

CORRIDOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE



A CITIZENS' REPORT
ON THE CURRENT AND FUTURE NEEDS
OF THE I-69 CORRIDOR

DECEMBER 2, 2008

THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR THE I-69 CORRIDOR WAS CHARGED TO:

- STUDY THE IMPACT OF CORRIDOR-WIDE ISSUES, INCLUDING ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, SOCIETAL, DEMOGRAPHIC, POPULATION TRENDS, USE OF EXISTING/NEW/UPGRADED FACILITIES, MULTI-MODAL SOLUTIONS AND FINANCING OPTIONS
- MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ON CORRIDOR PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT
- ENHANCE PARTICIPATION AND INPUT BETWEEN THE TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND AFFECTED COMMUNITIES, GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES AND INTERESTED PARTIES





INTRODUCTION

The forecast for international trade and freight movement along the Texas-Mexico border, Texas Gulf Coast and through East Texas is indisputably on the rise. A high-speed, high-volume corridor connecting land and seaports to each other and to the rest of the state will generate an economic boom for Texas. Regardless of the type of facility, a seamless and efficient transportation system is needed to move goods on time.

The I-69 Corridor was born over 15 years ago out of a demand from communities and industries who understood the need for transportation improvements and their relationship to the future economic prosperity of Texas. To keep moving forward, I-69 must be a local, state and national transportation priority. Studies must be accelerated, state and local needs must coalesce, key projects must be identified, funding must be secured and construction must begin without delay in order to capture for Texas the economic value of I-69.

Texas Gulf Coast and the Rio Grande Valley ports are key freight gateways for our nation because of the enormous amount of imports and exports that move through these regions. In fact, Texas' key ports have reached record growth levels and projections indicate this growth will continue unabated well into the future. Changes in worldwide trade patterns, including upgrades to the Panama Canal, will further increase the need to move freight throughout the I-69 Corridor.

The inland ports along the Texas-Mexico border have also opened the state to additional international commerce. I-69 will accommodate the increase in commerce and provide the critical connectivity needed to efficiently move goods in Texas as well as to other states.

Texas communities located on or near I-69 are positioned to “capture” value from the commerce flowing within their region. Texas' businesses and industries across the state will realize the efficiencies and cost-savings from accessible and reliable connectivity to and from the Texas ports of entry.

Corridor Advisory Committee



In March 2008, the Texas Transportation Commission established the I-69 Corridor Advisory Committee to assist the Commission and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) in advancing the improvements envisioned for I-69. The committee, which represents communities and business interests from Brownsville to Texarkana, agreed that the I-69 Corridor should be viewed as a contiguous system serving communities and businesses along its length. Included in its discussions have been issues relating to the planning, development and public involvement activities on I-69.

Based on its discussions, the committee has prepared this report and examined the opportunities and impacts along the I-69 alignment, that would result for both the communities and the businesses proximate to the corridor. In addition, the committee strongly asserted that a variety of funding options must be identified and pursued for the development of I-69 in order to capture the economic opportunity and avoid the inevitable degradation of the existing system.

I-69 OPPORTUNITIES AND IMPACTS

Currently, Texas is the nation's leading maritime state, with exponential growth projected. Table 1 reflects the significance of the state's role in our nation's foreign trade equation.

Texas has more than 1,000 freight handling facilities located in its 16 major seaports on the 1,000 miles of ship channels along or adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico. In recent years, Texas ports have handled approximately 25% of all cargo tonnage traded at U.S. ports. The impact of Texas ports on the state's economy and job creation is staggering. For example, the Port of Houston, Texas' largest port, contributed nearly \$118 billion to the state's economy, impacting over 785,000 Texas jobs in 2006 (Martin Associates, February 2007).

Texas ports significantly impact the national economy. The ports of Houston, Beaumont, Corpus Christi, Freeport and Texas City are among the top 25 U.S. ports in tonnage handled

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each year. The Texas portion of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) transports more than 73 million tons of cargo which translates into 116,243 movements. In comparison, the same cargo volume would require 1.7 million rail cars and nearly 7 million semi-trailers to move. As both conduits and catalysts for global trade and economic development, Texas ports serve the state and nation as important trade centers.

Texas maritime commerce increased in 2007 and is trending up for 2008, so the economic impact is expected to increase as well. The Port of Houston Authority's (PHA) container business is experiencing double-digit growth, resulting in annual record increases for more than a decade. Other Texas ports (e.g. Corpus Christi, Brownsville, Galveston and Beaumont) will realize similar increases in containerized cargo.

While Texas ports are addressing the need for much-needed container and other cargo-handling capacity by improving efficiencies at existing terminals and building new facilities, the phenomenal growth of containerized cargo has created serious capacity issues not only at the ports but also on the existing rail and highway infrastructure. Additional I-69 capacity is critical to accommodate the onslaught of containers.

As previously stated, I-69 will serve as a vital artery for inland ports along the Texas-Mexico border. Not only will Mexico continue to be a major U.S. trading partner, but much of the exponential increase in commerce with Latin and South America, Europe and Asia will funnel through the border ports of entry. Greatly expanded capacity is needed to connect these inland ports to the Texas seaports and major distribution and population centers, especially since future projections indicate truck freight to increase.

The envisioned improvements to I-69 are not just about new or enhanced freeway facilities. As Texas becomes an alternative to the West Coast for the movement of freight, the need for rail improvements becomes even more evident. The rail component to the I-69 improvements must be addressed. For example, half of the freight moving through the Port

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of Houston goes on rail and the other half via motor carrier. Addressing one mode and ignoring the other solves less than half the problem since that mode will be crushed under the huge demand it is required to carry.

Needed rail upgrades and infrastructure along the planned I-69 route should include better access to the seaports along the Gulf Coast, as well as to the U.S.-Mexican border. Vehicle conflicts with railroads at the many at-grade crossings are a growing concern. There is limited ability to add capacity to the freight rail system through the construction of additional tracks within the existing right of way. These needs must be cooperatively explored with each community, the rail carriers serving them and TxDOT.

The business impacts and opportunities are clear and compelling. The ports will continue to handle record volumes of cargo, and Texas needs to ensure that a land-based transportation system enhances rather than restricts that ability into the future. Freight crossing the border with Mexico will reach new levels every year. I-69 will also serve as a key intermodal connection as air-freight becomes increasingly important in the state. With all this in mind, it is safe to say that Texas' failure to invest in the I-69 and its related transportation elements will ultimately constrain both the state's and nation's economies.

COMMUNITY ROLE

Texas needs to build I-69. Even though I-69 will have positive state and national impact, many of the benefits (and commensurate impacts) will be local. Therefore, it is necessary for communities to be fully engaged in the planning and decision-making process for improvements along this corridor.

The segment committees for the I-69 Corridor, in collaboration with the I-69 Corridor Advisory Committee, TxDOT personnel and community stakeholders will be instrumental in facilitating this engagement. Through their deliberations, it is anticipated that these



segment committees will put forth recommendations on community-specific issues such as access points, right of way acquisitions and funding. By encouraging and facilitating participation and long-range planning from the local citizenry along I-69, potential impacts can be addressed early and economic opportunities maximized for the specific communities.

Benefits of proximity to the interstate which were reported to the I-69 Corridor Advisory Committee included:

- New job creation
- More funding for local transportation projects
- An increase in economic development opportunities
- Added sales tax revenue for community services
- An increase in tourism
- Improved mobility, safety and air quality
- More evacuation routes
- A better quality of life

It is clear that the communities along this key route must have a vital role in developing I-69. To gain their support it will take a proactive effort on the part of TxDOT and elected officials to ensure that their concerns and issues are addressed. To gain this level of community support, the I-69 Corridor Advisory Committee recommends:

- Develop I-69 as an interstate, abandoning the Trans-Texas Corridor concept and returning to its original intent.
- Use existing right of way wherever possible to minimize impact on land owners.

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- Provide timely and current information on the project's development.
- Protect private property rights and compensate landowners fairly. The Texas Legislature should reconsider past proposed statutory changes to the eminent domain laws that address compensation for diminished access and costs incurred by property owners who seek redress in the right of way acquisition process.

CURRENT AND FUTURE NEEDS

- The I-69 Corridor Advisory Committee envisions a facility that not only serves the commercial freight and transportation needs of the state but also provides important connectivity for cities along the Gulf Coast. To this end, the Advisory Committee offers its view of the corridor and considerations to be addressed as it is constructed: It is envisioned that I-69 will have the attributes of an interstate-type facility with appropriate access to adjacent landowners, meeting all current safety and geometric standards, and will be constructed with the long-term view in mind.
- Many of the key projects needed to improve I-69 are already included in regional transportation plans. These projects must be built at the earliest possible date.
- Consultation with local governments, businesses, port authorities, landowners and other impacted stakeholders along I-69 is essential to achieving the desired objectives of this effort.
- Improvements envisioned on this route must include projects on US 59, US 281, SH 44, US 77 and other related and highways to provide the contiguous facility needed.
- Local and regional connectors to I-69 must be addressed in planning and funding deliberations for each segment.

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- Improvements on I-69 must facilitate mobility of freight and people in a manner that respects the values of the communities and property owners along the alignment. I-69 improvements may include truck-only lanes, overweight lanes or other freight specific features that will facilitate the efficient movement of goods and promote safety for all.
- National security issues must be considered and incorporated into I-69 improvements to ensure public safety.
- I-69 needs to be viewed both at the micro level to ensure compatibility with local needs but also with a macro view so that all its elements and features work together, including connections to the ports, regional business activities and key state economic elements (i.e., airports, intermodal facilities, etc.). In the end, I-69 will need to serve the mobility and logistics requirements of both the citizen and business communities.
- Freight movement along I-69 must be viewed holistically, including both rail and highway systems.
- Texas must advance technologies that will result in quantum improvements in mobility, such as freight shuttles or other innovative approaches to addressing the issues found on I-69.
- TxDOT must have the authority to integrate the freight shuttle and similar innovative transportation solutions into Texas transportation system.
- Texas must advance more of the technologies such as the freight shuttle that will result in quantum improvements in mobility and should give these initiatives the highest priority in research and funding due to the potential long-term positive impact these technologies could have on Texas mobility.

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- Improvements should be accomplished within existing highway rights of way wherever possible to reduce the impacts of improvements on surrounding landowners and businesses.

FUNDING

The challenges facing our state and nation with regard to financing infrastructure projects are significant. Simply securing sufficient revenue to maintain current projects will strain treasuries at every level of government.

Recent studies at the federal and state level have identified enormous transportation infrastructure needs for the future to facilitate economic growth. The National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission report states that the U.S. needs to invest a minimum of \$225 billion annually over the next half century to upgrade the existing system to ensure strong economic growth. A recent study in Texas has identified that there is as much as an \$8 billion annual funding gap between what all levels of government are spending on transportation in Texas and the total transportation needs of our state.

These challenges inherent in maintaining and growing our current system are also part of the discussion of how to move forward in building key projects along the I-69 alignment. Financing is clearly a key component. When the effort began, the I-69 project was expected to cost \$6 billion. As construction and associated costs have increased, today it is estimated to have a project cost of \$12 to \$15 billion.

In light of these enormous challenges and costs, it is critical that government effectively utilize the current public and private tools available, look for innovative means of financing and construction that maximize resources, and ensure that funds are spent on priority projects that provide a good benefit-to-cost ratio and are based on performance measures.

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With regard to moving forward with I-69, the size and scope of this project will require a multi-faceted funding approach. Additionally, the benefits of the proposed corridor support it as a priority investment for Texas with a significant economic return. It is estimated that the project could create up to 40,000 new jobs by 2025, with a resulting \$12.8 billion in wages and \$24 billion in added value. The economic activity generated along the corridor will reach 4.2 million residents who live below the poverty level. And, it is a critical trade corridor as the shortest route between the Northeast and South Texas. In addition to the economic impacts, there are the benefits of reduced travel time and fuel consumption.

To achieve the vision of upgrading the I-69 Corridor to interstate standards, and accomplish the policy objectives of this report, the advisory committee recommends that TxDOT and the Texas Legislature commit to funding the needed improvements on I-69 with dedicated revenues. The committee recognizes that funding challenges facing the state and the many demands that are being placed before elected officials to provide money to meet these needs. That said, the needs along I-69 will not go away nor will their cost ever be less than they are today.

To reduce congestion, enhance safety, improve environmental air quality and expand economic opportunity, Texas needs to look beyond our current toolbox of available funding sources. It is time for policy leaders to embrace new and expanding initiatives to meet our future transportation needs. If the Texas Legislature and TxDOT can come together to take the necessary steps to address our transportation challenges, then funding sources can be identified to meet our strategic priorities. The committee suggests the following public funding sources as possible opportunities for generating the needed revenues to build the I-69 improvements discussed in this report:

- Create a state highway trust fund
- Index the motor fuels tax

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- Reorganize Fund 6 (TxDOT budget)
- Expand vehicle registration fees
- Expand sales tax revenues
- Increase flexibility in the use of 4A and 4B corporation tax revenues
- Develop a means for rail relocation funding
- Create a new federal and state strategic project funding category
- Enhance other available funding sources

These and other funding initiatives are found in [APPENDIX A—FUNDING INITIATIVES TO MEET STRATEGIC PRIORITIES](#).

In addition, it is clear that three immediate steps must be taken to begin the process of securing funding for I-69. They are:

- Stop diversions of money from the transportation fund
- Continue to enable innovative private and public financing tools
- Aggressively seek federal funding through the current reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU

Texas needs to use all financial options available to advance and build the state's critical transportation projects. We need to further empower local entities to resolve local transportation issues. Policymakers can provide the resources necessary to help transportation officials respond to the needs in the marketplace and support decisions with real funding options.



Finally, all Texans will benefit from a strong transportation system that has as its foundation the funding sources to meet our strategic priorities. Our future depends on the effective leadership and bold action of our state's leaders to embrace and enact these recommendations.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The time for upgrading and completing I-69 is now. The freight and trade trends along Texas' Gulf Coast are indisputable. Both land and seaports will serve a vital role in serving the state and national economies. In addition, the influence of I-69 improvements will be felt in all areas of the state as domestic and international goods are moved to and from the United States.

Texas needs an efficient interstate in place, connecting the ports of entry with each other, the rest of Texas and the nation. Further postponement of I-69 abdicates our enormous economic opportunity to other Gulf states and Mexico. With the doubling of the population and the freight demand along the Mexico and Gulf Coast borders, I-69 helps position Texas to capture the prosperity generated by the anticipated tsunami of increased trade. The time to act is now.



APPENDIX A—FUNDING INITIATIVES TO MEET STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

To achieve the vision of upgrading the I-69 Corridor to interstate standards and accomplish the policy objectives of this report, the following funding initiatives should be considered by TxDOT and the Texas Legislature to support implementation of the recommended improvements.

STATE HIGHWAY TRUST FUND

At a time when we are experiencing federal rescissions at increasing rates and the Federal Highway Trust Fund has been severely diminished, taxpayers are looking to state government to fill in the gap for transportation and mobility funding. Texas is in a unique position with its \$15 billion-plus surplus to be accumulated through the 2008–2009 Fiscal Year to create a state highway trust fund. This trust fund would have the ability to provide a return on investment (ROI) yield as a means of funding transportation improvements, such as I-69, identified as a strategic priority. A state highway trust fund would be a foundation for funding major strategic priorities such as the I-69 Corridor and its related projects. The future of transportation in Texas should include the enhancement of the economic well-being and prosperity of Texas as a priority. This can only be accomplished by laying out a bold and concrete vision for funding our state’s priorities through a long-term sustainable funding mechanism.

TxDOT’s recent past approach of attempting to rely on the private sector to finance the state’s transportation needs is not enough. While the private sector is willing to pursue the most feasible projects, the taxpaying public maintains a weary eye and a certain amount of distrust towards the privatization of public roads. It is critical that the state keep its commitment to fully fund our public’s transportation needs. Major infrastructure and strategic initiatives such as I-69 should be made a priority for the State of Texas and funded as such.



INDEXING OF THE MOTOR FUELS SALES TAX

Every time you put gas in your car, part of the per gallon price you pay is a tax dedicated to building and maintaining highways. Another approach long considered by the state is the indexing of the motor fuel sales tax. The current motor fuel sales tax is inadequate and has not been adjusted in more than 20 years, while inflationary costs, maintenance and new capacity demands far outweigh the revenue it generates..

Texans can easily agree on one thing - that there are insufficient funds to meet the growing transportation infrastructure needs in Texas. This is especially true for the regional economic engines that our urban and suburban communities represent.

Every level of government needs to do its part to contribute to transportation and mobility improvements. Thus far, the U.S. Congress has helped increase equalization figures for Texas by ensuring that donor/contributor states receive a more equitable distribution of federal highway funds. At the local level, city and county governments have been contributing greater amounts of funding towards mobility projects through bond elections and toll road projects. But the state has been contributing less over the years as a result of increased maintenance costs and an unadjusted motor fuel tax that is not stretching as far as it used to. The state government needs to help by indexing the motor fuel sales tax and increasing its contribution of funds. Indexing could be tied to the rate of inflation or the Consumer Price Index and be adjusted on an annual basis. This action amendment would go a long way towards the state contributing to the growing transportation needs of Texas.

The motor fuel fee that is charged at the gas pump is a fair tax, charged to the user (same as a toll charge), and rewards those who choose to conserve fuel. Texas needs to take this step to keep pace with inflation and avoid passing on the burden of compounded and delayed costs of transportation to future generations. Over the years, the gas tax has not increased, but traffic

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on Texas highways has increased dramatically. The traditional tax-based method of financing roads is no longer sufficient to handle the state's mobility needs in a timely fashion.

An effort to index would help the state's economy by contributing to mobility and would offer TxDOT a means to support the sale of state issued bonds (which it already has authority to do) for transportation improvements, much the way local government has been doing for years. Moreover, the state could contribute funds to community projects. As it is today, the pay-you-go method of funding transportation is contributing to congestion, unsafe roads and poor environmental air quality and is hampering economic development in Texas.

Major capital projects aren't built overnight. They last for generations, and should be funded with similar financing strategies. We have an opportunity to avoid paying for the increased costs of delayed projects, reduce traffic congestion and unsafe roads, improve air quality,, stimulate our economy, allow families to spend more time together and avoid longer commutes, which all contribute to maintaining an affordable cost of living and enhanced quality of life. Our state legislature has a unique opportunity to lead this effort for a brighter future for all Texans.

REORGANIZATION OF FUND 6

State leaders have heard the requests by city and county officials, as well as business leaders throughout the state with regard to the need to remove non-transportation expenditures (diversions) from TxDOT's budget. The drain on the agency budget inhibits TxDOT's ability to meet the increasing demands on new capacity projects that are so vital to the Texas economy and move goods and services throughout our state. Removing those items from the Fund 6 would free up approximately \$1.5 billion in funding for transportation improvements each year.



EXPANSION OF VEHICLE REGISTRATIONS FEES

The state's population and number of registered vehicles continue to rise. As a local options tax (requiring voter approval), there are some counties in South Texas that have received legislative approval to collect a local fee as an addition to the state's vehicle registration fees. If implemented on a statewide basis, an expansion of the vehicle registration fee could generate hundreds of millions of dollars per year.

Otherwise, the Legislature could allow local communities to expand vehicle registration fees, through voter approval, as an options tax to meet local transportation and mobility needs.

If this expansion were permitted by cities and counties along the corridor, it would enable those entities to develop an additional funding source to address unmet needs from state and federal agencies. Projects related to the I-69 Corridor could be funded, unlocking economic development opportunities in local communities.

EXPANSION OF SALES TAX REVENUES

State sales tax revenue is currently capped at 8.5-cents per dollar on retail purchases in Texas. While the revenue has been a benefit to cities throughout Texas, there is interest across the state to consider increasing the sales tax by .one-half cent to one cent, to fund community transportation improvements. The Legislature could provide local communities with a greater opportunity to participate with local funds, by raising the cap on sales tax revenues. The Legislature also could allow cities located in rapidly growing counties the opportunity to exceed the state sales tax cap and extend their taxable revenue boundary to include the extra territorial jurisdiction. The extension of sales tax would allow cities to keep pace with growth, transportation and infrastructure needs.



INCREASED FLEXIBILITY IN THE USE OF 4A & 4B CORPORATION TAX REVENUE

Increasing flexibility of the use of available sales tax revenue collected by cities that have elected to collect up to one-half to one cent of sales tax for 4A or 4B Economic Development Corporations (EDCs), is another potential revenue source alternative for local communities in Texas. Presently, local 4A and 4B corporations have the ability to utilize their sales tax revenue for economic development purposes only (creation of primary jobs, etc.).

It has been a long held belief by local officials and economic development experts alike, that transportation improvement projects contribute significantly to economic development in local communities. However, limits on the use of 4A or 4B corporation funds remains at issue. The use of funding from those entities currently remains limited. The Legislature needs to allow those funds to be used for transportation and infrastructure projects, without restrictions. By doing so, local communities would be able to help fund transportation improvements to reduce congestion, enhance mobility and improve economic development. A recent TxDOT study indicated that transportation projects represent a 900-percent return on investment to the Texas economy. The result would provide local communities the ability to attract economic development opportunities by expanding retail, industrial, residential and commercial development through improved mobility.

DEVELOP A MEANS FOR RAIL RELOCATION FUNDING

A major contributor to congestion and public safety concerns is the inter-city flow of rail road freight cargo located in urban areas of our state. In most major urban centers, the distribution of freight results in delays for shippers and traffic congestion for local communities. The solution has been to consider relocating freight rail lines as by-passes around cities, for pass-through freight, while maintaining service to existing railroad customers on a scheduled basis. The result creates the ability to share existing rail corridors with commuter services, and build necessary grade separations; all while creating new rail corridors for railroad



companies. However, this alternative requires funding elements to achieve the desired solutions. New funding for this initiative may be tied to a freight distribution charge, which is passed on and absorbed by consumers. Once again, funding for rail relocation should be another priority addressed through state and federal funding mechanisms.

CREATE A NEW FEDERAL & STATE STRATEGIC PROJECT FUNDING CATEGORY

Texas represents the eighth largest economy in the world. The transportation system is what keeps our economy strong. In addition, overall mobility issues, safety and traffic congestion affect our quality of life in Texas.

Federal and state support for transportation improvements have been dwindling over the years. While the interstate highway system was essentially completed in the late 1980's, the federal government transfers up to 13 percent of Texas' gas tax dollars to other states.

Unless major changes occur to reprioritize how the state funds critical infrastructure, strategic corridors will need their own special funding category. The state gas tax only pays for 32 percent of our current state transportation budget, which is diminished further by the diversions of non-transportation related expenditures. Initiatives such as the I-69 Corridor should receive special funding consideration as they are vital to expanding economic opportunities, enhancing safety, and reducing congestion to our state.

MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

BIOGRAPHIES AND PORTRAITS

I-69 CORRIDOR



JUDY HAWLEY

Judy Hawley is a commissioner for the Port of Corpus Christi and the Texas Business Development Director for Advanced Acoustic Concepts. As a former state legislator, she was Vice-Chair of the Texas House Committee on transportation and carried legislation establishing the Office for Rural Affairs.



NOLAN ALDERS

Nolan Alders is a landowner in Nacogdoches. He is a member of the Texas Farm Bureau, having served as local president, as well as a board member of the Forestry Association. His private businesses have included farming/ranching, timber production and investments.



WILL ARMSTRONG

Will Armstrong is the mayor of Victoria. He is a lifetime resident of the community and is dedicated to public service. He serves on the city's metropolitan planning organization and Sales Tax Development Corporation.



JAMES CARLOW

James Carlow is the judge for Bowie County. He also serves on the Texarkana Metropolitan Planning Organization and is a board member of the Alliance for I-69.

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ALAN CLARK

Alan Clark is the director of the metropolitan planning director for the Houston-Galveston Area Council. He has been appointed to several national transportation committees. He holds master's degrees in Civil Engineering and City and Regional Planning from Ohio State University.



CARBETT "TREY" DUHON

Trey Duhon is an attorney with a private practice in Waller. He is president of the Waller County Chamber of Commerce, vice president and director of the Citizens for a Better Waller County, and director of the Waller County Toll Road Authority.



JIM EDMONDS

Jim Edmonds is chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the Port of Houston Authority. As chairman, he has led several initiatives including the implementation of the Small Business Development Program and helped create the Gulf Coast Freight Rail District.



DAVID GARZA

David Garza is a Cameron County Commissioner. He has served on numerous local public and civic organizations, including the San Benito I.S.D. and a Texas Senate committee on International Relations and Trade. He is a pharmacist and owns the The Medicine Shoppe in San Benito.



JIM GONZALES

Jim Gonzales is a commissioner and mayor pro-tem for the City of Richmond. He also is the President & CEO of IDC Inc. He currently serves on of boards of the Greater Fort Bend EDC, Brazoria County EDA, and WCJC Foundation, and other community organizations.



CYNTHIA LELEKO

Cindy Leleko is Associate Vice President of Texas State Technical College Corporate College in Marshall. She is a member of the Harrison County Rural District Board and the Northeast Texas Economic Developers Roundtable.



CHANDRA SPENRATH

Chandra Spenrath is the Executive Director for the City Development Corporation of El Campo. She is actively involved in a regional rail relocation project, as well a member of numerous business and civic organizations.



STEVE STEWART

Steve Stewart is president of Gulf Winds International, Inc., in Houston. He has more than 36 years of experience in international shipping logistics in U.S. and Mexico. He is active in numerous transportation and business organizations.

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BILL SUMMERS

Bill Summers is the president of the Rio Grande Valley Partnership. Active in state transportation, he has served in numerous leadership roles such as vice-chair of the Alliance for I-69, executive committee for Texas Good Roads. He is a recipient of the Road Hand Award and the Russell H. Perry award for his service in transportation.



JOHN THOMPSON

John Thompson is the judge for Polk County. An advocate for rural counties and transportation, he has been named East Texan of the Year, and the recipient of the Russell Perry Award and the Road Hand Award.

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JACK GORDON

Jack Gordon is executive vice-president of the First Bank and Trust East Texas and also serves as mayor of Lufkin. He is serves in a leadership capacity on various business, banking and community organizations.

ARNOLD SAENZ

Arnold Saenz is the judge for Jim Wells County. He has served on the boards of the Alliance for I-69 and Texas Association of Counties.

DAVID SILVA

David Silva is the judge for Bee County. He is a former professor of history at Bee Community College and served in the U.S. Air Force as a Munitions Maintenance Specialist.

