreation experience, an opportunity to vicariously share the experience of the original trail users of the historic route, evocative historic landscape qualities, and/or a relative lack of inappropriate non-visual intrusions.

Appendix D—National Historic Trail Logo

The official logos for the National Historic Trails are used on signs for the Trails' routes, to mark Trail sites and segments, on official Trails publications and other materials, and for other official Trails uses. The logos represent the Trails and all Trail partners working toward the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Management and Use Plan for the Trails.

Official Logo Use

The El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail logo is trademarked and can only be used with permission from the Superintendent of the National Trails Office. It is the branding for the Trail and represents the partnerships between the National Park Service and the entities who manage Trail resources or educate about the Trail.

The National Park Service encourages the appropriate use of the logos by Trail partners. However, the Trail logos are viewed by law as a protected federal mark and cannot be used without the permission of the Superintendent of the National Trails office. For permission to use the logo, please contact ntir_information@nps.gov. [For more information, visit us here.](#)

Uses of the Logo

The Trail logo is most commonly seen on signs and exhibits to mark the route of the National Historic Trail and show association of places to the Trail.

Partners interested in using the logo on a sign or interpretive media product must contact the National Trails Office and provide information and/or a copy of the product for review.

Sign Family

The family of signs designed for each National Historic Trail helps visitors find roads, Trail segments, and sites where history happened. The sign's brown background alerts travelers to nearby opportunities to explore the historic Trail and the sign's logo identifies the National Historic Trail associated with the nearby site or route. This family of National Historic Trail signs, that mark both the Trail and its associated sites, includes both road signs and pedestrian signs.

The National Trails office developed National Historic Trail [sign standards](#) that work for most situations along public roads and on non-motorized trails.

National Historic Trails

Family of Pedestrian Signs



Historic Route Sign
12" x 18" (two panels):
Marks the historic route of the national historic trail



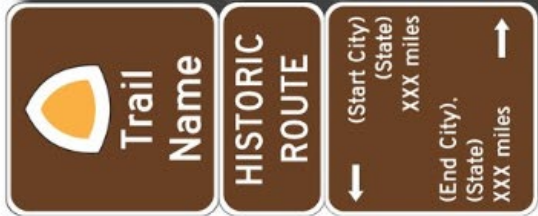
Historic Route additional lower panel sign option
12" x 6":



Lower panel arrow options
6" x 6":



Trail Start/End Distance
12" x 30" (three panels):
Shows distance to the beginning and end of the trail from the location the sign is placed



Trail Sign
12" x 20" (two panels):
Marks trail that is in close proximity and/or connects to the national historic trail, but is not on the actual historic route



Crossing Sign
12" x 18" (two panels):
Marks where the historic route of the national historic trail crosses a trail



(Site Name Here) Sign
12" x 18" (two panels):
Directs people to historic sites associated with the national historic trail



Family of Pedestrian Road Signs
PHOTO/NPS

Updated January 2020



National Historic Trails
Generic Family of Road Signs



Historic Route Sign
24" x 36" (two panels):
Marks the historic route of the national historic trail



Historic Route lower panel sign option
24" x 12":



Historic Route lower panel arrow options
21" x 15":



Crossing Sign
24" x 36" (two panels):
Marks where the historic route of the national historic trail crosses a road



Site ID Sign
Custom size - 72" x 42" typical:
Marks a site associated with the national historic trail



Directional Site Sign
Size varies:
Directs people to sites associated with the national historic trail



Appendix E—Certified Partner Sites

The following list of sites was retrieved from the NPS website in Fall 2024 and is subject to change.

Louisiana

Fort Jesup State Historic Site

Fort Jesup remained an important military post for nearly 25 years. The fort witnessed the migration of US settlers into Texas, the winning of Texas independence, and the annexation of Texas as a US state in 1845. Fort Jesup, no longer needed as a border outpost, was abandoned in 1846.

Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Historic Site

On a mission to establish trading ties with Spain, French-Canadian trader Louis Juchereau de St. Denis encountered an impenetrable logjam on the Red River; at this spot he hastily built two crude huts, which become Fort St. Jean Baptiste and the town of Natchitoches, the oldest permanent settlement in what would become the Louisiana Purchase. St. Denis was named the commandant of the fort in 1722, and the colony thrived until his death in 1744.

Los Adaes State Historic Site

Los Adaes, the symbol of New Spain in Louisiana, was once the capital of Texas. The founding of Natchitoches in 1714 by the French resulted in Spain's establishment, within two years, of six missions and one fort in east Texas. In 1719, a French attack on nearby Mission San Miguel alarmed the Spanish and they built a new presidio, or fort, to counter any further French intrusion into Spanish territory.

Texas

Acequia del Alamo Dam

Construction of the acequia at Mission San Antonio de Valero began in 1719. The source of the acequia was the San Antonio River near the ford of the Paso de Tejas. Here water was rerouted from the river by means of a diversion dam that extended into the stream from its western bank. The acequia served to raise and direct the flow of water toward the eastern bank to a canal intake. The acequia remained in use until 1912.

Apache Pass

Apache Pass provides a window into transportation logistics along El Camino Real, demonstrating how an array of factors combined to make certain locations popular with travelers.

Bastrop State Park

Present-day State Highway 21 closely follows one of the major routes of El Camino Real de los Tejas; original swales for the old road are located within the state park, but are not specifically identified.

Baumann Family Village Sites – Ranchería Grande

This privately-owned site near the Rancheria Grande area contains archaeological evidence of exchange between American Indians and Europeans along El Camino Real de los Tejas.

Cabeza Creek Crossing

Part of a National Historic District, this is a gravel bar ford that may have been associated with the Bexar-La Bahia Road. Artifacts recorded for the site are American Indian, most likely prehistoric but could also be protohistoric or historic. Swales stretch on both sides of the crossing. This creek crossing is located on a private ranch, several miles from the nearest public road. It is not open to general public visitation.

Caddo Mounds State Historic Site

Caddo Mounds State Historic Site attests to the crucial role of the powerful Caddo Nation in shaping the Spanish experience along El Camino Real de los Tejas.

Casa Navarro State Historic Site

Born in the Spanish town of Béxar, José Antonio Navarro's life (1795-1871) and career spanned four distinct periods of Texas history: Spanish, Mexican, the Republic of Texas, and the United States. A signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence, a writer of the Texas State Constitution, and the namesake of Navarro County, he was a champion of civil rights for Hispanics.

Conner Swale Site – Ranchería Grande

Established along Native American trails, Ranchería Grande was a diverse settlement of 23 Indigenous nations when Spanish explorers first encountered it in the 18th century. This joint settlement pooled resources for subsistence and defense, while also serving as a refuge for Native peoples fleeing Spanish missions. The 2.2 mile loop walk takes you through the rolling Post Oak Savannah hills of Central Texas. Visit cedarhillnaturepreserve.com/home to schedule a walk.

Dolores-Applewhite Crossing

The property is located on a portion of the land granted to eventual Spanish Texas governor Ignacio Perez in the 1700s, and includes one of the state's oldest family ranches. In recent years, archeological investigations have revealed centuries-old activity in the area, including wheel marks in creek beds at the Dolores-Applewhite Crossing that verify its use on El Camino Real de los Tejas.

Durst Taylor House

In the historic house and its surrounding gardens, visitors will find historically accurate plants and structures re-created to illustrate life in Texas during the 1840s.

El Camino Real de los Tejas Visitor Center

Repurposed today as an interpretive museum, the El Camino Real Visitors Center is the restored historic caretaker's cottage built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), as well as one of Goliad's hidden architectural jewels.

Floresville El Camino Trail

This trail is located on the old San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad right-of-way, and it roughly parallels the 19th-century El Camino Real de los Tejas between San Antonio and Goliad.

Goliad State Park and Mission Espiritu Santo State Historic Site

This mission showcases many classic Spanish architectural details. It is important to the history of ranching in Texas, and to the history of the San Antonio River valley in general.

La Villita Historic District

Part of a 27-building complex listed on the National Register of Historic Places, La Villita contains architectural and archaeological evidence of early civilian and military life in Spanish Texas; it also played an important role in the Texas Revolution.

Lobanillo Swales

The sandy soil at Lobanillo Swales displays the impact of thousands of travelers over hundreds of years, allowing visitors to follow in the footsteps of the diverse populations that used El Camino Real de los Tejas.

Main and Military Plazas

Military Plaza was first established in 1722 as a parade ground and market square for the Spanish soldiers garrisoned there. While this plaza is associated with early Spanish colonialism, due in large part to the preservation of the 1749 Spanish Governor's Palace, it evolved over the years from a community gathering place and marketplace into the city's seat of government.

McKinney Falls State Park

An identified site along Onion Creek within the park was a key crossing point along El Camino Real de los Tejas. The park is named for Thomas F. McKinney who came to Texas in the early 1820s as one of Stephen F. Austin's first 300 colonists. Sometime between 1850 and 1852, McKinney moved to Travis County and to his property on Onion Creek, where he used enslaved labor to build a large two-story home, stone fences, and the first flour mill in the area.

Mission Dolores State Historic Site

Mission Dolores was a Spanish mission built in 1721. The site imparts significant history about the American Indian experience with Texas' earliest European settlers. Although there are no historic above-ground remains, the mission is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is a designated State Antiquities Landmark.

Mission San Antonio de Valero 3rd Site – The Alamo

In 1718 Father Antonio de San Buenaventura y Olivares established the first Mission San Antonio de Valero, near present-day San Pedro Springs (one mile northwest of downtown). In 1793 the mission was secularized and control passed to local authorities, and before long it played host to the first of many military garrisons. Here in March 1836, the Battle of the Alamo took place in which the Mexican army defeated a smaller force of Texans.

Mission Tejas State Park

Mission San Francisco de los Tejas, the first Spanish mission in the province of Texas, was established in 1690 on San Pedro Creek just east of the site of present-day Augusta. Although the original site of the 1690 mission has not been found, Mission Tejas State Park offers hikers a chance to walk an original segment of El Camino Real de los Tejas.

Nuestra Señora de Rosario Mission

This National Register property was established in November 1754 in an attempt to make peace with various Karankawan tribes, who did not get along with the other Indians at existing missions. Frustratingly for the Spaniards, the Indians arrived in the winter but departed in the spring (when food was more widely available outside the mission grounds). This site is being studied and is only open by appointment.

Paso de los Tejas

During the 1690s, materials for the construction of missions were acquired from a series of quarries in this location. There are remnants of structures associated with the period of significance of the trail.

Paso de Sabinitas

This ford is a state archeological landmark. The route here crossed the Medina River for the Camino de los Palos, known to the Spanish as Paso Sabinitas.

Rancho de Pérez

This is a state archeological landmark, which is part of the Ignacio Pérez land grant. The ranch was known as Rancho de Piedra. The site is located north of the Medina River and was preserved and protected by the Pérez family for more than a century. There is a chapel at the Pérez Cemetery, which was constructed on top of the foundation of the original Spanish Colonial period chapel. Some elements of the original chapel remain.

Republic of the Rio Grande Museum

Located in the downtown San Agustín Historic District, it was once the Republic of the Río Grande's capitol building. It now showcases memorabilia from the short-lived Republic of the Río Grande and displays pictures, books, and furniture from the 19th-century Laredo area.

San Pedro Springs

The area surrounding these springs has been inhabited since prehistoric times. When Spanish explorers visited the springs in the late 1600s, the area was occupied by the Payayas Indians, who lived in the village of Yanaguana. The area around the springs (at the Presidio San Antonio de Bexar, 1st site) was the original site of San Antonio, and in 1729 it was dedicated as a public space by the Spanish government.

Spanish Governor's Palace

This national historic landmark is where Spain had its first permanent military presence in San Antonio. It represents the last visual vestiges of the Presidio San Antonio de Béjar. Traditionally known as the Spanish Governor's Palace, it was the original comandancia (residence and working office) for the captains of the military garrison from 1722 until the early 1800s.

Villa Antigua Border Heritage Museum

This museum showcases the region's history, culture, industry, and populations through a series of changing exhibits and educational seminars.

Treviño-Uribe Rancho

The fort is one of the best remaining examples of a nineteenth-century fortified home along El Camino Real de los Tejas (many others were lost during the construction of the Falcon International Reservoir in the mid-twentieth century).

Wise Family Village Site¹

On private property off County Road 343 near Kornagay Rd., roughly 5 miles west of Gause (Milam County).

¹ Consider renaming to Ranchería Grande—Wise Village Site

Appendix F—2022 Stakeholder Meeting Takeaways

This is a brief summary of key points discussed in stakeholder meetings in December 2022, where a group of Trail administrators and partners traveled together to visit a number of Trail sites in and around San Antonio, TX, and were guided through the initial stages of the interpretive planning process for the Trail.

Please note that these comments have been incorporated into the draft and revised plans, as appropriate.

December 5-6, 2022

A group of 24 participants traveled to each site in a total of two vans, along with simultaneous translators to facilitate communication between English and Spanish speakers. The following notes pertain to each of the sites visited.

Floresville Sites

1. Rancho de las Cabras (overview provided by NPS interpretive staff from San Antonio Missions)
 - only extant Spanish colonial site in the world
 - no infrastructure (ie bathrooms)
 - › accessibility issues
 - Archaeological site, most of the remains have been buried
 - Tours are now offered from Oct - Mar
 - › about 16-30 ppl per tour
 - › local interest
 - Connecting Trails to Parks (2011) = building 33 mi hike/bike trail
 - Q: How to make accessible?
 - Potential Media
 - › site bulletin
 - › reestablishing with SciArt (?) = documentation through ground penetrating radar
 - › many other ideas not mentioned
 - Q: Why is this a World Heritage Site?
 - › oldest Spanish colonial ranch site, 300 yrs old
 - › precious jewelry and ceramics found here
 - › “Spanish colonial truck stop” = gathering place and refuge
 - › Lobanilla portion of the Trail
 - Speaks to
 - › enduring connections of community (nearby residents took stones, then some brought some back)
 - › Close to the river—connected through water

2. US 97 Trailhead

- Continues to Riverbend Country Club, connects to Beer Warehouse
- Logistical challenges
 - › Surrounded by private land
 - › Not easy to get to = trailhead along busy highway so traffic issues, no parking lot, but there is a nearby park
 - › Old railroad is on top of Goliad Road
 - › Managed by City of Floresville
 - › Owned by Union Pacific (UP abandoned its use as a railroad, but they still have the rights to use the location)
- Media
 - › Mini exhibit panels currently in development
- Q: how to keep people engaged in the Trail?

3. Beer Warehouse

- Trailhead access to recreation trail that is a retracement of ELTE
 - › “Trail de Flores” chapter of Trail Association
 - › Chapter has Facebook page where people share photos, etc.
- Building was once a beer warehouse, supported by the rail line
- Media
 - › Wayside exhibits (1 upright orientation panel located here—content in English and Spanish, introduces the Trail and features places to visit; 4 more waysides like this along this section of trail)
 - › Waysides feature the NHT logo
 - › Trail Association consistently uses #elcaminotejas
- Logistics
 - › City-owned site
 - › Building now used as an event/meeting space
- Funding/Partnerships
 - › Local running club raised the funds to develop the wayside signage (via the Trail Association and NPS) (This is how Dave Regan got involved with the Association)
- Q: how to collect feedback from visitors?

4. Riverbend Country Club

- Logistics
 - › Retracement corridor owned by the state
 - › Private owner of Country Club is willing to work with NPS, City, and the Association
- In process of adding another mile of Trail

5. Helton Nature Park
 - Well-developed park with amenities
 - Features 1 mile of the retracement Trail
 - Logistics
 - › Owned by state
 - › Managed by San Antonio River Authority (SARA)
 - High potential for interpretation, but visitors don't seem to know about the ELTE connection here
 - Existing media
 - › Site ID sign and some wayfinding
 - Partnerships
 - San Antonio River runs along this site, has paddling trails (SARA)
6. Mission San José
 - NPS site
 - 6 acres
 - “Queen of the Missions” was established in 1720, was an active mission until 1790s
 - Logistics
 - › Church still operates on Sundays
 - › Part of the local community
 - › World Heritage visitor center being developed adjacent
7. Casa Navarro
 - Located on Laredo Road
 - City is developing walking trails along creeks around the city
8. San Fernando Cathedral
 - High profile site in plaza
 - No existing interpretive media
9. Spanish Governor's Palace
 - Built in 1749
 - City Hall was built on top of the old Military Plaza
 - Part of the core of the city
 - Logistics
 - › Closed Mondays
 - › Managed by the City

New Braunfels Sites

1. Comal Springs

- Located at Landa Park
- Native American footpath is nearby—why the Trail is here
- Anachaua tree located here is an indication of Spanish presence; they transported these trees with them
- “Layers of history” here
- Existing Media
 - › Site ID sign (across the street from Comal Springs)
 - › One 3-sided kiosk with upright wayside exhibits
 - › One interpretive plaque, but features incorrect date (not a THC marker)
- The Great Springs Trail is similar (?); there is an idea to build a recreational trail to connect that trail with ELTE

2. Guadalupe River

- Site of a shallow river crossing; historic evidence has been found here
- Prime location for ELTE development
- Near the river’s edge lies an old blue jean factory building
 - › Developers planning to convert to a multi-use space (like the Pearl District in San Antonio)
 - › Development comes with the possibility of getting enhanced interpretive signage
 - › Hope that Trail improvements will connect to Conservation Plaza
- Existing Media
 - › One interpretive sign (1 paragraph relates to ELTE)
- Partnerships
 - › Great Springs Trail Association

3. Historic Route to “The Trace”

- Route is part of the old San Antonio Road
- Area is being developed for housing, which recently destroyed part of the Trail
 - › A swale located here was recently filled in with cement as part of the housing development
 - › Perfect example of current threats to the Trail; what is at stake with further development without education
 - › Opportunity: potential to reframe with developers—this is a resource that can be sold as an amenity (“living next to history”)
- Existing Media
 - › One marker “King’s Highway)
 - › One sign for Camino de Nacogdoches

4. Route to San Marcos Springs
 - San Marcos de Nevé
 - Swales
 - McGhee Crossing, crosses San Marcos River
 - Existing Media
 - › Three historic markers
 - › One older interpretive panel on the side of the highway
5. San Marcos Springs
 - Springs are some of the largest in the Southwest
 - › Historically gushed to 30-40' tall
 - › Dams now prevent that
 - Archaeological site; researchers have found 13,000 year old artifacts
 - Logistics
 - › Owned by Texas State University (TSU)
 - › Site has walking area that's not accessible for visitors; idea to work with TSU to refurbish the sidewalk
 - › Could work with TS to develop more interpretation about ELTE
 - › San Marcos River flows through city parks; opportunity to work with the City on Trail development
 - Existing Media
 - › Site ID sign
 - › THC marker
 - › Interpretation is about the springs and the river
 - › Existing tours via glass-bottom boats and kayaks

Austin Sites

1. McKinney Falls State Park
 - Official Trail site
 - Swale
 - › Rock wall remnants
 - › Iron gate fixture circa 1850
 - Existing Media
 - › Visitor Center exhibits (new) focus on ELTE (one of three ELTE VCs in the state)
 - Bilingual
 - Interactive elements: moveable pieces, digital Trail map with touch screen, lighted displays (turn lights on/off)
 - › Site ID signs

2. Blair Woods

- 10-acre site; named after previous landowner Dr. Blair
- Certified site
- Swale
- Site is close to an urban area and serves as a community park and green space
 - › Mascot is the Texas Spiny Lizard (aka rusty lizard)
- Has willing private landowner: Austin Wildlife Center
 - › Working on a master plan for a future education and nature center
 - › Working on building an ADA-accessible trail
- Connected with Travis Audubon
- 2019 archaeological survey found remnants of Fort Colorado walls from Republic of Texas era (1836-1838); close to end of Trail era
- Existing Media
 - › Hosts a lot of education programs
 - › Interpretive signage (water & wildlife)
 - › Potential for additional interpretive signage

December 7-8, 2022

A group of 28 Trail administrators and partners met to discuss the planning foundations for the Trail. The group included simultaneous translators to facilitate communication between English and Spanish speakers.

INTRODUCTIONS, ORIENTATION TO THE TRAIL AND PARTNERS

Discussion: defining the process of certification and high potential sites

NPS is in the process of standardizing/developing a protocol to identify and document high potential sites and segments. Trying to tailor each NHT's experience.

- series of questions from the National Trails Act with site attributes for visitor experience
- not the same as certification process
 - › There are nearly 100 high potential sites on the Trail
 - › Not looked at through an archaeological designation, but for visitor experience

High potential site is a different process than certification

Certification is about partnerships and involves signing a formalized, voluntary agreement to preserve, protect, and interpret the site, segment, or facility.

Certification agreements are only with non-federal sites/partners.

“Partnership site certification” = involves a physical element (such as an historical trail site or segment or interp facility)

- For a site to be considered high potential, it needs to have public access, or is a prime spot for public access
- Private landowners must be willing, NPS cannot tell private landowners what to do (respecting property rights is elemental). Landowners don't have

to be involved in determining if a site is high potential, this process is about documenting what is significant about a site/segment.

- Can bring in colleagues to help with technical assistance; again, the landowner does not have to be involved
- On buying high potential sites/segments: if the federal government wants to acquire a site from a private partner, it must be either a high potential site or segment, previously identified. Can only use federal funding. Trail partners (i.e. Association) could buy sites that are not high potential (no federal funding)
- There are still trail routes/segments to be investigated in the US that may alter or change the current trail route
- A certified site may not always mean it is a high potential historic site because it could be visitor center or a place of public access
- NPS only enters into certification agreements with non-federal landowners and partners

High potential sites are resources

- Are subjected to research
- The federal government can only use federal funding to purchase sites from a private partner, but NPS does not buy land
- To add to designated routes is an act of Congress
- Adding sites however is an ongoing process, that changes as information is added to the knowledge base of the Trail
- So far, no sites have been taken away
- It is possible for sites to be removed from the Trail if private land changes hands and the new landowners do not want the site to be part of the Trail

Issues affecting certification: Capacity of the NPS Trails Office to do the certification process and the interest of the landowner(s)

- Currently: there are 25-30 certified sites (according to NPS website accessed 12/3/22, there were 32)
 - › 10-13 of these were certified in 2016
 - › Mission Dolores might be a certified historic site, Caddo Mounds is a certified site, Casa Navarro is not certified (has not gone through formal certification process)
- Trail Association acts as the eyes and ears on the ground in terms of potential Trail sites and acts as a liaison between NPS and potential sites for certification in TX

Difference between a site and a segment. Consider, for example, the Floresville to Camino hike/bike trail:

- Shows the complicated nature of sites/segments
- Might not be certified
- Floresville could be classified as a segment (which is an elongated stretch of 3

miles of trail vs a single point like the Alamo)

Unpacking the “Trail as a beaded necklace” metaphor from Carole:

- The string as the story that connects all sites
- Beads as sites/places that represent a section of stories significant to US history

In Mexico

- There are different agreements with specific guidelines
- For example, El Camino Adentro = Mexican portion is designated as a World Heritage site; designation process began with research from INAH
 - › Research identified Trail attributes; attributes decided by INAH
 - › Some properties did not want to participate
 - › INAH interested in sites from 1800s
 - › Sites needed an agreement with INAH to be part of the cultural itinerary
 - › Cultural itinerary and research classify sites as archaeological sites or other significance
 - › Research that proves cultural and historic significance protects sites
 - › There are other ramifications for different historical trails (not ELTE)

In US

- Comprehensive management plan (CMP) describes site designations
- Archaeologists reviewed 500 sites, about 200 were chosen
- Most important/relevant sites:
 - › are associated with the Trail
 - › have historical significance
 - › provide information
 - › public access
 - › scenic qualities
 - › free of intrusions
 - › are developed for visitor use

Updated list of high potential sites (original draft from 2011 CMP) is not available for public viewing, have not been updated yet

- the first NHTs to be established are getting these updates first, one trail at a time

Q: Do these criteria include partnerships involving conservation commitment?

- the certification agreement is voluntary
- agree to promote, protect, preserve site
- NPS may provide technical and limited financial assistance

InterpatMX—subcontractor under CBD developing report on conditions in Mexico

- As found during the development of the ELCA report, in MX there are logos from UNESCO, with some visible elements
- Signs are not uniform or standardized (some are bigger, or smaller, than others)
- Some signs have more specific information, some are more general
- Some signs have more information than others

ELTE has not received World Heritage designation in MX through UNESCO

- means no official logo
- will work on this in 2023
- InterpatMX will explore partnerships, sites, etc.

INAH working with NPS to develop the Trail segment from Zacatecas to Laredo, TX.

Local and International Context

What seems in common with Mexico: interpretation is in need of broader context and a diversity of visitors to tie the sites together

Need to move beyond what happened at one site, and include the movements between the trail segments

- People may know about the history of the main sites (or might not even know that history)
- Need to consider the movement along the Trail from north to south, not just south to north south to north
 1. Indigenous tribes
 2. Spain
 3. Mexico
 4. Revolutions/Europeans/etc.
- From INAH perspective, in interpretation, need to talk about the actual travel and experiences of the travelers and their movement across the landscape, their hardships
- Remember that interpretive signs are read by people with varying and multiple perspectives that impact how they understand history
 - › Where people come/came from, or stayed, where there is water = ideas of how and when the Trail was used. Flow of ideas and new knowledge...
- There are many stories:
 - › example, Lobanillo Swales
 - Spanish site in the Spanish era
 - Previously, native peoples lived and travelled in that area for thousands of years
 - Anglo: military and settlers

- Later, African Americans sought freedom from slavery, part of the underground railroad
- Talk about where the Trail starts, speaks to what is also happening around the Trail
 - › it branches to El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro
 - › People may ask, “why didn’t they just keep one trail?” Thinking about the reasons and historical use of the Trail from the perspective of historical peoples = context
 - › Experience of movement through the landscape = one of the hardest things to communicate to the public
- Idea to use phones and tech to start connecting with the site, first becoming clear on what is to be said. Tone matters.
- There are so many stories...layers of history and cultures—Indigenous peoples; Spanish and Mexican use; African Americans used the Trail to seek escape from slavery; US military and settlers... can’t fit all of this onto one panel
- Each site has a universe of stories
 - › Historians are interested in very specific information that the public is not interested in. Focus on the culture that exists today because of ELTE.
- Interpretive planning process walks through the process of organizing stories and themes, weeding out details to answer the question: Why should I care?
- Have to be careful with details we provide, and the levels of detail. Interpretation is purposeful.

Current Partners

- Texas Historical Commission
- Louisiana Dept. of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism
- Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept.
- El Camino Real de los Tejas NHT Association
- Other local, state, and federal entities
- Federally recognized tribes whose lands are crossed by the Trail
- Private organizations
- Institutions of higher learning
- Museums
- Visitor Centers
- Trail scholars
- Public and private schools
- Mexican entities such as INAH

Current Partner Roles

- Texas Historical Commission
 - › Manages 4 historic sites related to ELTE—Casa Navarro, Presidio la Bahia, Caddo Mounds, and Mission Dolores
 - › Casa Navarro does not have ELTE interpretation. Will start a new master plan process soon.
 - › THC also manages additional points of interest that are not directly tied to the Trail.
 - › The Trail is underutilized overall (by Brad’s organization)
 - › Brett of TX Historical Commission manages visitor opportunities
 - › Brad works on protection elements of NHTs to ensure that Trails are represented in the other things the agency does, appropriately highlighting the Trails. Serves as a liaison among agencies, particularly with Dept of Transportation. Facilitation between Dept. of Transportation and NPS.
 - › Elements of protection—National Register, working with NPS and stakeholders on designation processes, landmark designations (at the state level) for specific sites
 - › Brad’s role involves facilitating among agencies with differing priorities
 - › Jesse Treviño: we are starting from point A—many do not know about los Tejas
 - › Q: how do we communicate the Trail to the public, particularly in public education?
- Louisiana State Parks (Part of Dept. of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism)
 - › Three significant sites on ELTE:
 - › Natchitoches, Los Adaes, Fort Jesup
 - › These sites are significant in understanding the impact of the Trail
- El Camino Real de los Tejas NHT Association
 - › ELTE’s non-profit, private partner
 - › Works as liaison between private landowners and the federal government, as well as counties (Bexar and throughout TX state)
 - › Works with private landowners to get sites certified, signage on roads, historic and archaeological studies to identify other sites and segments, organizing meetings like this, organizing chapters in Central TX
 - › Conducts educational field trips and works with educators. Created lesson plans for 4th and 5th grade via grants. Used to have video conference for teachers, partnered with Consul General of Spain in Houston to have teachers from Spain now living in TX promote ELTE and create lesson plans with teachers.

- › Dave, (ElCaT President) had a conversation with Floresville school district about bringing teachers to the Trail and incorporating the Trail in their lessons. Follow up meeting to come.
- › Chapter outreach: local people are pushing to get those lesson plans in schools
- › Talked with teachers in Floresville district (about 1 month ago)
- › Association only has two paid employees... need to grow capacity potentially through the chapters. Need more resources.
- NPS National Trails – Intermountain
 - › When a Trail is designated by Congress, there is a designated Trail administrator. Intermountain Region office is the administrator for ELTE, along with a number of other national trails. Twenty full-time employees provide technical and financial assistance to partners of this Trail and others to promote, protect, mark, and interpret. NPS provides operating budget annually for the Association. NTIR staff includes interpretive specialists, landscape architects, GIS staff, and cultural resource specialists, as needed. Planning involves accessing high potential sites and segments.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING IN TX AND LA

- Curriculum resources: LA promotes the sites as fieldtrip destinations. ELTE is not part of statewide curriculum. The Trail is viewed as TX history because a small segment is in western LA, but there is opportunity to integrate and provide greater context.
- Could have TX Historical Commission put teacher resources on their website as a way to make available to the public. No reason to develop new curriculum if its already done, just put the link out there and share.

PARTNER PERSPECTIVES

- How does your organization view the Trail?
- Does your organization welcome increased integration with Trail interpretation?
- What are opportunities for improving interpretation?
- LA State Parks
 - › It's an ongoing discussion... Ray represents LA's willingness to work with what has been interpreted. Much depends on the interest level of individuals. Ray will go back to State Park offices and talk to managers and director and administration and express what is important and what is to move forward. They are taking part in the conversation with an openness to move forward.
 - › Nation of Spain recognizes LA's important "recovered memories."
 - › Roll of ELTE in LA...LA contributed to Spanish history (even though LA is often thought of as a French colony).

- INAH
 - › What opportunities can you think of as an organization and within individual roles, how can you see increased coordination with the US in Mexico? Visual consistency with a logo, signage, consistent language?
 - › To be able to facilitate and work together from Mexico City to Zacatecas, discussing the existence of a third trail. These trails are born at the same place, but they branch out. Starting in Mexico City, what can Mexico City tell us about the Trail? The role of the site can be in a general context... we can share on signage, a logo, this could be complicated but maybe we can have 2 or 3. Thinking about what happened from there to here? The taking and the giving back, what happened with the cultures here? We know very little. That's an opportunity. We could start to create interpretation that there are several trails out of Mexico City.
 - › INAH is federal entity that works on designation. We have collaborated with state governments and municipal governments, helping them fall in love with the route.
 - › Capital City—there is a museum, there are 10 historic buildings... working on a route... working city by city to find sites along the route. People from the US have supported us in identifying the route. Using relationships that are here to understand what municipalities they are from, educating Mexican Americans about the Trail. We know what happened from South to North but not the other way around. I see opportunity to understand better from this group of friends.
 - › Still getting familiar with this topic. We have already identified municipalities... there are some trails that we need to do research on to see if they relate. Another trail branches out and connects to other municipalities that border the US and the river. We are going to see if they have any connection with ELTE.
 - › NPS/US and INAH/MX have different ways of organizing sites/segments/partners. US legislation authorizes work with Mexican partners. Consider these two trails (ELCA & ELTE) to be international trails, but we (NPS) focus on the US side. US has worked with INAH for 30 years, looking to fulfill the missions of both countries.
 - › Q: What do NPS/INAH have in common and what can they do?
 - › Perspective: The conversation and location impact how the Trail is talked about.
 - › INAH writes about the Trail—assume that the Indigenous part is also the MX experience. In US we make presumption between Indigenous and US.
 - › INAH needs to explore sites or gather more information regarding mountain sites; needs archaeological exploration to see if these trails are part of ELTE. Sites start with indigenous cultures and Spanish.
 - › TX government in the 1840s declared that all Indigenous people would be

referred to as Texans/Mexicans. There are people here in TX whose ancestors were Indigenous but are now considered Texans. It's complicated. Indigenous and Spanish are hard to separate in the US. And in the US, there has also been segregation.

- › This project could strengthen cultural identities or strengthen the nuances between identities.
- › News: Former Spanish ambassador to Mexico will be on the Trail Association's board.
- › Sidenote: Luz is the Director of World Heritage Sites in Mexico for INAH, and along ELTE.
- › Camino Adentro and Tejas cross over at Zacatecas
- › According to Luz, historians at INAH could better explain influences and how to connect information... in Mexico there are people interested in the Trail for different activities (recreation, education, etc). Sites are connected in different ways. People in Zacatecas enjoy using the Trail and learning more about Mesoamerica. Need more guidance as to how to create new materials, something to integrate as part of the Trail identity.
- › InterpatMX found interesting information about the Trail in the process of identifying existing interpretive materials, including temples along the route and segments with different yearly festivities. We have the impression that different people that traveled the route used it to get to these festivities, and that the Trail offered security and protection. Merchandise that was transported involved lots of exchange. Connecting the religious and economic aspects. . . we need to highlight and do more research on. We also identified that Indigenous people used the route not only for commerce...but had other meanings, too, such as to share festivals and music.

QUESTIONS

- How could Trail collaboration and various efforts be improved amongst the various partners?
Capacity issue. Capacity from the individual on up. Individuals have multiple charges, even from within departments.
- What would make it easier to relate the Trail to your work?
All partners need to place more emphasis on the Trail. It has to become a priority for all involved. The Association is part of email chains, etc. Challenging because of complications and capacity. Roadway signing is complicated due to the variety of city and county officials involved, as well as other officials and road departments, etc.
Idea: From the federal government perspective—Share the information that's easily accessible, even if it's just organizational info. Like a directory.
In the Comprehensive Management Plan/Environmental Assessment (CMP/EA):
The preferred alternative called for a publicly accessible Trail resource database with info and images to be updated by Trail stewards.

- › NPS NTIR has such a website, but stewards cannot add to it on their own. NPS has a limit for how much info can be on the website, so this is a restrictive factor.
- › This has been a problem sharing information with INAH because there are limits to what NPS is allowed to do.

Idea: We should consider an Excel spreadsheet to collaborate on, that can be accessed by all partners. The Association suggested this last year, but the idea did not get a lot of reception/traction. Such a spreadsheet could be shared amongst the agencies and partners, and could include tabs with a directory of sites, projects, people, document links, events. (Keep in mind that NPS can only do Teams and not Google.)

Idea: ANZA NHT has a separate website with a blog. Partners use and write posts. This approach helps other partners see other initiatives and what is happening along the length of the Trail and can inspire different ideas. This is different from a database approach, which requires a lot of effort to maintain.

Idea: Email blast quarterly or monthly to highlight projects or email blast with links to projects for people to check out and engage with

Paula: Suggests writing up notes for the partners. Each time a sign is finalized, share it with all the partners along the Trail. Have Facebook pages too.

- › All these ideas also involve reminders for partners to look at these resources. Requires administration and management.

Association does e-newsletters and social media posts, and posts updates on their website. Those are more public facing. Partners are not always talking amongst each other about what they are doing. For example, the Association was trying to get some signs and then discovered that one of the missions was already trying to do that.

Association works with sites via chapters and works with individuals depending on the project.

Association coordinates with others on different parts of the Trail on a project-by-project basis.

For example: there is a chapter that wants to create a hiking trail connecting certified sites in their county. This chapter also wants to work with the Association to purchase a trail asset, Sugarloaf Mountain.

Meeting with community members in New Braunfels to start a chapter there.

First, we should be asking: Who should I be talking to? Who needs to be involved in this conversation? Are you bringing in the right partners beginning at the ground level?

Idea: Monthly Zoom calls with this group to talk about what each are doing.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE INDIGENOUS

Steven: In TX, in early Texian Period (1840), the Texas government declared that all Indigenous people would be known as Mexicans from that point forward.

- › There is an integration along the Trail—from an anthropological aspect more than an historical aspect. It is possible to identify places that have this information to connect to the historical context.
- › Mexico does not create significance statements for everything. Instead promotes research of the significance.

In US, many people do not know about the histories that connect their countries to others, or even of their own country.

As Americans, we are always trying to figure out who we are.

“These kinds of conversations are very revealing because we’ve never had them before. It’s about what is happening now, but we need to know about the past first to have a sense of what is to come.”

Cultural Differences: Americans do not think of themselves as one people like Mexico tends to. Keep this in mind on both sides of the border.

IMPRESSIONS FROM SITE TOURS

Dave: Sites were constrained to the next site we were going to. Wasn’t much interpretation out there. When it was, it seemed to be happening in a vacuum. Interpretation in Floresville was great in that it connected the place with other sites.

InterpatMX (Magda): Surprised by the distances—sites are far from each other compared to ELCA. A lot of elements in between, differences between sites. Some have large distances and required significant mobility. She’s thinking about the time and distances people used to walk; mobility past and present.

NPS (Paula): It was striking to see how quickly these sites are disappearing. And nice to see excitement from Blair Woods who want to interpret—it’s urgent.

LA State Parks (Ray): Seeing all of the sites was magnificent, but the average visitor still wouldn’t take away that WOW and important factor of sites. We need to start building that factor before the visitor goes to the site. Consider a promotional campaign or outreach in the schools to increase people’s interest in visiting and protecting.

NPS (Carole): Ranger said visitors ask for information on the sites, but they don’t ask where they can go. Challenge getting people to know that the trail is still out there.

NPS (Carol): Exhibits are dated. One sentence about the Trail. Assumption that there won’t be much about the trail. Need to educate partners to be mindful of/remember the Trail. Offer partners a “step back” for context, the Trail is big and long. This is difficult to promote.

InterpatMX (Antonietta): Challenge of connecting Mexican history. What was seen was mostly local history, learning about what happened there. Potential to connect what happened across the whole trail. Content was related more to the objects but less about the people.

Association (Steven): THC panels are applied for a specific site, a story for that site. Telling only a little bit of that information. Would be nice to have greater context. “Why is this here?”

In Eastern TX, the general population seems to know about the Trail, as they grew up right along the road. The situation in San Antonio, which has more sites and resources, is different in that people do not know about the Trail. Not sure how to bring the history to the forefront.

LA State Parks (Ray): Road signage from 1930's says "El Camino Route"—this was not intended to be interpretive, but rather just transportation and development-focused. People are able to identify the Trail through familiarity with their daily travel routes. They don't know the importance, but they recognize the name.

NPS (Cory): What can all we do to strengthen the ties between sites?

Idea: Route markers and site ID signage. Usually the easiest and first thing to do

What can we do better? What is working and what was missing?

Missing: cross-promotion. For example: At McKinney Falls, there is no information that guides people to other places, or where travelers were going to/from historically. Same at Mission San Jose. There is an opportunity for cross-promotion.

Dave: Floresville interpretation does have that (talks about other sites). What if instead of just having 1 panel we have 3, each with different levels of impact (local story, regional, and international) broader context?

Idea: With site ID panels, what if a brief slogan is introduced—the so what of why the Trail is important. "Second oldest Trail" ... briefly introduce the theme beyond the name recognition.

Naomi: Creating and promoting cultural itineraries on the NPS app. Like having a region that promotes movement between sites. The app was helpful while on the site tours. Mexican portion of the route is not separate. That detail in US and Mexican is important. This is a historic connection, beyond current borders.

Brad: Issue—So many sites have their own significance thought of first, but we know the connection is the Trail. The sites stand alone. Visitors have to dig further down the layers to even see the Trail. For example, The Alamo and Presidio la Bahia are not presented as being part of the Trail.

Carol: Has been having conversation on how much is needed to understand the place. Moving from having favorite places to learning about others. For example, the Trail of Tears has a context panel and a site-specific panel. NPS uses place-based interpretation and what visitors see in front of them in relation to a historic route without overwhelming visitors. This creates continuity with partners along the Trail. NPS uses 2 designs for context panels: one if you traveled by land or by water.

Antonietta: It's important to reference points along the route in a sequence. Having a slogan can raise curiosity. In Mexico, there are historical tensions with this territory in TX. This project could connect people from Texas and Mexico. We have a lot in common. This Trail can strengthen relationships. Mexicans and Texans have assumptions about how the other lives/lived.

Steven: The Trail connects people, places, and cultures over space and time—Native Americans, Spanish, Mexicans, French, Anglos, and African Americans. The Trail can bridge divides. It's just not well known.

Jesse: We should try to get young people in focus groups who don't know much about the history, identity, and territory, etc. They have interest. History has an impact on young people who don't know it.

Luz: It's important to work with the [individual] sites—they have diversity and have been doing more than Mexico currently. There were opportunities at each site, with partners that are knowledgeable. These help us to see the meaning. Panels focus on information. Need to figure out what we want to say and what we want to show people. There's a lot of potential where we can work on those different panels.

Public contact: To use ELCA as an example—we created a community survey to gauge interest and importance of themes. We also created a stakeholder survey to find out what missed opportunities there are and how they do interpretation at their sites. These were advertised at community events.

PLANNING FOUNDATIONS: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Context of the Project

Carol: This is a young Trail regarding designation. It came about as part of a trip Naomi and a colleague took to Mexico to speak with INAH. It's important to engage partners to have feedback, guidance, and a clear plan. When looking at the potential for interpretation along the Trail, it's important to focus on developing sites and developing the app and itineraries—where to start and where to aim? We need to learn what the primary stories are and understand the richness that isn't yet conveyed. The focus right now is a basic outline.

Do the 6 significance statements capture the modern version of the Trail? What's missing?

DISCUSSION ON THE USE OF THE WORD “COLONIZATION”

Jesse: There are issues with statements 1, 2, and 3. He has a technical issue with the word “colonize.” Spain did not colonize, did not have colonies. They had kingdoms. He wants to remove “colonize” and say “Spanish royal empire.” The term “colonize” is historically accepted but is not necessarily historically accurate.

Ray: Yet the academic world at large and in public communities know the term “Spanish colonial period.” People in Spain, Latin America, and the US know this.

Jesse: The English established charter companies that created colonies. In Spain they say royal empire. He wants to use “settlement” and “expansion” instead of “colonize.” There was no invasion. There is an effort in the US to cleanse unsightly history... Invasion guilts Spanish and Latino people as they are minorities, too. Latinos can be proud of their heritage and tell the stories of Indigenous subjugation.

- Indigenous Representation

We don't have Indigenous representation here. We do not have access to transcripts from the listening sessions.

Naomi: ANZA is a colonizing story. This is where history and places are

connected to identity and emotion. It doesn't mean that one narrative prevails—the Trail can hold all the narratives. “Colonization” does not mean to shame Latinos and their descendants.

Jimena: There are Hispanic people in Mexico that agree with the English/Anglo definition of colonization.

- Are there differences between “colonization” and “Colonization” (lowercase and uppercase)?

Chris: If changing the word away from “colonization,” it looks like trying to defend the actions of Spain.

Jimena: Maybe call it the “viceregal period?”

Carol: There will be space to address meanings and find the correct language later.

Steven: Hispanic people should not be shamed for their heritage, while still acknowledging the wrongs done against Native people.

Jimena: Maybe “viceregal period” is difficult to understand, maybe introducing this term might make definition or explanation more complicated.

General concern about the use of the term “colonization” when talking about Spanish settlement.

As a society and a culture, we are at a turning point.

Q: What needs to be included or emphasized beyond what is already in the current statements?

Antonietta: Emphasize the diversity of culture and Mexico at the international level (need to move beyond the local level).

Brett: The term American Indian is specific to the US... how to change to be more inclusive of cultures binationally. We need to ask Indigenous tribes in US and Mexico what term(s) they prefer.

Is Indigenous the correct term binationally? Not necessarily.

“Peoples,” “inhabitants,” “pueblos oficiales”—could be many terms. This conversation will be continued.

Significance Statements

The Significance Statements in the CMP/EA were produced in response to the National Trail Systems Act—a US law. The statements are from the US perspective by law.

The people who will be talked about should be asked what they would like to be called.

In Mexico, there may be different versions of that (“original settlements,” not “peoples”)

Jimena: There is a missing dimension related to human rights and access to one's own heritage, the preservation of this memory by all involved, the cultural memory,

not discrimination, and to recognize and value the participation of these cultures and groups that are involved with these trails. We want to strengthen the rights of these people related to these origins. We are working to try to recover this memory of these cultures across time; the intention independent of the country or who it belongs to is the creation of a culture of peace.

This is an opportunity.

Naomi: The current statements of significance mainly talk about commerce... the only merchandise mentioned was cotton. Thoughts, ideas, etc. were not mentioned.

Carol: The intention of traveling the Trail was to have a place to live and “plant your flag.”

Steven: Cotton is at the end of the period of significance. Trading among diverse cultures happened long before then—Indigenous trading with each other, then with the French, etc.

Jesse: Indigenous have been trading on the route for millennia.

Naomi: Spanish were there to protect their interests.

Trail Visitors: Target Audiences

Who are the primary audiences for Trail interpretation?

- Heritage enthusiasts
- Recreationists/locals at specific segments
- Incidental
- Educational (K-12 and higher education)
- Academics
- Private property owners
- Tourists
- Locals (community pride)
- Researchers
- Families with kids
- Experience seekers (Instagram)
- Pilgrims (pilgrimage seekers)/Religious tourists
- Descendants of Trail ancestors/personal heritage seekers
- Policy makers
- Developers
- Naturalists/Birders
- Virtual visitors
- Creatives
- Taxpayers
- Retirees
- International tourists
- Government representatives
- Visitor Bureaus
- Heritage professionals/specialists

- Priests
- Shopping enthusiasts
- Collectors
- Retailers/gift shop proprietors
- Sidenote: In Mexico, government workers at sites often sell toilet paper
- Media
- Food trucks
- Event promoters
- Tourism agencies
- Donors
- Disabled visitors
- Volunteers
- NPS fans

* NPS Passport stamps are not dependent on certification, some THC sites might already be passport sites

Priority Audience Segments: Recreationists, Education groups, Families with kids, Heritage enthusiasts, Developers, Policymakers, Private property owners

Existing: Recreationists, Incidental, Families w/kids/youth, Education groups

Is this list different in US than in Mexico?

- In Mexico, locals are more culturally important (higher priority)
- Cultural pride
- Very important because locals receive economic benefit

*US Chambers of Commerce want economic benefit to locals

With NHTs, there is a desire to expand the recreational audience. ELTE NHT is not capturing the same recreation enthusiasm as more scenic trails are. We want to bring in a wider range of society.

“Retracement trails”

- Recreation is the point of the National Trails System Act
- Definition of recreation is not limited to physical activity—it’s also enjoyment and learning

Resource at risk: Do we need to communicate with developers and zoning departments, etc.? Is there urgency?

Steven: Yes, there is urgency. Developers have money and political power.

Association is coming up from behind, telling them to remember the Trail. Great Springs is slated to be built by about 2023.

Other Existing Audience Segments

- Academics
- Private property owners
- Tourists
- Researchers
- Experience seekers (Instagram, etc)
- Religious pilgrims
- Personal heritage/ancestors
- Naturalists
- Virtual visitors
- Artists/creatives
- Taxpayers
- Retirees
- International tourists
- Visitor bureaus
- Priests
- Shopping enthusiasts
- Collectors
- NPS fans
- Retailers/gift shop
- Media
- Food trucks
- Event promoters
- Tour operators
- Service workers
- Donors
- Disabled

Primary Audiences: Recreationists, heritage enthusiasts (amateur and professional), education groups (K-12, higher education, scouts/cubs), locals (community pride), families with kids, incidental/accidental tourists, developers and policymakers.

- Recreationists
 - › Know—where they are, what they are doing. Awareness of site and available opportunities. Activities for children, i.e. Junior Ranger.
 - › Do—find and use the NPS App. Share with others (social media, word of mouth). Go to sites and take their time.
 - › Feel—that they belong, that the place is welcome and safe. Appreciation, becoming an advocate and sharing it. Empathy, feeling that they are part of the continuum of human existence and to be in the footsteps of those who came before.
- Youth & Their Families
 - › Know—the history of the Trail and the site, knowing the context. Working with teachers, classrooms, and administrators is an opportunity. Support curriculum in both states.

- › Do—Need to bridge the gap between what teachers are sharing in classrooms to students experiencing the Trail through field trips. Need to connect the Trail to lived experiences.
 - Use themes, like ecology, religious experience, etc. and make that a focus of research for kids. Work with other organizations that work with youth.

Q: Virtual experiences, social media—is this all that kids want?

It's a combination of virtual and in-person experiences.

Many youth are appreciative of having the ability to bond in-person.

In Sonora, Mexico, we have had to be creative with limited financial resources.

We held workshops with youth 12-18 and had them design activities. For example, one student designed virtual puzzles and shared them via social media.

In Nogales, we have a youth program that looked at how to restore a marsh. Now the program goes beyond its original purpose.

- Incidental/Accidental Tourists
 - › Know—that there is a Trail and that there's more to see. That the trail is connected to other places.
 - › Feel—A Connection to history and connected to other people. A desire to walk the Trail and enjoy the physical experience (smell, sight, etc.), instead of just driving along.
 - › Do—Get information to visit, to protect it, and to spend money there.
- Policymakers/Developers
 - › Know—Know the value of the resource and that they have ownership/control. Mobilize and value public support, as in other entities and organizations that support or have a stake in the resource.
 - › Demonstrate who supports the preservation of their site
 - › Feel—Personal relationship/connection and pride in doing the right thing. Recognition of doing the right thing and feel rewarded (good press). Feel like "I'm a hero."
 - › Do—Developers: Not destroy the resource, instead to leverage, improve, and preserve the resource. Policymakers: Enact legal, financial, or symbolic measures towards Trail protection.

Discussion

Recreationists (walkers, hikers, bikers, nature enthusiasts, locals, families, dogwalkers): These people are not there because of historical significance but are there to leave the city noise and find renewal in nature, or to pursue meditation or other spiritual activities.

Recreation is defined as what we do with our leisure time.

When people have a great experience, they discover what type of recreation is “for them.”

Participants from Mexico realized that there are different legal and structural agreements between the US and Mexico, and that there are different ways of managing the sites. But in addressing topics like youth, we have the same challenges (and desires for what visitors know, feel, and do). We can develop more collaborative actions between the US and Mexico.

- Heritage Enthusiast
 - › Know—Learn something new. Learn about things that are not about history (like the environment) and that there are other things to explore beyond history. People are still here (Indigenous peoples and those who settled)—and it’s a shared history. Know about the past, present, and think about the future. Know that the site they are at is connected to a larger story. Understand the importance of geography and the natural environment in shaping the Trail’s stories. Know that there are multiple ways of experiencing the Trail. Understand how common mobility was before—what it was like to travel without cars or planes.
 - › Feel—Curious, safe, and a connection to the sites (personal history, relationship). Challenged (challenging their perspectives to feel engaged). A sense of awe and wonderment. Pride. Realize the importance. Empathy. Understand movement along the Trail and across the landscape and to feel a longing for the journey. We are all migrants.
 - › Do—Stewardship (giving back, working to protect the resource). Experience interconnection. Interact with people and thereby gain a greater sense of context. Interact with what was there. Share their experience with others. Spend money to support the community. Come back, return and visit the other sites.
Learn about the Trails through doing (which helps them recover their memory, so visitors can feel). Very important that the historic is not divided from nature—in life, these are in the same place. Cultural landscapes help us feel more connected to the environment, earth, and land.
Feel ownership, being aware of nature and constructs and time.
Relationship—can’t separate people and nature. We need to bridge the gap that professionals tend to separate.

Human interaction—this topic is an ongoing process. Develop a greater “sense of place.” By feeling part of the history of a particular place, you are also building it. You are building what others in the future will experience, appreciate, and enjoy. We are part of the past, present, and future of the place.

Resources and their Meanings

Tangible Assets

What are the physical features of the Trail? (buildings, artifacts, etc.)

- bridges
- road signs
- swales and ruts
- missions
- presidios
- water sources
- river crossings
- temples
- mounds
- towns
- acequias/creeks/irrigation
- ruins
- lodgings/inns
- campsites/parajes
- landmarks
- houses
- boats
- animals
 - › turtles
 - › cattle culture
- corals
- heritage gardens
- roadways
- mills/workshops
- cemeteries
- archeological sites and trails
- churches
- quarries
- Indigenous sites and trails
- paleontological sites
 - › paleontological pieces that Indigenous peoples modified as artifacts/objects (ex: arrowheads made from dinosaur vertebrates)
- institutions and archives/historical documents/papers
- caves and rock shelters
- specific plants and foods

- textiles

Intangible Assets

What are the intangible features of the Trail? (people, events, systems, ideas, values)

- culinary traditions
- traditional dance
- music
- celebrations
- language
- rituals
- pilgrimage routes/idea of pilgrimage
- technological knowledge
- religion
- family
- trade
- migration
- myth and legend
- tradition
- social organization
- borders/boundaries
- politics
- placenames
- territory
- war
- crime
- cosmology
- marriage
- culture
- climate/weather
- smells
- arts
- sounds
- failure/success
- protection
- struggle/hardship
- endurance
- time/distance
- ghosts
- change
- home
- colonization
- migration
- hope
- fear
- loss

- death
- identity
- joy
- rebirth
- expansion
- exploration
- oppression/prejudice
- destruction
- rules/law
- customs
- adaptation
- government
- danger
- pedagogy/the way we teach/education
- games/sport
- coercion
- disease
- finding/losing your way
- spirituality

Universal Concepts

Which of these are universal to all people, regardless of background?

- hope
- fear
- family
- culinary traditions
- travel language
- coercion
- spirituality
- trade
- migration
- traditions
- social organization
- danger
- adaptation
- customs
- rules
- destruction
- exploration
- disease
- place names
- war
- pride
- culture
- climate

- obstacles
- smell/sound/senses
- arts
- failure/success
- protection
- struggle
- hardship
- endurance
- time/distance
- interaction
- change
- home
- loss
- death
- identity
- finding/losing your way
- joy

The Big Idea

What are the most important messages you want to tell people about the Trail?

- What is the Trail?
 - › International Trail that is a physical connector
 - › Brings people together
 - › People find similarities and differences—highlights these between people on the Trail
 - › Borders are artificial/temporal constructs
- What does the Trail represent?
 - › Continuity of culture and traditions
 - › A place to make discoveries about themselves, history, and places about different perspectives
 - › The Trail belongs to everyone
 - › “Now I know where I came from”
- Transformation
 - › Change, evolution, transformation of identity (self-identity and how others identify you)
 - › Process of change and adaptation
 - › Encounters and struggles that are part of Trail history, results in transformation (example: new communities that exist because of the Trail)

- Movement
 - › Immigration
 - › Ideas
 - › Trade/commerce
 - › Establishment of missions across what is now Texas and Louisiana
- Adaptation
 - › Through time and space
 - › Construction methods (example: missions in east TX are made out of wood and lumber)
 - in Cahuilla there are evident road improvements with stone
 - › Availability of local resources
- Human relationships/social diversity
 - › Survival
 - › Religion + politics
 - › Trade and commerce between groups
- Journey/Migration
 - › Not exactly the same thing
 - › Perspectives of priests/military (people who left records)
 - › Indigenous cultures
 - › Stories of movement (back and forth) and settlement
 - › Planning and preparations for the journey
- Settlement
 - › Of places: San Antonio establishment, Nacogdoches, San Augustine (TX), Anglo settlement
 - › System of settlement
 - › Climate and topography
 - Eg., Faust Bridge
- Network of Routes
 - › Different paths are affected by seasons/climate/safety considerations
- Relationships
 - › Concepts and ideas were transferred along the Trails and through the communities
 - › Music, art, and language
 - › Interweaving
 - › Vaquero culture
 - TX origins come from Spain and New Spain (Mexico)

- Change
 - › Missions—having many cultures in one place creates something new (emerging culture)
 - › To the environment. Tangible: water, landscape through new uses. Taming the land or learning from people who lived here before.
 - › Catalyst of change during Spanish era—colonization of Indigenous peoples, change of lifeways and life experience.
- Home
 - › Subjugated families were resilient, keeping their families and cultures despite great change.
 - › Repetition of social action
 - › The journey is a way of life, people live their lives traveling. Home is the road. Humans have been nomadic for a long time...
- Diversity
 - › Cultural and ethnic diversity of the past is reflected in the diversity of Trail communities.
 - › Learning from others different from ourselves helps us survive and improve our lives.
 - › Intersection of multiple cultural traditions creates a distinct cultural product (example is San Antonian food traditions are well known locally and across the world).

Prioritizing Big Ideas

- Movement of people, ideas, trade - journey, migration = 26
- Indigenous experiences - catalyst of change = 24
- Intersection of identities and cultures = 23
- Transformation of identities, practices, languages - vaqueros, cowboys = 22
- International/physical connector - bringing people together, network of places = 20
- Social diversity - religion, trade, commerce, past + present = 18
- Continuity of cultures and traditions - perspectives, language, personal history = 16
- Adaptation - architecture, new adaptations in new lands = 16
- Settlement - process, systems, geography = 11
- Climate + environment - landscape changes = 7
- Resilient families + cultures = 4
- Home = 2
- Struggles and overcoming - survival = 1

Appendix G—2023 Stakeholder Meeting Takeaways

In August 2023, Conservation By Design (CBD) conducted in-person stakeholder workshops in five (5) communities along the length of the Trail—Natchitoches, LA; and Nacogdoches, Goliad, Laredo, and San Antonio, TX. The workshops were advertised (via newsletter, email, and social media) starting several weeks ahead of time by the Trail Association and further shared by additional partners. CBD made special efforts to reach out and invite several different tribal representatives, but aside from one individual who mentioned her tribal heritage, no one of indigenous lineage attended any of the workshops (or if they did, did not mention their affiliation). Steven Gonzales of the Trail Association did attend and assist with every meeting.

At each of the meetings, Melanie Mae (CBD) presented an overview and orientation to the Trail and described the intent of the interpretive planning process. She also defined interpretation and shared the principles of effective interpretation for participants. The groups then offered input into possible interpretive goals and visitor objectives for the Trail, described existing and potential Trail audiences, and discussed likely motivations for visitors. Each group provided input into the “big ideas” associated with the Trail, as well as the best locations for visitors to access those stories. CBD then asked participants to offer insight into how Trail collaboration and interpretive efforts might be improved among the various partners and closed the meeting with an overview of the next steps of the project. A QR code was shared with participants so that they might offer additional input via digital survey. Just two respondents participated in that survey.

Monday, August 21—Natchitoches, LA

Goals for Interpretation

- Enjoy their experience
- Basic understanding of what the Trail is, the scope of it, and why it is important
- Tell others
- Cultural mix (3 cultures—Spanish, French, Indigenous)
- Feel empowered to know more, know history, appreciate it, and plan for the future
- Feel a sense of pride
- Bring the Trail to life
- Protect the Trail/know it is worth protecting
- Opportunity to educate
- Cross-promotion
- Know that the history of the church is rooted here
- Understand the significance of the “national” designation

Trail Audiences

- Heritage enthusiasts
 - › Passport stamps
 - › Ancestry seekers
- Families (multigenerational)
- International (France, Canada, Germany, Australia, UK)
- Religious (local & international)
- Accidental/pit stoppers
- Outdoor/recreational enthusiasts (water trail)
- Organized groups (K-12, college, tribal) (emphasis of college shifted from field school toward heritage tourism)
- Researchers
- Elder (potential)
- Festivalgoers
- Sightseers
- Trail riders (traditionally horseback and now ATVs)
- Virtual visitors (need to offer a one-stop shop for travelers)

Big Ideas

- Significant trading route (bandits, smuggling, land pirates)
- Family history/settlement
- Western expansion/manifest destiny
- Cultural exchange/continuous presence by these cultural groups
- Expansion of cattle industry/cowboy culture
- Migration route—major gateway (settlers coming in and enslaved escaping out)
- American Revolution connection
- Foodways
- Traditions (horseshoeing and saddle-making as examples)
- The road that led to the founding of TX and LA
- Faith
- Military history
- Changing borders
- The Trail is a Louisiana story (North/South on the Mississippi River vs. East/West on ELTE)

Potential Locations

- Downtown Natchitoches (riverbank panel & pocket park near Fort St. Jean)
- Cane River NHP
 - › Magnolia (enslaved escaped along the Trail)
 - › Melrose (cultural exchange)
- Roque House
- American Cemetery (site of 2nd fort)
- Las Cabezas
- Zwolle

- Robeline
- Museums (Many and ??)
- Adai Cultural Center
- Tribal office in Ebarb (and future Cultural center)
- Natchitoches Historical Landmark District (walking tour)
- Williamson Museum
- Genealogical Society
- Walking trail @ NW University (and marker for St. Denis ranch)
- Private sites
 - › Felch House (Wells)
 - › Old Land Office/cattle yard
 - › Grand Ecore Visitor Center (Army COE)

Partnership Improvement

- Revise Trail collateral
- Consistent design guidelines
- Cross-promotion of sites (incl. social media)
- Consistent hashtag—#elcaminotejas
- Make materials accessible to non-NPS partners

Miscellaneous

- Look at www.texasbeyondhistory.com
- Possible media options:
 - › Interactive StoryMap (Trail Association has an existing one)
 - › Podcast

Tuesday, August 22—Nacogdoches, TX

Goals for Interpretation

- Want people to understand the different people who have lived along the Trail
- Historical significance—events and known historical figures
- Understand what is in their backyard
- Layers of history
- Know it exists
- Role of natural landscape in shaping the Trail
- Corridor of connection & change (people, goods, ideas)
- Know how natural features/landscape/natural history of Trail has changed over time
 - › Increased runoff
 - › Increased invasive spp.
 - › Decreased herbivore and carnivore (predator) populations (bear, cougar, jaguar)
 - › How water features and availability have changed (reservoirs have covered swales and parajes while groundwater pumping has depleted surface flows)
- Feel connected to the past, sense of ownership, protection, desire to educate

- Have the ability to walk/ride the Trail and get a sense of travelers' experience
- Sense of pride
- Know the influence of the Trail on religion (sense that Catholicism failed in this area, and Methodist/Episcopalian lasted)
- CVVB tells people that ELTE is the Royal Road that led West (vs the road that brought Spanish settlers east)

Trail Audiences

- Heritage enthusiasts
 - › Passport stamps
 - › Genealogy
- School groups — field trips (this is a potential audience because state testing is a priority and teachers/school districts don't really do field trips anymore)
- Local residents
 - › Newcomers
 - › Old timers
- Outdoor recreationists (equestrians, hikers/runners, cyclists, boaters, canoers/kayakers)
- Event & festivalgoers
- Birders/naturalists (Association is targeting birders per its strategic plan)
- Vacationers
- Geocachers
- Landowners
- Businesses using the name El Camino Real

Big Ideas

- Corridor of connection & change (people, ideas, goods)
- Road that led to TX statehood
- Significance of national designation (involvement of NPS, rarity)
- Influence on religion
- Historic resources at risk
- Footsteps of TX heroes

Potential Locations for Interpretation

- Murals
 - › Furniture store
 - › Apartments on Pecan
- Sterne-Hoya House
- Old Spanish Plaza
- Trammel's Trace (TH is at farmer's market)
- Pocket park in plaza (Spanish artifacts discovered here)
- Washington & Mound St. (one mound remains)
- Old Halfway Inn
- Cemeteries
- Bernardo D'Ortolan Rancho Site (there's another D'Ortolan site across the

- creek)
- Segments
 - › Hwy 308 to Old Melrose Road (physical remnants/swales)
 - › 225 to Douglas

Partnership

- Cross-pollination—make effort to invite partners to participate
- Adjacent counties can collaborate
- Sharing info re: events & campaigns, etc. with Association
- Consistent hashtag #elcaminotejas

Miscellaneous

- There's a difference between the “original route” (older) and “historic route” (newer)

Wednesday, August 23—Goliad, TX

Goals for Interpretation

- Have a greater connection between local sites and Bexar, significance of local sites (use local names of routes, e.g. La Bahia Road)
- Critical trade route
- Easternmost line of defense (La Bahia) once French threat diminished (important to Spanish TX)
- Move beyond name recognition, basic understanding of Trail for residents and visitors (Heritage tourism is 2nd most significant contributor of economy in Goliad economy)
- Reach locals
- Elevate Spanish history
- Legends/myths of the Trail
- Increase awareness of existing Trail resources
- Have physical experience of traveling the Trail
- See physical remnants of the Trail

Big Ideas

- Settlement /development patterns in TX (including pre-historic patterns)
- Elevate stories/perspectives prior to TX statehood (Spanish, indigenous)
- Physical experience of traveling the Trail (hardship, difficult conditions)
- Routes are still here—you're walking/driving on history
- Why our cities exist
- Cultural traditions (e.g., Halloween)
- Concepts of time & distance
- Cultural mix – interactions
- Cattle arrival and movement
- Routes had different names & functions (including this will better reach locals)

- Exchange of people, ideas, goods
- People had different experiences of and perspectives of the Trail

Visitors

- Local residents
- Landowners
- Heritage tourists
 - › Passport stamps
 - › Genealogy
- Event & festival goers
- School groups
- Paranormal tourists
- Recreationists
- Organized groups (senior bus tours)
- Naturalists

Potential Locations

- Pocket park in Goliad (private property)
- New IMP coming soon to La Bahia (possibility of exterior context panel for ELTE as well as inclusion in future interior exhibits)
- San Marco de Neve (Hays County 1812-1817)
- Goliad State Park – exterior of VC and/or mission
- County courthouses

Partnerships

- Email newsletter, listserve
- Mailing list expansion (local history orgs, not just tourism folks)
- Partners should update Association with events, etc
- Use consistent hashtag #elcaminotejas

Miscellaneous

- There are (3) TX State Park visitor centers in Texas that focus on ELTE
 - › Mission Tejas State Park
 - › McKinney Falls State Park
 - › Goliad State Park
- Goliad has an existing trail between La Bahia and downtown
- USGS has new LIDAR data of Goliad area (Scott from La Bahia says)
- THC published a book on heritage tourism 15 years ago (Raymond Starr has copy)
- La Bahia also does living history demonstrations and presentations

Thursday, August 24—Laredo, TX

Goals for Interpretation

- Be aware it exists
- Understand what it is and why it matters
- International trail, originates in Mexico
- Who used it and why
- “Who’s royal?”
- Native American origins (Paso del Indio)
- Want to know more, engaged, proud
- Know our own city’s history
- Understand national significance
- Be more proud of Latino heritage
- Protect our history and heritage from destruction, feel empowered
- We didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us
- Borders are fluid, artificial divisions
- Humans are nomadic creatures
- Trade routes
- The Trail is still in use today, always will be
- Imagine the physical experience of travelers (walking in the footsteps)
- Layers of time and culture
- Petty divisions of today are temporary
- Trail connects people, places, culture
- Elevate underrepresented stories

Audiences

- Students (K-12, higher ed)
- Local residents
- Heritage tourists
 - › Passport stamps
 - › Genealogy
- International tourists (Laredo-specific)
- Researchers (authors)
- Winter Texans (snowbirds)
- Birders (along the river, birding festival, nature preserve at the bend in the river)
- Shoppers/retail tourists
- Recreationists

Big Ideas

- Pursuit of religious freedom (different types of missions were founded, “path to freedom,” “crypto-jews” and priests fleeing Spanish inquisition)
- Immigration/migration is our past, present, and future
- We were here (first, second, before)
- Royal influence—how city was constructed (regulations, Law of the Indies)

- Square/plaza in middle (public trials)
 - › Church
 - › Municipal government building

Locations

- Plaza
- Park on river bank
- Outlet mall
- Bridges
- Lake Casablanca State Park
- Scenic overlooks
 - › The bend
 - › El Azteca Creek (popular with birders, but in need of maintenance)

Partnerships

- Sharing info about events, etc.
- Consistent hashtag #elcaminotejas

Miscellaneous

- Margarita is interested in getting Laredo more known as a heritage tourism site
- (2) attendees are city council members

Friday, August 25, 2023—San Antonio, TX

Goals for Interpretation

- Be aware it exists, what it is, where it is, what it changed, what it felt like
- People who walked/rode it: what did they want, what were they trying to get/do?
- Why missions were created
- That this camino is different from the pilgrimage camino also in San Antonio)
- International influence
- Role of water features along the trail
- Role of trail in how the city developed
- Help people understand the pervasiveness of “el camino”
- Know that it is still in use today
- Gain a deeper sense of history (before 1835/statehood/Alamo)
- Based on indigenous routes (explain significance to indigenous people)
- Confluence of cultures (part of our collective past, present, future)
- Walk physical remnants (recreation)
- Virtual exploration of trail
- Utilize local names of routes
- Feel connected to people who traveled the trail
- Feel connected to their communities as well as more distant places in TX
- Understand travelers’ experiences (hardship)

- Supply routes
- Generate support for Trail protection
- Significance of national designation
- Have greater access to information/personal stories of the Trail

Audiences

- Festival & event goers (cultural, fitness, community type events)
- Recreationists
- Local residents
- Trail riders (horseback)
- Landowners
- Heritage tourism
 - › Indigenous
 - › National significance (passports)
 - › Personal ancestry/genealogy
- Accidental visitors (went to a site and happened on the trail)
- Neighborhood associations
- Higher education
- Existing trail orgs (Great Springs Trail, for example)
- Religious communities

Big Ideas

- Colonial effort here was more significant than British (New Spain, rather than New England)
- History is written by the victors
- Road that led to the founding of TX
- Layers of multicultural history (various perspectives)
- Trail is a unifying concept
- Story of economic development (trade route—people, goods, ideas)
- Path to freedom
 - › Religious
 - › Political (escaping slavery)
- String of pearls that unites space and time

Locations

- Institute of Texan cultures (missing Spanish, Mexican, Tejano representation)
- World Heritage Center
- Meadows Center (San Marcos @ springs)
- University history departments (to make students more aware)
- Courthouses
- Downtowns (cities along the Trail) (could they all have a consistent way of marking the trail through downtowns? Like a medallion or other in-ground installation?)
- Look into the Mexican American Museum of TX (in Dallas)
 - › Have been documenting early Mexican settlers

- › Alex Martinez, board member

Partnerships

- Sharing information with Association
- #elcaminotejas
- County judges and development offices, historical commissioners, historic preservation office (not all counties have this officer)
- Real Places conference every April (put on by Friends of THC), suggest making template proclamations available (try to get state and county proclamations)

Miscellaneous

- Potential partners
 - › Mexican American Civil Rights Institute
 - › World Heritage Office of the City (San Antonio)—is planning a world heritage festival
- The trail has always been a place for tourists, even in indigenous times
- What water features enabled the Trail to exist?
- How did my DNA move back and forth across the Trail?
- Everything about the missions and Trail is alive and in use today (mission descendants are still going to church and getting baptized)
- Local pilgrimage trail (el camino) traverses the missions (participants get credit/certificates from church as they walk from mission to mission)

Appendix H—2024 75% Draft Stakeholder Input

Overview

In November 2024, Conservation By Design released the 75% draft of the interpretive plan to stakeholders and conducted a pair of virtual workshops with stakeholders. Ten out of several hundred people invited were able to attend.

The purpose of these meetings was to present the key findings of the 75% draft, allow for questions and initial comments, and invite a deeper review if interest existed.

75% Draft Feedback Survey

All stakeholders (those in attendance as well as those on the invitation list) were invited to provide more detailed feedback through either comment on the pdf of the plan or by participating in a short survey. A summary of the survey results follows.

Summary: Overall mixed response to the survey. Low engagement with the survey (8 total responses) and stakeholder meetings (10 attendees), makes it unclear if there is a lack of knowledge of the project allowing stakeholders to see themselves and their organization connected to the Trail. However, there is positive response to the plan and alignment on future need with the top three being:

- Facilitate greater public awareness of the Trail
- Develop new or expanded wayside interpretation along the Trail
- Facilitate greater communication and collaboration amongst Trail partners TIED WITH Continue developing digital Trail media products

Question 1: captured contact information for each participant

Question 2: gauged the level of support for the interpretive themes and goals in the plan. There was a glitch in the way the response options were presented to the participants, but after accounting for the glitch, the average level of support was 86%.

Question 3: 28.57% indicated that yes, input was captured from the previous input sessions; 28.57% indicated I am not sure; and 42.86% indicated no (two-thirds of which did not participate in previous sessions, and the remaining one-third added that their organization should be listed as part of the Trail community).

Question 4: 87.5% of respondents indicated that the plan addresses their, their organization's, and their community members' interests and concerns. 12.5% indicated the plan did not meet their interests and concerns.

Question 5: Other recommendations or considerations submitted by respondents are as follows:

- To the list of Indigenous tribes recognized: The Tonkawa's subtribes: Mayeye, Yojuane, and Emet should be added to the Sana (already included). I can explain the importance of these names in detail but briefly: Mayeye frequented the cross timbers exclusively, Yojuane were seen very early near Colorado River crossing in 1709, Emet were first Tonkawa speakers met by Father Massanet in 1689. Second, more attention should be given to springs along the trail, as they were overnight campsites. My research has located 2 specific locations and 3 other general locations. I can show you sources for each. More attention should be given to river crossings, because of their beauty, ability to be identified, and the danger they posed.
- More emphasis on American Indian life and contributions to historical story
- p 10. Change two definitions. Carts have two wheels; wagons have four wheels. Thus: Carreta-was a cart, a two-wheeled vehicle drawn by.... Caro-was a wagon, a four-wheeled vehicle drawn by...
- Need more information at areas where they crossed the international border / Rio Grande. Wayside exhibits. In Theme 2, it should also talk about the reverse of Indigenous people brought warfare against TX and the US. Exhibits and waysides near the river crossings. Suggested Waysides: On hwy 83, near Hacienda Dolores and in Laredo near old For McIntosh. Recommendations: 5. Include other federal and state agencies for websites and publications for reading. Hacienda Dolores crossing, buildings still there.
- Theme 1 Help visitors understand the origins and impact of Tejano/Creole/ Cowboy culture - could be combined into one concept/idea. Is cowboy culture the correct term? Or would ranching culture be more appropriate? Theme 2 Illustrate the impacts of cross-cultural exposure - the topics of "stories of conflict" and "stories of cooperation" seem overly simplified compared to other topics Theme 3 Introduce the tribes indigenous to the region: Archaeological periods (Paleoindian, Archaic, etc) can be hard to grasp. Mention the years that these periods are associated with, e.g. 11,000 years ago or 13,000 BCE Stories about environmental changes - mention fire suppression and/or wildfire? Aquifers? Also, insects are animals. Theme 4 Help visitors "read the landscape" - doesn't need to be in quotes Essential Questions I like how they're broken down by concept. What would it look like if there were some (not all of them) essential questions included in each theme matrix? Notes on specific TX SP items: The mule interactive at Mission Tejas SP is not operational and is going away permanently. Might need to remove this note unless there's another mule loading interactive somewhere else. Bastrop SP is about to print an outdoor sign with a ECR blurb and the ECR logo from NPS. Focus 2: Prioritize Interpretive Media - Allow partner sites to hand out unigrids and other brochures. Provide files and specs for professional printing. - Provide signage templates that partner sites can print - generic ECR signage - Provide ready-made social media content for sites - We don't want there to be a hard requirement that all ECR signage is in

the NPS format. For SP sites, we have our own graphic identities and are happy to incorporate the official logo, but do not wish to use other NPS design elements like the black bar. Focus 3 - youth - Junior Ranger - supply booklets and badges to trail sites. Maybe pilot at a few well-established non-NPS sites, like McKinney Falls Focus 4 - train interpreters yes!!! Cannot wait for this! Let TPWD know what support you need in this area as we have many interpretive trainers on staff. p. 105 - McKinney Falls SP description - tweak this to include mention of enslaved labor constructing the house, gristmill, etc.--not Thomas McKinney directly.

- My background is in linguistic and cultural anthropology, which is my PhD area, and I'm also a lawyer, so I pay a lot of attention the language used in everyday life to talk about Native nations and have some observations. I hope these will not be taken as harsh or pedantic. The language used to talk about Native people matters, a lot, because the general public is not informed about the diversity or even just the continued existence of Native nations as tribal governments or the unique legal status of tribes in the U.S. In general, there is a tendency to "monolithize" Indigenous nations in the plan. Instead of referring to Indigenous peoples generally, in most cases, it would be preferable to refer to specific groups. Ex.: different groups had different experiences with the missionaries, and others had no experience with them. Being specific will help the public understand that Native nations are not one group, but have a variety of histories. It is also a best practice to use the term Nation or whatever the group calls itself--ex., "Caddo Nation, Coushatta Tribe"--than just "the Caddo, etc." We don't say "the Spain" or "the France," etc. but we do say "the buffalo" and "the elephant," so, as a matter of language, I think this was of referring to Indigenous nations can be problematic and semantically link them to features of the natural world rather than their actual status. In the U.S., the legal status of Native nations is domestic, dependent nations, not Indigenous groups (which has a different meaning in international law). It is the word "group" that is problematic, not the word Indigenous. Another consideration is that there are deeply affected Native/Isleño mixed communities, some of which are not federally recognized, but are still distinct shareholder communities and should be included as such. These include the Ebarb and Spanish Lake communities in Louisiana. There are other examples of monolithization in the interpretive plan. For example, a list of religions says: "Catholicism • Protestantism • Judaism • Native belief systems" Native people also have religions, not just belief systems, and they should be specifically listed (ex.: Caddo, Apache, etc.). Those are just a few examples. If this is something you are open to reconsidering, I would be happy to go through and offer more detailed feedback.

Question 6: asked participants to prioritize the plan's recommendations (listed in descending order, according to responses received).

1. Facilitate greater public awareness of the Trail
2. Develop new or expanded wayside interpretation along the Trail
3. Facilitate greater communication and collaboration amongst Trail partners
4. Continue developing digital Trail media products
5. Continue offering interpretive publications for the Trail
6. Continue supporting social media engagement
7. Create a central repository of educational curricula
8. Pursue Trail-themed public art opportunities
9. Train interpreters about the Trail
10. Support capacity building for the Trail Association
11. Market available educational resources
12. Create and promote digital education resources
13. Train other visitor contact personnel about the Trail
14. Expand interior exhibits
15. Promote professional development opportunities for teachers
16. Consider developing an NPS Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program for the Trail
17. Continue to support the Trail's Junior Ranger program

Question 7: 57.14% indicated that they could see their organization's role in implementing the planning objectives and recommendations. 42.86% indicated that they did not know if they could. No one responded with a "no."

Question 8: gathered additional comments or suggestions:

- Just that the documentary we are developing with the Tonkawa tribe see tonkawathemovie.com has plans to make additional footage available to groups interested in telling/showing Tonkawa history.
- Might want to talk about other areas that the trail might have gone over, new routes could be found.
- I want to clarify that I work as an associate professor at [XYZ] but do not speak for it. I also am a member of a tribe (not from the area) and work with several Native cultural nonprofits in [my state], but my comments are my own.

Appendix I—Participants in the Interpretive Planning Process

Ing. José Francisco Aguilar Moreno—Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia

Sunny Albright—Conservation By Design

Frank Arredondo—Hays County

Donna Baker—Cammie G Research Center, NSU

Teresa Banker—Able City

Brian Beattie—Individual

Perky Beisel—Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches County Historical Commission, Nacogdoches Historic Landmarks Preservation Commission, Friends of Historic Nacogdoches

Christopher Bentley—National Park Service, Juan Bautista de Anza NHT

Ray Berthelot—Louisiana State Parks

Rebecca Blankenship—Cane River National Heritage Area

Deborah Burkett—Cherokee County Historical Commission

Kass Byrd—Individual

Sharon Calcote—Louisiana Office of Tourism

Carla Camacho—Mexican American Civil Rights Institute

Charles Cantu—Individual

Bill Christopher—Sons of the Republic of Texas

Pam Christopher—Daughters of the Republic of Texas

Jason Church—National Park Service, National Center for Preservation Technology & Training

Alyssa Cigarroa—City of Laredo

Melissa R Cigarroa—City of Laredo

Carol Clark—National Park Service, National Trails Office Intermountain Region

Linda Coker—Hays County Historical Commission

Anita Collins—Hays County

Joyce Conner—El Camino Real de los Tejas NHT Association

Alicia Cowley—Daughters of the Republic of Texas

Georgia Craven—Sabine Parish

Brett Cruse—Texas Historic Commission

JayAnna Davis—Cherokee County Historical Commission

Lynn Dean—Discover Texas History

Cory Donnelly—National Park Service, National Trails Office Intermountain Region

Bill Doolittle—El Camino Real de los Tejas NHT Association

Mtra. Jimena Escobar Sotomayor—Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia

Andy Ferrell—National Park Service, National Center for Preservation Technology & Training

Justin French—Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Historic Site

Robert Frizzell—Hays County Historical Commission

Christopher Fullerton—Bexar County Historical Commission

Azucena Garcia—Translator

Magdalena Garcia—InterpatMX

Santiago Garcia—Mission Heritage Partners & Great Springs Project

Rhonda Gauthier—Individual

Steven Gonzales—El Camino Real de los Tejas NHT Association

Oscar Gonzalez—San Antonio Public Library

Arlene Gould—Natchitoches Parish Tourist Commission

Sarah Gould—Mexican American Civil Rights Institute

Pete Gregory—Williamson Museum, NSU

Tanya Hedahl—Translator

Lauren Holmes—Louisiana Office of Tourism

Mark Howe—United States International Boundary and Water Commission

Jill Jensen—National Park Service, National Trails Office Intermountain Region

John Kisalus—El Camino Real de los Tejas NHT Association

Shelby Lero—Nacogdoches Convention and Visitors Bureau

Mtra. Luz de Lourdes Herbert—Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia

Dr. María Antonieta Jiménez Izarraraz—InterpatMX

Patsy Lassiter—Cherokee County Historical Commission

Marie Levy—Individual

Gabriel Ulises Leyva Rendón—Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia

John Luster—American Planning Corporation

Courtney Lyons-Garcia—Mission Heritage Partners & Great Springs Project

Melanie Mae—Conservation By Design

Toro Mortinez—Office of Henry Cueller

Scott McMahon—Presidio La Bahía State Historic Site

Fred Meek—Goliad County Historical Commission

Sara Mendoza—Webb County Heritage Foundation

Cindy Meyer—Hays County Historical Commission

Ralph Meyer—Hays County Historical Commission

Jim Neal—Natural Areas Association

Noel Nicholls—Individual

Bob O'Dell—Sugarloaf Pictures LLC

Paula Ogden-Muse—National Park Service, National Trails Office Intermountain Region

Jimmy Partin—Nacogdoches County Historical Commission
Brad Patterson—Texas Historic Commission
Kent Peacock—Creole Heritage Center, NSU
Jose Luis Perea—Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia
Katie Raney—Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Dave Regan—El Camino Real de los Tejas NHT Association
Dr. Rebecca Riall—Individual
Christopher Rincon—The River Pierce Foundation
Kristin Rodriguez—Texas Historical Commission, Casa Navarro
Angélica Sánchez-Clark, Ph.D.—National Park Service, National Trails Office Intermountain Region
Logan Schlatre—Cane River National Heritage Area
Javier Serrano—InterpatMX
Raymond Starr—Individual
Elaine Sullivan—El Camino Real de los Tejas NHT Association
Naomi Torres—National Park Service, Juan Bautista de Anza NHT
Enrique Treviño—San Antonio City Council
Jesse Treviño—El Camino Real de los Tejas NHT Association
Lupita Valdepeña—Webb County Heritage Foundation
Luis Alberto Velázquez Correa—Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia
Carole Wendler—National Park Service, National Trails Office Intermountain Region
Leah Dunn Witman—Association for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches
Wanda Wynder—Cane River National Heritage Area

Appendix J—The State of Trail Interpretation in Mexico

Executive Summary of InterpatMx’s Report “El Camino Real de los Tejas: Existing Conditions, Portfolio of Options and Heritage Tourism Partnerships”

Introduction

In support of Conservation By Design’s contract with the National Park Service, associates of InterpatMx were tasked with developing an analysis and portfolio of interpretive media options and heritage tourism partnerships relevant to the stretch of El Camino Real de los Tejas in Mexico (Camino) that connect to current or future interpretive opportunities in Mexico. This document summarizes the report created by InterpatMx for inclusion in the interpretive plan for the National Historic Trail. The full version of the InterpatMx report is available through the National Trails Office, Intermountain Region, based in Santa Fe, NM.

Purpose and Objectives

This report documents existing conditions related to interpretation and heritage tourism along the Camino, followed by recommendations for interpretive products and programs and heritage tourism partnerships to enhance the visitor experience.

General Context for the Project

In Mexico, a large portion of cultural heritage sites are protected by a 1972 Federal Law—enforced by the federal National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) and managed by several players, depending on the designation of the site. Some historical monuments are administered by federal offices, by state and local authorities, or are stewarded by civil organizations. To date, there have been no inter-state collaborations for the creation of panels, official guides, a Camino web site, or other interpretive products.

Summary of Activities Undertaken

In order to gather information about existing conditions, the InterpatMX team completed the following activities:

- Attended a site tour and workshop to sections of the Camino in Texas;
- Conducted web-based discovery of social media and other Camino-related content (which revealed a significant absence of information);
- Conducted interviews with key individuals associated with Camino research; and
- Conducted site visits to the Querétaro – San Luis Potosí – Matehuala, Matehuala - Saltillo - Monterrey, Zacatecas - Saltillo, and Saltillo - Piedras Negras and Guerrero sections.

Records were generated in nine capital cities, various municipal centers, and small villages. The historical trail, in most cases, does not align with highly trafficked routes such as federal highways or expressways. In some instances, historical segments of the trail were followed.

Key Findings

El Camino Real de los Tejas is one of several road roads that developed in the history of New Spain, and may be thought of as a branch of El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro or Camino à Santa Fe. El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro is considered a main path that holds historical importance, attracting various research efforts, and enjoys social prominence, notably being included in UNESCO's World Heritage List.

This report builds upon our previous involvement in a similar project focusing on El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro conducted by InterpatMX from 2019-2023. That route is thematically and physically connected to El Camino de los Tejas; in fact, these routes overlap from Mexico City to Zacatecas, and was referred to historically as Camino de la Plata, which connected Mexico City with the silver deposits at Zacatecas. El Camino Real de los Tejas veers off to the northeast in Zacatecas, branching off to reflect later events in Mexico and the larger history of New Spain.

El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro has been the subject of much research and academic scholarship surrounding its designation as a World Heritage destination. That same focus and attention has not yet been trained on El Camino Real de los Tejas. El Camino Real de los Tejas has been considered in Mexico to be a complementary road, used at a different time. The name "El Camino Real de los Tejas," in fact, cannot be found in Mexican territory; rather it is a name promoted in the United States. In addition, Mexican experts interviewed for the project are often at odds regarding the significance of the route or specific locations along the route. Sections of the route are often referred to by more regional names, such as "Camino Saltillo," which refers to the stretch from San Luis Potosí to Saltillo. As we approached the US border, we recognize that graphic panels begin to refer to it simply as "Camino Real."

The route lacks the historical connotation typical of the Spanish occupation process between the 16th and early 19th centuries. Instead, different roads and branches take on immense significance in reference to later periods and dramatic moments in Mexican history.

For example, in Matehuala (San Luis Potosí), the chronicler highlighted the fact that the place was part of the Ruta de Hidalgo, a historically significant figure in the Mexican Independence movement. This narrative was particularly emphasized during the commemoration of the 200 years since the start of the independence movement in 2010, with various research projects, museum creations, and the highlighting of places where the group of main insurgents passed through. The narrative doesn't mention any Camino Real (in fact, the chronicler mentioned not knowing anything about it). Similar situations occurred in Pabellón Hidalgo (Aguascalientes), which has an important local museum dedicated to the Ruta de

Hidalgo because in that location, Hidalgo's fellow insurgents, Allende and Aldama, took command away from Miguel Hidalgo. Another episode took place in Monclova (Coahuila), which, despite having a museum called "Coahuila - Texas," mainly refers to the shared history before Texas became American territory, without specific mention of the Camino Real. Complementarily, outside this museum, which was an old hospital, the fact that several of the main insurgents, including Miguel Hidalgo, Allende, Aldama, and Jiménez, were captured nearby, gains prominence. The place commemorates that they were imprisoned there, and some were executed inside, including Ignacio Aldama.

While its status as a "royal road" is not much discussed anywhere, there are stories and narratives discussing many things historically connected to that status—the Spanish colonization process to northern Mexico, wars between Spaniards and indigenous peoples, the context of building presidios, or the founding of cities linked to mining interests. Though scarce, there are also discourses about indigenous resistance. This is because the dominant discourse of the Spaniards usually prevails, speaking of processes of "pacification" rather than "invasion."

Access to any intact stretches of the route as well as specific places is hampered by development and modernization, as well as organized crime in many of these localities. This limits promotion of such sites for public visitation.

The full report includes detailed information about specific findings in each locale, including existing interpretation related to El Camino Real de los Tejas or the Tejas branch.

Portfolio of Options

Opportunities for both the local and visiting public to learn about the history and significance of the heritage of the Camino are very limited. Any plan for the interpretation of El Camino Real de los Tejas must consider several conditions:

- **Context**—The Camino Real de los Tejas is a branch of the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro. The latter has a history, projects, and even considerable popularity. It is important that actions on the Camino Real de los Tejas remain linked to these efforts and that its contents are related to those developed in eventual heritage interpretation programs or plans of ELCA.
- **Geographic and geopolitical diversity**—This historic road takes on different relevance regarding the attention it receives for tourism and heritage conservation purposes compared to other heritages in each state or municipality.
- **Legal protections affecting dissemination of heritage information**—Any proposal for disseminating information about archaeological heritage implicitly requires authorization from INAH. Also, any proposal for disseminating or interpreting historical heritage implies an agreement with the owners or administrators of the spaces where these heritages are located, which can vary greatly according to criteria such as property type (public/private) and jurisdiction, among others.
- **Historical complexity**—A process of dissemination or interpretation must refer to this dynamism and historical complexity, and to the fact that it is necessary

to support further research that allows us to expand our knowledge about this historical path.

- Access, accessibility, and security—We do not consider it prudent to encourage visits to certain localities, at least not without precise security recommendations, even though they are enclaves of great historical interest linked to the Camino Real towards Texas.
- Local perspectives—Leverage specific content about the Camino Real towards Texas starting from what is already known and managed locally (insurgent army in the War of Independence, for example).

Opportunities regarding interpretation include:

- The need for additional research about this route and period of history
- The role of local chroniclers
- Leveraging existing museum spaces and the people who administer and promote them

Priority audiences include:

- Local chroniclers and heritage researchers
- Tourists and travelers
- Local residents
- Intergenerational family groups

Suggested Media

1. Existing museum spaces
2. Waysides and brochures
3. Websites, such as the “Mediateca,” a repository of heritage information managed by INAH (especially its “Lugares,” or Places page)
4. Mobile application for self-guided tours
5. Educational materials for elementary and middle school students

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Interpretive Plan El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail



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