



The Alliance for I-69 Texas

**Testimony of Judge Robert Eckels
Before the Senate Committee on
Infrastructure Development and Security
May 4, 2004**

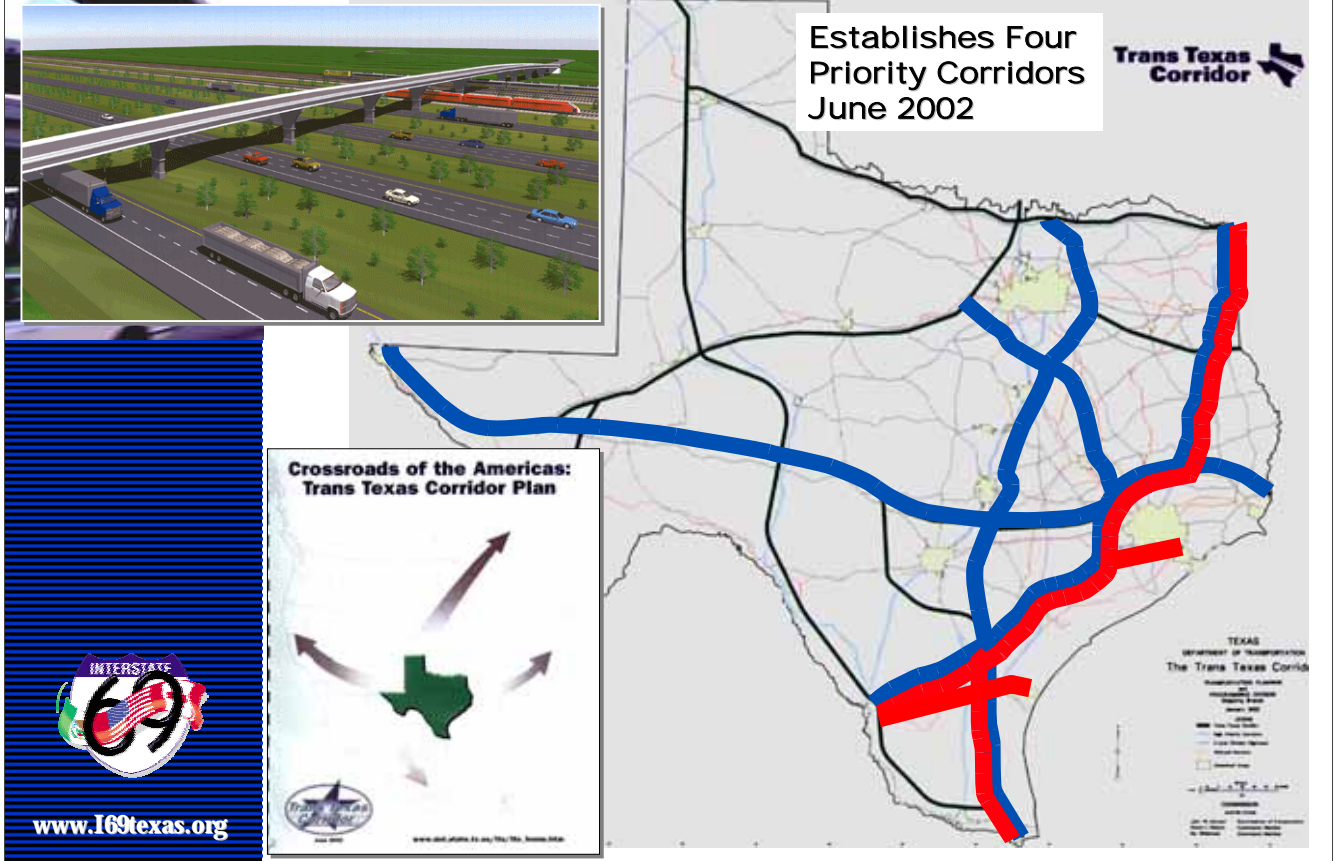
Thank you for the opportunity to come before you today on behalf of the Alliance for I-69 Texas. We are an organization of cities, counties, chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, and now private sector companies from the Rio Grande to the Sabine River.

The proposed route for I-69 passes through 34 counties and impacts 14 congressional districts, 8 state senate districts and 48 state house districts. The alliance was organized in 1993 – a decade ago – to develop an interstate corridor from the US/Mexico Border across Texas to the northeastern United States and Canada. We believe we are making progress – in major part because of the support we have received from the Texas Transportation Commission. The Commission has included the I-69 route as one of the four priority routes for the Trans Texas Corridor System.

The Alliance for I-69 Texas was one of the first organizations to support the Trans Texas concept at a Commission meeting in Lufkin two years ago. This is a farsighted and innovative concept.

I-69 has been included by the U.S. Department of Transportation as one of only seven projects in the nation for federal environmental streamlining.

Trans Texas Corridors



We are convinced that the Trans Texas Corridor plan can cause Texas to lead the nation in the building of a transportation system for the 21st Century. The Alliance for I-69 Texas wants to be part of that system. We were delighted when our route was made part of the four priority corridors by TxDOT.

We want to thank this committee for the passage of HB 3588 in the last regular legislative session which gave TxDOT the tools and flexibility necessary to make Trans Texas a reality. The Alliance actively supported the passage of HB 3588.

The first section of the Trans Texas Corridor plan is now under construction as a relief route for I-35. We hope to see I-69 as the second of the priority routes to move to construction.

TxDOT I-69 Route Study

From
TxDOT
Web Site

www.i69corridorstudy.com



www.I69texas.org

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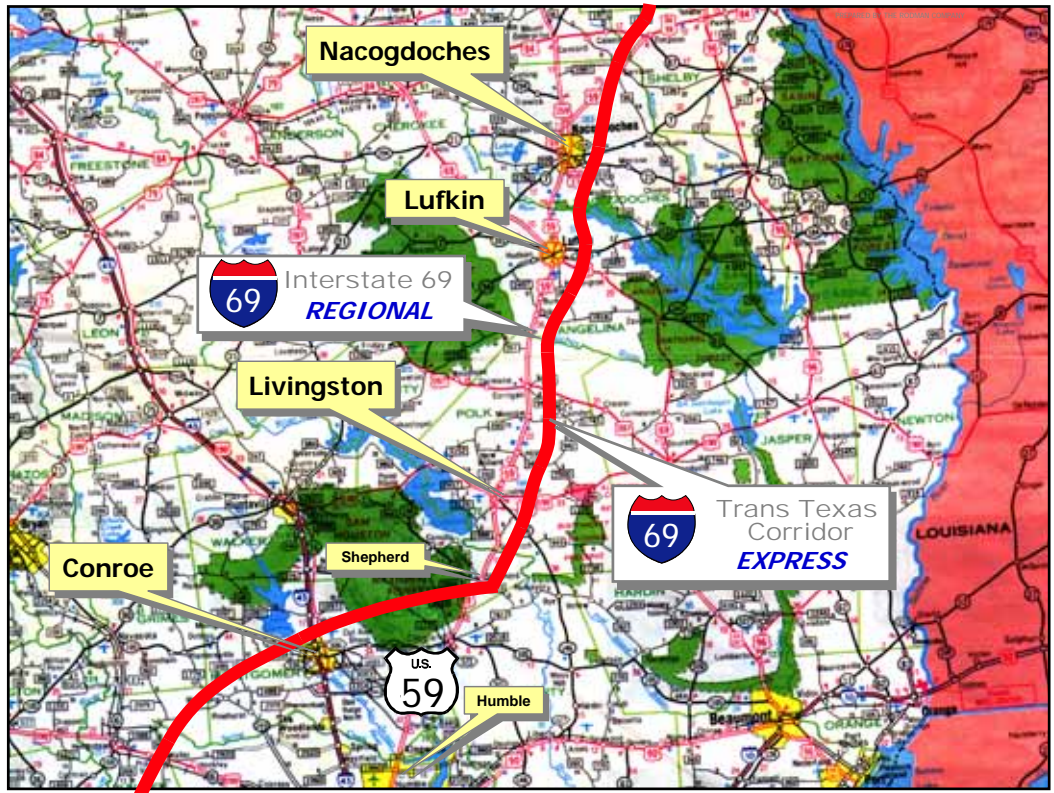
Title	Date	Location
Diboll: I-69/Trans-Texas Corridor Study Public Meeting	April 1, 2004	North
Texarkana: I-69/Trans-Texas Corridor Study Public Meeting	April 5, 2004	North
Marshall: I-69/Trans-Texas Corridor Study Public Meeting	April 6, 2004	North
Humble: I-69/Trans-Texas Corridor Study Public Meeting	April 12, 2004	Central
Victoria: I-69/Trans-Texas Corridor Study Public Meeting	April 13, 2004	Central
Rosenberg: I-69/Trans-Texas Corridor Study Public Meeting	April 15, 2004	Central
Corpus Christi: Trans-Texas Corridor System Public Meeting (TTC-35 and I-69/TTC elements)	April 14, 2004	South
Falfurrias: Trans-Texas Corridor System Public Meeting (TTC-35 and I-69/TTC elements)	April 19, 2004	South
George West: Trans-Texas Corridor System Public Meeting (TTC-35 and I-69/TTC elements)	April 20, 2004	South
Laredo: Trans-Texas Corridor System Public Meeting (TTC-35 and I-69/TTC elements)	April 22, 2004	South
Weslaco: Trans-Texas Corridor System Public Meeting (TTC-35 and I-69/TTC elements)	April 27, 2004	South

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TxDOT has just completed 11 meetings along the I-69 route to receive input from elected officials and the public on the scoping of the environmental issues to be studied in the route studies that will be undertaken shortly. The Alliance for I-69 Texas had representatives at each of the 11 meetings.

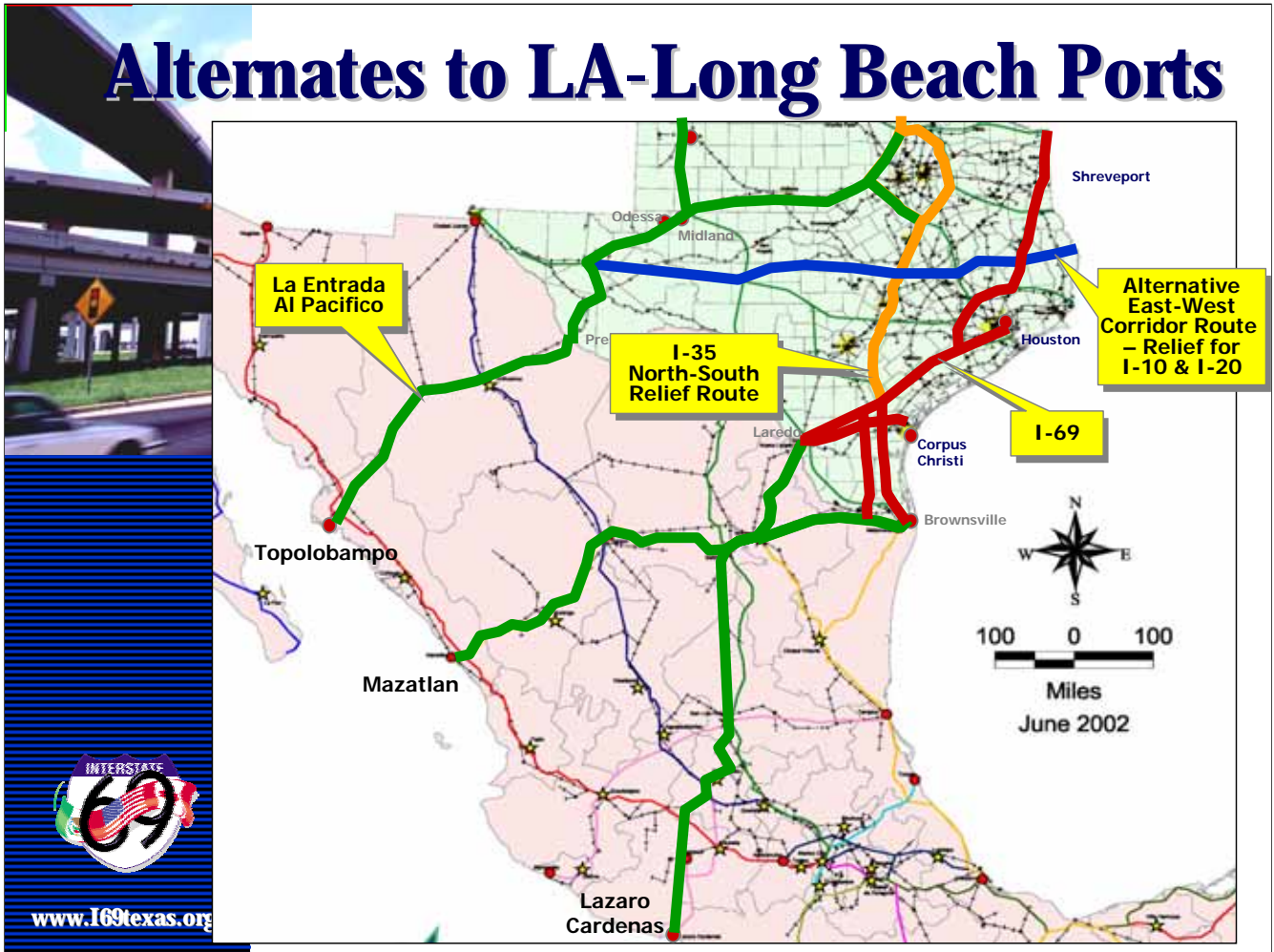
I-69 Regional and Express



The Alliance for I-69 Texas supports the Trans Texas concept of building on new right-of-way outside of existing metropolitan areas while continuing to make improvements on the existing federal and state highway systems which link our metropolitan areas.

The true thru traffic which is not stopping in these communities for pick up or delivery needs to travel on an express route as envisioned by the Trans Texas plan. The result will be segments of I-69 that have both a regional and an express component. We support building both and believe we can build both.

Alternates to LA-Long Beach Ports



Using elements of the Trans Texas Corridor plan, Texas ports could become part of a Pacific-Gulf freight land bridge linked to ports on the west coast of Mexico. These land bridges can also feed freight traffic to the Trans Texas Corridor Routes going northeast to the I-69 system leading to Canada, north to DFW and beyond, as well as an east-west Trans Texas route that can provide relief to freight congestion on I-10 and I-20.



The Alliance for I-69 Texas

We believe I-69 and the other priority routes of Trans Texas can become a reality but it will take aggressive use of new funding tools provided by this committee and the Legislature, and enactment of some additional tools by Congress.

Interstate 69 is the preeminent opportunity to create a new national highway linking the economic centers of the United States, Canada and Mexico.

No other route offers this level of national significance. By connecting North American economic centers, I-69 will support economic development in a wide geographic area of the United States. It will also relieve congestion on our existing systems that are currently struggling to move 75% of the nation's overland traffic generated by NAFTA.

International trade carried on this new national commercial highway will be both the result and the cause of economic development.

I-69 links economic centers, serves hemispheric trade, and builds economic development for the people of the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Thank you for your time and your support.