



The Alliance for I-69 Texas

Encouraging Cooperation and Seeking Solutions Since 1994



Austin Events Keep Spotlight on I-69

Twenty representatives of I-69 Alliance communities gathered for I-69 Day in Austin on January 30th and 31st. They met with lawmakers, key staff policy advisors and TxDOT commissioners and staff to extend a big “Thank You” for progress being made on I-69 projects and to help keep attention focused on the need to maintain I-69 momentum.



Members of the I-69 Day delegation were recognized during the January monthly meeting of the Texas Transportation Commission. Pictured are (l-r) Gary Bushell, Bowie County Judge James Carlow, Cory Floyd, Jennifer Shepard, John Thompson, Tecló Garcia, Daniel Silva, Transportation Commissioner Laura Ryan, Polk County Judge Sydney Murphy, Transportation Commissioner Jeff Austin, Jim Jeffers, Charles Thomas, Linda Thomas, Cameron County Commissioner David Garza, Xavier Villarreal, Cameron County Commissioner Joey Lopez, Pete Sepulveda, and Richard Ridings.



Alliance Chair Sydney Murphy addresses the Transportation Commission.

Alliance Chair Sydney Murphy, County Judge of Polk County, thanked members of the Transportation Commission for the department's continued support of the long and strong partnership that exists between TxDOT and the Alliance. She thanked them for creating and sustaining the TxDOT I-69 Advisory Committee which provides a conduit for communities to provide specific local input on I-69 development and project prioritization. Judge Murphy stressed that the Alliance has worked hard to support more overall funding for transportation including Prop 1 and Prop 7.

She pointed out that as it is developed I-69 is providing economic development possibilities for all the millions of Texans along the route. She said that from her personal experience she can say that I-69 has been a long-time wish for the people of Texas.

Commission Chairman Bruce Bugg thanked Judge Murphy for stepping up to take on leadership of the Alliance and expressed his appreciation for the work of the Alliance team who provide the "boots on the ground" for I-69.



Sen. Robert Nichols

Taking the I-69 Message to Lawmakers

Before fanning out to visit with individual members of the Legislature on Wednesday, the I-69 Day delegation heard remarks and had questions for **Senator Robert Nichols**, chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee and a former member of the Transportation Commission. Sen. Nichols' East Texas district includes 140 miles of the I-69 System in Shelby, Nacogdoches, Angelina, Polk, San Jacinto and Liberty Counties.

Recalling that his initial introduction to the Alliance was when he was appointed to the Transportation Commission in 1997, Nichols said, "I want to you know how proud I am of this coalition."

"You all have collectively stayed with it and in this transportation business you have got to stay with it a long time because people change – the legislators change, the governors change, county judges and commissioners change. So having one vision – build I-69 – you have been a model of how to get it done," Nichols said. He pointed out that he has advised other groups wanting to advance corridor projects to look at what the Alliance for I-69 Texas has done.

The Transportation Committee chairman said he is looking at two simple but important changes to the law this legislative session. The first is to clarify how funds are directed to the State Highway Fund from oil and

gas production revenues. The second is to simply strike the expiration date from the Prop 1 enabling legislation rather than to extend it, a simple but important change for highway finance.

Senator Juan “Chuy” Hinojosa was scheduled to meet with the I-69 group but was chairing the Senate Finance Committee and unable to break away. Hinojosa’s South Texas district includes 218 miles of the I-69 System in Hidalgo, Brooks, Jim Wells and Nueces Counties. He was represented by his chief of staff, **Luis Moreno**.

Oscar Garza, transportation advisor to **House Speaker Dennis Bonnen**, pointed out that he grew up 200 yards from what is now I-69C in Edinburg. “Some say that is where I-69 begins,” he said. He noted that as additional sections are added to I-69 it will hopefully empower communities along the way to have stronger economic development opportunities. He offered to serve as a resource to the Alliance in the Speaker’s Office.

Also addressing the group were **Allegra Hill**, transportation policy advisor to **Gov. Greg Abbott**, and **Curtis Smith**, chief of staff to **Rep. Terry Canales** of Edinburg, recently named chairman of the House Transportation Committee.



Judge Murphy delivers “I-69 Master Builder” hard hat to Commissioner Austin

Honoring an I-69 Champion

Wednesday’s events concluded with a dinner honoring Transportation Commissioner **Jeff Austin III** of Tyler who has been a tireless champion of I-69 since he joined the commission in 2011. Austin has been part of the Alliance-TxDOT team that annually goes to Washington to raise awareness of the importance of I-69 as a national freight corridor and to urge Congress and federal agencies to adopt policies that will help Texas develop I-69. Commissioner Austin’s dedication to I-69 is reflected in the fact that he has been present at every segment signing ceremony starting with the first for 6.2 miles in Corpus Christi and Robstown in December 2011.

Alliance I-69 Day Participants

Sydney Murphy	County Judge	Polk County
James Carlow	County Judge	Bowie County
David Garza	County Commissioner	Cameron County
Joey Lopez	County Commissioner	Cameron County
John Thompson	Past Alliance Chairman, Former Judge	Zimmer Creek LLC
Roy Rodriguez	City Manager	City of McAllen
Jim Jeffers	City Manager	City of Nacogdoches
Daniel Silva	CEO	Mission EDC
Tecló Garcia	Dir. Communications and External Affairs	Mission EDC
Pete Sepulveda Jr.	Executive Director	Cameron County RMA
Ruben Gallegos Jr.	Vice Chairman	Cameron County RMA
Charles Thomas	Executive Director	Carthage Improvement Corp.
Linda Thomas	Chair	North East Texas RMA
Cory Floyd	Chair	Texarkana Chamber of Commerce
Tammy Embrey	Director of Intergovernmental Relations	City of Corpus Christi
Xavier Villarreal	Deputy Administrator	Cameron County
Henry E. Sauvignet	VP – International/Public Affairs	IBC Bank
Jennifer Shepard	Executive Director	Alliance for I-69 Texas
Gary Bushell	Austin Representative	Alliance for I-69 Texas
Don Rodman	Communication Consultant	Alliance for I-69 Texas

THANKS TO OUR AUSTIN DAY SPONSORS:

City of Nacogdoches
 Carthage Improvement Corp.
 Cameron County Regional Mobility Authority

February 4, 2019