

Interoceanic Corridor of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec BUILDING A FASTER, GREENER BRIDGE TO THE U.S. SOUTHEAST

... AND BEYOND

Salina Cruz

CIIT

Coatzacoalcos

MEXICO'S NEW TRADE CORRIDOR COULD RESHAPE NORTH AMERICAN SUPPLY CHAINS

Global manufacturers are moving production closer to end markets, and Mexico has already overtaken China as the United States' top trading partner. Less discussed but potentially game changing is the 303 km Inter-oceanic Corridor of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (CIIT), linking Salina Cruz on the Pacific with Coatzacoalcos on the Gulf. By replacing roughly 1,000–1,800 nautical miles of Panama-Canal sailing with a planned freight rail shuttle targeted at under six hours, an Asia-to-Atlanta move could arrive about a week faster and at mid-single-digit lower freight costs, even before congestion premiums are considered. The shorter distance also reduces total CO₂ per shipment, giving retailers a verifiable ESG benefit and avoiding the Canal's recurring draft restrictions.



INDUSTRIAL LAUNCHPADS WITH FRESH INCENTIVES

Under the 2025-2030 Plan México, the federal government has earmarked ten **Polos de Desarrollo (Development Zones)** along the Interoceanic Corridor. The four **Gulf-side parks** clustered around the **Port of Coatzacoalcos**, Coatzacoalcos I, Coatzacoalcos II, Texistepec, and San Juan Evangelista, are the most immediately serviceable sites. A June 2023 fiscal decree grants investors in these zones **multi-year income-tax holidays** and **VAT credits** on domestic inputs, trimming entry costs while sites are still being graded. Coupled with **USMCA rules of origin**, these breaks let tariff-exposed products, such as ready-to-assemble furniture or consumer-electronics kits, shift final assembly across the U.S.–Mexico border and **regain duty-free status**.

PRIVATE UPTAKE HAS ALREADY BEGUN

In late March 2025, Hyundai Glovis completed the corridor's **first finished-vehicle move**, railing 900 cars from Salina Cruz to Coatzacoalcos for re-export to the U.S. East Coast. **Global container carriers** have also run small block-train trials to validate schedule reliability ahead of commercial launch. Meanwhile, **newly awarded park developers**, Mota-Engil México, Grupo Constructor Urcedic, and the Profharmax/Comexsa consortium are now courting brewers, plastics converters, and furniture assemblers for **production start-ups targeted for 2026**. In short, CIIT's blueprint is already translating into **booked cargo and committed capital**.

WORK STILL TO DO

On the Gulf side, Coatzacoalcos still has to **dredge its access channel** beyond the current 12 m depth, procure **ship-to-shore cranes** and finish a true **on-dock rail yard** and **4 km rail spur**, an upgrade widely priced in the hundreds of millions.

Across the Pacific, Salina Cruz is completing a **1.6-km breakwater**, widening its entrance to 120 m, and lining up a new package of **automated cranes** for its planned specialized container terminal so ship-to-rail transfers match Gulf-side throughput.

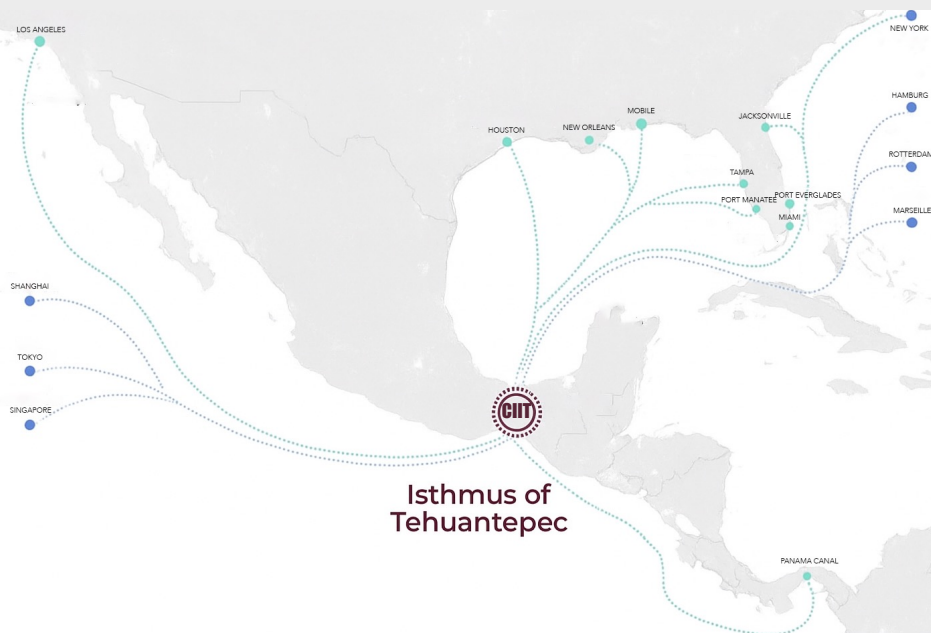
Finally, the federal government must publish operating rules that align the state-run Ferrocarril del Istmo with private carriers such as Grupo México Transportes and Florida East Coast Railway; until that interface is nailed down, the **seamless one-bill-of-lading** service shippers expect will remain theoretical.

COMPETITION IS NOT STANDING STILL

Savannah's Mason Mega Rail Terminal now handles up to 2 million TEU per year and puts containers on inland trains within 24 hours, while Port Houston and Union Pacific have added on-dock service reaching nine inland markets. Both gateways are courting the same Asia-to-Southeast U.S. flows that CIIT hopes to win.

BRIDGING THE COLLABORATION

Since 2019, the Florida Ports Council and Mexico's Coordinación General de Puertos have convened the **Florida-Mexico Work Group on Maritime Commerce**, a public-private forum supported by World Trade Center Miami to streamline Gulf logistics. The task now is to broaden that dialogue to cover the CIIT rail-and-port interface, knitting the state-run Ferrocarril del Istmo with private carriers such as Grupo México Transportes and Florida East Coast Railway, and to secure the final dredging and crane packages before the corridor's 2026 full-service target. Without that push, early pilots such as Hyundai's 900-vehicle shuttle will remain promising but isolated proofs of concept rather than a viable alternative to the Panama Canal.



CALL TO ACTION

Public and private sector leaders now have a **narrow window** to turn CIIT's blueprint into a functioning, resilient supply-chain option. If your organization touches trade, logistics, or investment on either side of the Gulf, **join the conversation** and help shape the standards, infrastructure, and partnerships that will set the course of North American commerce for decades to come.

