



## Talking Points & Background

### US 290/I-610 Interchange Project

November 16, 2009

#### Background

The Texas Transportation Commission is considering allocating \$315 million of Proposition 12 funds for the design, ROW acquisition and construction of the interchange of US 290 and Loop 610 in Greater West Houston. This is the largest single allocation from Prop 12 Funds.

The Commission is scheduled to make their final decision on this project and others funded from Prop 12 at the Thursday, November 19, 2009 meeting. In addition to this project, the Commission will vote to approve \$127 million for a project on I-45 South in Harris County. Together Harris County will receive \$440 million.

The Commission appears to have done an excellent job of the difficult task of allocating these limited funds for mobility and congestion relieve. In addition to the two Harris County projects, I-35 south of Dallas in Hill, McLennan and Bell counties will receive for 7 individual projects over \$1 billion from Prop 12 funds. San Antonio will receive over \$130 million for mobility projects. However, neither Dallas nor Tarrant is set to receive any allocation of Prop 12 funding.

#### Project Comments

- **Critical First Step.** The IH610/US 290 interchange project which would receive Prop 12 funding from the Commission vote today is a critical and necessary first step to the eventual beginning of the US 290 Corridor project.
- **Keystone Project.** This severely congested 3 mile interchange section of Interstate 610 has been a confusing, dangerous merging of 3 major expressways in West Houston since its original construction in the 1970's. The current design of the intersection forces weaving of traffic in competing directions. The reconstruction would "untie" this concrete knot, easing cross traffic movements. From a traffic movement standpoint for West Houston, it "completes" the interchange of Interstate 10 West and IH 610 which was part of the very successful Interstate 10 reconstruction.
- **Access to Major Activity Centers.** This interchange improvement will improve traffic flow into the Galleria area, a major business center with over 30 million square feet of office space ranking it larger than most central business districts in the state; the Houston central business district; and the Port of Houston.
- **Transportation is Critical to Houston Economy. Houston is Critical to the State Economy.**
  - Houston's economy is 37% or \$417 billion of Texas' \$1.1 trillion gross product (2007). Houston's economy is built on mobility of people and goods.

- The Port of Houston, unknown to most Texans, is the catalyst for nearly 800,000 jobs and \$118 billion in state economic impact and \$3.7 billion in state and local taxes. It lives or dies on the mobility of goods.
- Northwest Houston is served by one freeway, US 290 to which all traffic is funneled from numerous arterials. Because of its heavy use and undersized design, we consider it the most important project in the Houston area. Improved mobility resulting from its reconstruction is critical to the future of Houston and the state.

### **Texas Funding Outlook**

- Transportation remains the largest underfunded statewide need with per year needs identified by the 2030 Committee is \$14.3 billion with Urban Mobility being 54% of that with \$7.8 billion per year.
- Available to spend statewide is \$2-3 billion per year or only 20% of the total annual need.
- In the face of failed efforts to provide the state with a increased dedicated flow of transportation funds, the federal government continues to book rescissions forcing Texas to return critical funds already allocated.
- The voters and the Legislature approved and authorized Proposition 12 funding for transportation projects and represents a milestone as it is funded from general state revenue rather than the Highway Fund.

### **Data/Houston**

- Houston MSA is a region of 5.7 million people, 23.4 % of the State of Texas. (DISCOS 2008 Data has the Houston District at 22.8% of the state total population)
- Houston Gross Product of \$417 billion in 2007 was 37% of the total Texas Gross Product (\$1.1 trillion, 2007, State Comptroller)
- Houston District vehicle registrations ranked first with 21% of the state total (DISCOS 2008)
- Houston District vehicle miles of travel ranked first with 17.6% of the state total (DISCOS 2008)
- Houston District ranks last of 5 most populous TxDOT districts (San Antonio, Dallas, Ft. Worth, Austin, Houston) in:
  - Centerline miles of highway
  - Centerline miles per person
  - Lane miles per person

### **Data/ I-610 @ I-10 to Ella (I-45)**

- The I-610 section that is the subject of the Prop 12 funding ranks 29th on TxDOT's 100 most congested list.

- Annual hours of Delay 837,289. Annual Hours of Delay per mile 135,571.
- Annual Cost of Delay \$17.38 million. Annual Cost of Delay per mile \$2.81 million
- Texas Congestion Index (delay of a trip in peak hour versus free flow) is 1.31 and projected to be 1.90 in 2028.
- In 2028 hours of delay will be nearly 5 times as severe as it is today (4,065,00/837,289)

#### **Data/US 290 Corridor**

- Corridor population forecasted to be 800,000 by 2035
- Traffic 250,000 vehicles per day
- Level of Service Grade F
- 229,812 annual hours of delay per mile. 2,258,133 hours delay per year. \$46.88 million annual cost of delay
- Texas Congestion Index (delay of a trip in peak hour versus free flow) 1.53 project in 2028 to be 2.14
- Stop and go traffic 3 to 4 hours per day, projected to reach 12 hours per day in the future
- 1400 accidents per year plus 200 per year at I-610 interchange
- Planning for improvements started 10 years ago in 1999 with the beginning of the Major Investment Study
- EIS delayed until 2010. No funding currently allocated or dedicated for completion of design, ROW or construction.

Prepared by the West Houston Association November 17, 2009