

DEC 05 2016



# SAN ANTONIO MOBILITY COALITION, INC.

*Transportation Solutions for an Improved Quality of Life*

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December 1, 2016

The Honorable Robert Nichols  
Sunset Advisory Commission  
PO Box 13066  
Austin, Texas 78711

Re: Texas Department of Transportation Sunset Staff Report

Dear Senator Nichols:

Thank you for your leadership and for this opportunity to provide comments on behalf of the San Antonio Mobility Coalition, Inc. (SAMCo) in regard to the November 2016 Sunset Staff Recommendations for the Texas Department of Transportation that will be the subject of a public hearing on December 8 and/or 9, 2016.

The San Antonio Mobility Coalition is a partnership consisting of local governments, chambers of commerce, financial institutions, engineering and construction firms, private sector firms, and other individuals and groups that support efforts to secure additional funding for transportation projects in the Alamo Area MPO region.

We offer the following comments in regard to the November 2016 staff report:

- 1) We support the overall theme of the report that the "department is tentatively on the right track" and that "continuing TxDOT without another wholesale reinvention would allow the department much needed time to stabilize and complete many half-finished tasks critical to meeting the tremendous challenges at hand". It would be our observation that most of the key management positions at TxDOT have turned over during the past couple of years just when several new legislative initiatives have been brought forward, including Proposition 1, Proposition 7, HB 20, and related discussions regarding how best to prioritize projects and spending categories. In our view, the Department appears to be acting in good faith toward meeting the many new objectives and challenges that have been set before it. In working toward implementation of many of these new policies, procedures, and approaches, the department has organized in a way that ensures input on these new initiatives from local elected officials, local districts, and the MPO's. While this may slightly slow implementation, ultimately

**GOVERNMENTAL:** Bexar County ♦ City of San Antonio ♦ VIA Metropolitan Transit **PATRON:** Civil Engineering Consultants ♦ HNTB Corporation ♦ Jacobs ♦ LNV Engineering, Inc. ♦ Pape-Dawson Engineers, Inc. ♦ SWBC ♦ USAA ♦ Williams Brothers Construction Company, Inc. **ADVOCATE:** AECOM ♦ Alamo Concrete Products ♦ Arias & Associates ♦ Bain Medina Bain, Inc. ♦ Bracewell LLP ♦ Broadway Bank ♦ Brown & Gay ♦ CDS Muery ♦ Cemex ♦ Cobb, Fendley & Associates ♦ CP&Y ♦ Dannenbaum ♦ Dykema Cox Smith ♦ Hatch Mott MacDonald ♦ HDR Engineering, Inc. ♦ HOLT CAT ♦ IBC Bank ♦ IDC Engineering ♦ Jones & Carter ♦ KGBTexas ♦ Locke Lord LLP ♦ Lockwood Andrews & Newnam, Inc. ♦ Martin Marietta ♦ Michael Baker International ♦ Port Authority of San Antonio ♦ Poznecki-Camarillo Associates, Inc. ♦ Raba-Kistner Consultants, Inc. ♦ RJ RIVERA Associates, Inc. ♦ RPS Klotz & Associates ♦ Security Service Federal Credit Union ♦ Sundt Construction ♦ Terracon ♦ Vickrey & Associates ♦ Vulcan Materials ♦ WSP/Parsons Brinckerhoff ♦ Zachry Construction Corporation **ASSOCIATE:** AACOG ♦ AGC of Texas ♦ Alamo RMA ♦ American Council of Engineering Companies San Antonio ♦ Brooks City Base ♦ City of Hollywood Park ♦ City of Seguin ♦ Free Trade Alliance of San Antonio ♦ Greater Austin-San Antonio Corridor Council ♦ Greater New Braunfels EDF ♦ Medical Center Alliance ♦ North San Antonio Chamber of Commerce ♦ Real Estate Council of San Antonio ♦ San Antonio Chamber of Commerce ♦ San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce ♦ South San Antonio Chamber of Commerce **GENERAL:** 21 additional entities

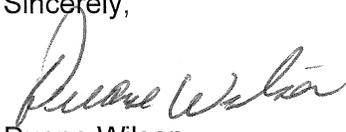
this approach is likely to ensure an end product with greater “buy in” from local elected officials and the general public. The amount of communication and outreach by the department has been greatly enhanced in recent years.

- 2) One example of the enhanced level of outreach by the department is the effort lead by Commissioner Bruce Bugg to organize multiple meetings with key elected officials in each of four largest urban regions of the state to discuss potential priority projects for additional funding likely to result from ending diversions, Proposition 1, and Proposition 7. Seeking input from state senators, state representatives, county judges, mayors, commissioners, city council members, and other key local officials early on in the process has resulted – at least in the San Antonio region – in a strong consensus on which projects should be prioritized to move forward. The proactive approach and genuine opportunity for discussion and input appears to be greatly appreciated by local elected officials and should be considered a “best practice” for future TxDOT initiatives.
- 3) With regard to the goal of a more “Transparent, Performance-Based Transportation Planning Process” and related recommendations for a more objective process to prioritize projects, we strongly support efforts to provide improved data and standards for project selection. However, we would also urge that this enhanced information be utilized as an essential guide for decision making rather serving as automatic process based totally on the numbers. Different regions of the state have different needs, and even within regions different types of needs will necessarily compete. For some regions, the top priority will be congestion relief, for other it may be connectivity, economic development, hurricane relief, port connectivity, and/or many other factors. It is likely an impossible task to reduce all of these competing priorities to a simple or even complex formula. Local MPOs and TxDOT Commissioners should continue to be allowed to exercise good judgement using an improved data system as an important and most helpful guide – but not as the final determinate and not as a substitute for the appropriate and informed judgement of local and state elected and appointed officials.

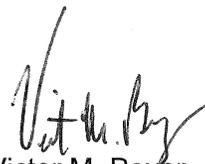
In general, as TxDOT approaches this historic opportunity to fully implement Proposition 1 and 7 - supported by more than 80 percent of the electorate - we are hopeful that the department will be afforded every opportunity it needs to succeed and that sufficient time will be provided to work through the complex prioritization issues mentioned above as well as gearing up for the opportunity to deliver an historic level of project delivery as the new funding provided by legislators and the voters of this state comes to fruition.

Again, we thank you for this opportunity to provide input regarding the Sunset Advisory Commission Staff recommendations.

Sincerely,



Duane Wilson  
SAMCo Board Chair



Victor M. Boyer  
SAMCo President & CEO