

Testimony of Judge Terry Simpson, San Patricio County Judge  
Before the  
Senate Committee on Transportation and Homeland Security  
Wednesday, October 13, 2010

Mr. Chairman and Members,


I was specifically asked to address your 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" on behalf of the Texas Association of Counties.

One of the strongest aspects of the Department's organizational structure in relating to and working with local government and organizations is its District Engineering Offices. That structure has provided the department with point of contact and information gathering outreach in the 25 regions they serve. While the TTC-35 and TTC-69 concepts were driven from Austin top down that has been addressed by the abandoning of the TTC concept and the creation of citizen advisory committees on needed improvements to I-35 and I-69. In addition, the Department created a system by which local elected officials and organizations actually appointed members to the multiple individual segment committees to advise the Department on the improvements needed along these routes from a very local perspective. I serve as Chairman of the I-69 Segment Committee 5.

As Chairman of the Corpus Christi MPO and Transportation Policy Committee, I would say the system is working well. It would be a mistake to attempt to create a new statewide uniform organizational structure for this information flow and decision-making. Each of the regions of the state has worked with the Department to create a system that is somewhat unique to their regions and which works well.

While I am here as a spokesman for the Texas Association of Counties, I am a past president of the County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas and that association recently passed a resolution asking the legislature to provide local governments with four specific tools for local financing of transportation projects. These four tools would NOT impact the State's budget or require you to vote to raise anyone's taxes. They are as follows.

First, give every county in Texas the ability to establish a county toll authority such as the Harris County Toll Authority or to join together in a regional authority like the North Texas Tollway Authority. Most counties are not currently authorized to create an authority under either Section 284 or Section 366 of the



Transportation Code. I believe all 254 counties ought to be able to exercise that authority, if they so choose.

Second, increase the authority of counties and cities to create Transportation Reinvestment Zones (TRZs). Allow them to use the incremental growth in both LOCAL property and LOCAL sales taxes to finance transportation projects.

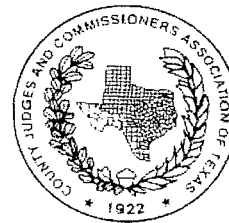
Third, extend Comprehensive Development Authority (CDA). With the limited public dollars available for transportation, we cannot afford to turn our back on private investments in NEW tolled capacity.

Fourth, give local county or city government the option of putting on their ballots a LOCAL OPTION fuels tax or fees to build local transportation projects that they have identified as important to growth and job creation in their region of the state.

I have attached the County Judges and Commissioners Association resolution. Thank you for allowing me to appear before you.

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*The following resolution was passed by the County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas, representing 254 counties in the State of Texas, on October 7, 2010, during the Association's annual conference.*

## COUNTY TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

**WHEREAS**, county transportation funding sources are currently limited to property taxes, motor vehicle registration fees and some minor permit fees; and

**WHEREAS**, funding for the Texas Department of Transportation is insufficient to meet the current requirements for the state transportation system; and

**WHEREAS**, counties should be able to utilize additional transportation funding methods to support our vital infrastructure systems;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:**

The County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas hereby requests that the Texas legislature provide the following local option transportation funding authority to Texas counties:

1. Local Toll Authority for all counties;
2. Expanded authority to create Transportation Reinvestment Zones to utilize revenues from future development;
3. Extended comprehensive development agreement authority to enable counties to attract private participation in transportation projects; and
4. Local Option County Motor Fuel Tax authority for all counties.

Read and adopted this 7<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2010.