

TEXAS TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

ALL Counties

MINUTE ORDER

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ALL Districts

The legislation that authorizes the surface transportation programs for the nation known as the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users, expired on September 30, 2009. The nation is currently operating under a third continuing resolution to keep these vital programs running.

Congress is in the process of developing and debating new legislation that will govern the transportation programs for the next six years.

On August 26, 2009, the Texas Transportation Commission (commission) directed the Texas Department of Transportation (department) to develop proposed federal legislative priorities reflecting key policy objectives for members of Congress to consider as they debate reauthorization of the federal transportation program.

As a result of this direction from the commission, agency staff has reached out to both stakeholders and the general public in an attempt to solicit input and ideas into what principles should guide the future transportation policy of this state and the nation.

The department published a call for ideas through the internet and through more traditional means such as the Texas Register.

Staff met with coalitions such as the Border Trade Advisory Committee, the Texas Municipal League, and the Alliance for I-69 Texas, as well as, principles from the Ports-to-Plains and the Midland-Odessa Transportation alliances.

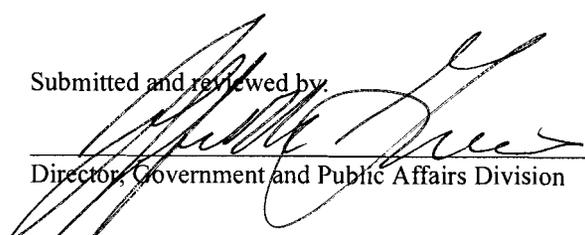
Staff met with the state's small urban and rural transit providers through the Texas Transit Association and with the Texas Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations. The department also met with representatives of local toll project entities, specifically, the North Texas Tollway Authority, Harris County Toll Road Authority, Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority, Alamo Regional Mobility Authority, and the Camino Real Regional Mobility Authority.

Staff gathered input from within the agency as well.

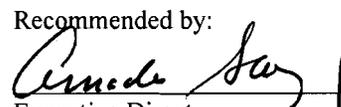
Exhibit A contains a listing of common policy issues and ideas stemming from these deliberations and meetings. This document is intended to serve as a tool in discussions with members of the Texas Congressional Delegation when addressing federal reauthorization of the surface transportation programs.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED by the commission that the document contained in Exhibit A is hereby approved to serve as the department's official priorities for the federal program.

Submitted and reviewed by:


Director, Government and Public Affairs Division

Recommended by:


Executive Director

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Passed

Exhibit A

Texas Transportation Commission

Policy Considerations

Reauthorization of the Federal Surface Transportation Program

Rate of Return and Minimum Guarantee

Commission Position

Throughout deliberations on the next federal reauthorization bill, Texas should take every opportunity to increase its rate of return on federal fuel taxes. If Congress decides to increase fuel taxes, all new funds above the current tax rate should accrue to each state at a 100 percent rate of return, should provide a higher degree of flexibility than present funding allows, and existing guarantees on current gas tax revenue should be maintained.

Reauthorization of the surface transportation program must ensure that the Equity Bonus program is retained and that the program title be reverted back to the Minimum Guarantee program as that is more reflective of its purpose.

Expanded Funding Options

Commission Position

The federal transportation program should include provisions which ensure that a variety of both public and private funding options are available and utilized at the discretion of state and local entities. Congress should establish new sources of funding for rail projects.

Clearly Defined Goals and Performance Measurement

Commission Position

Congress should establish overarching goals and desired outcomes of the federal transportation program, including passenger and freight movement, and align resources to meet them. There should be a clearly defined federal focus on addressing congestion relief in our metropolitan areas, safety improvements throughout the system, connectivity between our urban centers, and in maintaining and preserving this nation's highway assets with specific focus on improving the Federal aid highway system. Each focus area should be tailored to the unique challenges of that state or region.

The Federal program should maximize transportation funds through efficient program implementation and outcome-based decisions. Additional programmatic requirements should only be considered if they measurably enhance project delivery through time and cost savings.

Exhibit A

Program Consolidation and Funding Flexibility

Commission Position

Reauthorization should consolidate programs where it makes sense to do so and ensure that state and local governments are authorized to utilize federal funds across modal lines.

Strengthened Partnerships

Commission Position

As Congress moves towards establishing and increasing performance measures, appropriate outcomes must be identified for all levels of government. Because one size cannot fit all, states and local governments must have a significant role in the establishment of these measures and the unimpeded authority to implement solutions. To that end Federal reauthorization of the surface transportation program should recognize and support the roles and responsibilities that state and local governments and the private sector provide in addressing each of these goals.

Expedited Project Delivery

Commission Position

Reauthorization of the federal transportation program must focus on expedited project delivery. Specifically, there should be firm establishment of additional permitting approvals and continued progress in the delegation of environmental review to the states. In addition, federal law should contain provisions which expedite resolution of environmental disputes and allow all records of decisions for projects to be processed within a specific time frame.

Efficient International Freight Movement

Commission Position

Congress should take every opportunity to improve, not hinder, the efficient movement of freight between the United States and its international borders.