

1 TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

2 2030 COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING

3
4
5
6
7 El Paso Public Library, Main Branch

8 501 North Oregon

9 El Paso, Texas 79901

10
11
12
13
14
15 Held on August 7, 2008

16 Convened at 4:01 p.m.

17 Adjourned at 5:54 p.m.

18
19
20
21
22
23 Reported by: Teresita Fonseca, CSR

1 MR. MARCUS: I'd like to welcome everybody
2 to the second statewide hearing of the Texas
3 Transportation Commission's 2030 Committee. I'm David
4 Marcus, and I'm the vice chair of the committee. Before
04:01:46 5 I begin, I'd like to recognize some of the people who
6 helped make today's hearing in El Paso possible. I'd
7 like to recognize Carol Brey, director of the El Paso
8 Public Library, and her capable staff, for hosting this
9 hearing. Blanca Del Valle in the local TxDOT district
04:02:00 10 office for helping with logistics. Eduardo Miranda from
11 the El Paso Greater Chamber of Commerce, and Ms. Tania
12 Norman, the manager of the research division, government
13 and public affairs division of the Texas Department of
14 Transportation in Austin, who keeps us moving forward.
04:02:20 15 Thank you, Tania.

16 It's also my great pleasure to welcome to
17 El Paso some of my fellow committee members who are
18 joining us today. And I'm going to mention their names,
19 and then I'm going to have them introduce themselves and
04:02:38 20 tell you just what they do. The first gentleman I'd
21 like to mention is Mr. Tom Johnson from Austin. And I
22 only want to mention his name first because I think it's
23 important to point out to Mr. Johnson that there are
24 probably three times as many people here today as there
04:02:56 25 were in Austin two weeks ago, and I think it's

1 appropriate that we allow that as a warning because when
2 UT comes to El Paso on September 6 to play UTEP, there
3 might be an equally distant problem for you.

4 I'd also like to welcome Mr. Harry -- Gary
04:03:15 5 Thomas from Dallas, Mr. Cullen Looney from Edinburg and
6 Mr. Drew Crutcher from Odessa. And I'd like for each of
7 them to introduce themselves.

8 Drew, would you like to start?

9 MR. CRUTCHER: Yeah.

04:03:25 10 I'm Drew Crutcher from Odessa, Texas, a
11 civil engineer. I'm glad to be here and I'm happy to
12 see such a good crowd for us. Thank you.

13 MR. JOHNSON: I'm Tom Johnson, and I'm not
14 from Austin, I just live there now. I'm from Ysleta,
04:03:42 15 Texas, and I'm proud to be here.

16 MR. THOMAS: My name is Gary Thomas. I'm
17 president/executive director of Dallas Area Rapid
18 Transit, and it's good to see a crowd here today. It's
19 good to be in El Paso. I'm looking forward to hearing
04:03:57 20 your comments.

21 MR. LOONEY: I'm Cullen Looney. I'm from
22 Edinburg, Texas. I'm the other end of the Rio Grande
23 Valley down to the lower Rio Grande Valley, the other
24 end of the river, and I'm an attorney and businessman
04:04:09 25 there. I'm the newest member on this committee and I

1 look forward to hearing from you-all today. Thank you.

2 MR. MARCUS: Thank you.

3 Just three months ago, the five of us
4 received an invitation from the chair of the Texas
04:04:21 5 Transportation Commission to join eight other people
6 from around the state to serve on an independent
7 committee charged with issuing a report by December 2008
8 quantifying and describing the need for transportation
9 and mobility investment in Texas over the next 20 years.

04:04:36 10 As part of the process, we have been given
11 access to a needs assessment team, which includes
12 researchers from the Center for Transportation Research
13 at the University of Texas at Austin and the Texas
14 Transportation Institute at Texas A&M University. This
04:04:54 15 team will look to us, the 2030 Committee, for guidance
16 on the mobility and maintenance goals that we want to
17 see measured as part of this process. That's what
18 brings us to today's hearing.

19 The committee has planned five to six
04:05:09 20 public hearings around Texas. Our first hearing took
21 place in Austin two weeks ago. El Paso is the second.
22 The committee is looking at you for guidance. We are
23 here to listen, not to give you our ideas, but rather to
24 listen to yours. We want to know what you think this
04:05:27 25 region will need in the next two decades, what you think

1 is important for the El Paso region.

2 El Paso has enormous growth opportunities
3 happening all around us. Fort Bliss is going to add the
4 equivalent of a small city to its post in the next
04:05:44 5 three years right in the heart of our city. There is a
6 brand-new four-year medical school getting ready to open
7 next year, and the city, the MPO and the RMA passed an
8 ambitious billion dollar mobility plan scheduled to
9 happen over the next 36 months. And if you walked in
04:06:02 10 the front door of this library, you noticed that
11 downtown redevelopment is happening all around us.

12 So this is what we want to know: How do
13 you see all these people, freight trains and cars moving
14 in 2030? What do you think we need to do now to make
04:06:20 15 sure we're ready for the future? We have invited the
16 dealership from the local entities to give us invited
17 testimony and then we're going to open the floor to
18 anyone else who would like to speak from the community.
19 If you would like to speak today and you haven't yet
04:06:34 20 done so, make sure you've signed up in the back of the
21 room so we can tell who is going to speak.

22 If you have specific questions for one of
23 us, feel free to ask us; otherwise, we're just going to
24 listen to you. Please note that -- that being here
04:06:50 25 today will make a difference. Your remarks will be made

1 part of the record and we will be considering all of
2 them when preparing our final report in December. If
3 you're speaking today, there are time keepers who will
4 be holding up cards, letting you know when your time is
04:07:08 5 running out.

6 Thank you for taking the time to attend
7 today. It's certainly important to the future of our
8 local community and to the mobility of our entire state.
9 Before we begin with the invited testimony, I'd like to
04:07:20 10 recognize State Senator Eliot Shapleigh.

11 MR. MARCUS: Senator, do you want to use
12 the mike?

13 SENATOR SHAPLEIGH: I don't think I need
14 one. Do you think I do?

04:07:40 15 MR. MARCUS: No.

16 SENATOR SHAPLEIGH: I would like to thank
17 you-all for coming to our great community. Mr. Johnson,
18 as you well know, once an Indian, always an Indian, and
19 welcome back home.

04:07:47 20 I'm reading from your handout what the
21 mission of your committee is, and as it states here:
22 Oversees an independent assessment of Texas mobility and
23 maintenance needs to the year 2030.

24 MR. MARCUS: Senator, could I interrupt
04:08:01 25 you?

1 SENATOR SHAPLEIGH: Yes, sir.

2 MR. MARCUS: This is on the record and if
3 you don't speak in the mike, it won't be transcribed, so
4 if you would go to one of the mikes --

04:08:08 5 SENATOR SHAPLEIGH: Okay. I'll be glad to
6 do it.

7 MR. MARCUS: Thank you.

8 SENATOR SHAPLEIGH: Your mission is to
9 assess mobility needs in the State of Texas to 2030, but
04:08:24 10 I'd like to ask you to do one other thing, and that is
11 advocate for the revenues to pay for those mobility
12 needs. That right there is the MPO list of projects in
13 El Paso, Texas color coded with perhaps the best MPO
14 organization in the state. We've looked at what our
04:08:42 15 needs are, we've color coded them by project, we've put
16 it on a spreadsheet and we've taken it out to the year
17 2030.

18 In the last 60 days, this has become the
19 center of innovation in Texas. We announced a
04:08:59 20 \$1 billion transportation mobility project. We're the
21 first to use pass-through tolls, the first to use the
22 TRS law that was created in the last session, so you're
23 seeing a community way out front taking care of its own
24 needs. If you take the 25 MPOs from around the state
04:09:17 25 and take their needs and chart them, which is your

1 mission, and measure them against current revenue
2 streams, TxDOT will tell you we're \$86 billion short of
3 meeting the mobility needs of this state by the year
4 2030. The low side is the state auditor's number who
04:09:39 5 will tell you we're \$66 billion short of meeting the
6 mobility needs of this state in the year 2030.

7 When you look at the fact that this state
8 will double in population by the year 2040, basic
9 infrastructure is emerging, I believe, as the number one
04:09:55 10 issue in the next session. What do we need and how are
11 we going to pay for it? TxDOT is preparing right now at
12 our request, we asked them on that stage in March to
13 look at the 25 MPOs through a spreadsheet in the year
14 2030 and document by priority what the transportation
04:10:15 15 needs were of the State of Texas, and on the other side
16 come back with the 11 known ways to pay for highways.

17 If you look at the world, you look at how
18 highways are being paid for today from Israel to the
19 middle of Manhattan, there's about 11 ways you can raise
04:10:34 20 revenues to pay for highways, and we want the
21 legislature to know exactly the options that are on the
22 table. But to leave your work and say, These are the
23 needs, and not come forward and say, We need to push for
24 the revenues as a political matter, is going to leave us
04:10:51 25 short. Whether it's 60 billion or 86 billion, we'll see

1 after you've turned in your report.

2 I want to mention two things before we go
3 forward. One is the Texas CDA Model. As you know,
4 that's been a point of contention at TxDOT and around
04:11:06 5 the state in terms of funding highways. They became
6 particularly true in the north Dallas area with your
7 projects over the last year. In my view, the state
8 needs to be aggressively involved in putting our pension
9 funds into the revenue streams of paying for highways.

04:11:24 10 If there is indeed a 15-percent return on investment,
11 then let's let the teachers of the State of Texas and
12 the universities participate in that as a prudent
13 investment. And I would like to see this committee get
14 out front on that issue because that legislation's being
04:11:40 15 prepared, as we speak, down in Austin.

16 The next thing I'd like to mention is mass
17 transit. I just came back from a trip abroad where
18 gasoline is \$12 a gallon. We're rapidly moving to a
19 bimode, bimile, bitransportation mobility concept.

04:12:01 20 Today we subsidize highways to the extent of 91 percent,
21 that mode of transportation. Recently, I asked a rail
22 executive, What if we did a lease option with you? We
23 would put in the money you need to double stack and
24 double track, and you gave us time on your rail to move
04:12:21 25 things through metropolitan areas in the State of Texas.

1 These are the kinds of innovations we're
2 going to need to look at, particularly in places like
3 Houston and Dallas as we move forward because our
4 constituencies are going to be asking for much cheaper
04:12:35 5 modes of transportation. I know you've got a lot of
6 work to do. I look forward to reading your report, but
7 please don't end with the report, come to the
8 legislature in January and ask for results. I
9 appreciate your time.

04:12:48 10 MR. MARCUS: Thank you, Senator.

11 I'd like to introduce the first person in
12 our agenda, Mayor Cook.

13 You want to speak from up here?

14 MAYOR COOK: I'll use the podium up there
04:13:12 15 if that's okay.

16 MR. MARCUS: Absolutely.

17 MAYOR COOK: And I don't know if you-all
18 can see this screen here. You might want to turn your
19 chairs around so it's a little more convenient for you.

04:13:21 20 But what my job is today -- first of all,
21 *bienvenidos* a El Paso, welcome to El Paso. And I want
22 to try to give you sort of a lay of the land on what we
23 see as being our transportation challenges and the
24 solutions we came up with.

04:13:35 25 And next slide, please.

1 On this one, here's some of the impacts
2 that we have. First is a population based upon base
3 realignment and closure. As you may have heard or read
4 in the paper, El Paso and Fort Bliss really benefitted
04:13:52 5 from BRAC. And the numbers that are really important
6 for you to look at here are these bottom line numbers
7 right here, a total of 30,000 new folks coming in that
8 we have in 2035, and that number is going to jump to up
9 to 77,494 by 2011. What that -- the yellow box down
04:14:13 10 here tells you what the impact is for mobility, and
11 that's that there's going to be an approximately
12 additional 30,000 vehicles on the road by 2011 and we
13 have to be able to address that.

14 The next slide actually talks about the
04:14:27 15 El Paso regional statistics and population. The
16 important numbers here, if you look at 1997, 1.7 million
17 folks that we have when you combine the El Paso
18 metropolitan area, Juarez and El Paso. Put them all
19 together, 1.7 million people. Jump over to 2035 and
04:14:50 20 what do you got? You have double the population to
21 3.5 million people, so -- and that's going to be
22 something that we're going to have to deal with both
23 internationally and -- and as the State of Texas and the
24 region.

04:15:05 25 In the next slide, you can see some of the

1 challenges that we have. If you -- this is a Google
2 view of the El Paso region. I cut off all of the -- the
3 east El Paso, not on purpose, but just to show you what
4 some of our big challenges are. The first one is this.
04:15:21 5 That's called the Franklin Mountains, and it separates
6 the west side of El Paso from the northeast and central
7 portions. You also have what's known as Juarez, Mexico,
8 which is all this down here, and so we have those
9 international governmental challenges that we have. And
04:15:41 10 then you also have the challenge that we're -- all of
11 this Interstate 10 runs right along here and it's
12 squeezed between the mountain, New Mexico and the Rio
13 Grande River, which comes around here. So those are
14 some of our biggest challenges, and then you have Fort
04:16:01 15 Bliss property over here, takes up all of this and
16 becomes another barrier that you have to figure out how
17 you're going to get around it.

18 And the next slide talks about our
19 infrastructure and transportation needs. Probably the
04:16:16 20 foremost of those is the completion of our loop. This
21 is a loop which would go around the City of El Paso.
22 Right now all you have is Interstate 10, and if anything
23 happens to Interstate 10, mobility stops, stops in its
24 tracks, whether that's a tractor-trailer turning over or
04:16:34 25 an accident on the freeway or the -- like in 2006 when

1 our highway system flooded and there was no way to get
2 around it, so that's probably one of our greatest
3 priorities right now. We have to have those alternate
4 routes.

04:16:51 5 We also want to complete a northeast
6 parkway, which would come off of that loop and go
7 through Highway 404 in New Mexico, and that's one of the
8 mobility plans that the Senator was talking about that
9 we've already addressed. So we need to complete this
04:17:05 10 portion of the border highway. There's already a lot of
11 work been done here. Transmountain, the road was built
12 for the mountains back in the early '70s, so we've got
13 parts of this, but we haven't completed the picture, and
14 that's -- one of our biggest challenges right now is to
04:17:22 15 complete that picture.

16 But we also need to look at intermodal
17 opportunities and increasing transit routes. One of the
18 first transit routes that we're going to take care of is
19 right here where you see Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. We have
04:17:36 20 about 6,000 students a day that come across the bridge
21 to go to the University of Texas at El Paso, which is
22 right about here, so one of the first projects that
23 we're going to do is -- on our bus rapid transit system
24 is to set up a route that goes right here from the
04:17:52 25 international bridge up to the University of Texas at

1 El Paso.

2 Theoretically, that will get rid of up to
3 6 million cars that are sitting on the bridge idling and
4 help us to reduce congestion and mitigate pollution on
04:18:05 5 our international bridges. Eventually, what we're going
6 to do is to take that system, and we're doing the
7 feasibility studies right now, so we're going to run
8 that up to -- almost up to Sunland Park, New Mexico to
9 Doniphan Drive. And we've already set that as being a
04:18:21 10 number one priority for mass transit. The first seven
11 busses have already been ordered. We're waiting for
12 them to be delivered right now, so -- we also -- part of
13 our plan is to integrate all modes of transportation,
14 whether that's going to be pedestrian traffic or bus
04:18:39 15 traffic, light-rail, whatever the component is, we're
16 going to bite those and take them on.

17 We're also looking at transit rail
18 feasibility studies. I was mentioning to some of you
19 earlier that the black bridge, which goes between El
04:18:56 20 Paso and Juarez, which brings back all the -- all the
21 goods that were not used in the manufacturing process in
22 the *maquilas*, comes back over that bridge. Ferromex is
23 going to be moving that bridge out of downtown Juarez
24 and that will give us the opportunity for light-rail.

04:19:14 25 We can go to the next slide.

1 The El Paso regional statistics
2 international commerce, there's some really important
3 things on this slide, but let me jump to two of the most
4 important. Right down here at the bottom of your screen
04:19:27 5 you see the exports to Mexico is \$20.7 billion. That's
6 17 percent of all the national trade with Mexico. And
7 if you look at the other side over here, \$30 billion of
8 imports from Mexico. That's 18.32. You put those two
9 numbers together, \$50 billion worth of trade in this
04:19:50 10 cargo, and it's a significant portion of the U.S.
11 economy. Up here it'll tell you it's 60 percent of the
12 entire U.S. economy. So what happens in this region
13 impacts not only El Paso, but the State of Texas and the
14 United States.

04:20:04 15 Next slide.

16 El Paso's infrastructure and transportation
17 needs, this talks about existing and proposed ports of
18 entry. In order to have that \$50 billion worth of
19 trade, we have some existing and new ports of entry. We
04:20:20 20 have rail freight relocations, as I mentioned, to get
21 them out of the inner cities, and we're -- we have -- we
22 already issued a contract for a \$1 million study to
23 where we're going to put that next port and there's some
24 proposed places for it up here.

04:20:33 25 And let's jump right to the next slide.

1 El Paso's use of TxDOT tools, which the
2 Senator mentioned, we're going to use every tool in the
3 toolbox. We're going to use tollways, we're going to
4 use transportation reinvestment zones. As a matter of
04:20:49 5 fact, we will be the first city in the State of Texas to
6 use the TRZ, which was put into the toolbox. We've also
7 used the pass-through tolling, which down here on the
8 bottom it tells you Spur 601, \$134 million project that
9 our RMA has spearheaded to make sure we get it off.

04:21:08 10 It's under construction right now, and it's probably the
11 biggest use of that particular tool in the toolbox.

12 And I know I'm running out of time, so
13 we'll try to move to the next slide real quickly. The
14 rapid transit system, the BRT or rapid transit system,
04:21:25 15 as I mentioned, we've already bought the first of our
16 busses. And I mentioned what those corridors are going
17 to be, but in the future what I'd like to see is some
18 kind of a light-rail system to move almost 10,000 people
19 a day that walk across our bridges and have them pretend
04:21:39 20 that they're in the 21st century and ride across the
21 bridge instead of walking.

22 If we can jump to the next slide.

23 We also want to have intelligent
24 transportation system. We want to invest more into
04:21:52 25 technology. We already do that for traffic monitoring,

1 and we want to make sure that we use rail and we invest
2 in -- all of our plans now will use multimodal
3 transportation mobility. We'll look at pedestrian
4 transportation, bicycle transportation and mass transit,
04:22:10 5 along with automobiles. We're not going to leave any of
6 those.

7 And also, I did appoint Senator Shapleigh
8 to a committee that's looking at rail relocation, and I
9 think he should have his report ready for us in a couple
04:22:25 10 of weeks. We're excited about what's happening for
11 mobility in El Paso, and we're excited that you-all have
12 been asked to look at what the various needs are, and I
13 hope you remember El Paso's needs and pass that on to
14 the commissioners.

04:22:39 15 Thank you very much and God bless all of
16 you.

17 MR. MARCUS: I've got to move this way down
18 here.

19 Mr. Richard Dayoub, president and CEO of
04:22:56 20 the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce. Richard?
21 There you are.

22 MR. DAYOUB: Thank you.

23 MR. MARCUS: Is that mike on? It's
24 working. Now it's on.

04:23:10 25 MR. DAYOUB: If it's okay with you, I'll

1 just present from up here, David.

2 MR. MARCUS: Sure. That's fine.

3 MR. DAYOUB: I want to thank the members of
4 the 2030 Committee for this opportunity to speak before
04:23:19 5 you this afternoon and for making El Paso one of the
6 stops in your tour across the State of Texas. And
7 today, at this point, I'm glad to know that we surpassed
8 Austin with the turnout for our committee on this very,
9 very important issue. As I was sitting here listening
04:23:38 10 to Senator Shapleigh and Mayor Cook deliver their
11 remarks, I was feverishly editing my remarks so that I
12 would try to avoid some duplication of effort, so I -- I
13 will just cut to the chase.

14 There is no PowerPoint presentation, just
04:23:52 15 my notes to you. Again, we think this is one of the
16 more important things that you are doing as an
17 organization. We applaud you and TxDOT for taking the
18 necessary steps. For the record, I'm Richard Dayoub,
19 president and CEO of the Greater El Paso Chamber of
04:24:11 20 Commerce. Transportation is a key component to economic
21 development and growth for the El Paso community, the
22 State of Texas and our nation.

23 Yet, in the United States, traffic
24 congestion has tripled over the past 20 years, costing
04:24:23 25 Americans millions in lost economic output. 2.3 billion

1 gallons of fuel are estimated to be wasted annually due
2 to congestion. In 2005, carbon dioxide levels were
3 27 percent higher than ever recorded. In ten years,
4 there'll be 20 percent more cars on our roads, only
04:24:47 5 adding to the severity of our situation.

6 As a nation, as a state, Texas has to
7 improve our roadways and the manner in which we fund the
8 building of these roadways. From 1997 to 2002, spending
9 under capacity increased 41 percent, while maintenance
04:25:05 10 and services increased only 24 percent. We're seeing
11 the results across the country, bridges that are
12 collapsing and infrastructure across America that
13 really, in some cases, it narrowly misses being compared
14 to some third world countries.

04:25:25 15 This problem only increases as the federal
16 government no longer has the revenues to consider and to
17 take care of its obligations. Federal gas tax has not
18 been raised in 14 years, and the cost of materials in
19 construction have only skyrocketed. The gas tax is
04:25:43 20 still the dominant source for federal transportation
21 funding. And as we all know, Texas happens to be a
22 donor state, not a very good thing voting for, but is
23 also the fastest-growing state populationwise in
24 America.

04:25:57 25 In the last two years, the federal

1 government has rescinded nearly \$8 billion in
2 transportation money from the 50 states. Just over half
3 of Americans report that transit transportation is
4 available to them. 54 of the top 100 metros have no
04:26:15 5 rail service and have low bus volumes per capita. Of
6 the largest metros, only one in nine of them do
7 25 percent or more workers commute by transit. And by
8 the way, I might echo that Texas reflects that same --
9 as a mirror across the country. We simply are not doing
04:26:36 10 a good enough job in Texas in promoting mass transit and
11 in making dollars available for mass transit.

12 In addition, CO2 accounts for 84 percent of
13 our greenhouse gas emissions and is steadily increasing.
14 According to the Brookings Institute, in 205,
04:26:54 15 transportation accounted for one-third of all CO2
16 emissions. I don't know how much time you have to spend
17 in El Paso, but if David has not shown you yet,
18 hopefully he will, what's going on in our international
19 bridges with those trucks lined up, backed up for seven
04:27:12 20 hours a day to cross over here and bring goods and
21 service to market.

22 And the challenge with that is not only
23 that it's going to increase the cost of goods because it
24 takes longer to get them over, it's estimated that each
04:27:25 25 semi spends approximately four to six hours on the

1 bridge on any given day. But even if we get to the
2 optimum number of two to three hours of wait, that's
3 about \$100 an hour per truck. That's the cost for each
4 manufacturer that has their truck sitting on the
04:27:44 5 bridges. Somewhere down the road, we as consumers in
6 America pay that price through the cost of goods that
7 are increased as a result of that.

8 And of course, the air quality, you only
9 have to ask some of the border patrol agents who are
04:27:55 10 monitoring the bridges, and the customs agents, what
11 it's like for them and how frequently they have to take
12 breaks to simply breathe fresh air for a little while
13 before they go back on the firing line, if you will.

14 U.S. consumers drive more and consume more
04:28:10 15 oil per capita than any other nation, and result in
16 transportation being the second largest expense for most
17 American households. 19 percent.

18 Is that five minutes? Thank you.

19 For every dollar a working family saves by
04:28:24 20 moving further out from their metro area, they spend 77
21 cents more on transportation. Once a commute has
22 surpassed 12 to 15 miles, the increase in transportation
23 costs usually outweighs the savings on housing. The
24 federal government cannot, and I want to underscore
04:28:43 25 this, abdicate the responsibility they have for road

1 construction and repairs for the states. Building and
2 maintaining our transportation infrastructure to meet
3 our current needs and the increasing demands of the
4 future is a national issue, and it's going to affect our
04:29:00 5 national economy as it already is. The degradation of
6 our national infrastructure system is pervasive and
7 approaching dangerous levels and will require a firm
8 commitment from the federal government to mitigate those
9 challenges.

04:29:12 10 The government continues to rely on the
11 states to fund the transportation needs, and in Texas,
12 the financial burden outweighs our financial means. The
13 gas taxes, one of many state revenue sources that does
14 not grow with the economy. The State of Texas can no
04:29:30 15 longer financially maintain the roads that are currently
16 part of this transportation system, let alone construct
17 new roads.

18 I'm skipping through a lot of this for
19 time. You have our testimony in writing and it goes
04:29:44 20 into greater detail. A manner in which to alleviate
21 some of the financial burden is to decrease our -- our
22 -- excuse me -- stop the siphon of monies from the state
23 highway fund 6 to nontransportation efforts and direct
24 100 percent to transportation sources. Toll roads
04:30:02 25 alone, and they are important, simply cannot be the

1 future of Texas transportation.

2 If we find ourselves in that situation, as
3 more people begin to look at mass transit alternatives
4 and light-rail to get to and from work, those toll roads
04:30:19 5 will of course not generate the revenues necessary if we
6 become too dependent on them. The United States has
7 experienced a 13-percent increase in trailer trucks. I
8 talked about our bridges a little while ago. Since
9 2001, trucks are projected to carry 82 percent of new
04:30:38 10 freight by the year 2020.

11 Congestion in and around the freight
12 terminals is a major problem for short-haul traffic as
13 international bridges have seen the largest increases.
14 There is no better example of freight congestion than in
04:30:53 15 our El Paso region. The area encompasses an estimated
16 population in the entire region, over 2-and-a-half
17 million. And in addition, El Paso is the largest metro
18 area on the U.S./Mexican border, and the region
19 constitutes the largest binational metropolitan area in
04:31:09 20 the western hemisphere. There's \$152 billion in land
21 trade with Mexico. Texas surpassed other states by far.
22 In over all inspections of people, El Paso surpasses all
23 ports of entry in Texas. These companies that work here
24 on the border, the *maquiladoras*, all the manufacturers,
04:31:31 25 these companies import equipment and machinery all over

1 the United States.

2 Our state and our region must focus on
3 ingress and egress of international bridges as they
4 relate to our roads. We need to do a better job with
04:31:44 5 dealing with the freight trucks and the increase in
6 pedestrian traffic. We need immediate access to public
7 transit at the bridges.

8 Because of the time constraints, I will
9 forego any further comments that appear in my written
04:32:00 10 testimony. I would like to, again, thank you for taking
11 the time to address this critical issue. And I would
12 like to underscore what Senator Shapleigh said: What
13 you're doing is critical, but it's even more important
14 that you come forward during the next legislative
04:32:13 15 session and offer some recommended solutions. Thank you
16 for your time.

17 MR. MARCUS: Thank you, Mr. Dayoub. And I
18 assure you your -- the complete written comments will be
19 part of the record as well.

04:32:25 20 Mr. Jay Kleberg, chairman of the Borderland
21 Mobility Coalition.

22 MR. KLEBERG: As you receive -- will
23 receive more testimony and information today than you
24 probably know what to deal with, I will be concise. I
04:32:45 25 first want to thank the committee for being in El Paso

1 today, and thank the vice chair, David Marcus, for
2 bringing the group to El Paso. As the committee
3 permits, I would like to provide some comments and then
4 answer any questions that you may have. The common
04:33:01 5 theme of my statement is public/private partnerships are
6 critical to the future of transportation in this region,
7 so if you forget what I say between now and the time
8 that you speak with the commission, please remember that
9 one thing.

04:33:21 10 Simply stated, the Borderland Mobility
11 Coalition was formed by a group of El Paso business and
12 civic leaders, themselves pioneers and leaders in
13 U.S./Mexico business and trade with the sole purpose of
14 supporting, facilitating and promoting multimodal
04:33:39 15 mobility solutions in the El Paso, Juarez, southern New
16 Mexico region. In short, it is the view of the BMC that
17 mobility infrastructure equates to economic develop,
18 quality of life, and ultimately, sustainable global
19 competitiveness.

04:33:58 20 I ask the committee to think about our
21 region 30 years from now as you fly into the El Paso
22 International Airport and look out the window of the
23 aircraft. From that window, you will see the most
24 advanced, binational, tri-state mobility infrastructure
04:34:14 25 system in North America, financed and built with

1 creative public/private ventures. While vision is
2 needed, we all know that the practicalities of details
3 are necessary. How do we, as a region and state, make
4 this a reality during a time of less money and funding
04:34:35 5 from both federal and state governments? First, we
6 accept that there will be less public money and view
7 this not as an obstacle, but as an opportunity. We must
8 be smarter and faster.

9 Our first step was last week. Our region
04:34:53 10 embraced the \$1 billion plan developed for our community
11 under the dealership of our transportation commissioner,
12 Ted Houghton, supported by our local metropolitan
13 planning organization, our regional mobility authority,
14 the City of El Paso and other elected officials. But
04:35:11 15 our region must do more than just embrace this plan. As
16 a whole, we must ensure that these plans do not lay
17 idle. We must see them through to implementation.

18 This announcement is the opportunity of a
19 lifetime for our community and our region. We all must
04:35:29 20 be accountable to realize the full potential of this
21 opportunity. The mobility infrastructure we receive
22 30 years from today has a completed outer loop,
23 congruent connectivity between our region's
24 international ports of entry, numerous international
04:35:42 25 transportation corridors and additional international

1 bridges.

2 Technology is used to ensure secure origin
3 of point-to-point freight shuttles for just-in-time
4 delivery of manufactured goods and components.

04:35:57 5 Alternative fuels such as solar and wind-powered
6 electricity are used to reduce emissions and
7 environmental pollution. Congestion is an anomaly and
8 not the normal. Our region's main transportation routes
9 have additional capacity, both free and tolled. We
04:36:13 10 utilize mass transit and light-rail.

11 We have increased air freight and passenger
12 capacity at a state-of-the-art intermodal facility at
13 the El Paso International Biggs Army Airfield, along
14 with additional capacity at Santa Teresa and southern
04:36:29 15 New Mexico and Juarez international airports. The
16 region's mobility infrastructure enhances our military's
17 ability to defend our nation both at home and abroad,
18 but most importantly, it is secure. Through the advent
19 of technology, our system is protected against those
04:36:46 20 individuals engaged in illegal and criminal activity.

21 Our international mobility infrastructure
22 is the case study for public, private and international
23 financing, as seen in the rebuilding of the Bridge of
24 the Americas. The economic development and quality of
04:37:02 25 life opportunities created by our present and planned

1 international bridges and future innovations, such as
2 the universal freight shuttle system, makes our region a
3 beacon, a region so different, so unique that people say
4 that it is where I want to make my investments move to.

04:37:20 5 That is where I want to live, invest my capital, do
6 business, raise my family.

7 In order to create this vision, we must
8 understand and not be afraid to invest in our future.
9 We must go beyond forging partnerships with Washington,
04:37:36 10 D.C., Mexico City, Austin, Santa Fe and Chihuahua. We
11 must utilize pass-through tolls, use design and build
12 proposals, create transportation reinvestment zones,
13 structure public/private financing ventures, and lastly,
14 we must advocate for our share of traditional
04:37:55 15 transportation funding.

16 In closing, I'd like to acknowledge and
17 thank all those individuals who were pioneers in
18 binational trade and transportation in our region on
19 both sides of our international border. Additionally,
04:38:07 20 I'd like to thank our Texas transportation commissioner,
21 Ted Houghton; Mr. Chuck Berry, district engineer TxDOT,
22 Mr. Roy Gilliard, executive director of the El Paso MPO;
23 Harold Hahn, chair of the Camino Real Regional Mobility
24 Authority, and our elected federal, state and local
04:38:26 25 officials, notably, State Senator Eliot Shapleigh, State

1 Representative Joe Pickett, Mayor John Cook and city
2 council.

3 With the support -- without the support and
4 efforts of these individuals and others far too numerous
04:38:41 5 to name individually, none of our dreams would become
6 reality. We hold our destiny in our hands, and we ask
7 that you also support the Paso del Norte region in our
8 continuing efforts. Thanks.

9 MR. MARCUS: Thank you, Mr. Kleberg.

04:38:58 10 Mr. Harold Hahn, a good friend and chair of
11 the RMA. Do you want to speak from here?

12 MR. HAHN: Gentlemen, thank you for being
13 here. I can't tell you what a pleasure it is to be
14 fourth or fifth down the list of speakers and everything
04:39:26 15 I had written down has already been said for the most
16 part, so -- but thank you for being here.

17 I asked that this particular slide be put
18 back up. The Mayor went over the programs with you. I
19 just want to kind of tell you and recap that I could
04:39:44 20 tell you about growth in the military, and I can tell
21 you about crossborder trade, I could tell you about the
22 difficulties that we're going to experience with
23 east/west rail traffic, but that's already been
24 presented to you, so I won't waste your time and my
04:40:04 25 effort.

1 The only thing that I can say is that
2 the -- the bottom line is that we are going to have to
3 use all kinds of innovative financing techniques in
4 order to make our transportation plan work. The -- they
04:40:20 5 deny our currently serving on the board at the local
6 RMA. And all though it does provide a great amount of
7 tools, it is not a catchall and a solve-all for all of
8 our community's transportation needs; however, the Spur
9 601 is a project that was before my time, before I
04:40:44 10 joined the RMA. It is absolutely going to change the
11 way that transportation moves in our area. We have a
12 large growth in the eastern side of the city.

13 But one of the things that we must do is to
14 complete the loop around our city. The program that we
04:41:06 15 currently have in place that has been approved by the
16 local entities should go a long ways in doing that;
17 however, we all know that the financial markets are kind
18 of in chaos right now, but over a period of time I
19 believe that those will settle down and we will be able
04:41:24 20 to address those issues. The major project, as far as
21 tolls that the RMA will be involved in, will be kind of
22 the line going through the center there. It's known by
23 several different things and it's created a lot of
24 contention in this community about whether we should
04:41:45 25 have toll roads or whether we shouldn't have toll roads.

1 Many of you, I'm sure, are in areas of our
2 state that have embraced tolls and it has created
3 substantial mobility in their areas. And many of those
4 areas, as I see them, the one thing that sticks out to
04:42:03 5 me is those areas generally are booming economically.
6 And I don't know if that's universally true, but any
7 time that we have an opportunity to increase our overall
8 mobility and ability to transport people and goods and
9 services in an efficient and business-like manner and
04:42:22 10 save time, then they do come into play. But that road
11 is an extremely expensive tollway. If you go from I-10
12 on the east side of the city, basically tracking the
13 river until it comes back up into northwest El Paso,
14 that tollway is probably going to cost somewhere in the
04:42:45 15 neighborhood of three quarters of a billion dollars.

16 Now, I ask you with traditional financing
17 in the State of Texas, where in the world is Texas ever
18 going to get three quarters of a billion dollars from
19 the State and Federal Government? It's just not going
04:43:01 20 to happen, so we have the option of not increasing that
21 or we have the option of building a toll road. We --
22 we're obviously going to study that and hopefully we'll
23 be able to move forward.

24 Another innovation just like the Spur 601,
04:43:22 25 the other pass-through toll projects that we have in our

1 community are very important, and that allows us to, in
2 essence, leverage funds that we would be getting from
3 the state over a period of time. We end up with our
4 transportation assets now at today's costs rather than
04:43:40 5 building them incrementally over a period of years, and
6 there's no telling what they would cost at that point,
7 so the pass-through toll program that TxDOT has used
8 here in this community, and I'm assuming other places,
9 is very, very important.

04:43:56 10 Other than those comments, I just want to
11 say that the bottom line in my mind is this: That if we
12 have a well-planned and well-implemented transportation
13 program in our community, we're going to create a more
14 vibrant economy here in the El Paso region. A vibrant
04:44:19 15 economy creates jobs, and jobs are the key to virtually
16 everything when addressing a community's health and
17 well-being. We need tools to implement those projects
18 and the support of both the Federal and the State
19 government in order to do that. We do have some of the
04:44:36 20 tools, but we need our leaders to think outside the box
21 in solving or helping us solve our mobility issues.
22 Thank you.

23 MR. MARCUS: Harold, I see a couple of
24 other RMA members in the audience. I think Ralph
04:45:04 25 Domanance(phonetic), Scott McLaughlin, I don't know if

1 anyone is out here, but just for the record, I'm going
2 to ask the Mayor and council for a raise next week.

3 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Doubling it would be
4 good.

04:45:15 5 MR. MARCUS: Doubling it would be good.

6 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Thanks, Mayor.

7 MR. MARCUS: Kathy Neal, board member of
8 the Border Trade Alliance.

9 MS. NEAL: If it's all right, I'll speak
04:45:20 10 from here.

11 MR. MARCUS: That's fine. Thank you.

12 MS. NEAL: I don't have a PowerPoint
13 either, so -- but I do have some remarks, many of which
14 have been made, so I'm going to try and keep my remarks
04:45:30 15 as brief as possible and try not to be too repetitive.
16 Thank you very much for inviting me to testify this
17 afternoon. My name is Kathy Neal, and I am the director
18 of trade compliance at A.O. Smith in El Paso. I'm here
19 representing the Border Trade Alliance or the BTA.

04:45:47 20 The BTA started to facilitate North
21 American crossborder trade and economic development
22 through public/private partnerships that result in the
23 integration of grassroots-based solutions with sound
24 federal policies. As a leading tri-national
04:46:00 25 organization representing border trade communities, the

1 BTA works on behalf of corporations, small businesses,
2 local governmental organizations and individuals. We
3 represent a broad cross-section of critical stake
4 holders involved in crossborder economic activity
04:46:19 5 committed to promoting and improving economic and social
6 prosperity throughout the border regions of North
7 America.

8 Congestion in urban areas and along our
9 transportation corridors is not a new concern. For
04:46:32 10 decades, the efficiency of crossborder trade and
11 manufacturing has been limited by overburdened and aged
12 infrastructure, lack of optimal staffing for border
13 officials, and hours of service at land ports of entry.
14 For the past 25 years, much of the response from federal
04:46:48 15 government, and in particular by U.S. and Mexican
16 Customs to the transportation infrastructure issue, has
17 been to urge crossborder manufacturers to alter our
18 business modal. They're asking us in effect to conduct
19 crossborder shipments during periods that are more
04:47:05 20 convenient to avoid congestion at the ports,
21 irrespective if those periods conform to the demands of
22 our manufacturing processes.

23 We are finally seeing from federal agencies
24 a realization of the needs of the *maquiladoras*
04:47:21 25 acknowledging that we have to work together in order to

1 address these significant issues. The BTA has long been
2 involved in promoting solutions to the transportation
3 challenges at the ports of entry and along
4 transportation corridors in our border regions.

04:47:36 5 These transportation infrastructure issues
6 are critical to ensuring our local, state, and national
7 competitiveness in the global economy. Last year alone,
8 crossborder surface transportation moved an annual
9 record of \$797 billion worth of goods across our borders
04:47:56 10 in Canada and Mexico. In April of this year, Texas
11 ranked first among states in moving more than \$8 billion
12 in goods to Mexico via surface transportation.

13 Our state ranked sixth in surface trade
14 with Canada with over \$2 billion in goods transported
04:48:13 15 across our northern border. The need for additional
16 investment in transportation infrastructure at the state
17 and federal level for our ports of entry and
18 transportation corridors is clear when over \$10 million
19 in exports a month here in Texas depend on it. Why is
04:48:30 20 this of significance to the 2030 Committee and the need
21 to address transportation infrastructure?

22 Specifically, in your capacity in leading
23 the 2030 Committee, the BTA urges you to focus specific
24 attention toward the transportation infrastructure at or
04:48:47 25 near U.S. land border ports of entry here in Texas.

1 While the transportation infrastructure needs at each
2 Texas port of entry are specific and unique, they have a
3 significant economic impact on the state and the
4 national economy. Our ports of entry are often the
04:49:02 5 limiting factor in achieving increased transportation
6 efficiency in the U.S. border regions and throughout our
7 transportation corridors into the interior.

8 To illustrate this point, in 2006,
9 according to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics,
04:49:19 10 the El Paso port of entry was the busiest border
11 crossing in Texas with over 23.8 million commercial
12 trucks, busses, trains, private vehicles and pedestrian
13 crossings. A delay that starts in El Paso can ripple
14 throughout the transportation system causing congestion
04:49:37 15 well beyond the border. These delays not only cause the
16 inconvenience of stalled traffic, but also impact
17 multiple economic sectors involved in crossborder
18 commerce and trade, including customs brokers, carriers,
19 importers and exporters, commercial retail interests,
04:49:54 20 and just in time, manufacturers.

21 A single shipment that misses the time
22 window of arrival at the manufacturing plant in Juarez
23 can result in thousands of dollars of additional
24 expenses. These expenses include employee downtime at
04:50:06 25 the plant, possible overtime to meet deadlines,

1 expedited outbound shipments using air freight or even
2 charter flights instead of truck, and also penalties for
3 late customer shipments.

4 A 2006 study commissioned by the San Diego
04:50:25 5 Association of Governments found that the two-hour
6 truck -- two-hour per truck processing time at the San
7 Ysidro, Otay Mesa and Tecate border crossings cost San
8 Diego County \$455 million in lost annual revenue from
9 reduced freight activity. This translates into more
04:50:44 10 than 2400 jobs or \$131 million in lost labor income a
11 year. While the San Diego study focused specifically on
12 the impact of these delays in southern California, the
13 transportation infrastructure component that contributes
14 in part to these delays is not dissimilar, whether you
04:51:01 15 are in San Diego County, the El Paso/Juarez region or
16 even north in the Detroit/Windsor area.

17 While much of my testimony here today has
18 focused on the need for upgraded and improved
19 transportation infrastructure, in order to maintain the
04:51:15 20 currents levels of crossborder trade and commerce, we
21 should look ahead and anticipate the opportunities and
22 challenges down the road. In particular, as Mexico
23 develops its maritime and interior transportation
24 infrastructure, we will see additional pressure on the
04:51:29 25 land border ports on the southern border.

1 We urge this committee to consider how we
2 can seize this opportunity now in order to be
3 well-positioned to handle the anticipated increase
4 surface trader result as a result of Mexico's improved
04:51:45 5 global trade stature. This is on top of our present
6 projected growth in crossborder trade. Aged and
7 overburdened transportation infrastructure is only one
8 component in contributing to increased delays at our
9 ports of entry.

04:51:59 10 The two other elements that also contribute
11 are policies and processes that govern the use of and
12 limit the effectiveness of federal, state and local
13 investment in transportation infrastructure, and second,
14 the deployment of technology. These are key elements in
04:52:15 15 addressing the congestion in U.S. border regions and
16 throughout our trade corridors in the interior of the
17 U.S. For our part in these areas, the BTA has supported
18 and helped develop legislation by Senator
19 Hutchinson[sic] and Congressman Rodriguez to study the
04:52:31 20 scope and impact of these crossborder delays.

21 We have also strongly supported legislation
22 from both Senator Cornyn and Congressman Reyes to
23 address them of the specific port infrastructure needs,
24 facilities, technology and staffing. We continue to
04:52:45 25 meet with congress and federal agencies to discuss

1 potential solutions in these areas that also contribute
2 to the delays we continue to experience at our border
3 crossing.

4 To summarize, the BTA urges this committee
04:52:57 5 to focus on the current and future transportation
6 infrastructure needs at our land border crossings and
7 along our trade corridors, stressing the economic
8 importance of maintaining our state, regional and
9 national competitiveness in a global economy. The
04:53:13 10 Border Trade Alliance is honored to participate in this
11 hearing and it will be my pleasure to address any
12 questions that you may have. Thank you very much.

13 MR. MARCUS: Thank you, Ms. Neal.

14 I'd like to go ahead and move into the
04:53:23 15 public testimony part of our hearing today. Please
16 limit your remarks to three minutes. I think we've got
17 close to 20 people who might have signed up to speak
18 today. The first person who signed up is Representative
19 Beto O'Rourke, city council representative for District
04:53:49 20 8.

21 REPRESENTATIVE O'ROURKE: Thank you for
22 allowing me to address the committee, and I want to
23 welcome you to El Paso and welcome you to District 8,
24 city council District 8, which we're currently in. And
04:54:02 25 I want to let you know that it's not often that you hear

1 the president of the chamber of commerce echoing
2 comments of our State Senator, and so that in itself is
3 kind of a historic moment. But I think it says
4 something about where El Paso is today. We just
04:54:18 5 recently agreed unanimously as a community at the city
6 council level, at the MPO level, at the regional level
7 and also at the RMA level on a \$1 billion package of
8 mobility and transportation improvements to this region.
9 We have a very hard time agreeing on how to spend
04:54:34 10 \$50,000, much less \$1 billion, so I think that's a
11 historic moment in El Paso's history.

12 And I really like the comments that Jay
13 Kleberg gave in stressing that El Paso really
14 understands that our future and our destiny is in our
04:54:50 15 hands. The comments that Harold Hahn made about the
16 fact that we're going to deal with the cards that were
17 dealt us, and though many other Texas cities have their
18 loop built for them by the state, we're going to fund
19 that in large part through revenue that's generated here
04:55:06 20 either by tolls or through a tax increment reinvestment
21 zone.

22 I'm really proud of El Paso and proud that
23 so many of us are on the same page and are pushing
24 forward towards a common goal. Let me use my remaining
04:55:19 25 time, however, to address a more specific scope of

1 services that I would really like you, in your capacity,
2 to consider, and those are the alternate modes of
3 transportation. Those who choose to walk, those who
4 choose to ride a bicycle to where they're going to, and
04:55:34 5 those who choose to use transit. And frankly, more
6 importantly, those who have no choice but to use one of
7 those modes of transportation.

8 I represent one of the poorest urban zip
9 codes in the United States, 79901, and I know that many
04:55:45 10 of my constituents, if not the majority, are dependant
11 on one of those alternate modes of transportation. And
12 I think it's incumbent upon us, at the local and at the
13 state leadership level, to find new and creative means
14 of better funding those modes of transportation. And
04:56:01 15 it's an issue of fairness and justice for those who
16 depend on it. And I think it's also an issue of
17 economic development. I think we'll find we build
18 better neighbors and communities if we make Texas and
19 El Paso more attractive places to live if we locate,
04:56:16 20 grow families and businesses when we have neighborhoods
21 that are not car dependent.

22 We recently did a little bit of research
23 and found that 65 percent of El Pasoans live in
24 car-dependent neighborhoods. And as the price of fuel
04:56:27 25 goes up, that obviously makes it very hard to afford to

1 live in this community, especially one that is still
2 challenged by its median wages, so I ask you to consider
3 those three areas as you present your findings down the
4 road, and I look forward to reading the report. Thank
04:56:45 5 you.

6 MR. MARCUS: Thank you, Representative
7 O'Rourke.

8 The next person that signed up was Dennis
9 Melonas, on behalf of City Council Representative Rachel
04:56:56 10 Quintana from District 5.

11 MR. MELONAS: Good afternoon, Committee. I
12 submit the following thoughts from the representative.
13 I also send regards from Representative Pickett. Good
14 afternoon. Thank you for selecting El Paso as one of
04:57:20 15 the sites for the 2030 Committee. El Paso City Council
16 -- the city's council service, as you know it as the
17 mass transit port, which oversees our public transit
18 system, the Sun Metro. The city council's made
19 transportation their number one priority for El Paso.
04:57:34 20 The regional coordinated transportation plan created by
21 the 2003 Texas legislature had a vision of combining
22 into one plan all the many state and federal resources
23 that support public transit.

24 Their goal is to increase transit services
04:57:52 25 and efficiency. It is significant to note that the

1 federal transportation law did not mandate such
2 coordinated transportation planning until '05, making
3 Texas a national leader in transit solutions, now made
4 even more important by high fuel costs. In El Paso
04:58:10 5 County proper and five surrounding counties launched
6 this initiative in the fall of 2005 with about 40
7 organizations who worked diligently to submit a plan to
8 TxDOT by the due date of December 1, '06.

9 We discovered that we had 58 million in
04:58:26 10 annual public transit resources through federal and
11 state agency funds. Over 320 vehicles were being
12 operated by 17 different providers collectively
13 providing some 13 million rides a year. Prior to this
14 effort, for the most part, these entities did not
04:58:44 15 coordinate their resources, plans, trips, grade in
16 redundancies, and even worse, huge gap in mobility
17 services for many segments of our population.

18 An immediate priority is coordinating
19 planning to build a transit system adequate to meet the
04:58:58 20 Fort Bliss huge expansion coming up. Thanks to this
21 coordinated transportation effort, many improvements and
22 efficiencies in public transit have been made over the
23 last three years. TxDOT now allows shared use of their
24 alternative fuel facilities, van pool services are
04:59:13 25 offered in El Paso County, numerous transit providers

1 have been successful recently in securing new grants to
2 expand transit service throughout our region. This plan
3 enabled our region to make gains in support of TxDOT
4 goals, but we still have more work to do.

04:59:29

5 Many of our strategic actions require
6 additional research, data collection, and I stress
7 public involvement, pursuit of a variety of special
8 grants, and the inclusion of many other transit
9 providers in this regional coordinated transportation
10 partnership. I encourage this 2030 Committee to --
11 to report to include some provisions, not only to
12 institutionalize this young initiative, but to make it
13 responsive to the local community.

04:59:44

05:00:03

14 TxDOT should assist the legislature and
15 revisit the original enabling legislation for this
16 effort to consider adding provisions, making it a
17 permanent and accountable local effort by placing it as
18 a responsibility of local elected officials. Through
19 such amendments, TxDOT funding for this effort will no
20 longer be necessary as federal law currently provides
21 for the use of federal funding to continue transit
22 planning. The Texas Transportation Code could be
23 amended to make regional coordination accountable --

05:00:17

24 30 seconds, please.

05:00:34

25 MR. MARCUS: Go ahead.

1 MR. MELONAS: -- through progress reports
2 to and oversight by lo- -- elected officials. Finally,
3 it will be essential that TxDOT have oversight to the
4 state's effectiveness in realizing the goals of this
05:00:45 5 initiative, so in turn it can report regularly to the
6 legislature and the people of Texas on how the effort
7 has improved public transit service.

8 Thus, I urge the 2030 Committee to give
9 careful consideration to recommending amendments and
05:01:00 10 enhancements to the regional legislation created in '03,
11 working closely with elected officials throughout Texas
12 and setting up these amendments, infrastructure and
13 accountability as we are highly cognizant of the growing
14 demand for public use.

05:01:13 15 We believe that quality in public transit
16 is as important a transportation issue as our system of
17 roads and highways. Cooperation among elected
18 officials, local, regional coordination transportation
19 efforts and TxDOT can yield all Texans an effective
05:01:28 20 system to providing mobility services necessary for
21 daily living, as well as enhancing our local and state
22 economy and quality of life. Thank you.

23 MR. MARCUS: Thank you.

24 Next speaker is Georgia Panahi for
05:01:45 25 Representative Emma Acosta, District 3.

1 MS. PANAHI: Representative Acosta would
2 have loved to be here, but she's currently in Austin
3 right now, so I'm going to read this speech that she
4 made. I want to congratulate the Texas Governor and
05:02:05 5 Deirdre Delisi, chair of the Texas Transportation
6 Commission for forming a committee that will compile
7 information that will formulate the future
8 transportation needs of Texas and its cities.
9 Long-range planning is crucial to any community, and
05:02:18 10 especially to an entire state. I thank our Honorable
11 Mayor, John Cook; Richard Dayoub, Greater Chamber of
12 Commerce; Jay Kleberg, Border Mobility Coalition; Harold
13 Hahn, CMRRMA[sic], Kathy Neal, BTA; Mr. David Marcus,
14 Vice Chair of 2030 Committee, for their interest in the
05:02:40 15 transportation needs of the El Paso community.

16 It is crucial to community and state that
17 we take the important steps to assess Texas
18 transportation needs and find feasible and economical
19 solutions to address these needs before they become
05:02:54 20 critical needs in the future. As our great state of
21 Texas continues to prosper in business and in
22 transportation. It is imperative that we stay ahead of
23 the curb and continue to be a leader in this great
24 country.

05:03:09 25 As Texas continues to prosper, so does the

1 El Paso region. We're the largest border city in the
2 entire world with over 10 million international border
3 crossings each year. Our bridges carry over 5.3 million
4 pedestrians, 4.7 million passenger vehicles and over
05:03:28 5 320,000 commercial vehicles. These border crossings
6 utilize our existing international bridges, which in
7 turn utilize transportation infrastructure in this
8 community.

9 The need to move vehicles and people is
05:03:42 10 currently a dire need, and if the issue is not
11 addressed, then the need for connectivity from the
12 international bridges to our roads and highways will
13 become critical. In the next 20 years, the City of El
14 Paso's transportation needs will be at a critical state.
05:03:57 15 With our current demographics and proximity to Mexico
16 and New Mexico, our mobility issues must include
17 improving the international bridges' connectivity to our
18 interstate freeway system, the building of a new, larger
19 international bridge that is able to move people and
05:04:15 20 vehicles into our roads and highways smoothly and
21 effectively.

22 The El Paso region also needs a bus rapid
23 transit sy- -- sy- -- excuse me -- transit system that
24 is able to meet the needs of the local community that
05:04:28 25 includes El Paso, New Mexico and our border city,

1 Juarez, Mexico. A transit system that is able to travel
2 into Juarez, Mexico from El Paso and back, a system that
3 is able to move passengers from the bridge to various
4 parts of the El Paso community into New Mexico.

05:04:46 5 I thank the committee for allowing me, the
6 city representative from District 3, to voice these
7 important transportation needs of this community and
8 especially of this district. This district includes the
9 International Bridge of Americas, one of the most
05:05:01 10 heavily used international bridges. Yet connectivity to
11 and from our existing roads is not easily accessed and
12 pedestrians must travel a long distance to use our
13 transit system. Thank you.

14 MR. MARCUS: Thank you.

05:05:13 15 The next person that will speak will be
16 Edward Moreno, and then after him, Marcia Keller. And
17 when you get up to speak, please repeat your name and
18 then let us know who or what you're affiliated with as
19 well.

05:05:29 20 MR. MORENO: Good afternoon. My name is
21 Edward Moreno, and I'm here to provide a statement on
22 behalf of AARP in my present role as an AARP volunteer.
23 I would also like to thank the 2030 Committee of the
24 Texas Department of Transportation for the opportunity
05:05:54 25 to provide testimony.

1 I would like to begin by posing a
2 question: As we grow older, will our communities be
3 ready for us? The question -- this question is not just
4 important to AARP members, but it is an important
05:06:13 5 question for all of us, regardless of whether we live in
6 a city, a suburb, a small town or out in the country.
7 It is particularly relevant for persons of 50 and older
8 who are planning or have already entered retirement or
9 who are facing the challenges to independence and
05:06:36 10 quality of life that often accompanies ageing.

11 Yet, people seldom discuss the mobility
12 until it has become obvious that the community in which
13 they live does not meet their needs. Specifically, a
14 livable community is one that has affordable housing,
05:06:59 15 supportive community -- supportive community features
16 and services and adequate transportation resources,
17 transit system and mobility options, which together
18 facilitate a personal independence, an engagement of
19 residence in civic and social life.

05:07:24 20 In principle, AARP feels that all
21 individuals should have a range of safe, accessible,
22 dependable and affordable option that enhances mobility,
23 enables independent living, facilitates employment
24 opportunity and faltered social engagement.

05:07:47 25 Furthermore, AARP feels that all

1 communities should examine the connection between
2 transportation and land use and use those fundings to
3 coordinate transportation and land use decisions that
4 will enhance accessibility for all people. In this
05:08:07 5 regard, AARP supports the following transportation
6 planning consideration on the part of states,
7 metropolitan planning organizations and local
8 jurisdiction. Consider the effects of transportation
9 and land use decisions on the mobility of older persons
05:08:30 10 and people with disabilities. Examine the benefits of
11 public transportation, public transportation service
12 improvements before undertaking major road-building
13 projects. Investigate the benefits of making land uses
14 and increasing density around transit stops to encourage
05:08:56 15 more diverse neighborhoods and improved network
16 efficiencies. Include affordable housing requirement
17 and incentives in mix-used areas served by the -- served
18 by high level transit to ensure a diverse mix of
19 households. Focus on the safety and security of
05:09:22 20 pedestrians in the design and operation of
21 transportation facilities.

22 In support of this, it is worth noting that
23 according to a 2007 report on pedestrian fatality
24 produced by WalkWell Texas, a project funded by the
05:09:39 25 Texas Department of Transportation and jointly released

1 with AARP, between 2002 and 2005 the overall pedestrian
2 fatality rating in Texas was 2.0 per 100,000 population,
3 exceeding the national average of 1.7 livable 100,000
4 population.

05:10:03 5 MR. MARCUS: Mr. Moreno, excuse me, do you
6 need a lot more time? You've gone over your
7 three minutes.

8 MR. MORENO: No. No, I'm pretty close.

9 MR. MARCUS: Okay.

05:10:11 10 MR. MORENO: Among Texans age 55 and older,
11 the pedestrian fatality -- the fatality rate was 2.7 per
12 100,000, a rate 35 percent higher than the already
13 elevated state rate of pedestrian fatality.

14 Furthermore, within Texas, El Paso County has led the
05:10:37 15 seventh largest metropolitan county with more than
16 500,000 in population with a ratio of 4.58 to 100,000.

17 Actively promote public participation by
18 consumers, including older people, in transportation
19 planning decisions, such as public transportation,
05:10:59 20 highway and road siding and design, transportation
21 demand management, activity and investment and
22 deployment of intelligent transportation system.

23 Finally, AARP respectfully recommends that
24 TxDOT and the 2030 Committee consider complete streaks,
05:11:19 25 policies and provision in their prioritization designed

1 and developed in order to assure for safe accommodations
2 for all users of streets, roads and thoroughfares, both
3 retroactively and looking forward. Thank you.

4 MR. MARCUS: Thank you, sir.

05:11:39 5 Ms. Marcia Keller. While Ms. Keller walks
6 to the mike, also the next person to speak will be
7 Martha Saucedo, if you want to position yourself near a
8 microphone.

9 MS. KELLER: My name is Marcie Keller.

05:12:09 10 Thank you for allowing me to speak and thank you-all for
11 being here. We cannot solve the problem for 2030 until
12 we solve the problems now. I will be brief. Let's get
13 down to the brass tacks here, people. Cabs, I heard in
14 February, with my own ears, that there is a company who
05:12:29 15 used to, I hope allegedly, charge northeast passengers a
16 14-percent service charge for cab companies -- for cab
17 fares because we live too far away from the cab company.
18 There is no northeast cab company. I am sure they have
19 remedied that. Mass transit, somebody wrote an article
05:12:55 20 in the paper that explains why we have trouble, and it's
21 an issue in El Paso. And I see people on busses, on
22 mass transit busses, who hang on to rails, who do not
23 give up their seats for senior citizens and the
24 disabled. They aren't required to, but I think
05:13:22 25 it's only out of kindness that they do.

1 Also, I see the busses overloaded. There
2 are no seat belts, and I hope that this can be remedied
3 as soon as possible because someone is going to get hurt
4 or killed if it is not. Metro LIFT, I've always loved
05:13:45 5 Metro LIFT, and I speak very kindly of it. I
6 congratulate it for using natural gas. It employs clean
7 air for our community. They are going to raise their
8 fares for people whose income is probably about 500
9 bucks a month and maybe a little bit more. We just had
05:14:10 10 a fare increase and they're going to raise them again,
11 and they've already cut back on services. And they --
12 they -- they want to raise our fares because of rising
13 fuel costs and I'm not so sure we understand that, but
14 we got to consider our community here. And I have an
05:14:32 15 issue with a grocery cart. I have a large grocery cart,
16 and I try to expedite my trips by going two or three
17 months to the grocery store, to Wal-Mart, to help
18 Wal-Mart with their -- with their carts, it's helping
19 me, also to allow more people to ride the LIFT.

05:14:55 20 I have been told that I cannot use this
21 cart. I was given permission three years ago to use it,
22 but I am told that I cannot and I do not know why,
23 nothing has happened. And we got to solve these
24 problems now before we talk about 2030. Thank you.

05:15:17 25 MR. MARCUS: Thank you. After Ms. Saucedo

1 speaks, Terry Minjares, so if you want to make your way
2 to the microphone.

3 Go ahead. Ms. Saucedo, go ahead.

4 MS. SAUCEDO: Yes. Thank you. I would
05:15:32 5 like to -- I think that the time allowed is very short,
6 but I would like to read my comments. I'm going to talk
7 about how the uses of the metro systems work -- we were
8 dealing with. Thanks God that because Fort Bliss is
9 coming and more projects are coming. We hope that the
05:16:00 10 -- the uses of this service -- we hope that the services
11 are going to be improved.

12 I've been on these crusades for more than
13 ten years, and I ask God to please help me to go again
14 of what is going to be done on this matter, but the
05:16:21 15 people of El Paso that aren't in the same condition that
16 the San Diego and San Ysidro bridge in San Diego,
17 California. We are in a same geographic -- hold it,
18 please, I just started -- and we are in the same
19 geographic situation, but through the years, El Paso has
05:16:44 20 been behind, no prosperity, no advancement. Why?
21 Because we don't have proper transportation.

22 People who go to work to go to -- can be a
23 people -- handicap people are the ones who are suffering
24 more because we don't have enough busses to help us.
05:17:04 25 From -- we receive 35 busses back in last year and those

1 busses -- these busses didn't even help us because they
2 were taking the place of the trolleys and the busses
3 that were beyond repair, so we only gain 20 busses, but
4 literally they were delivered in this year. They
05:17:28 5 promised to bring 45 busses in November. They changed
6 their mind, so they say that it's not going to be
7 delivered until January.

8 So I want to ask that you in the panel that
9 to please review all the signatures that were given to
05:17:49 10 Mr. Cook on 206 and another 800,000 signatures from the
11 users of El Paso that aren't representing the -- the
12 federal protest situation in El Paso. Lately on the
13 busses -- ride the bus, but how do the people is going
14 to ride the busses? They break down, they don't replace
05:18:11 15 them. A lot of people would like to use the buses. The
16 problem being that the busses are not reliable.

17 Now with the cost of gasoline, more users
18 would like to use the busses, but there is not enough
19 busses. The roads have been shortened, the times have
05:18:26 20 been shortened, and people doesn't get anywhere. There
21 is no -- no jobs, and the people losing the jobs because
22 they can't rely on the busses.

23 So please -- I'm so happy for the first
24 time in ten years that I'm able to talk to a panel of
05:18:42 25 you from the DOT department, and I would like to write

1 my comments because I don't have enough time right now,
2 but you're supposed to hear about what the users of
3 El Paso that have been representing for more than ten
4 years are talking about.

05:18:59 5 But I don't have an address where to send
6 my comments and -- and the comments of the users of El
7 Paso -- from Ciudad Juarez and El Paso. The people who
8 come from Ciudad Juarez are the one -- and Mexico are
9 the one -- the main income in the City of El Paso, but
05:19:18 10 they are having a terrible time to be transported until
11 lately they allow busses from -- from Ciudad Juarez to
12 come to El Paso to -- to help the people who are to --
13 to Juarez with whatever they bought.

14 So I'm glad that Mr. Rivera from the Times
05:19:34 15 is here, and I'm asking the media that -- the television
16 agents are not here, but we noticed that they don't give
17 coverage to us when we complain to -- for everything
18 that is -- we are going through in hot weather, cold
19 weather, rain and the whole thing.

05:19:54 20 MR. MARCUS: Mrs. --

21 MS. SAUCEDO: We won't complain, but we
22 need the service to be improved.

23 MR. MARCUS: Are you going to need anymore
24 time?

05:20:01 25 MS. SAUCEDO: Only one -- one more time.

1 This company that is taking the first transit is called,
2 I requested that the contract will not be renewed
3 because they have not lived to our expectations.
4 Nothing was done. They continued in the contract, but
05:20:20 5 we are not -- the service is the same than ten years
6 ago.

7 So the people of El Paso deserve better.
8 I'm asking you, please, you have the power to inquire
9 about this. I can prove it, there is signatures, more
05:20:40 10 than 15 signatures are responding my -- my -- my claim.
11 There is a lot of us that are unable to speak today, but
12 what I want to say, we want the City of El Paso to
13 improve, better jobs, better opportunities, but without
14 the proper transportation, this is not going to be able
05:20:59 15 to -- to become a true reality.

16 MR. MARCUS: Thank you.

17 MS. SAUCEDO: You're welcome.

18 MR. MARCUS: Before we go any further, let
19 me remind everybody to please give us your name and who
05:21:09 20 you're affiliated with. And when you see the stop sign,
21 please cut your remarks as short as possible, otherwise
22 we're all going to be here till midnight.

23 Terry Minjares, and then after Terry will
24 be James King Perry.

05:21:24 25 MR. PERRY: Yes.

1 MR. MARCUS: Okay.

2 MS. MINJARES: Hi. My name is Terry
3 Minjares, and I'm speaking on behalf of my uncle, Jesus
4 Ramirez, who couldn't be here right now because he's
05:21:32 5 working. So just to give you some background, he lives
6 in central El Paso, commutes to work and -- on the east
7 side of El Paso and also visits family in northeast.
8 And I wanted to get his input.

9 He rides mass transit more than I do and he
05:21:50 10 depends on it more than I do. Some of his comments
11 overall, he's been riding Sun Metro for more than
12 two years, and he says that overall the service is very
13 reliable, except that he's been noticing that more of
14 the busses have been breaking down as was -- as were
05:22:09 15 mentioned before. So his suggestions were that -- to
16 invest -- to keep investing in a new bus fleet. Not
17 only will that help with reliability, but that, as
18 mentioned before, will also increase ridership, which
19 is -- seems to be the issues here as far as mass
05:22:31 20 transit, reducing vehicles, also which was mentioned
21 with transportation of goods.

22 Another thing that he mentioned was that
23 the shelters that are currently in place, he was very
24 impressed that they are kept clean, and that's one thing
05:22:49 25 that he really appreciates that that can be -- if that

1 can be continued. Another thing on a side note is that
2 he was really saddened that he couldn't be here because
3 the meeting did start at 4:00 and it's scheduled to end
4 at 6:00.

05:23:03 5 So with that being said, somebody mentioned
6 public involvement. One of the suggestions was to make
7 these meetings, if they're going to be continuous
8 meetings, at a time when people are out of work, and you
9 might be able to have more public input. Thank you.

05:23:19 10 MR. MARCUS: Thank you. Mr. King Perry,
11 after Mr. King Perry, David Cortez will be next.

12 MR. PERRY: Yeah, my name is James Perry.
13 I have El Paso charter busses. I had a Greyhound bus
14 station in Austin, Texas for about 20 years. The bottom
05:23:41 15 line is, we need a train that runs from El Paso to Fort
16 Worth and Dallas. The current Amtrak train runs through
17 here, goes to San Antonio. They don't stop and pick
18 anybody up.

19 You're looking for money for toll roads and
05:23:56 20 different things to support a train, we can buy -- Texas
21 can buy its own train and run it from here to Dallas and
22 Fort Worth. You want some money? Go back to Austin and
23 get some of that surcharge money. All this surcharge
24 money has gone to the MHMR. The MHMR people are out on
05:24:20 25 the streets, they're not in the hospitals. There is

1 30,000 people in Austin, plus 20,000 in Houston, plus
2 25,000 in San Antonio, and there's 41,000 people in El
3 Paso driving with no driver's license paying surcharge.

4 There's millions of cars that come across
05:24:39 5 the border every day from Juarez, Nuevo Laredo,
6 Matamoros with no inspection stickers and no insurance.
7 That's where your money's at. And we need you -- if we
8 get stopped, the Texas Department of Transportation
9 pretty well regulates our driving. We have to have
05:24:59 10 stickers. If you get stopped in El Paso and you don't
11 have a sticker, you're going to get a ticket or you're
12 going to go to jail, so there's a lot of revenue in
13 Mexico that you're not getting.

14 When these people come across the border,
05:25:15 15 they should have -- be able to -- have to show a Texas
16 highway patrol that they have insurance. So that's
17 where the money's at, then we can build a train. Thank
18 you.

19 MR. MARCUS: Thank you, sir. Mr. Cortez.

05:25:33 20 MR. CORTEZ: Thanks, Mr. Marcus.

21 Dave Cortez. I'm an organizer here in El
22 Paso. I'd like to speak on behalf of our younger
23 population and our low income population whom I help
24 organize. I would also like to thank you guys for
05:25:45 25 coming here, and also to express publically my

1 discontent with many of the elected officials and RMA
2 officials who are leaving before public testimony was
3 heard. I think these people have a lot of good things
4 to say that needs to be heard.

05:25:57 5 First and foremost, the fundamental
6 question from what you guys are researching and doing
7 is, how can you build yourself out of traffic
8 congestion? Can that happen or can it not? Senator
9 Shapleigh said a little while ago that our
05:26:12 10 constituencies are going to be asking and demanding in
11 the future for alternative transportation. What I'm
12 saying today is that we already are asking for that.
13 Low income folks, as you've heard already, are asking
14 for more mass transit.

05:26:30 15 Thirdly, we need -- because I personally
16 believe it's not possible to build our way out of
17 congestion, we need to work to reduce the numbers of
18 automobiles that are on our roadways and not to
19 accommodate them. We need to incorporate all the
05:26:47 20 proposals that have been made today for bicycles and
21 pedestrian use.

22 Fourthly, one of your big facets or
23 proposals has been toll roads. I'm not sure if you're
24 aware that here in El Paso County we're already being
05:27:02 25 taxed and overtaxed immensely from public utilities to

1 property taxes. Consider the feasibility of using toll
2 roads and how many people might be willing to pay for
3 toll roads in the future in this area. I'll keep this
4 short.

05:27:18 5 Lastly, I ask, please research the use of
6 federal money that's been set aside for road
7 construction, how we can use that to prepare our roads
8 and prepare areas for laying down rail. I know you
9 can't use it for rail, but please do the research for
05:27:38 10 it. Areas like Austin, Texas; Phoenix, Arizona;
11 Portland, Oregon, they have been doing things like that.
12 In Phoenix, for example, they have prepared the medians
13 to lay down rail using road money.

14 The last aspect I have is that you please
05:27:52 15 advocate the use of readily available alternative fuel,
16 such as biodiesel and vegetable oil for Texas Department
17 of Transportation vehicles, busses, et cetera. Thank
18 you.

19 MR. MARCUS: Thank you, Mr. Cortez. The
05:28:06 20 next speaker is Frank Lozano. And after Mr. Lozano will
21 be Lisa Turner.

22 MR. LOZANO: Good afternoon, members of the
23 TxDOT committee, and thank you for this chance to speak
24 to the committee. I -- my name is Frank Lozano. I'm a
05:28:56 25 member of Adapt and I'm a -- well, I'm a nondriver, as

1 I'm sure you realized. One huge, huge gap in El Paso,
2 from my perspective, is accessible passways for
3 pedestrian traffic, and El Paso has just entered into a
4 transition plan that's looking great.

05:29:30 5 We're very happy about this new initiative
6 to comply to -- to the Americans with Disabilities Act.
7 And as far as TxDOT's side is concerned, if you try to
8 walk along the -- any of the gateways in El Paso, as
9 well as the -- as well as Montana, Mesa, Dyer, Alameda,
05:30:03 10 Paisano, it's -- it's a dangerous place to go, not just
11 for the blind, for anyone that's there all the time.
12 The great need for -- for accessible passways, that --
13 that's what I would like to see happen in El Paso, more
14 transition for accessible passways.

05:30:31 15 And Sun Metro here in town is recovering
16 from a meltdown. They are responding to the people's
17 needs of many, many people who are dependent on public
18 transportation. Today, the only piece that I have
19 problems with about Sun Metro's management is the -- the
05:30:57 20 downtown terminal. While our -- our terminal at the San
21 Jacinto Plaza was constructed with federal dollars, 82,
22 if I'm not mistaken, 80 percent. It's abandoned right
23 now, seats at the placita on Texas Street, Oregon and
24 the satellite facility, while people are stepping over
05:31:31 25 each other around the library.

1 Intermodal, our connections between
2 different modes of transportation is very important, not
3 just for the elderly, but people with wheelchairs,
4 walkers, women with baby carriages shouldn't be forced
05:31:58 5 into moving traffic, and I think TxDOT can do something
6 about that. I hope you consider the nondriver
7 population in El Paso. *Gracias*.

8 MR. MARCUS: Thank you, sir. Lisa Turner,
9 after Lisa, Richard Teschner will be up.

05:32:21 10 MS. TURNER: Thank you, gentlemen, for
11 allowing me to speak. The population numbers that you
12 saw from our Mayor John, he forgot Las Cruces, Santa
13 Teresa, Sunland Park, Chaparral, these are all cities
14 that are important and just sit right on the border with
05:32:46 15 El Paso. We're going to have to rethink the way we do
16 business. Throwing concrete down, more asphalt, more
17 bridges, they are not going to move the people in 2030.
18 You do this, in 2030 you will create the largest parking
19 lot that this country has ever seen. We will be walking
05:33:12 20 back and forth over cars and trucks to get where we're
21 going.

22 We need to put the old ideals of the '30s
23 and '50s down and come up with something suitable to
24 the 21st century. You need, as a committee, to take a
05:33:30 25 trip to Bentonville, Arkansas to look at Wal-Mart's

1 distribution center. Look how they move product.
2 Moving a case of vegetable oil is not different than
3 moving a person. I should be able to walk out of my
4 apartment complex, step into a car, say or enter where I
05:33:56 5 want to go, sit down and not worry about it until I get
6 there.

7 Well, how do you do that? Well, you go to
8 Bentonville, Arkansas and you ask people, How do you
9 move this product through without human intervention?
05:34:11 10 You go to your airports and ask, Well, how do you move
11 your baggage? How do you get people from terminal A at
12 one end of the airport all the way over here to terminal
13 F, 3 miles away, without human intervention? How do you
14 do that? You need to get the old ways. What you need
05:34:31 15 to do is get a highway engineer, a roller coaster
16 engineer -- who else did I have down here? -- and
17 somebody who does distribution centers, and let them
18 develop a new transportation system.

19 Forget about the busses as it is. An
05:34:54 20 article in this morning's Houston Chronicle told how a
21 woman had to take several busses in Houston, plus cross
22 a freeway to get to one of those busses to get to work,
23 and then she would have to repeat that in the evening.
24 It took her two hours each way, four hours round trip,
05:35:16 25 but if she drove a car it would take her ten minutes.

1 Extremely inefficient to move people by busses. That's
2 just about it except unless you want a suggestion on how
3 to unclog the bridges. I have two of them. Thank you.

4 MR. MARCUS: Thank you. Is Richard
05:35:43 5 Teschner here? Did he leave? Does anybody see Richard?

6 Okay. Marta Maldonado, and then I have a
7 Martha Maldonado right after that.

8 MS. MARTA MALDONADO: Good afternoon,
9 gentlemen. I am a user of Sun Metro. Two years ago, I
05:36:39 10 gathered about 5,000 signatures relating to poor service
11 of the transit system. Up to today -- currently,
12 there's nothing -- there has nothing been done about it.
13 Apparently everything is fine. And they eliminated
14 routes and they only have one bus per route and these
05:37:19 15 are 18 routes. We still have a problem of poor service.

16 I have this package for you so that you can
17 review and analyze some schedules so that you can
18 compare how we have been affected -- effected. The
19 problem still is ongoing out there. This company that
05:38:03 20 came, they congratulate themselves and they award
21 themselves for a good service, but I, as a 38 -- as a
22 user for 38 years, can tell you that has not improved at
23 all. If you accept this package, I have it for you, so
24 that you review it along with the amendments that have
05:38:56 25 forbidden us to be in the plaza and the terrible

1 discrimination we go through. This study -- this
2 research was done by the City.

3 Now they want to increase the fare, and if
4 we don't pay it, they -- they are thinking about closing
05:39:32 5 routes. I think they have taken away enough routes for
6 this to happen again. Thank you, gentlemen. Thank you
7 for listening to me as a user. Sorry for the bag.

8 MR. MARCUS: *Gracias, Señora* Maldonado.
9 Mary Frances Keisling, and then Joseph Marcus.

05:40:14 10 MS. KEISLING: Good afternoon. My name is
11 Mary Frances Keisling. I'm president of the Save the
12 Valley Neighborhood Civic Association. And as I've been
13 listening today, I've been amazed by the projected
14 things that have been discussed. And what we really are
05:40:34 15 concerned about is the condition of Artcraft Road right
16 now.

17 Mr. Marcus, the map that you had, the
18 El Paso regional mobility plan map, shows Artcraft. Are
19 these gentlemen familiar with where it is?

05:40:46 20 MR. MARCUS: No, they're not.

21 MS. KEISLING: Well, it is the road which
22 was constructed when the port at Santa Teresa, New
23 Mexico was opened to bring traffic from the port through
24 the valley to -- through New Mexico, through Texas and
05:41:00 25 to Interstate 10. We have serious needs, which should

1 be addressed immediately in order to make Artcraft more
2 accessible, user-friendly and safer for everyone coming
3 from Mexico, New Mexico and Texas. The issues are there
4 are no right turns from the two roads which enter
05:41:19 5 Artcraft from Texas. There are no right turns from West
6 Side Drive and Upper Valley Road onto Artcraft.

7 Number two, there is no dedicated onramp
8 from Artcraft onto Interstate 10, only one right-turn
9 lane onto the access road going south. Traffic is
05:41:37 10 backing up. There's a gas station there. We need to do
11 something about that.

12 When exiting Interstate 10 from the north
13 and heading west, there is no right-turn lane. The
14 solutions are add right-turn lanes from West Side Drive
05:41:53 15 and Upper Valley Road, both from the north and the
16 south. Build a two-lane dedicated onramp from Artcraft
17 onto Interstate 10 going south, and add a right-turn
18 lane onto the Artcraft exit, which goes to the west from
19 Interstate 10. Thank you for considering these, and I
05:42:12 20 hope that these can be implemented soon.

21 MR. MARCUS: Thank you.

22 MS. KEISLING: Thank you.

23 MR. MARCUS: Before Joseph begins, I have
24 to make a point here. We're related, and I think people
05:42:23 25 should know that. And after he's through speaking, Bob

1 Geyer is next. Go ahead.

2 MR. JOSEPH MARCUS: All right. Thank you,
3 Mr. Marcus.

4 I'm going to keep this short for the sake
05:42:35 5 of dinner. But basically, what I just wanted to say is
6 you've heard a lot of things, a lot of local issues
7 about the specific streets and specific areas you may
8 not really be aware of. And really, what I just want to
9 mention is that you are in El Paso, the pass. This city
05:42:51 10 is here and this city is growing because this city is
11 useful. It's here because of its geography. It was the
12 pass to the north, and then it was the -- the only pass
13 to the west.

14 And the reason that there's investment here
05:43:04 15 and that you've heard all these statistics about how
16 many tens of billions of dollars are being spent here is
17 because all of these corporations, all of these
18 national, multinational companies are dealing with
19 increased globalization. El Paso is, you know, the
05:43:17 20 foundation. It's one of the most basic and dominant
21 blocks in any ledger of any company from any, you
22 know -- Texas, even Canada, all across the world.

23 And so, you know, despite the fact that we
24 do feel being up here in the mountain time zone a little
05:43:33 25 neglected, this city is important. Anything that you do

1 to increase mobility here, anything you do to get, you
2 know, elevated walkways over the streets so that cars
3 can flow, anything you can do to increase transportation
4 here, as unglamorous and as, you know, far away as we
05:43:50 5 may be, it makes its market in the impact and just
6 everything across the city.

7 You know, for Houston, Dallas, no,
8 nothing's coming in really prepared, nothing's coming
9 from Brownsville, nothing's coming from Laredo. This is
05:44:04 10 where it's going. You know, if you want to ship
11 anything on I-10, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Houston, you
12 know, New Orleans, Miami, anything, this is where it
13 comes through. And so although some of what you've
14 heard may not apply to you, Artcraft Road may not really
05:44:17 15 drop anything -- you know, it may not draw any
16 memories up, you may not have any memories of Artcraft
17 Road, but anything that you to do increase mobility is a
18 specific and measurable increase in your own city's
19 progress. And that's just what I want to say.

05:44:34 20 MR. MARCUS: Thank you. Mr. Geyer.

21 MR. GEYER: Okay. You could make these
22 microphones more accessible. My name's Bob Geyer. I'm
23 the transportation manager for El Paso County. One of
24 the things that I think a lot of people at TxDOT don't
05:45:02 25 know, and you-all may not know either, we all fund rural

1 transportation, probably the stepchild of TxDOT. The
2 funding since 2000 that TxDOT has given to rural
3 transportation across Texas has risen 2 percent
4 since -- that's eight years.

05:45:19 5 The minimum wage of -- across the board has
6 risen 27 percent during that same time. And fuel, as
7 you all know, has risen at least 185 percent, so it's
8 kind of tough to provide transportation in rural areas
9 with that small of a funding base. El Paso County we
05:45:40 10 see is approximately \$487,000 a year to operate our
11 county transit system. We serve cities, small cities
12 outside of the city limits, Anthony, Horizon City, way
13 out at Montana Vista, and we serve all the way to
14 Tornillo, Fabens, Socorro, Clint and San Elizario.

05:46:02 15 The city of Tornillo is 40 miles from
16 downtown El Paso, and so with the money that we have,
17 we're only able to provide that rural service two to
18 three trips in the morning on each route and two to
19 three trips in the afternoon. We have no service during
05:46:19 20 the middle of the day because that's all the money that
21 we have, so I would encourage you all to, you know, look
22 at encouraging TxDOT to contribute more money to rural
23 transportation.

24 This -- basically what it is, it's any
05:46:33 25 service outside of the city limits of El Paso. El Paso

1 has a mass transit board, but it is like the city of
2 Laredo. We are created under 1118Z back in 1988. That
3 means we're a city transit department with taxing
4 authority, unlike all the transit authorities who cross
05:46:55 5 the state and major cities, Houston, San Antonio, Austin
6 and Corpus, Fort Worth -- I think I'm missing one, but
7 anyway -- they are county -- larger than any county,
8 sometimes regional. That's actually what we need here,
9 and I wish Mayor Cook was here. I've been pushing him
05:47:14 10 for years and county officials, but -- and city
11 officials.

12 There is legislation on the book, and,
13 Mr. Marcus, you're on the RMA. You all can take over
14 the transit system too. I'm sure if you're not aware of
05:47:27 15 that -- I think you probably are. I wish Mr. Hahn was
16 here, but I really think you all need to look at not
17 just highways and toll roads here, but taking and making
18 yourselves the entity for the -- a regional transit
19 authority, which would encompass all of El Paso County.
05:47:44 20 There would be more of a seamless system.

21 Right now it's real difficult for people
22 outside the city limits to access transportation and
23 then coordinate the routes, so that would be a real
24 important thing for El Paso to catch up with the rest of
05:48:00 25 the state and that area, a regional county-wide

1 authority. And, you know, once again, we're getting
2 shortchanged here, us and Laredo on the border don't
3 have what the major cities have. Thank you.

4 MR. MARCUS: Thank you, sir. Lois Balin.
05:48:22 5 After Lois is Jesus Contreras.

6 MS. BALIN: Hi. My name is Lois Balin and
7 I'm the urban wildlife biologist for Texas Parks &
8 Wildlife, and I'm just thrilled that we're on your plan
9 for public hearings for the 2030. I can guarantee you
05:48:46 10 that I'm not going to be redundant. I'm here to
11 approach the new system in a little bit different angle.
12 It's become really clear to the council of El Paso and
13 the Mayor and the residents that quality of life has
14 become a priority, the important issue here being
05:49:06 15 El Paso. And the City of El Paso has developed a plan
16 for El Paso that accommodates that thought. There's an
17 open space plan, there's arroyo protection, arroyo
18 ordinances, plans to promote conservation development,
19 et cetera.

05:49:25 20 And what does this have to do with TxDOT?
21 Well, I would just like to see El Paso get -- we're
22 ready to join the other ecologically sensitive cities in
23 Texas. We have bats here. We have Mexican free-tail
24 bats here, and I would like to see in all the new
05:49:47 25 construction of bridges, especially over the Rio Grande

1 and anything over a large arroyo, I'd like to see
2 bat-friendly bridges. Bats have a bad reputation here,
3 but it's an unjustified one. They carry less than
4 one-tenth of 1 percent rabies. You only hear about the
05:50:03 5 ones that have rabies.

6 In addition to the bat-friendly bridges, I
7 would really like TxDOT to consider natural
8 right-of-ways large enough to protect the grassland
9 desert birds, especially the burrowing owls. Both these
05:50:18 10 bats and burrowing owls eat tremendous amounts of
11 insects. And we talk about quality of life, well, these
12 birds controlling insects control other plant and
13 wildlife populations which influence the vegetation and
14 the soil and the water and so forth. It's all
05:50:35 15 connected. TxDOT's done a wonderful job in other
16 cities. And also, we're considering making a lot of
17 pedestrian crossings, which is absolutely wonderful.
18 I'd also like TxDOT to consider wildlife-friendly
19 crossings in any areas of open space and natural habitat
05:50:55 20 to allow for the safe passage of our wildlife,
21 especially deer.

22 And, let's see, that's about all I have. I
23 just wanted to say I think all the other issues are
24 really important too. I just would like for El Paso to
05:51:14 25 catch up to the rest of the world in being ecologically

1 sensitive and to consider the region, the health of the
2 region, the health of the environment, and health of the
3 people when planning because now's the time to do that
4 in the early stages. Thank you.

05:51:32 5 MR. MARCUS: Thank you.

6 Mr. Contreras.

7 MR. CONTRERAS: Yes. Gentlemen, welcome to
8 El Paso, and I hope you have a good time. You've heard
9 everybody talk. You know, it's -- for all reasons there
05:51:49 10 is much-needed help from Austin that we need here. The
11 people of El Paso have always had a good agenda, going
12 into growing, you know, jobwise and so on,
13 transportation growth and everything.

14 The fact is this: We, the people of
05:52:07 15 El Paso, have an agenda, but yet the government has an
16 agenda of its own. They don't listen to us. We got
17 people going up to city hall every day. We're always
18 talking about growing and doing things better, and we
19 can't even communicate with Austin or with any other
05:52:27 20 city. All the cities around town have their own
21 agendas.

22 If we combine to get everything together --
23 the security right now in the United States is the most
24 important thing, and we haven't been able to talk on
05:52:40 25 good terms with the director of homeland security. In

1 other words, we can build a road all the way across
2 Texas with the federal government and so on and the wall
3 would have been built. There's no communications
4 whatsoever anymore, any aspect of government with the
05:52:57 5 people. We have a bunch of problems: Drugs,
6 unemployment, the economy, gas, and we're fighting for
7 all of them.

8 It's time our government starts putting its
9 hats on, in other words, and -- you know, so many of you
05:53:16 10 guys come to listen to us, come November, you might not
11 make it back to your -- you know, to your decisions and
12 we get cut off right away, in other words, because we
13 don't know who to go to.

14 It's the same case scenario. I've been
05:53:31 15 here since 1955. I crossed the river when I was -- in
16 1955. I was nine years old. I have served my country,
17 and I've done what I have to. The fact is this: I
18 think we need to come together as a nation and we need
19 your help. You're the guys that are leading, so lead.
05:53:55 20 Thank you.

21 MR. MARCUS: Thank you. That was the last
22 signed-up speaker that I have. Is there anyone else
23 that I missed in the room that still wants to say
24 something? If not, let me -- let me thank everybody
05:54:16 25 here who took time to testify today. And if you would

1 still like to address this committee and have your
2 remarks entered into the record, you may do so by
3 e-mailing your comments to
4 2030committee@dot.state.tx.us.

05:54:33

5 And in case any of you are interested, our
6 next public hearings are scheduled for next Thursday,
7 August 14th, in Houston, August 21st in Dallas,
8 September 4th in Corpus Christi, and we have a tentative
9 hearing date that has been set for Amarillo on

05:54:50

10 September 18th. Thank you very much. This hearing's
11 adjourned.

12 (Hearing adjourned at 5:54 p.m.)

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

CERTIFICATE

State of Texas)
)
County of El Paso)

I, Teresita Fonseca, a Certified Shorthand
Reporter in and for the State of Texas, do hereby
certify that this transcript is a true record of the
testimony given in said proceedings, and that said
transcription is done to the best of my ability.

Given under my hand and seal of office on
this _____ day of _____, 2008.

Teresita Fonseca, CSR, Texas #8288
Expiration Date: 12/31/09
Firm Registration #384
300 E. Main, Suite 1024
El Paso, Texas 79901
(915) 533-1199