INTRODUCTION

The Alameda Corridor, a 32km express freight rail line, links the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to the national rail network and rail yards of Los Angeles. It opened in 2002.

The line is owned by the Alameda Corridor Transportation Authority, and is funded through user fees paid by private railroads.

BACKGROUND

The main objective of the project was to serve increasing levels of activity at one of the world’s busiest port complexes, relieving congestion on the surrounding road and rail network and in the ports and nearby areas. It also enabled the elimination of 200 at-grade rail crossings, improving accessibility for local traffic and the local urban environment, and helping stimulate economic development in the area.

The Southern California Association of Governments was the initiator of the project, forming a Ports Advisory Committee which recommended consolidating the four existing rail lines into one grade-separated route, and subsequently setting up the Alameda Corridor Task Force.

The Alameda Corridor Transportation Authority, a joint powers agency, was formed in 1989 by the two city governments, and also represented other bodies including the port authorities, and federal road and rail administrations. The three private railroads operating in the area sold their rights-of-way to the port authorities and now share rights of way on the Corridor.

Three successive pieces of legislation on multi-modal transport planning strengthened the role of metropolitan planning organisations, increased funding flexibility and eligibility, and promoted the inclusion of freight interests in the process.

Governments of the eight ‘Corridor Cities’ through which the Corridor passes were also represented on ACTA’s governing board, although some opposed the project. ACTA negotiated separate agreements with them, providing funds for specific mitigation measures. The governing board was restructured in 1996 to reduce the influence of the Corridor Cities.
ACTA also introduced a range of community outreach measures. Environmental impact assessments were required under both federal and state law (the former only after federal funding was identified), and involved public hearings and community meetings.

**CHARACTERISTICS**

The project cost was estimated at USD 1.8bn in 1996 (USD 2.50bn in 2010 prices)\(^1\). The final cost was USD 2.4bn in 2003 (USD 2.88bn in 2010 prices). Construction, design and engineering accounted for 70% of the total, acquiring rights-of-way from the railroad companies 16%, and financial and legal costs 14%.

The project was managed by the Alameda Corridor Engineering Team, a joint venture between DMJM Harris, Moffatt & Nichol, Jenkins/Gales & Martinez, and TELACU, on behalf of ACTA. It consists of three sections: North End Project, Mid-Corridor Trench and South End Project.

The Mid-Corridor, the largest part of the project, was built through one of the country’s largest Design-Build contracts, let to the Tutor-Saliba Corporation. It is a below-ground, triple-tracked rail line, 16km long, 10m deep and 15m wide, and allows trains to bypass 145 km of early 20\(^{th}\) century branch lines.

**FUNDING**

In 1998, the railroads agreed to pay ACTA a container-based user fee for access to the Corridor. The projected revenue stream allowed ACTA to finance a revenue bonds issue for USD 1.1bn and helped secure a federal loan for USD 0.4bn. The project’s eligibility for federal funding rests on the 1991 Act (‘ISTEA’) and its designation as a national high priority corridor. Other public bodies provided additional grant funding, including the port authorities and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transport Authority.

In the year of opening, 2002, an average of 39 trains per day used the Corridor. Numbers peaked at 55 in 2008, falling to 44 in 2008. This represents approximately a third of the freight traffic from the two ports. The share is lower than initial expectations, as road freight has remained extremely competitive. However, a general increase in port activities and the empty container discount have maintained performance levels and ACTA repaid its federal loan 28 years ahead of schedule, in 2004.

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\(^1\) Costs have been converted to USD at 2010 prices, using historic inflation rates and current exchange rates, to allow comparison between projects.