



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

Texas Division

June 7, 2010

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In Reply Refer To:
HDA-TX

The Honorable John Carona
Chair, Senate Committee on Transportation and Homeland Security
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Chairman Carona:

In response to your request to testify before the Senate Committee on Transportation and Homeland Security on Tuesday, June 8, 2010 regarding recommendations to expedite the environmental review process for transportation projects, I hereby submit this letter on behalf of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). This written statement is submitted in lieu of oral testimony at the hearing.

As you know, Section 6002 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) authorized changes to make the environmental review process more efficient and timely, while protecting environmental and community resources. Early results from FHWA's tracking of environmental impact statements under this process indicate some improvement in timeliness of environmental review. Additionally, FHWA has seen a positive reaction from agencies and the public regarding their early involvement in the environmental review process. However, much work remains.

To this end, FHWA Administrator Victor Mendez recently announced his "Every Day Counts" initiative, designed to identify and deploy innovation aimed at shortening project delivery, enhancing the safety of our roadways, and improving environmental sustainability. Through this initiative, FHWA sought input from stakeholders such as the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, the Associated General Contractors of America, and the American Road & Transportation Builders Association to develop a set of clearly-defined strategies that will advance FHWA's mission. After certain milestones have been met in implementing this first round of strategies, FHWA plans to deploy additional ones.

Shortening project delivery time is a core element of the Every Day Counts initiative. Reducing delivery time, from the early planning stages to actual construction, will save money that can be used on additional projects and help to improve environmental outcomes. FHWA believes that several opportunities exist in the current project delivery process where innovative approaches, such as the following, will improve project delivery times:



Chairman Carona

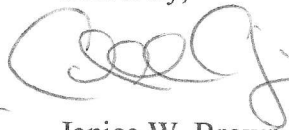
June 7, 2010

Page 2

- Implementing “Planning and Environment Linkages,” which represents an approach to transportation decision-making that considers environmental, community, and economic goals early in the planning stage and carries these goals through project development, design, and construction.
- Consulting with FHWA environmental attorneys at early decision points to expedite legal sufficiency reviews and approvals.
- Broadening the use of ecological and wetland mitigation banking and in-lieu fee programs to expedite construction of Federally funded highway projects.
- Clarifying the scope of preliminary design.
- Employing flexibilities already provided in statute and FHWA regulations to expedite the right-of-way acquisition process and foster effective relocation of utility facilities.
- Providing additional technical assistance to State Departments of Transportation on ongoing Environmental Impact Statement projects by integrating project delivery best practices and flexibilities to resolve project delays where feasible.
- Accelerating project delivery methods such as Construction Manager/General Contractor and Design-Build.

FHWA believes that accelerating use of these innovative approaches through the “Every Day Counts” initiative will provide an opportunity to build FHWA's capacity, in concert with its stakeholders, to identify best practices and address some of the most challenging highway issues facing the Nation. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this informational statement.

Sincerely,



for Janice W. Brown
Division Administrator