

7.0 Stakeholder and Public Outreach

7.1 Purpose

Promoting transparency with the public is a fundamental tenet of TxDOT's vision. Well-informed stakeholders can provide valuable input to the transportation planning and decision-making process. During the public outreach for the SLRTP, TxDOT:

1. Provided a clearly defined purpose and objective for initiating public dialogue and soliciting input in the transportation planning process.
2. Provided notice of opportunities for the public to participate in cooperative dialogue, in an adequate and timely manner to allow sufficient time for stakeholders and interested parties to prepare their written or oral responses.
3. Provided venues (e.g., forums, meetings and hearings) open to all members of the public that allow stakeholders to be heard and to present evidence supporting their views and positions.
4. Engaged in a transportation planning process that is transparent and provided stakeholders with access to educational materials and all information used (e.g., documents, exhibits, schematics, maps, photographs, etc.) in the planning process.
5. Engaged stakeholders and listened thoughtfully to comments and input during meetings held around the state.

The comments received during the public outreach process will be summarized later in this chapter.

7.2 The Public Outreach Plan

A Public Outreach Plan was developed specifically for the public involvement activities carried out during the development of the SLRTP. TxDOT's outreach effort:

1. Established early and continuous public involvement opportunities that provide timely information about transportation issues and planning processes to all interested citizens and transportation stakeholders;
2. Provided access to technical and policy information used in the development of the long-range statewide transportation plan;



3. Provided ample public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key points, including, but not limited to, a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed long-range statewide transportation plan;
4. Conducted public meetings that were held at convenient and accessible locations and times (to the maximum extent practicable);
5. Used visualization techniques to describe the proposed long-range statewide transportation plan and supporting studies;
6. Made public information available in electronically accessible format and means, such as the world wide web, as appropriate to afford reasonable opportunity for consideration of public information;
7. Demonstrated explicit consideration and response to public input during the development of the long-range statewide transportation;
8. Included a process for seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services; and
9. Provided for the periodic review of the effectiveness of the public outreach process to ensure that the process provides full and open access to all interested parties and revised the process when necessary.

7.3 Public Outreach Tools

7.3.1 Newsletters

TxDOT issued three newsletters electronically and via U.S. Postal Service to federal, state, and local elected officials, transportation stakeholders, and all parties on a contact list maintained and updated by the Government and Public Affairs (GPA) Division. Throughout the public outreach process, interested parties were added to the distribution list upon request, allowing for follow-up and continued involvement in the process.

The contact distribution/ mailing list used for newsletter distribution and meeting notification included regional planning commissions, councils of government, metropolitan planning organizations, regional mobility authorities, rail districts, federal and state elected officials (and chiefs of staff), federal transportation staff members, congressional district directors, state district directors, local elected officials, civic and community leaders, organized state transportation groups and advisory committees,



Indian tribal government representatives, and business and economic interest groups. Also included were transportation stakeholders, including industry representatives for each mode (this includes freight shippers, private providers of transportation, public transit user representatives, and freight transportation service providers), and public agency representatives.

The newsletters were also available on TxDOT’s SLRTP webpage (www.txdot.org). This series of letters notified interested parties about the initiation of the project, advertised public meetings, solicited stakeholder input, and provided study results and proposed content for the SLRTP.

7.3.2 Questionnaire

An optional, informal questionnaire was made available to the public during the initial round of statewide public meetings held in each TxDOT District and on TxDOT’s SLRTP webpage (http://www.txdot.gov/txdot_library/publications/transportation_plan.htm). The questionnaire was simple and straightforward with check-offs or priority listing for each question. Respondents were able to complete it on-line, at the TxDOT District offices, at the public meetings, or complete and mail/fax it in. The results are not statistically representative of a large sample of transportation users, but rather represent the responses of those who opted to complete the questionnaire—approximately 245 were received.

Figure 7-1: Modes of Personal Transportation

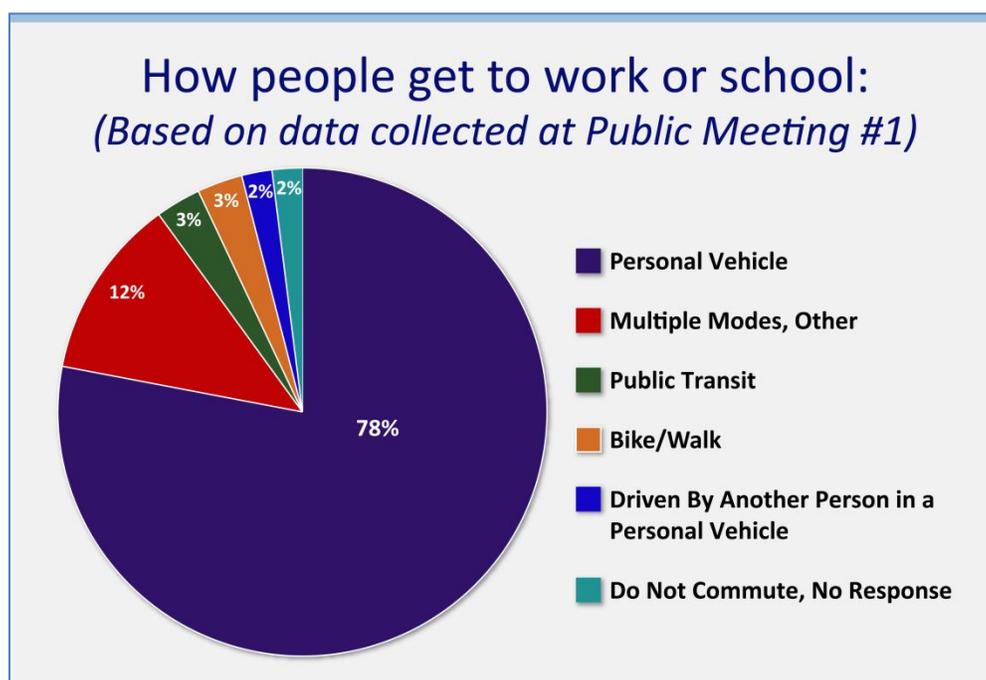




Figure 7-2: Rating Transportation Problems

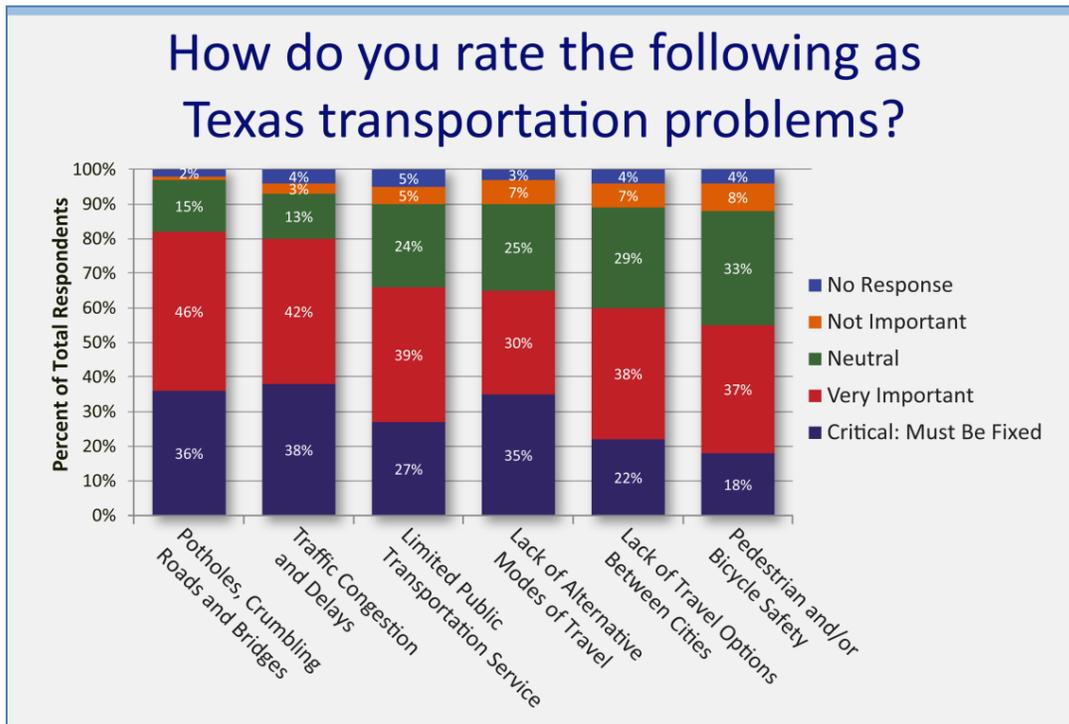


Figure 7-3: Rating Potential Solutions for Roads

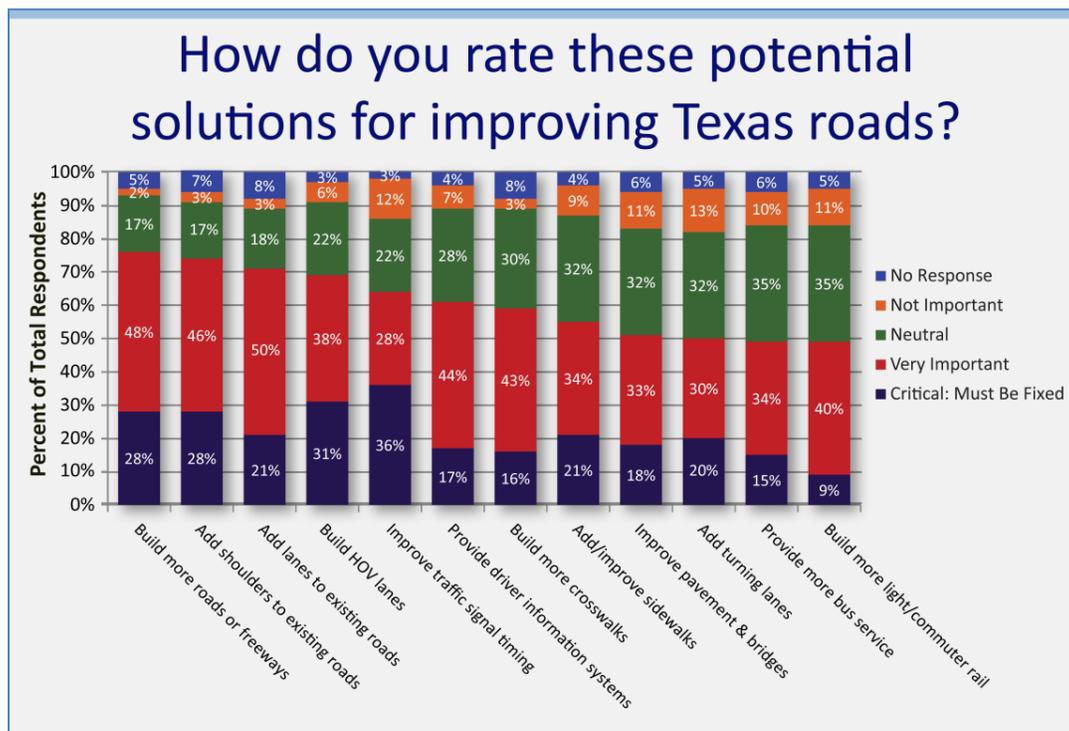




Figure 7-4: Rating Potential Solutions for Travel between Cities

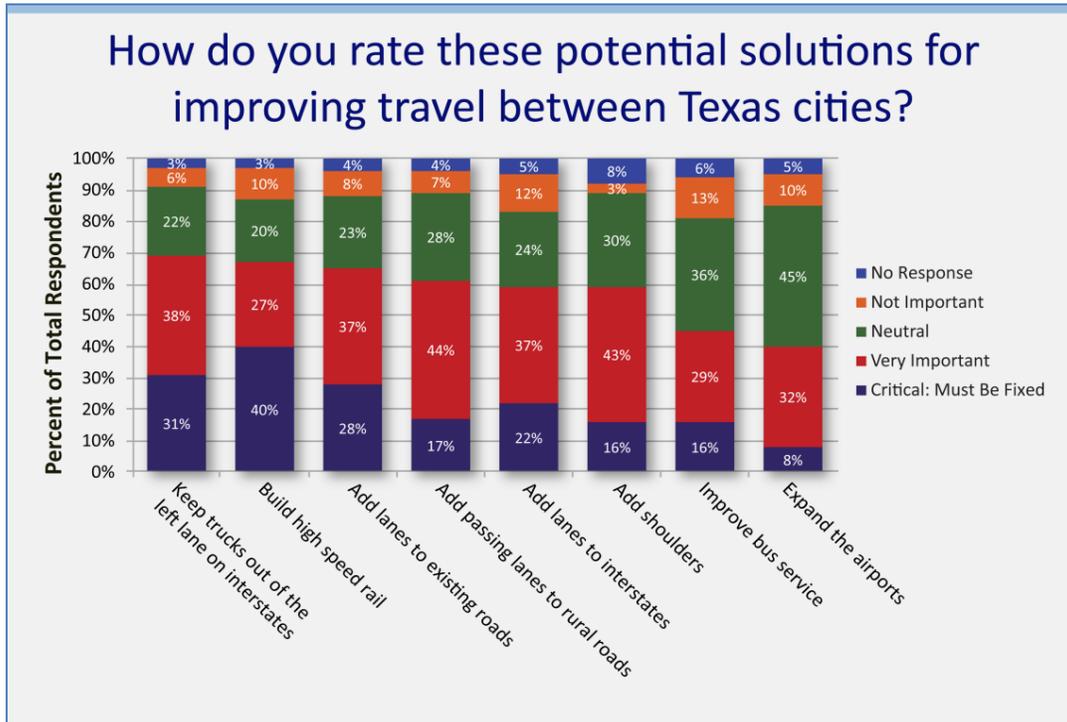


Figure 7-5: Rating Improvements to Freight

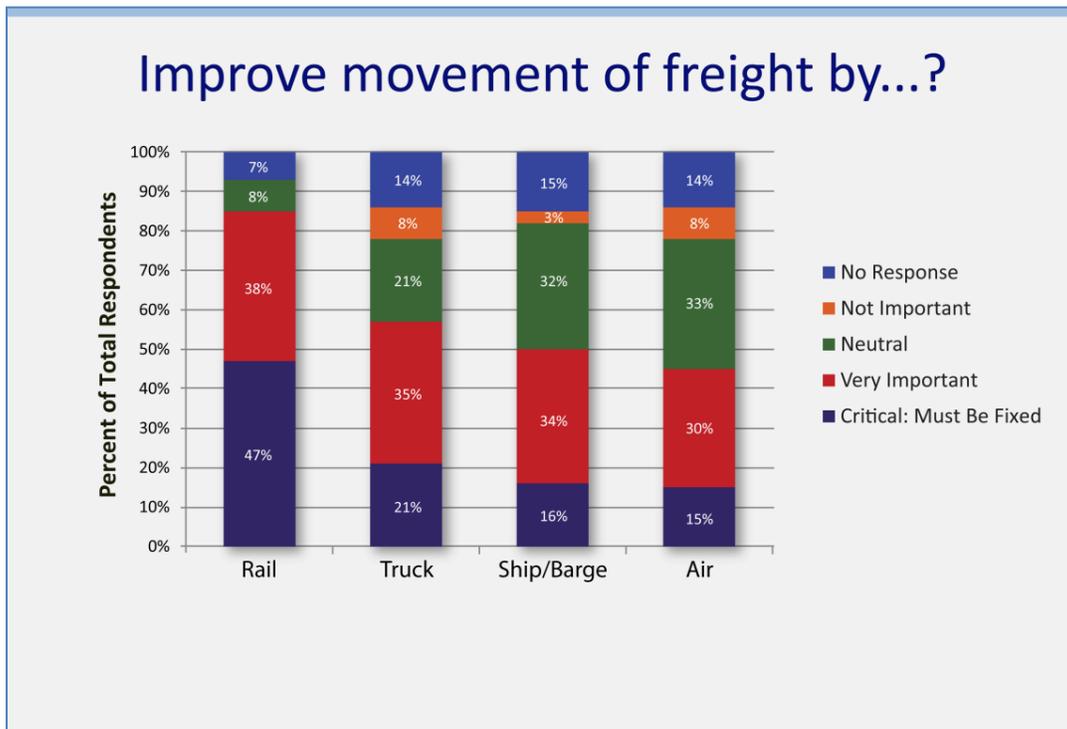
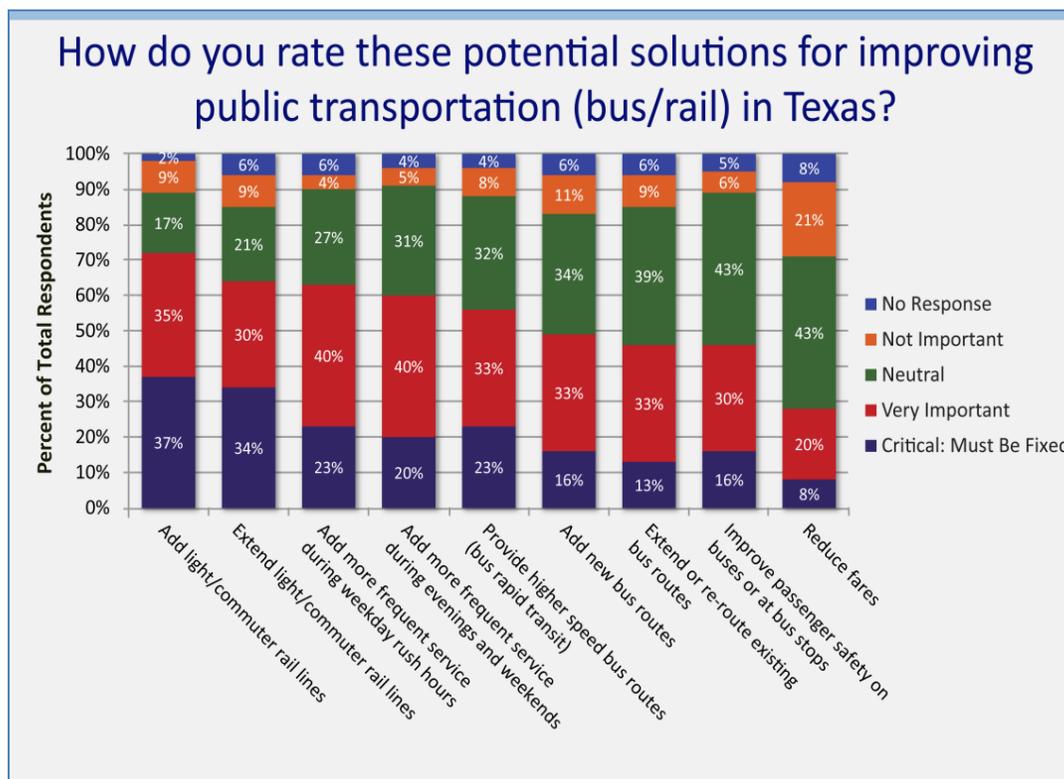




Figure 7-6: Rating Potential Solutions for Public Transportation



7.3.3 TxDOT Website

TxDOT created an SLRTP webpage on their website to provide information regarding the status of the project and present opportunities for the public and interested stakeholders to become involved in the process of developing the SLRTP. The website included an electronic comment box on the TxDOT web page accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

7.3.4 Visualization Tools

The materials included video and electronic presentations, maps, informational boards, surveys, comment sheets, and visual content all posted on the SLRTP webpage on TxDOT’s website.

7.3.5 Innovative Social Networking Tools

TxDOT used a variety of tools to communicate with and inform the public including social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.



7.3.6 Toll Free Telephone Line

A toll free telephone number and voice mailbox, monitored during business hours and accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, was designed for the public to leave input, feedback or general comments. It will remain operational until October 29, 2010. The toll-free number for the project – 1-888-5-Texas-PLAN (1.888.589.7526)—was published in all newsletters, advertisements, meeting materials, public website, and social media channels.

7.4 Stakeholder Meetings

TxDOT conducted two rounds of regional (Houston, San Antonio, Lubbock, Fort Worth, Corpus Christi, and El Paso) stakeholder meetings in April and July of 2010.

Figure 7-7: San Antonio Stakeholder Meeting, Round 1



Figure 7-8: Fort Worth Stakeholder Meeting, Round 2





7.5 Public Meetings

Two rounds of open-house-style public meetings were conducted in each of TxDOT's 25 districts in May and August of 2010 in conjunction with their respective Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) when applicable, and according to each TxDOT District's Rural Consultation Process as outlined In TxDOT's Public Involvement Plan.

Figure 7-9: Wichita Falls Public Meeting Round 1



Figure 7-10: El Paso Public Meeting Round 2



7.6 Public Hearing

One formal public hearing was held on October 1, 2010, at 200 Riverside Drive in Austin, Texas, to solicit public input on the SLRTP draft before presenting it to the TxDOT Commission for adoption on November 18, 2010. TxDOT posted notice of this meeting in the Texas Register and on the TxDOT website on September 17, 2010.



One oral comment was received at the meeting and 24 written comments were received between October 1 and November 1, 2010. A copy of the public hearing transcript and all written comments are included in the Appendix.

7.7 SLRTP Public Outreach Activity Schedule

All outreach materials including newsletters, meeting notifications, survey results, meeting summaries and summaries of public comments/responses, are included in the electronic notebook.

Figure 7-11: Public Outreach Activities and Dates



7.8 Stakeholder Meeting Summaries

Each TxDOT region was responsible for drafting a list of both public and private stakeholders appropriate for participation in the SLRTP process.

Table 7-1: Stakeholder Meeting Dates

Region	Round	City	Meeting Date
East	Round 1	Houston	April 27, 2010
East	Round 2	Houston	July 26, 2010
North	Round 1	Fort Worth	April 28, 2010
North	Round 2	Fort Worth	July 28, 2010
South	Round 1	San Antonio	May 3, 2010
South	Round 2	Corpus Christi	July 29, 2010

**Table 7-1: Stakeholder Meeting Dates**

West	Round 1	Lubbock	April 29, 2010
West	Round 2	Lubbock	July 27, 2010
West	Round 2	El Paso	July 30, 2010

East Region: In Houston, concerns were focused primarily on freight movement and added capacity needs due to the growth of tonnage coming in and out of the port. It was stated by many stakeholders that the movement of freight should not be focused on merely trucks but short-line rail and the use of barges in the GIWW. Better coordination among the rail, truck, and port mode is desirable. Interconnectivity at the Port of Houston will help handle the increase of container traffic predicted from the expansion of the Panama Canal and other trade possibilities. A multi-modal approach with heavy coordination with the Houston Galveston Area Council was discussed. Representatives from pipelines discussed the need for better multi-modal coordination as natural gas is one of the biggest commodities. High-speed rail was mentioned to alleviate congestion concerns between major metropolitan areas. A discussion in Round 2 was that needs ought to be calculated to represent all modes. Current highway needs does not reflect the whole story. Innovative financing to bridge the difference is necessary. A further discussion of movement of freight by rail and barges continued. Stakeholders would like to see the SLRTP to make clear recommendations to the Commission

North Region: In Fort Worth, concerns came from a rural and urban perspective. Consensus from the group was that freight movement by rail needs to be expanded and include rural rail lines. Representatives from rail discussed support of innovative financing. The bicycle/pedestrian mode was also highly represented. A desire to include bike lanes in highway projects and additional TxDOT funding received much debate.

South Region: In San Antonio (Round 1), port representatives discussed increase in rail and barge loads to accommodate port growth. Traffic management via ITS through signs and smart phones could assist with congestion on I-35 and SH 130. Innovative financing away from gas tax could help funding concerns and commuter rail/expansion of other modes could assist higher demand on highways. In Corpus Christi (Round 2), concerns were similar to San Antonio, specifically with expansion of rail in port areas. The desire for commuter rail between large urban cities was discussed. The need for a social/cultural change away from personal vehicles could help the demand on current transportation. Suggestions were made to shift funding from highways to bicycle/pedestrian facilities as a way to encourage this change.



West Region: In Lubbock (rounds 1 and 2), concerns were focused on rural needs and lack of available state funding to rural communities. Stakeholders spoke of the growing elderly population and the need for safety programs to assist their transportation needs. Rail representatives spoke of the need to establish a rural rail system. Pipelines representatives spoke of the right of way for energy services originating in the area. In El Paso (Round 2), funding options were the main focus. Innovative financing by the use of tolls and the development of impact fees were options shared by stakeholders.

7.9 Public Meeting Summaries

A total of 968 persons signed in at the two rounds of public meetings held throughout the state on the SLRTP. Table 7-2 shows the draft attendance numbers at the SLRTP public meetings.

Table 7-2: Public Meetings

Public Meeting #1		Public Meeting #2	
District	Sign-In Attendance	District	Sign-In Attendance
Abilene	23	Abilene	12
Amarillo	13	Amarillo	11
Atlanta (Jefferson)	10	Atlanta	11
Austin	34	Austin	28
Beaumont	22	Beaumont	22
Brownwood	4	Brownwood	3
Bryan	46	Bryan	12
Childress	18	Childress	12
Corpus Christi	18	Corpus Christi	6
Dallas (Farmers Branch)	30*	Dallas (DeSoto)	11
El Paso (Alpine)	19	El Paso	13
El Paso	16	El Paso (Marfa)	17
Fort Worth	30	Fort Worth	6
Houston	93	Houston	105
Laredo	5	Laredo	6
Lubbock	7	Lubbock (Levelland)	3
Lufkin	27	Lufkin	12
Odessa	9	Odessa	9



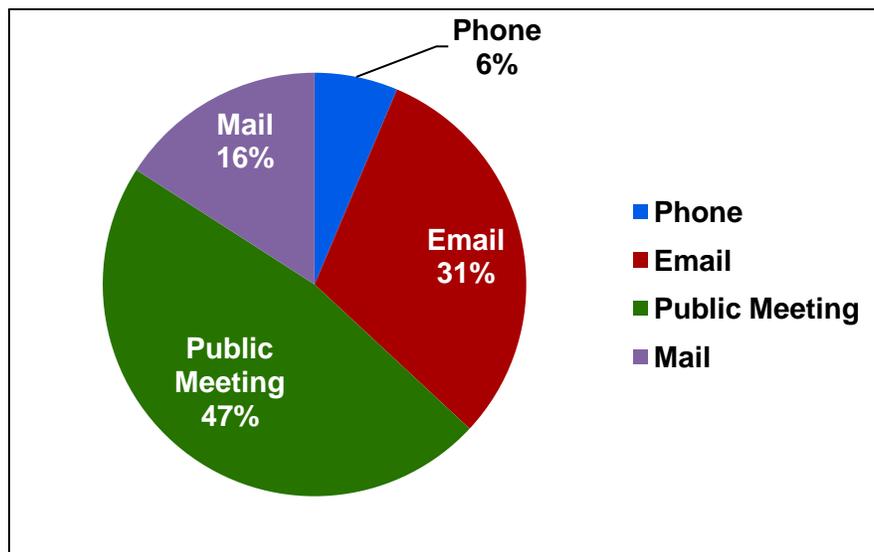
Table 7-2: Public Meetings

Public Meeting #1		Public Meeting #2	
District	Sign-In Attendance	District	Sign-In Attendance
Paris (Commerce)	17	Paris (Commerce)	22
Pharr	13	Pharr	7
San Angelo	13	San Angelo	11
San Antonio	23	San Antonio	41
Tyler (Longview)	7	Tyler	20
Waco	9	Waco	10
Waco (Belton)	23	Waco (Belton)	21
Wichita Falls	13	Wichita Falls	9
Yoakum	9	Yoakum	7
Total	521		447

7.10 Public Comments

During the period of the public outreach that encompassed two rounds each of stakeholder and public meetings (not including the period between September 17 and November 1, 2010), TxDOT received a total of 566 comments regarding the SLRTP. Figure 7-12 represents the percentage of comments received by source.

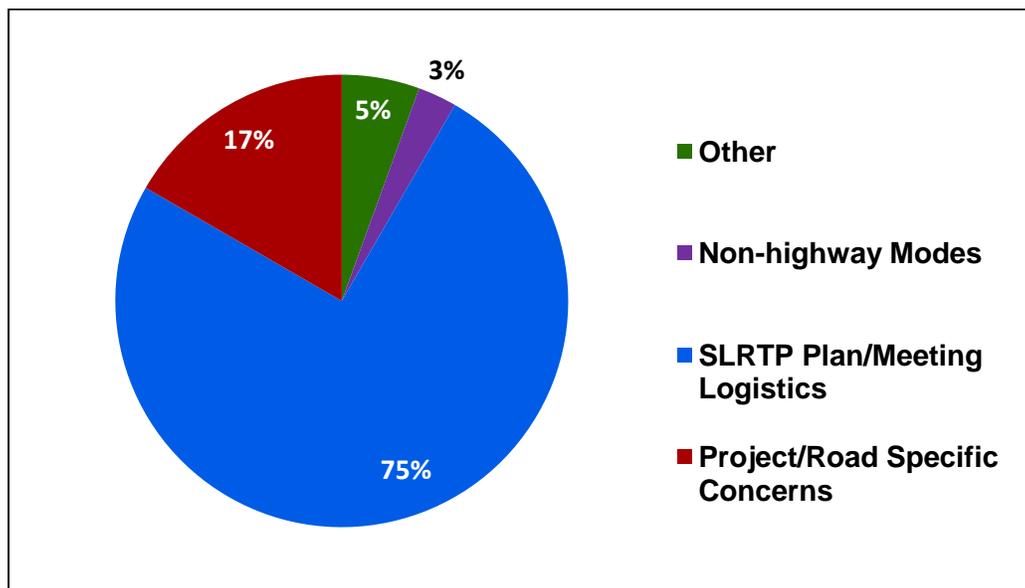
Figure 7-12: Comments Received During Public Outreach Activities (% By Source)





The 566 comments received include comments from stakeholder and public meetings, as well as comments received by telephone, electronic mail, and regular mail. Figures Figure 7-13 through Figure 7-17 summarize the generalized comment topics by source.

Figure 7-13: Telephone Comments (% By Generalized Topic)



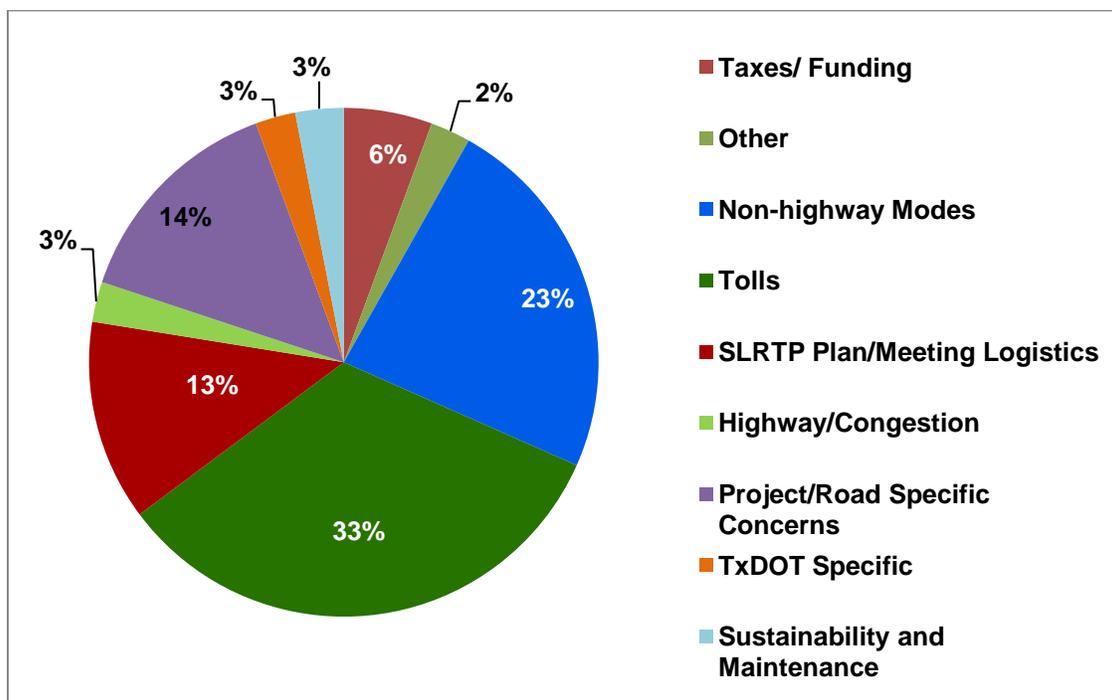
Note: There were no telephone comments for the following categories Rural vs Urban Issues, Taxes/Funding, Highway/Congestion, TxDOT Specific, Sustainability and Maintenance, and Tolls

A majority of the comments and questions received via the toll free telephone line regarded the SLRTP meeting logistics (i.e., date, time, location, etc.). Those were responded to with either a call back or e-mail as appropriate.

Comments received for the second ranking topic were those having to do with specific TxDOT projects (e.g., overpass construction in Amarillo, roadway projects in Levelland, FM 715 in the Abilene District, etc.). Project specific comments were forwarded to the appropriate TxDOT District Office for response.



Figure 7-14: Electronic Mail Comments (% By Generalized Topic)



Note: There were no electronic comments for Rural vs Urban Issues.

A majority of the comments received via electronic mail were related to toll roads; more specifically many were in opposition of toll roads or were requests to remove toll roads from the SLRTP.

Comments received for the second ranking topic were those regarding non-highway modes (e.g., more transit for the disabled, more high-speed commuter rail, request for a broader rail system, more bicycle/pedestrian facilities, advocate for a more robust multi-modal system, etc.).

Comments received for the third ranking topic were those having to do with specific TxDOT projects (e.g., maintaining roadside parks and rest areas, widen and extend FM 552 and US 190 in the Dallas District, widening of FM 521 in the Houston District, requests for the widening and use of various construction materials on various facilities for safety reasons, etc.). Project specific comments were forwarded to the appropriate TxDOT District Office for response.

Comments and questions received for the fourth ranking topic regarded the SLRTP meeting logistics (i.e., date, time, location, etc.). Those were responded to with either a call back or e-mail as appropriate.



Figure 7-15: Round 1 Public Meeting Comments (% By Generalized Topic)

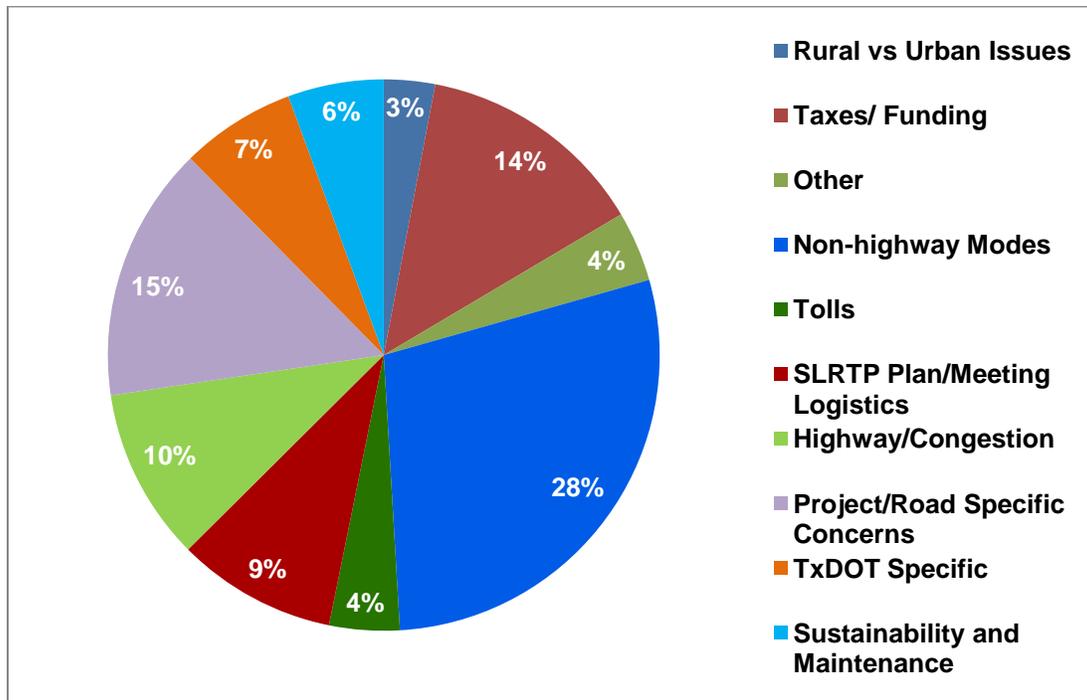
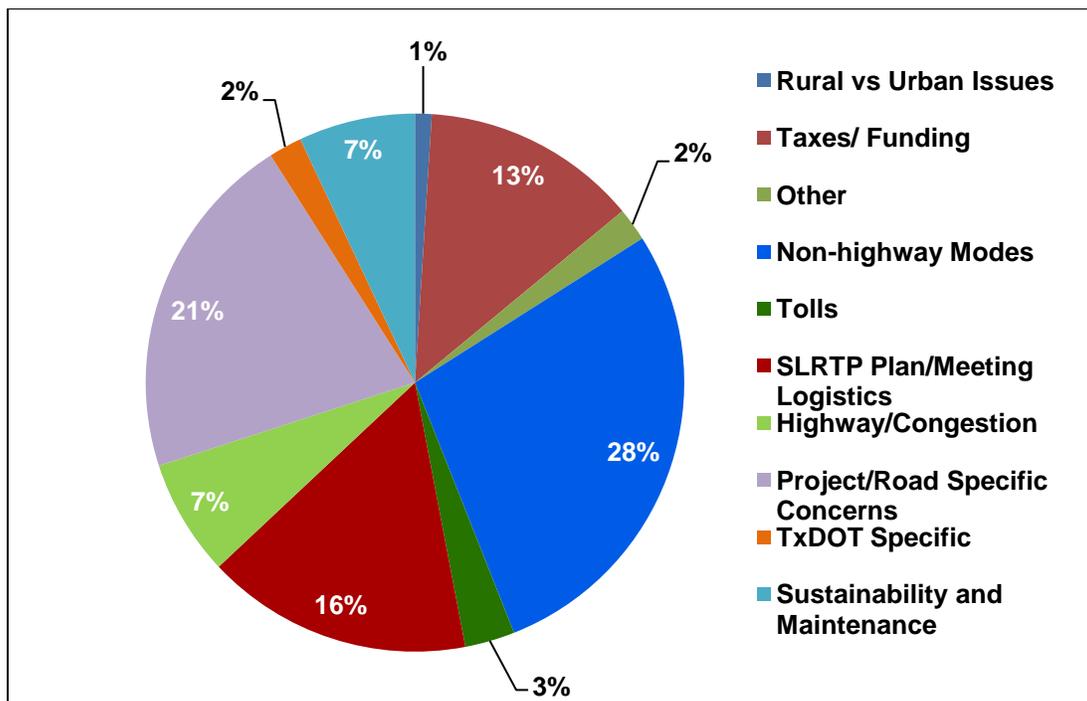


Figure 7-16: Round 2 Public Meeting Comments (% By Generalized Topic)





In both Rounds 1 and 2 of the public meetings the topic receiving the highest percentage of comments (provided at the meetings on comment forms) was Non-highway modes (e.g., several comments advocating high-speed rail and more transit in rural areas, request for rapid bus routes, request that TxDOT shift away from highway-centric planning, requests for environmental sustainability, several comments from urban and rural areas advocating bicycle and pedestrian facilities, a request from the Houston area that TxDOT work with other agencies to work toward a multimodal plan, etc.).

The second ranking topic in Rounds 1 and 2 of the public meetings was specific TxDOT projects (e.g., the expansion and designation of US 277 in Wichita Falls as a high-priority corridor, completion of State highways 19 and 24 as a priority in the Paris District, completion of SH 45 SW in Austin, the removal of US 67 in El Paso from the Texas Trunk System, the widening of FM 1463 in the Houston District, improvement of US 83 in the Laredo District, etc.). Project specific comments were forwarded to the appropriate TxDOT District Office for response.

The topic of taxes and funding was ranked third in the Round 1 public meetings and fourth in the Round 2 meetings. There were many comments (statewide) opposing the use of tolls to finance transportation, with several requests to remove all toll projects and those funded through public-private partnerships from the SLRTP. Others advocated for public-private partnerships to fund transportation. Some comments supported raising the fuel tax and fees for overweight trucks to increase revenue. Other suggestions included:

- Taxing diesel and hybrid electricity
- Gaming (legalized gambling) as a source of transportation revenue
- Increased funding for small multimodal facilities
- Equal funding for rail and roads
- Ceasing the use of fuel taxes for education
- The return of more federal dollars to Texas
- More money shifted to mid-sized cities
- Lack of state appropriations for ten years while operations have escalated
- Less money used to increase infrastructure, and more used to manage demand

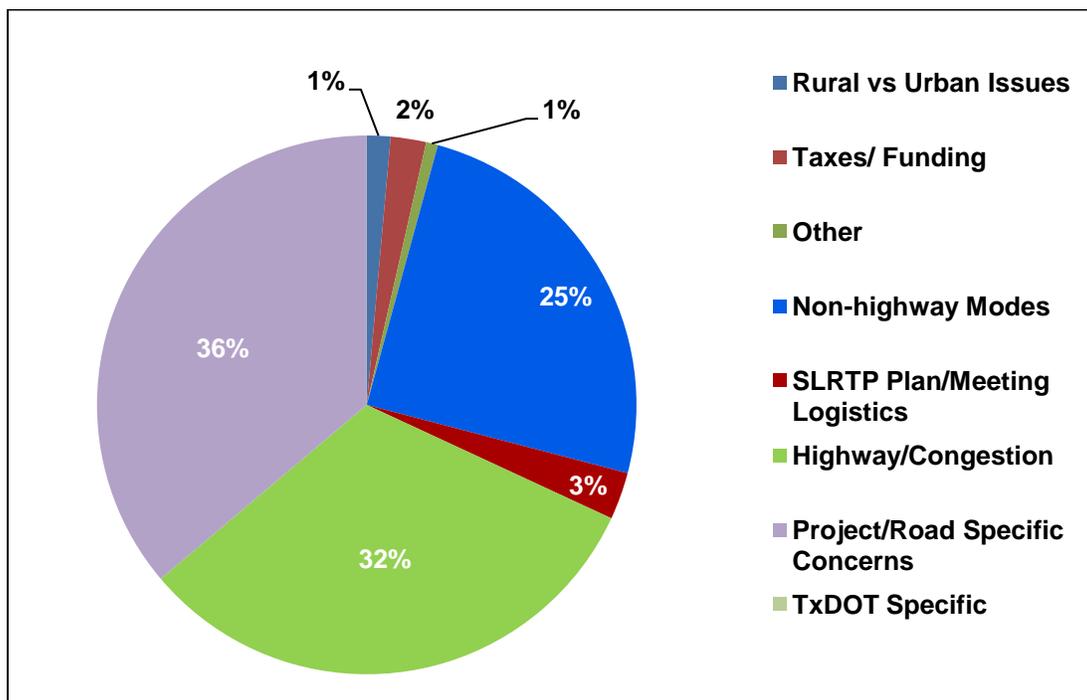


- More education to the public and decisions-makers regarding funding options
- Reduced funding to other state agencies and focus on transit needs

TxDOT also received numerous comments requesting or advocating for the exploration of unique and innovative funding sources, but with no specific source for the funds named.

In both rounds, there were comments focused specifically on congestion, including comments advocating TxDOT spending more money on reducing congestion, widening roadways, shifting freight to rail, and the use of other modes to reduce congestion, improve air quality, and provide a more sustainable transportation system.

Figure 7-17: Mailed Comments (% By Generalized Topic)



Note: There were no telephone comments for the following categories Tolls, TxDOT Specific, and Sustainability and Maintenance.

The majority of comments that were mailed to TxDOT – in paper form – covered three topics. The highest ranking topic was specific project concerns for various roadway and bridge projects across the state. As with similar comments from other sources, project-specific comments were forwarded to the appropriate TxDOT District Office for response.



The second ranking topic was Highway congestion. Some comments were general in nature (i.e., non-facility specific requests to reduce congestion), and others requested the reduction of congestion via other modes or modal facilities.

The third ranking topic was Non-highway modes. An overwhelming majority of the comments received for this topic were requests for the inclusion of the Northeast Texas Rural Recreation Trail from New Boston, Texas to Farmersville, Texas.

Across all sources of comments, there were numerous comments related to three specific corridors or corridor systems that interested parties wanted to see included, promoted or completed as a part in of the SLRTP:

- IH 69 (Statewide);
- The Gulf Coast Strategic Highway System (all corridors); and
- The Northeast Texas Rural Recreational Trail System (from New Boston, Texas to Farmersville, Texas).

Comments that were received during the official public review period of the Draft SLRTP (September 17 to November 1, 2010), and at the public hearing, were addressed separately as a function of the process by which the Texas Transportation Commission considers the adoption of the SLRTP. Those letters, electronic comments and comment forms, and TxDOT responses, are included in the document Appendix.

Due to the number and content of the hundreds of comments received by TxDOT related to the SLRTP, not all of them could be included specifically in this chapter. However, every comment (regardless of source) and all proceedings related to the public outreach efforts for the SLRTP will be included in an electronic notebook, the contents of which are available for viewing via request to the Transportation Planning and Programming Division of TxDOT. Public meetings and hearings are not archived, but a copy of the public hearing transcript is available upon request.

Video of the TxDOT Commission Meeting at which the SLRTP will be presented for adoption will be archived on TxDOT's website at: <http://www.txdot.gov/>.