

**From:** [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)  
**To:** [Cecelia Hartley](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)  
**Date:** Wednesday, December 14, 2016 5:11:16 PM  
**Importance:** High

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-----Original Message-----

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]  
Sent: Wednesday, December 14, 2016 4:57 PM  
To: Sunset Advisory Commission  
Subject: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Agency: TEXAS DEPARTMENT TRANSPORTATION TXDOT

First Name: Steve

Last Name: Adler

Title: Mayor

Organization you are affiliated with: City of Austin

Email: [steve.adler@austintexas.gov](mailto:steve.adler@austintexas.gov)

City: Austin

State: Texas

Your Comments About the Staff Report, Including Recommendations Supported or Opposed:

I write to urge the Sunset Advisory Commission's concurrence with Commission staff's recommendation to continue the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), and to further suggest the Commission consider specific recommendations related to the integration of new technologies into future TxDOT planning and projects. Texas' continued economic prosperity is dependent on the quality and capacity of our transportation infrastructure. Residents and industry in Austin and throughout our great state cannot continue to thrive without continued investment in our transportation network.

As Mayor of one of the fastest growing regions in the country, I cannot imagine our region continuing its rapid development without our strong partnerships with TxDOT. This November, Austin voters approved our largest ever transportation bond package (\$720 Million), and one of the key factors in securing its passage was the prospect of using our local funding to partner with TxDOT for critical investments in our regional highways. Just this week, the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) approved proposed amendments to the State's Unified Transportation Plan which, if approved by the Texas Transportation Commission early next year, would combine our local bond dollars with TxDOT funds to complete badly needed improvements to address congestion on State Loop 360. Our local community is eager to develop additional beneficial partnerships with TxDOT in the years to come, especially on IH-35, our most congested road, and one of the biggest headaches in Texas.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency:

Further, I encourage the Commission to consider recommendations related to the impact of emerging technologies on the design, construction and operation of our state highways. Austin is the Kitty Hawk of autonomous vehicles. Recently, WayMo, the spin-off of Google's driverless car effort, revealed that Austin was the site of the world's first

known driverless vehicle trip. New transportation technologies now being tested must be considered for integration across the entire transportation system, from highways down to our local streets.

Other states already recognize the immense potential impact of automated and connected vehicles upon jobs and economic development. Michigan and Florida have aggressively pursued sophisticated testing sites that are supported by USDOT funds and by the private sector. In the last week alone, Ohio Governor Kasich announced a \$15 million investment by ODOT (in partnership with the autonomous truck company Otto) in a smart mobility corridor, and Las Vegas, Nevada, became the first city to connect its traffic signal network to private vehicles (in partnership with Audi). States that successfully attract the private sector to this new and growing industry will undoubtedly reap tremendous economic benefits, while solving transportation challenges.

There is a need for TxDOT to continue planning for the integration of new technologies into future highway projects, and cooperatively engage with other jurisdictions, including Cities, Counties, MPO's, and toll and transit agencies, as well as private technology and auto manufacturing companies on such efforts.

To date, Texas universities have aggressively pursued research funding, and some cities have begun to plan for automated vehicles and services. It was in this context that Austin was selected as a finalist for US Department of Transportation's first-of-its-kind Beyond Traffic Smart City Challenge, a \$50 million national competition focused on the planning, creation, and development of a fully integrated, data-informed transportation network. As Austin prepared its application, we were gratified by support from TxDOT and other jurisdictions across Texas; however, we also realized how far Texas has to go in developing the technical expertise, planning, and revising implementation processes to prepare for the transportation disruptions soon to come.

We look forward to working with TxDOT, Texas universities, other local jurisdictions, and the private sector as we test and deploy automated vehicle technologies and services. To support these efforts, we ask the Sunset Advisory Committee develop specific recommendations for TxDOT to increase Texas' competitiveness for these important new companies and the accompanying economic development.

**Recommendation 1:** TxDOT should initiate a Texas Smart Cities Challenge. This could support efforts already underway in the DFW, Austin, and Houston areas, support new efforts in other Texas urbanized areas, and spur plans for how new transportation technology and services could work in rural areas.

**Recommendation 2:** TxDOT should work with universities and other stakeholders to begin short and long-term evaluation and pre-planning for state system rights-of-way that could be used for Autonomous Vehicle/Connected Vehicle services, including unused or abandoned rail corridors. Where opportunities exist, TxDOT should support and partner with local jurisdictions, non-profit entities, and the private sector to plan, design, and deploy transportation infrastructure that anticipates the application of new technologies that advance safety and mitigate congestion.

**Recommendation 3:** TxDOT should begin an iterative planning process that prepares both the state and local jurisdictions for the impacts and efficiencies that will be realized as technology advances. Such planning will affect how highways are designed, built and operated, perhaps incurring new up-front costs, but also potentially achieving substantial cost savings, safety benefits, reduced congestion, and economic development.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations and for your service to Texas.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree