



TxDOT's five goals: reduce congestion • enhance safety • expand economic opportunity
• improve air quality • increase the value of transportation assets.

EMBARGOED For Release at 10:00 AM CDT, June 11, 2008

TxDOT Recommends Narrowing Study Area for Texas Portion of I-69 *Citing Public Recommendation, Project Would Follow Existing Roads*

AUSTIN – The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) announced today that it will recommend that the I-69/Trans-Texas Corridor (TTC) Project be developed using existing highway facilities wherever possible. If additional travel lanes are added to existing highways, only the new lanes would have tolls.

"After a dozen town hall meetings, nearly 50 public hearings, and countless one-on-one conversations, it is clear to us that Texans want us to use existing roadways to start building the Texas portion of Interstate 69," said Texas Transportation Commissioner Ted Houghton. "TxDOT's recommendation would effectively shrink our environmental study down to roads such as U.S. Highways 77 and 281 in South Texas, State Highway 44 and U.S. Highway 59 along the Coastal Bend and U.S. Highways 84 and 59 in East Texas. We are dropping consideration of new corridors that would run west of Houston in addition to other proposals for new highway footprint in other parts of the state."

TxDOT Executive Director Amadeo Saenz, in a letter to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), wrote "The preliminary basis for this decision centers on the review of nearly 28,000 public comments made on the Tier One DEIS (Draft Environmental Impact statement). The overwhelming sentiment of these comments focused on the need to improve the existing transportation network" rather than building a new corridor for the project.

TxDOT's stated intention has been to focus on making needed improvements to existing and planned transportation facilities within the I-69/TTC study area. Such upgrades may fully satisfy the project's need to improve the international, interstate, and intrastate movement of people and goods for many decades.

In May, the Texas Transportation Commission adopted guiding principles and policies that will govern the development, construction and operation of toll road projects on the state highway system and the Trans-Texas Corridor. In addition to reaffirming that only new lanes added to an existing highway will be tolled and that there will be no reduction in the number of non-tolled lanes, the Commission stated that wherever possible, existing right-of-way would be considered for the development of new projects.

"The Commission made it clear that they wanted their newly-adopted principles applied to the development of important projects like I-69 and a parallel corridor to I-35," said Saenz. "We are closer than ever to realizing the promise and the potential of I-69, and we will move forward with this important Transportation Commission policy in the front of our minds."

Saenz said that TxDOT would continue to talk to the public about I-69/TTC, and he encouraged Texans to ask questions and share their ideas at the department's "Keep Texas Moving" website (www.keeptexasmoving.com). He noted that the recently-named I-69 Corridor Advisory Committee will help guide TxDOT's work on the project. Saenz said he looked forward to the appointment of Segment Advisory Committees comprised of local leaders who will help further develop I-69/TTC.

"We also want to keep working with our Congressional delegation and the Texas Legislature," added Transportation Commissioner Houghton. "Legislative leadership, public involvement and local commitment will all be essential if we are going to build this long-awaited highway."

TxDOT is preparing its report for FHWA following completion of the public involvement process for the environmental review of I-69/TTC. If today's recommendation is approved by FHWA, plans for a separate new corridor would be dropped from future environmental reviews, and the existing infrastructure would serve as the study area for future environmental review.

TxDOT is expected to submit its Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for public review prior to federal approval late in 2008 or early in 2009. FHWA approval of the FEIS does not authorize property acquisition or construction.

In the future, the northern and southern portions of I-69/TTC could be linked in the Houston area. Houston's connection to I-69/TTC, including access to the Port of Houston, will be determined in coordination with elected leaders and transportation planners in the area.

A copy of Saenz's letter to FHWA and a new map reflecting TxDOT's recommendation are available on the internet at www.keeptexasmoving.com.

- 30 -

The Texas Department of Transportation - The Texas Department of Transportation is responsible for maintaining nearly 80,000 miles of road and for supporting aviation, rail and public transportation across the state. TxDOT and its 15,000 employees strive to empower local leaders to solve local transportation problems, and to use new financial tools, including tolling and public-private partnerships, to reduce congestion and pave the way for future economic growth while enhancing safety, improving air quality and increasing the value of the state's transportation assets. Find out more at www.txdot.gov.

For more information call TxDOT's Government & Public Affairs Division at (512) 463-8588.