



TESTIMONY

Interim Charge 2: TxDOT, MPOs and Tolling Authorities

**Testimony Before the
Senate Transportation and Homeland Security Committee**

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Interim Charge 2: Review and make recommendations relating to the Texas Department of Transportation's organizational structure and working relationship with local governments, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Regional Tolling Authorities and Regional Mobility Authorities.

Introduction

Over the years, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) has worked diligently to forge a strong working relationship with its transportation partners across the State. This relationship is most necessary as TxDOT and its partners work together to craft a transportation plan that considers the State's needs related to urban mobility, statewide connectivity, and both urban and rural transportation needs. TxDOT relies heavily upon both Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) and tolling authorities across the State for their expertise to achieve this goal.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations

In 1962, the United States Congress passed legislation that required the creation of MPOs for any urbanized area with a population greater than 50,000. Federal funding for transportation projects and programs are channeled through this planning process. Congress created MPOs in order to ensure that existing and future expenditures of governmental funds for transportation projects and programs are based on a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive planning process. Statewide and metropolitan transportation planning processes are governed by federal law (23 U.S.C. § 134–135). Additionally, public access to participation in the planning process is required by federal law to achieve transparency. There are 25 MPOs in the State that address the transportation planning needs of citizens in these urbanized areas. There were several reasons for the creation of MPOs, namely:

- to enable urbanized areas to create its shared vision for its transportation future;
- to allow for a comprehensive examination of a region's transportation needs and funding alternatives; and,
- to allow for collaboration of local governments and citizens within an MPOs boundaries.

Tolling Authorities

The Texas Turnpike Authority (TTA) was created in 1953, for the purpose of constructing, maintaining, repairing, and operating turnpike projects in the State of Texas, including a specific direction to construct the Dallas-Fort Worth Turnpike. The TTA was governed by a twelve-member board serving staggered six-year terms.

In 1997, the TTA was abolished by Senate Bill (SB) 370, 75th Regular Session of the Texas Legislature, and recreated as a new turnpike division within TxDOT. Under SB 370, the turnpike division within TxDOT was governed by an independent seven-member board, although the turnpike board had to have concurrence from the Texas

Transportation Commission (Commission) on many things, including the condemnation of property. SB 370 also established the North Texas Tollway Authority (NTTA) as a regional toll authority consisting of Collin, Dallas, Denton, and Tarrant counties. The assets, rights, and obligations of the former turnpike authority, except for those in Collin, Dallas, Denton, and Tarrant counties, were transferred to the turnpike division of TxDOT. The remaining assets, rights, and obligations were transferred to NTTA.

In 2001, SB 342, 77th session of the Texas Legislature, abolished the turnpike authority board. Turnpike issues are now overseen by the Commission and functions as a division of TxDOT; assets, rights, and obligations of the board were transferred to the Commission.

In addition to TxDOT, there are three types of tolling authorities allowable by current statute: regional toll authorities, such as NTTA (Transportation Code, Chapter 366); county toll authorities, such as Harris County Toll Road Authority, (Transportation Code, Chapter 284); and regional mobility authorities (RMAs), such as the Central Texas RMA, (Transportation Code, Chapter 370). A full listing of tolling authorities in Texas is attached. This listing also includes the projects that the various authorities have undertaken.

As more tolling authorities have been created over the years, TxDOT has worked to create a more symbiotic relationship with them to tackle much-needed projects in certain regions. Both TxDOT and tolling authorities benefit from a strong relationship as each have a mutual goal of improving infrastructure and increasing mobility options. Although both TxDOT and tolling authorities have a shared goal, in some respects their goals are obviously different. As the State's department of transportation, TxDOT is tasked with improving statewide mobility. This requires a system that provides statewide connectivity to transport people and goods in the most efficient and safe manner as possible. Additionally, TxDOT is tasked with the maintenance of roadways (interstate highways, state highways and farm-to-market roads), the rehabilitation of the State's aging infrastructure, and the preservation of its world-class transportation system.

By design, tolling authorities are focused on a more regional solution to address transportation needs. Each statutorily created authority has its own unique boundaries and powers that are clearly defined by law. A brief description of each type of tolling authority is provided below:

Regional Toll Authorities (RTA)

Nature of Entity: A political subdivision formed by two or more counties, acting through their respective commissioner's courts. An RTA may be formed if one of the counties has a population of not less than 300,000, and the counties form a contiguous territory. This requirement currently limits the creation of RTAs to Bexar, Cameron, Collin, Dallas, Denton, El Paso, Fort Bend, Harris, Hidalgo, Nueces, Tarrant, Travis and their adjoining counties. Unless one of the counties has a population of 1.5 million, the Commission must approve the creation of an RTA.

Governing Body: Board of Directors, appointed by the commissioners' courts of each member county. The governor also appoints one director.

General Powers: Numerous powers and duties associated with the study, evaluation, design, acquisition, construction, maintenance, repair and operation of turnpike projects.

Geographic Reach: Within a county that is a part of the authority or in a county in which the authority operates or is constructing a turnpike project if the project in the affected county is a continuation of the project from an adjacent county.

Project Delivery Methods: Traditional methods plus comprehensive development agreements (CDAs). A regional toll authority may also procure a combination of engineering, design and construction services in the course of a single procurement provided that any contract awarded results in the best value to the authority.

Use of Surplus Revenue: Pay the costs of another turnpike project or for the study, design, construction, maintenance, repair and operation of a highway or similar facility that is not a turnpike project, under certain conditions.

County Toll Road Authorities

Nature of Entity: A county with a population of 50,000 or more that borders the Gulf of Mexico or an inlet opening into the Gulf [Cameron, Nueces, Brazoria, Galveston, Jefferson and Orange counties], a county that has a population of 1.5 million or more or is adjacent to a county that has a population of 1.5 million or more [Harris, Dallas and adjoining counties] or a county that borders Mexico [El Paso, Hudspeth, Presidio, Brewster, Terrell, Val Verde, Kinney, Maverick, Webb, Zapata, Starr, Hidalgo and Cameron counties].

Governing Body: County commissioners' court or an operating board appointed by the commissioners' court.

General Powers: Numerous powers and duties associated with constructing, acquiring, improving, operating, maintaining or pooling projects (including causeways, bridges, tunnels, turnpikes, highways and ferries).

Geographic Reach: Exclusively in the county, and outside the county in one or more counties adjacent to the county. A county may not construct or acquire a project located outside the county without the consent of the commissioners' court of the other county.

Project Delivery Methods: Traditional methods plus CDAs.

Use of Surplus Revenue: Pay for the study, design, construction, maintenance, repair or operation of roads, streets, highways or other related facilities that are not part of a project.

Regional Mobility Authorities (RMAs)

Nature of Entity: A political subdivision formed by one or more counties. The Commission authorizes the creation of an RMA.

Governing Body: Board of Directors, appointed by the commissioners' courts of each county in which a transportation project of the RMA is located. The presiding officer of the board is appointed by the governor.

General Powers: Numerous powers and duties associated with the study, evaluation, design, acquisition, construction, maintenance, repair and operation of all modes of transportation projects.

Geographic Reach: Within the county or counties in which it operates and into adjacent counties and potentially into another state or Mexico, under certain conditions. Member counties do not have to be adjacent to one another and the service area of an RMA may overlap with that of another RMA.

Project Delivery Methods: Traditional methods plus limited CDA authority (expires August 31, 2011). An RMA may also procure a combination of engineering, design and construction services in the course of a single procurement provided that any contract awarded results is the best value to the RMA.

Use of Surplus Revenue: Reduce tolls, deposit the surplus revenue in the Texas Mobility Fund or spend the surplus revenue on other transportation projects.

As part of ongoing efforts to foster a more cooperative relationship with its transportation partners, TxDOT has engaged in meetings with tolling entities to collaborate on a variety of matters. The nature of the meetings have varied; however, many have focused on improvements to interoperability (i.e., customers may use a toll tag issued by one of the tolling entities to travel on any of the toll roads in the state and receive only one bill). Additionally, all tolling entities have engaged in discussions surrounding collaboration on legislative items.

TxDOT will encourage and continue to participate in future discussions with all entities in order to attain our common goal of improved mobility for the citizens of Texas.

TxDOT Planning Rules

In the 1970's as a part of the federal transportation authorization bill, Congress enacted laws to require states to develop an ongoing, comprehensive, and intermodal statewide transportation planning process to include the development of a statewide transportation plan and transportation improvement program that facilitates the efficient, economic movement of people and goods. Because there are many components involved, the process is somewhat complex. Additionally, with every reauthorization bill passed by Congress, the process evolves and state departments of transportation are required to

adapt to changing rules and regulations. Each of the numerous planning documents compiled by TxDOT are necessary, and in some cases required, by federal or state law. Due to the complexity of the process, it has been difficult to achieve the transparency we desire. Many have expressed that the State's complicated transportation planning and project development process makes it difficult to understand how important decisions are made.

Although the comprehensive Sunset bill for the Texas Department of Transportation was unable to achieve passage during the 81st regular session of the legislature, the Department has initiated the recommendations contained in the bill to make the planning process more transparent and efficient. As part of this effort, TxDOT is in the process of revising its planning rules and is working diligently with its partners around the State to make the process as comprehensive, yet streamlined as possible in order to promote the projects that best fit the needs of the citizens of Texas.

In response to the recommendations of the Sunset Advisory Commission and suggestions from TxDOT's many transportation partners, the Texas Transportation Commission approved Minute Order 111891, dated July 30, 2009. The Minute Order outlined policies and guidance for appointing a Transportation Planning and Project Development Rulemaking Advisory Committee. The committee was charged with recommending changes to the Department's transportation planning and project development programming rules. The 11-member committee included representatives from MPOs, counties, transit organizations, tolling authorities, small cities, councils of government and the Federal Highway Administration. The Department held several workgroup meetings with the Rulemaking Advisory Committee, and based on input from the advisory committee, drafted revisions to the planning and programming rules found in Title 43, Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 15. Notices for public comment were issued in the Texas Register on two different occasions to provide an opportunity for transportation partners and citizens to provide feedback on the proposed changes to TxDOT's planning and programming rules. Public comments are being used by the Rulemaking Advisory Committee and the Department to form the basis for new proposed rules aimed at establishing a comprehensive transportation planning and project development program that is transparent, well-defined and understandable. The proposed rules recommend that TxDOT develop a long-range plan that outlines the State's long-term transportation goals and provides for measurable targets for each goal; a mid-range plan that specifies the criteria for project selection, defines funding categories, and defines the planning, design and construction phases of major projects; and a short-term plan that contains details on the funding for each phase of a project, a right-of-way plan, a letting plan, and reports that summarize the progress made on these plans.

The rules further suggest that TxDOT's planning and project development program include:

- project selection criteria for the Department and each MPO to use in their transportation plans that are based on the Texas Transportation Commission's transportation goals and measurable targets;
- statewide connectivity project benchmarks and implementation guidelines;

- an extended cash forecast;
- funding formulas for various categories of transportation projects;
- allocation formulas for mobility projects located within MPOs and related performance measures;
- flexibility provisions that allow TxDOT and MPOs to accelerate or delay projects based on cash forecasting; and
- consistent, clear and understandable reporting requirements.

TxDOT staff and the advisory committee worked for nearly a year on development of rules to establish a comprehensive transportation planning and project development program that is transparent, well-defined and understandable. Public comment was accepted in the spring and the rules were officially adopted by the Commission on August 26, 2010. The rules will go into effect January 1, 2011.

Statewide Long-Range Transportation Needs

Transportation planning is a continuous, comprehensive and cooperative process. It starts with very broad, visionary, futuristic and long-range statewide transportation goals as a foundation and systematically builds toward the delivery of projects. This approach is essential because it assures that improvements are needs-based. The process is continuous; plans are routinely reexamined, recalibrated and adjusted as time and conditions change.

There are numerous planning documents that guide the Department's and local officials' planning activities over the period of several years that projects are developed. Federal and state law requires the Commission to develop a statewide long-range transportation plan (USC, Title 23, Section 135/Texas Transportation Code 201.601). The Commission establishes statewide goals and priorities and works under the direction of the Governor and State Legislature. Working together, the Commission and State leadership refine goals and strategies, illuminate challenges or "rocks in the road" and implement solutions through legislative initiatives.

After establishing the state's transportation priorities, the Commission works to identify and quantify long-range, system-wide needs; these needs must incorporate multi-modal solutions. In addition to roadway networks connecting rural, urban and metropolitan areas, statewide systems that help meet our transportation goals include public transportation, general aviation, and the freight/passenger rail systems. Assessing needs requires collaboration with statewide, regional and local stakeholders that are accountable to the users of these systems. For example, metropolitan mobility transportation needs are best determined by the MPOs in each region.

A final public hearing to receive input and public comment on the SLRTP was held October 1, 2010, and written comments can be submitted through November 1. The 24-year long-range multimodal plan for the state of Texas, which provides for the development and integrated management and operation of transportation systems and

facilities that will function as an intermodal transportation system, is scheduled for adoption by the Transportation Commission at their November meeting.

Statewide Transportation Plan

Once the Commission establishes the State's long-range transportation priorities, it identifies the needs of the urban and rural areas by creating a statewide transportation plan. This plan consists of two major components: Metropolitan Transportation Plans (MTP's) developed by each MPO, and statewide corridors that provide regional connectivity. State law requires TxDOT to develop this multi-modal statewide transportation plan (Transportation Code, Title 6, Chapter 201, Section 201.601).

Local MPOs are responsible, under federal law (USC, Title 23, Section 134), for preparing the MTP's (referred to in some metropolitan areas as the Regional Transportation Plan), and TxDOT is responsible for planning for statewide corridor initiatives. Developing the collaborative statewide transportation plan, irrespective of the lead entity, includes extensive public involvement and decision-making at the local, regional and statewide levels.

Developing MTP's within each metropolitan area is similar to the statewide planning process in that it is a continuous, comprehensive and cooperative process. Using a 20+ year planning horizon, MTP's identify priority transportation projects that meet the specific needs of the urban area and must be financially constrained. Because our transportation needs greatly exceed anticipated federal, state and local funding, the MPO's stakeholders must prioritize the projects that "fit" within those financial constraints.

It is important to recognize that long-range transportation plans are not budgets; however, they are financially constrained by the projection of funding the regions can reasonably expect during the 20+ year planning horizon. Instead of being a budget, they provide more of a blueprint for building and preserving infrastructure that is "needs" driven and financially constrained based upon reasonable funding forecasts.

Unified Transportation Plan

The Unified Transportation Program or UTP is an 11 year document. It consists of the current year's planned lettings and also includes a listing of projects that are planned to be constructed and/or developed during the following 10 years of the 24 year long-range statewide transportation plans. The Commission approves the UTP and authorizes those projects for development. The UTP has two major components: mobility and preservation. The mobility portion of the UTP includes projects that add capacity to the transportation system, while the preservation portion includes maintenance and rehabilitation projects.

As required by federal law (USC, Title 23, Section 135), projects within the first four years of the UTP make up the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). Each

MPO and TxDOT district develops a local Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), under federal law USC, Title 23, Section 135, that best suits their region's transportation needs. The TIPs from all of the MPOs and districts are then combined to comprise the state's overall STIP.

Transportation planning and project selection begins as a broad initiative, aimed at addressing our transportation needs. Through this process, projects are refined and focused to achieve both state and regional transportation goals. This is a multi-faceted, continually evolving process; this testimony only "scratches the surface" of its complex nature.

Collaborative Projects

TxDOT and CTRMA

Since the inception of the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA) in 2002, TxDOT has assiduously pursued a strong partnership with the authority. Beginning in 2006 with the opening of the extension of Loop 1, the CTRMA and TxDOT have worked together to create a network of inter-connective roadways to relieve congestion resulting from the massive growth in Central Texas. The Loop 1 Extension, SH 45 and SH 130, also known as the Central Texas Turnpike System, all provide enhanced connectivity and congestion relief in the north Austin area. The Loop 1 Extension was built to extend past the former endpoint of Loop 1 to connect to SH 45. This new system of roadways now provides an east/west connection for residents in Travis and Williamson counties and connects to IH 35 and SH 130. Additionally, SH 130 (Segments 1-4) is a 49-mile tollway located east of I 35 through Williamson and Travis counties, extending from IH 35 north of Georgetown to US 183 southeast of Austin. Segments 5 & 6 of SH 130 are a continuation of the northern segments of SH 130; upon completion, SH 130 will be a new 91-mile tollway intended to provide needed relief to the congested I 35 through Central Texas.

In 2005, construction began on the 183A toll road. The project, which extends through Cedar Park and Leander in northwest Williamson County, opened to traffic in March 2007. During its first year of operation, the road generated more than 55,000 toll transactions per day, double the 24,600 originally projected. As a result, the CTRMA is accelerating development of the northern extension of 183A. Overall, the 183A project has significantly improved travel times and reduced traffic on adjacent roadways including US 183.

Traffic on US 290 East between US 183 and SH 130 has increased more than 78 percent since 1990, and the resulting congestion is challenging the area's quality of life and economic prosperity. To address this challenge, the CTRMA is constructing the Manor Expressway. This project will triple the current capacity of US 290 East between US 183 and SH 130. It will be a 6.2-mile limited-access road, which will include three tolled lanes in each direction, and three non-tolled frontage lanes in each direction. The new Manor Expressway will be constructed in an expanded median of the existing US 290

East. The existing US 290 will be widened and improved and will remain non-tolled. Therefore, drivers preferring not to use the Manor Expressway will have the option of using these non-tolled frontage roads. Construction on the first section will begin in early 2010 and portions of the road could begin opening by late 2012. Once completed, the Manor Expressway will link up with other important roadways in the region, including US 183 and the new SH 130 toll road.

TxDOT and the Northeast Texas RMA

The Northeast Texas RMA (NET RMA) was created in 2004 in order to enhance mobility in the Northeast Texas region. Since its creation, it has grown to include 12 counties. In 2006, the NET RMA agreed to partner with TxDOT to build key segments of Loop 49. Loop 49 is a proposed corridor in Northeast Texas that, when complete, will connect Lindale, Tyler, Longview and Marshall, Texas, and will provide much needed connectivity with Interstate 20 and the US 59 corridors. The Loop 49 concept is comprised of three key pieces. The first is a 32 mile outer Loop around Tyler that has been in planning phases for over 30 years. Through traditional funding sources and local partnerships, TxDOT completed construction on seven miles of this segment that connects SH 155 and FM 756 on the south side of Tyler. After completion of this two-phase segment, funding constraints and declining gas tax revenues prevented further development of Loop 49 through traditional funding sources. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act allowed TxDOT to begin construction on an additional 6.2 mile, \$38 million segment connecting SH 31 on the west side of Tyler to SH 155 on the southeast. In addition, the sale of Proposition 14 Bonds allowed TxDOT to start construction on a fourth segment that will connect FM 756, south of Tyler to SH 110 on the southeast. When these two projects are complete, TxDOT will have approximately 16 miles of Loop 49 in operation, connecting SH 31 to the west and SH 110 to the southeast around Tyler. These segments provide much needed congestion relief for US 69, which currently carries 44,000 cars a day north and south through Tyler. A portion of this segment of US 69 is among the Top 100 most congested roadways in the State. Loop 49 provides a much needed east-west corridor and, ultimately, connectivity with IH 20 alleviating congestion along US 69. The NET RMA recently selected a design-build team and is in the process of preparing a financial plan for the sale of bonds that will fund the final western leg of the Outer Loop connecting SH 31 and IH 20.

The second key component of the Loop 49 concept is the Lindale Relief Route. This approximate seven mile segment will connect US 69 on the north side of Lindale, TX west and south to IH 20. This segment will greatly reduce congestion through the city of Lindale by providing an alternate route from US 69 to IH 20. Currently, there are approximately 24,000 cars per day travelling US 69 through Lindale, TX. TxDOT is currently completing the final environmental coordination.

The final component is the Longview Outer Loop, more commonly referred to as the East Texas Hour Glass (ETHG). This project is still in the conceptual planning phase. Ultimately, this project will extend east from SH 110 to IH 20 at the Gregg County Line, then north and east around Longview to US 259, and easterly to US 59 above Marshall,

TX. Corridor studies and environmental studies must be completed before the alignment of the proposed roadways can be accurately established.

Thanks to the alternative funding sources provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and Proposition 14 Bonds, TxDOT has been able to expedite the construction of Loop 49 and provide much needed connectivity and congestion relief through the city of Tyler. TxDOT will continue to work through the NET RMA and local partnerships to complete this project.

TxDOT and NTTA

The NTTA was created in 1997 in order to address the transportation demands in the Metroplex. The Authority's mature system of roadways serves to manage congestion and improve mobility for the residents in North Central Texas. With almost 80 centerline miles, the NTTA's system is a major infrastructure component in the North Texas region.

The Dallas North Tollway provides 32 miles of mobility for residents traveling from Dallas to the rapidly growing communities in both Collin and Denton counties. The President George Bush Turnpike is an east/west route that provides a link to the Central Expressway (US 75), the Dallas North Tollway, IH 35E, and LBJ Freeway (IH 635). It also serves as an alternate route to the Dallas-Ft Worth International Airport for residents along that corridor. The 26-mile long Sam Rayburn Tollway, formerly known as SH 121, is a collaborative effort between both NTTA and TxDOT. TxDOT began constructing the project that travels through cities in both Denton and Collin counties including Carrollton, Coppell, Frisco, McKinney and Plano; in 2008, NTTA assumed responsibility for operations, maintenance and construction of the Sam Rayburn Tollway for the next 50 years. Segments 4 and 5 are still under construction, and the total project should be complete by 2012. The Lewisville Lake Toll Bridge is a 1.7 mile tolled bridge that serves as an east/west connection in Denton County across Lewisville Lake. The bridge also connects IH 35 to the Dallas North Tollway.

The most recent collaborative effort between TxDOT and the NTTA is certainly one of which both partners can be proud. In March of 2010, the NTTA agreed to partner with TxDOT on a financing plan to fully develop the SH 161/Southwest Parkway and Chisholm Trail project. Knowing the regional significance of providing this additional capacity, TxDOT worked together with the region to put together a financing package that allows for the projects to be developed in the near term. This collaborative effort involves an approximately \$400 M Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) loan from the Federal Highway Administration; approximately \$330 M in funds advanced by the Regional Transportation Council (RTC); and, the issuance of bonds by the NTTA supported by the projects' toll revenues. TxDOT is supporting the development of the project by providing a toll equity loan to guarantee payment of eligible costs associated with the development, operation and construction of the SH 161 project.

As the North Central Texas region continues to grow to the north, east and west of Dallas/Ft Worth, the NTTA continues to grow with it by providing many alternate routes to more effectively and efficiently transport the region's residents.

TxDOT and Harris County Toll Road Authority

As the most populous county in Texas and one of the most populous in the United States, Harris County requires an extensive transportation infrastructure system to address its mobility needs. The Harris County Toll Road Authority (HCTRA) was created in 1983 to construct toll roads in the rapidly growing Harris County region. Since 1988 with the opening of its first project, the Hardy Toll Road, HCTRA has continued its efforts to keep up with the demands of the traveling public. TxDOT and HCTRA have enjoyed a long-standing, mutually beneficial and productive relationship for many years dating back to the inception of the Beltway 8/Sam Houston Tollway system development.

Following the Hardy Toll Road, HCTRA built an outer loop around the Houston area: the Sam Houston Tollway. TxDOT and HCTRA worked collaboratively in the development, implementation and construction of the Beltway 8/Sam Houston Tollway system infrastructure in use today. In particular, TxDOT and HCTRA made joint investment in constructing the roadway. HCTRA funded the construction of the mainlanes, while TxDOT paid for the construction of the major interchanges where the Sam Houston Tollway crossed TxDOT existing facilities in various locations including: IH 45 North and South; I-10 East and West; and US 59 North and South. Additionally, both TxDOT and HCTRA worked together to innovatively enter into an agreement allowing for the exchange of assets (including infrastructure and monies) related to the transfer of ownership of the Beltway 8 Ship Channel Bridge, constructed by the Texas Turnpike Authority. The agreement and exchange ultimately allowed for an accelerated implementation of the Beltway 8 East and South system that significantly improved system connectivity. The Sam Houston Tollway provides connectivity to IH 45, IH 10 and US 59 and serves to move traffic around the city of Houston in a more efficient manner. The Westpark Tollway is a 19 mile route that serves the residents of west Houston and provides access to US 59, the Sam Houston Tollway and SH 6.

The Katy Managed Lanes project opened to traffic in April of 2009. As the first roadway of its kind in Texas, the Katy Managed Lanes project will provide a more flexible option for commuters traveling between SH 6 and IH 610 West by utilizing "dynamic pricing". Dynamic pricing means that the toll rate changes based on variables such as the amount of traffic on the roadway and the time of day. The project is a collaborative effort between TxDOT, HCTRA, the Federal Highway Administration and Houston METRO. HCTRA partnered with TxDOT in order to leverage funding for the project so it could be built in less time and for less money to provide a much-needed option for commuters traveling the congested Katy Freeway; HCTRA is responsible for operating and maintaining this transportation asset.

Conclusion

Ultimately, all partners involved in transportation planning have a collective goal: to build a safe, reliable and efficient transportation system. There are vast benefits resulting from the cooperation between TxDOT, MPOs and tolling authorities when planning, constructing and operating projects. When collaboration occurs, TxDOT is able to focus on statewide connectivity and mobility needs as well as the preservation of its current system; MPOs are able to craft plans that address long-term transportation solutions; and tolling authorities are able to focus on the mobility needs of their regions and build much-needed projects. Most importantly, citizens across the State undoubtedly benefit from a world-class transportation system. It is imperative that these entities build upon their past collaborative efforts to build even stronger, more robust partnerships as they move forward to cooperatively address the transportation challenges facing Texas.