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TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
COMMISSION MEETING

Ric Williamson Hearing Room  
Dewitt Greer Building  
125 East 11th Street  
Austin, Texas

Thursday  
September 24, 2015  
9:00 a.m.

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Tryon D. Lewis, Chair  
Jeff Moseley, Vice Chair  
Jeff Austin, III  
Victor Vandergriff  
J. Bruce Bugg, Jr.

STAFF:

Lt. General Joe Weber, Executive Director  
Jeff Graham, General Counsel  
Robin Carter, Commission Chief Clerk

Job No. 2124698

P R O C E E D I N G

1  
2 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: I want to thank you all  
3 for being here. It is 9:04 a.m. I'm going to call to  
4 order the September 24th, 2015 meeting of the Texas  
5 Transportation Commission in Austin, Texas. I will note  
6 for the record that public notice of this meeting  
7 containing all items on the agenda was filed with the  
8 Secretary of State at 4:01 p.m. on September 16th, 2015.  
9 That's seven days prior to the meeting and meets with  
10 the requirements of the Government Code Section 551.044.

11 At this time I'd like to ask that before  
12 we begin today's meeting, you join me in placing all  
13 your cell phones and communication devices in the silent  
14 or off mode. If you wish to address the Commission  
15 today during this meeting, I'll need you to complete a  
16 speaker's card. We call it a comment card. These cards  
17 are out at the registration table as you come in. If  
18 you will, complete those, fill them out, and give them  
19 to our clerk over here so we'll know that you wish to  
20 address us.

21 Now, there are two types of comments.  
22 First, we have the yellow card. If your comment is with  
23 regard to an agenda item, something that's been posted  
24 on our agenda, then you fill out the yellow card. It's  
25 self-explanatory. But basically it says if you want to

1 make a statement, to come forward to this dais, and make  
2 an oral statement to us; or if you just register your  
3 position, you can do that, too. You'll need to identify  
4 the item number on the agenda, whether you're for it,  
5 against it, or neutral on it; your name; if you're here  
6 representing an organization, your title and who you're  
7 here representing. That will give us a record of your  
8 desire to talk on an agenda item. When we reach those  
9 items, I'll have your card. It will be handed to me by  
10 our clerk, and I'll ask you to come forward and give us  
11 your thoughts.

12 Now, you also may address the Commission  
13 on items that are not on the agenda. It's what we  
14 call open comments. It's just different cards, a  
15 different color card so we'll know that it's not related  
16 to any agenda item; and it's a blue card. You'll fill  
17 it out -- it's similar -- and you may make comments.

18 I want to note that whichever it is, your  
19 time is limited to three minutes to make your comments.  
20 So be sure and marshal your thoughts and have them in  
21 order so that you can give us your comments within that  
22 time period.

23 I also want to note that if it is an open  
24 comment, that the Commission cannot respond to you. I'm  
25 usually the one that forgets that, but I'm always

1 reminded by the other able members of the Commission.  
2 But we cannot because we can only speak on agenda items  
3 as a Commission. So please understand if you give us  
4 the benefit of your thoughts in open comment, we will  
5 not be giving you our feedback or our comments or our  
6 views on that matter.

7 When your name is called to come forward,  
8 just come up to this dais here. There's a microphone  
9 there. Adjust it for your height. State your name; if  
10 you're representing a group, who you're here  
11 representing; and then give us the benefit of your  
12 thoughts.

13 At this time I'm going to turn the  
14 microphone over to our Executive Director, General Joe  
15 Weber.

16 GENERAL WEBER: Thank you, Chairman.

17 And at this time I'd like to ask our  
18 Occupational Safety Specialist, Sidney Maloy, to come  
19 forward and provide our Safety Briefing.

20 Sidney.

21 MR. MALOY: Good morning, General. Thank  
22 you.

23 Good morning to each of our Commissioners  
24 and to Mr. Williams and to our Executive Team and to  
25 each of our guests this morning.

1 I'd just like to discuss with you our  
2 safety guidelines briefly for this morning. In case of  
3 a tornado or inclement weather, we will shelter in place  
4 in this facility. We will stay inside. We will move  
5 away from the exterior windows and walls.

6 And our primary shelter area in the Greer  
7 Building is the stairwells and the basement. Our  
8 secondary shelter area is included in the lower levels  
9 and the stairwells and interior hallways and the  
10 centrally-located restrooms.

11 In the event we have to evacuate for a  
12 fire, you will find the pull station is in the lobby  
13 area; and pull stations are on every floor of this  
14 facility. Maps are located by the elevator to share  
15 with you to discuss our exits for each of the floors and  
16 the routes for exiting this building.

17 Our primary exit is the front door. It's  
18 facing 11th Street. Our secondary exits are east,  
19 towards Brazos and west, towards Congress. Our  
20 gathering area is across the street on the Capitol lawn.

21 We also have available for you Agency  
22 fire extinguishers. If we have to use them today, pull  
23 the pin, stand approximately 8 feet away from the fire.  
24 Squeeze the lever. Sweep side to side and aim at the  
25 base of the fire.

1           In case of an active shooter or a bomb  
2 threat, follow instructions of the public address  
3 system, security, and our onsite personnel.

4           In the event of a medical emergency,  
5 we'll have volunteers to perform the following steps:  
6 We will call 911. Somebody will call 911 from a cell  
7 phone. And from the land line, the TxDOT land line,  
8 dial 9 then 911 to call the operator. Our physical  
9 address here is 125 East 11th Street, across from the  
10 State Capitol.

11           We do have available AEDs. We do have  
12 one across, behind the security booth. Also, if you do  
13 have to use an AED, it will prompt you step by step on  
14 how to activate and use that device.

15           First-aid kits are available on every  
16 floor.

17           If there are no questions, let's have a  
18 safe meeting and productive meeting on this morning.

19           Thank y'all so much for your time.

20           GENERAL WEBER: Thank you, Sidney.

21           And with our Safety Briefing completed, I  
22 defer back to you, Chairman.

23           CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you very much,  
24 General.

25           It is our custom to begin each meeting

1 with open comments from our Commissioners, and at this  
2 time I would like to ask for opening comments beginning  
3 with you, Commissioner Bugg. Any open comments at this  
4 time?

5 COMMISSIONER BUGG: Thank you,  
6 Chairman Lewis.

7 I just wanted to mention that yesterday  
8 Governor Abbott gave a speech in Lake Jackson, Texas.  
9 And in that speech he called upon the Texas  
10 Transportation Commission to work on congestion relief;  
11 and to use his words, he said that he was asking our  
12 Commission to focus the initiative to identify and  
13 address the State's most congested choke points and work  
14 with transportation planners to get new roads built  
15 swiftly and effectively.

16 And I know, Mr. Chairman, that you and my  
17 fellow Commissioners are all committed to trying to  
18 respond to Governor Abbott's directive. I just wanted  
19 to mention that.

20 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank, you. We will be  
21 mentioning it as we go forward with opening statements,  
22 probably.

23 Commissioner Vandergriff.

24 COMMISSIONER VANDERGRIFF: Thank you,  
25 Chairman. I'll just reserve my time for the balance of

1 the meeting; and, hopefully, people that need time to  
2 visit with us about issues, I'll cede my time to them as  
3 well.

4 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you,  
5 Commissioner Vandergriff.

6 Vice-Chairman Moseley.

7 VICE-CHAIRMAN MOSELEY: Thank you,  
8 Chairman.

9 Members, Chairman Lewis has asked me to  
10 report back to the Commission related to best practices  
11 on safety for our highway system; and regretfully, since  
12 the last time we convened, we've had more Texans die on  
13 our highway system.

14 Those of us who live in the Houston area  
15 have been painfully aware of the loss of students whose  
16 lives were taken after a tragic bus accident on  
17 Highway 610, and our deepest sympathies and thoughts go  
18 out to the families who have lost their loved ones and I  
19 join Governor Abbott in his statement that this is a  
20 painful loss that no parent should ever have to endure;  
21 but the reality of it is that these are powerful symbols  
22 of how we must work more vigilantly to look at how we  
23 can design a roadway, how we can work with technology  
24 and driver behavior to reduce the number of deaths on  
25 our highway system.

1                   We would, every one of us, be horrified  
2                   if a 747 were to go down in the state of Texas; and,  
3                   yet, every year on our Texas roadway systems the number  
4                   of Texans that die is equal to ten 747s going down. And  
5                   so we are challenged by that.

6                   And to that end, Chairman Lewis, I'm  
7                   happy to announce that this past month we did have a  
8                   committee meeting engaging some of the best and  
9                   brightest innovators related to the topic of technology  
10                  and how technology can contribute to more safety. This  
11                  is led by Dr. Walton of the University of Texas; and he,  
12                  of course, is an advisor to this Commission on  
13                  technology.

14                  This coming month, October 14th, we're  
15                  going to have a discussion with Enforcement. DPS is  
16                  coordinating that roundtable discussion, seeing how we  
17                  can partner more fully with DPS to make our roadways a  
18                  safer place.

19                  With no objection, Mr. Chairman, I've got  
20                  a two-minute video clip created by AASHTO that I think  
21                  symbolizes very well this whole discussion.

22                  CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you.

23                  (Video playing.)

24                  VICE-CHAIRMAN MOSELEY: Mr Chairman,  
25                  this, again, just symbolizes that this whole topic takes

1 everybody; and so whenever we report back to you, it  
2 will be a rather comprehensive set of recommendations  
3 for consideration. Thank you so much.

4 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you very much,  
5 Mr. Vice-Chairman, for your work and leadership in that  
6 area.

7 Commissioner Austin.

8 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: Good morning,  
9 Everyone. Thank you for coming. I know we have a full  
10 audience, and I see some faces that have left and come  
11 back. Randy Redmond, it's good to see you back in the  
12 audience.

13 I'm sorry I missed last month. I had a  
14 very important engagement with my daughter to pick her  
15 up. She graduated overseas. So I had to bring her back  
16 home to Texas. Amen.

17 But as you travel around, you know,  
18 whether it's in state, out of state, out of the country,  
19 when you come back, you really believe and you see the  
20 great road system that we have. And sometimes it  
21 takes -- while we talk about it up here, we see it;  
22 y'all are engaged in it, leaving and coming back, you  
23 really appreciate what we have.

24 But it doesn't come easily. There's a  
25 lot of folks, men and women, that do a lot of work; and

1 as we begin talking about Prop 7, with the ultimate  
2 passage of that, you know, that's something we can't  
3 take for granted. I know the Department is beginning  
4 thinking of how we're going to implement and execute --  
5 and those are two very important terms -- should it  
6 pass, much like what we did in gearing up for Prop 1.  
7 If it passes -- I had the opportunity -- you know, the  
8 message, like what the Governor said yesterday, we're  
9 looking at TxDOT to begin working on choke points.  
10 Choke points are not just in the major cities. It's  
11 when you leave the cities, you go on our Texas trunk  
12 system, the interstates, Main Street Texas, I-35.

13 I had the opportunity to be with the  
14 Governor on a train ride, the Texas State Railroad; and  
15 his comment was very clear, "Should this pass, y'all  
16 need to execute and be able to get out."

17 And the reply was, "Sir, we're going to  
18 be relying not just on our staff, our engineers to begin  
19 planning the design; but we're going to need the  
20 community's help to help set priorities."

21 And we're going to need many of you in  
22 here that represent the private industry to be able to  
23 gear up and get ready to go and help plan, oversee,  
24 design, and get these projects ready to go. I know  
25 those that are in the hopper, we may have to double

1 down. I'm not trying to get ahead of the cart, but  
2 we've got to begin thinking about it as a state to move  
3 forward and be able to get these projects out.

4 That was a great train ride. I believe  
5 this started back with Governor Briscoe for each of  
6 the -- you know, the Texas State Railroad goes between  
7 Palestine and Rusk. Each Governor, during their  
8 freshman term, the first year, they take that train  
9 ride. So it's been a great honor to see them.

10 Well, I had the opportunity to  
11 participate several years ago with former Governor Perry  
12 as well. And I know he was here. We really appreciate  
13 the things that he has done for transportation and  
14 making that a priority in the state. I think we're  
15 enjoying a lot of luxuries that -- economic development  
16 as a result of transportation. We've got to continue  
17 that on; and Governor Abbott, I know, is carrying that  
18 on with his comments.

19 Last month I had the opportunity to go  
20 down to Houston with Commissioner Moseley and we  
21 celebrated the additional signing of Interstate 69  
22 inside -- along the US 59 route inside the city limits  
23 of Houston. That's adding well over 150 miles -- we  
24 have many more miles to go -- but, really, almost from  
25 Richmond over to Cleveland on 59 it's designated

1 Interstate 69, duly branded with U.S. 59.

2 So, Judge Emmett, all of Harris County, I  
3 believe, now has I-69 coming in on both sides.

4 I notice there is a campaign that  
5 Mr. Moseley put up here, the AASHTO video. In the last  
6 month I know many of our folks have been around safety  
7 campaigning, teaching kids and parents how to properly  
8 put kids in safety seats; and we really appreciate that.

9 And with back to school, in reading the  
10 paper, kids are anxious going to football games. We  
11 need to be especially careful with what's going on with  
12 new activity in the fall.

13 But, again, should Prop 7 pass --  
14 Mr. Chairman, I know how I'm voting; and I look forward  
15 to voting yes on it. Texans need it, and we appreciate  
16 the Legislature giving us that opportunity to vote on  
17 it.

18 Thank you. I'm glad to be back.

19 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you. It's very  
20 nice to have you back, and thank you for all of your  
21 work. You're undertaking a number of tasks for the  
22 Commission.

23 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: I forgot to mention  
24 one thing --

25 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Go ahead.

1                   COMMISSIONER AUSTIN:  -- safety-wise.  
2   While I speak to a lot of folks around the state, I was  
3   reminded of something.  You know, you think about what  
4   TxDOT does.  And I was reminded of something that  
5   occurred 14 years ago, about a week ago; and it was two  
6   or three days after 9/11 when a barge struck a bridge  
7   down in -- y'all may remember this -- down in South  
8   Padre Island.  We had several Texans that were killed.  
9   But TxDOT got this reconstructed about a month ahead of  
10  time, in about 69 days.  And that's what TxDOT does is,  
11  one, we have to think ahead; but we also respond.  And  
12  it's a grim reminder as we begin looking at projects,  
13  alternate routes throughout the state, to be prepared as  
14  we go forward.  So thank you for those that were  
15  involved.

16                   CHAIRMAN LEWIS:  And thank you, again,  
17  for your thoughts and efforts in that regard.

18                   And this does bring up the fact that each  
19  of our -- well, TxDOT has a number of challenges is, I  
20  think, the way to say it.  There are a number of  
21  challenges out there for TxDOT in executing its plan.  
22  And we have, fortunately, a very wonderful staff to do  
23  that.

24                   But, in addition, the Commission has a  
25  role; and to make sure that we do our part well, each of

1 our Commissioners has taken one of those key aspect  
2 areas, those key areas, and is providing leadership with  
3 regard to it. And it's a lot of work, and I appreciate  
4 very much the hard work of each of our Commissioners.

5 One of those areas is traffic gridlock  
6 and congestion issues that we have; and in the past, I'd  
7 requested Commissioner Bugg to assume that role and work  
8 with staff and make sure that we were well coordinated,  
9 as far as our plans were concerned, to address those  
10 gridlock issues.

11 As Commissioner Bugg mentioned,  
12 yesterday, the governor, Governor Abbott, specifically  
13 addressed that problem at the Brazoria County  
14 Transportation and Infrastructure Summit Meeting and  
15 specifically spoke to us and specifically charged the  
16 Commission with creating a focused initiative to  
17 identify and address the State's most congested choke  
18 points and do something about it so that the quality of  
19 life of our citizens and the quality of our economy can  
20 go forward and be successful.

21 And, Commissioner Bugg, since you already  
22 have been working in that area for us and working with  
23 staff on that and the Governor specifically charged us  
24 with it, I'd like to ask you to take the leadership role  
25 with regard to the Governor's challenge to us in that

1 area, if you would do so.

2 COMMISSIONER BUGG: Thank you. Thank  
3 you, Mr. Chairman. That's a real honor to be appointed  
4 to kind of lead that effort. Now that the Governor has  
5 asked this Commission to focus on this, I'm going to  
6 need your help, Chairman Lewis; and I'm going to need  
7 the help of every fellow Commissioner sitting up here  
8 with me because I think it is important to the economic  
9 development future of the state of Texas.

10 I think that Governor Abbott is  
11 absolutely right that it affects the quality of life of  
12 every Texan. We all understand what it's like to get  
13 behind the wheel of our car and get stuck in a parking  
14 lot that happens to be I-35, or wherever.

15 And so I will do my best to try to lead  
16 this effort but with the help of my fellow Commissioners  
17 and you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much.

18 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Well, thank you.

19 And, again, thanks to all of our  
20 Commissioners for the work. It's very uplifting. Every  
21 time I'm down here, every Commissioner down here is  
22 working so hard to get things right and doing a great  
23 job.

24 Now, let's get to the agenda. Our first  
25 order of business is the approval of the minutes from

1 the August 27th meeting of the Texas Transportation  
2 Commission. Draft minutes have been provided to each of  
3 you, my fellow Commissioners.

4 And, let's see, Commissioner Bugg, do you  
5 file a motion to approve the minutes of the August 27th  
6 regular meeting?

7 COMMISSIONER BUGG: I have a motion to  
8 approve.

9 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: All right.  
10 Commander Vandergriff, do you second that motion?

11 COMMISSIONER VANDERGRIFF: Yes.

12 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: There is no discussion.  
13 We have a motion and a second. All in favor say "Aye."

14 (A chorus of "Ayes.")

15 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you. The motion  
16 carries.

17 And with that, General, I'll turn the  
18 agenda over to you to work through today's business.

19 GENERAL WEBER: I'd like to start with  
20 Item 3A, a discussion of the Department's response to  
21 the requirements of House Bill 20. Our Interim Deputy  
22 Executive Director Marc Williams will present.

23 Marc.

24 MR. WILLIAMS: Good morning,  
25 Mr. Chairman, Commissioners, General Weber. For the

1 record, again, my name is Marc Williams. I serve the  
2 Department as the Interim Deputy Executive Director.

3 The intent of the presentation today is  
4 really to give you all an update on where we are with  
5 continued implementation of HB 20. We expect that this  
6 will be a familiar topic to this Commission as we come  
7 back and update you not only on the work of what we're  
8 doing within the department but also what's going on  
9 with our stakeholders and our legislative committee  
10 members that have been assigned and we are actively  
11 working with.

12 As we had previously advised you all, the  
13 Department has been in the process of putting together  
14 the required initial report on HB 20. This was outlined  
15 in the Legislation itself. The Legislation called for  
16 the Department to submit a report by September 1st of  
17 2015, September 1st of this month, that provides  
18 information on three factors: revenue projections to  
19 maintain current maintenance, congestion, and  
20 connectivity conditions; funding categories and  
21 allocations, funding within those categories and the  
22 project-selection authority that's associated with each  
23 of those; and the development and implementation of  
24 performance-based decision making for project  
25 prioritization, more specially, where the Department is

1 currently and where our planning stakeholder  
2 organizations are in this process.

3 This report was, in fact, submitted in  
4 accordance with the Legislation; and on September 10th  
5 of this month, TxDOT staff, myself, James Bass, along  
6 with Commissioners Vandergriff and Chairman Lewis, had  
7 the opportunity to testify before the newly-appointed  
8 House Select Committee on Transportation and Planning  
9 that was appointed in response to HB 20. And through  
10 that discussion, there were several key items that were  
11 raised by members of the Legislature: First, as is  
12 noted in the first bullet item up there, the Committee  
13 was appreciative and complimentary of the efforts of the  
14 Department, the efforts of staff, and the Commissioners  
15 to assemble and prepare the initial report. The members  
16 had reviewed it, and we had very positive comments from  
17 the members on it.

18 There were about three key messages that  
19 came out of that discussion that the members of that  
20 committee were particularly focused on; and those are  
21 identified in the second, third, and fourth bullet items  
22 on this slide. One, continued discussion and interest  
23 on whether the funding categories that exist today in  
24 the UTP, the twelve funding categories that we've used  
25 for several years in the UTP, and the formulas that

1 allocate money to them and is part of those and just the  
2 method for doing that, whether those meet the current  
3 transportation needs of the state and how those current  
4 funding categories materialize in terms of our  
5 performance. And as we move forward with looking at the  
6 prospects of additional funding that may be coming into  
7 the state, how those funding categories might be  
8 adjusted to potentially respond to the State's needs  
9 going forward.

10 And that's what's accounted for in the  
11 third bullet item is just looking more specifically at  
12 how Prop 1, Prop 7, and potential other resources should  
13 be allocated in the UTP and the prioritization to doing  
14 this. And part of that prioritization process and  
15 what's been emphasized as part of HB 20 -- and it's  
16 really a broader issue than just HB 20 itself; this is  
17 an area that the Department, along with many other DOTs  
18 throughout the nation and the Federal Highway  
19 Administration, through some of the requirements of even  
20 MAP-21, have been a really been dictating a more  
21 performance-based approach on how we allocate our funds,  
22 how our local stakeholders or metropolitan planning  
23 organizations and our districts really look at  
24 performance goals and performance targets and use that  
25 as a basis, not only for allocating funds but also for

1 selecting projects. And that was a point that was  
2 additionally emphasized by the Members of the House  
3 Committee.

4           Next step as we go forward, we're  
5 continuing the process with implementation of HB 20.  
6 Following our meeting with the House Transportation  
7 Select Committee, we had a briefing with our Planning  
8 Organization Stakeholder Committee, that's been part of  
9 the HB 20 process, really updated them on the results of  
10 our hearing with the House Select Committee and began to  
11 get some input from them on how they would like to move  
12 forward in terms of not only responding to the items  
13 that the Legislature has outlined for us but really  
14 beginning to kind of address their needs, working  
15 forward.

16           And one of the things that we're looking  
17 at not only in terms of having continued meetings with  
18 this organization but really looking at scheduling a  
19 two-day workshop with that group, where we'll have the  
20 opportunity to really dive into some of the specific  
21 details that we need to address in order to respond  
22 effectively to this legislation.

23           We're going to continue to collaborate  
24 with not only our Planning Organization Stakeholder  
25 Committee, but near in the point in time where we're

1 going to complete a draft membership list that we'll be  
2 sharing with the members of the commission on a Customer  
3 Stakeholder Committee, that's going to be comprised of  
4 local officials, business leaders, industry leaders, and  
5 representatives around the state to really kind of be  
6 more sort of a read-and-react group, an opportunity just  
7 to hear from a key group of core customers that use and  
8 rely upon our transportation system and work with the  
9 Department in addressing needs at both the local level,  
10 the county level, and the statewide level. And we want  
11 to engage that group in helping us as we respond to the  
12 requirements of HB 20.

13           Lastly, you all have seen this chart  
14 before. We felt that it was important, again, to just  
15 kind of remind you of the structure around which this  
16 process is being put together. I mentioned that we've  
17 met with the House Select Committee on Transportation  
18 Planning.

19           The Senate Select Committee on  
20 Transportation Planning, while it's been established,  
21 it's being chaired by Chairman Nichols. We have had an  
22 opportunity to meet personally with Chairman Nichols and  
23 brief him on where we are. That committee has not yet  
24 met. We will be reaching out to staff members of the  
25 Senate appointees to that committee and giving them a

1 direct one-on-one briefing on where we are. And we're  
2 certainly available to meet with the Senate members of  
3 that committee; but as of yet, there has not been a  
4 formal meeting set of the Senate committee. But as we  
5 go through this process, all of the information will be  
6 routed up through -- to these organizations through  
7 TxDOT Administration and this Commission.

8 In the four green boxes at the bottom  
9 that are on this slide, this really outlines kind of the  
10 four groups that we're predominantly working with. It  
11 doesn't necessarily mean that our efforts are exclusive  
12 to these groups -- we're certainly open to public input  
13 and engagement -- but we have several specific invitees  
14 to be part of some of our discussions with our  
15 committees. Those include representatives from the  
16 staff members within the Governor's office, Lieutenant  
17 Governor, Speaker, Senate and House Transportation  
18 Chairs, and the Senate and House Select Committees, as  
19 well as the Sunset Advisory Committee.

20 I've mentioned that we're going to be  
21 appointing our customer stakeholder group. I've also  
22 referred to our Planning Organization Stakeholder  
23 Committee in the past.

24 And then, lastly, but not least in this  
25 effort has been the efforts of the TxDOT Core Strategy

1 Team that I know that this Committee has been briefed on  
2 before. This is a group of internal staff that has been  
3 working with Darran Anderson and Stacy Strittmatter on  
4 developing mission, vision, values and goals for the  
5 Department, and we want to make sure that those efforts  
6 are tied into the ongoing efforts associated with HB 20.

7 Our next meeting will include a meeting  
8 with our Planning Organization Stakeholder Committee,  
9 our upcoming meeting with our Planning Organization  
10 Stakeholder Committee, which is set for October 7th. We  
11 expect to, next month, have a specific -- have named a  
12 group for our Customer Stakeholder Committee and will be  
13 meeting with them in early November.

14 We'll also -- while it's not on this  
15 chart -- expect to have another meeting with our  
16 Planning Organization Stakeholder Committee in late  
17 October or early November as well. It may be a two-day  
18 workshop, as I mentioned before. And then, we're  
19 continuing to wait until, as called on House and Senate  
20 select committees, through future meetings, we will  
21 obviously be responding and providing information to  
22 them.

23 Mr. Chairman, that concludes my  
24 presentation. I'll be happy to answer any questions  
25 from you or Members of the Commission.

1                   CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you.

2                   Commissioners, any questions?

3 Commissioner Vandergriff.

4                   COMMISSIONER VANDERGRIFF: Yeah. I'd  
5 just like to add a few comments to this from the  
6 Commission's perspective. As I think probably most  
7 people in the audience know, Chairman Lewis tasked me  
8 with the oversight and the engagement from a policy  
9 level on this particular effort. And my hat continues  
10 to be off to Marc and his staff, and then he mentioned  
11 Darran Anderson and Stacy Strittmatter and their efforts  
12 and the core strategy team members, which are employees  
13 of TxDOT.

14                   These efforts are kind of merging  
15 together at this point pretty quickly. The Core  
16 Strategy Team Mission, which is our internal group, has  
17 been going over everything that we stand for and  
18 believe in with a fine-toothed comb and updating it; and  
19 as that comes to the Commission, hopefully, in the next  
20 month or two -- they've seen the first part of it --  
21 that they will be in the performance measures and  
22 metrics which will then merge into what's being done in  
23 that regard with respect to the planning organizations  
24 committee.

25                   And I do want to note that Michael Morris

1 is in the audience from DFW. He's a member of that  
2 committee. And this group has really got, collectively,  
3 a tiger by the tail in terms of what we have to do in  
4 the world that we're in. You noted, Marc noted, the  
5 various things that we're to be reporting on and  
6 studying from the Legislature.

7           There was a meeting prior to that of  
8 actually a House Select Committee on Long-Term  
9 Infrastructure Planning and Funding. I don't think I  
10 have the name quite right, but Chairman Ron Simmons  
11 chairs that. And what was remarkable about that  
12 discussion is that, of course, everybody is very  
13 supportive of Proposition 7 and wants that to pass and  
14 recognizes that gives a lot of money into  
15 transportation, that they understand that in the world  
16 that we're in, which is a world where we're going to  
17 have less reliance on tolling to leverage revenue, that  
18 we need more money.

19           TTI made a presentation that said,  
20 basically, to do that, you need another \$5 billion; and  
21 the members on that committee agreed and understood that  
22 and actually had other people come up and talk about  
23 ways in which to do that without having to rely on  
24 tolls, a remarkable discussion there.

25           And then, as it went forward into the

1 select committee, as Marc has discussed, that committee  
2 really focused on the funding formulas and what went  
3 into them and was it time to look at those and re-gauge  
4 again on how that works. I mean, you have a very  
5 engaged Legislature at this point; but it's  
6 fundamentally clear, at least to me, at this point that  
7 we are really going to have to focus on that congestion  
8 relief, with certainly, connectivity, and items like  
9 border trade and all of those factored in as a part of  
10 that.

11 But it's going to be important that this  
12 Commission and the staff here generates the trust and  
13 respect in the Legislature so that we provide enough  
14 flexibility in the funding that we can attack those big  
15 projects because if it is all formula funded out as  
16 Proposition 1 is, that's going to be challenging.

17 And so I'm appreciative of the task we  
18 have and I'm mindful of the effort that we have to make  
19 to satisfy a lot of masters, but certainly the primary  
20 master is the State of Texas and the need for this  
21 Commission and this Agency to focus under  
22 Commissioner Bugg's leadership, Chairman Lewis'  
23 leadership, and attacking those major problems that the  
24 Governor has addressed. So we'll do our part in this  
25 group to give you the data and the support you need to

1 do that.

2 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you very much,  
3 Commissioner Vandergriff.

4 Commissioners, are there any other  
5 questions or comments before we proceed on?

6 (No audible response.)

7 And thank you very much, Marc.

8 And I'll turn it back to you, General.

9 GENERAL WEBER: Next is Item 3B, a  
10 discussion of the Texas Freight Mobility Plan. Our  
11 Interim Director of the Freight and International Trade  
12 Section, Caroline Mays, will present.

13 Caroline.

14 MS. MAYS: Thank you, General Weber.

15 Good morning, Commissioner -- good  
16 morning, Chairman and Commissioners and General Weber.  
17 For the record, my name is Caroline Mays; and I  
18 currently serve as the Interim Director for the Freight  
19 and International Trade Section, within TPP. This  
20 morning I'll be providing you a briefing on the Texas  
21 Freight Mobility Plan; and with me this morning is  
22 Judge Emmett, who has been Chair of the Texas Freight  
23 Advisory Committee that was created by the Commission  
24 back in early 2013. And, you know, the Committee was  
25 charged with helping the Department to develop the

1 Freight Mobility Plan that I will be talking about this  
2 morning.

3 So to give you kind of a quick overview  
4 of what the Freight Mobility Plan is, you know, this is  
5 the first transportation plan that TxDOT has developed  
6 that essentially focuses on the needs of the freight  
7 industry and the business community and also looks at  
8 economic development issues and how transportation  
9 relates to that. The plan also outlines goals and  
10 objectives to address freight mobility and, you know,  
11 also support economic development.

12 The plan serves as an investment guide to  
13 address freight transportation needs as well as also  
14 meets the requirements outlined under MAP-21, the  
15 current transportation legislation.

16 The plan development process was fairly  
17 comprehensive and really was data driven and stakeholder  
18 driven. You hear the Judge talk about the Freight  
19 Advisory Committee later, but also we had very extensive  
20 stakeholder engagement throughout the process. But just  
21 to give you an idea, we took -- the development of the  
22 plan, we took several steps. The first step was  
23 analyzing the issues, understanding the issues; and that  
24 took a lot of data-driven process as well as identifying  
25 the needs to the stakeholder involvement and engagement,

1 that I'll talk about a little bit later, but also  
2 developing the recommendations as well. The stakeholder  
3 involvement process was incorporated throughout the  
4 freight planning and development process.

5 I also mentioned the stakeholder  
6 involvement process was incorporated throughout the  
7 planning and development process. We employed a very  
8 comprehensive and multifaceted stakeholder engagement  
9 process. As you can see from this slide, we had over  
10 twelve Texas Freight Advisory Committees through the  
11 leadership of Judge Emmett.

12 We also held a big leadership summit back  
13 in April of 2014. We held two months of Stakeholder and  
14 Public Engagement Meetings throughout the state in the  
15 Summer of 2013 and Summer of 2014, and we held numerous  
16 speaking engagements throughout the state.

17 And just to sum this up, really the  
18 freight plan outreach process included executive level  
19 as well as grassroots initiatives, and that really gave  
20 us a good understanding of the weaknesses and the  
21 strengths of our existing transportation system but also  
22 the needs for improvement to address future needs.

23 When it comes to freight, there are  
24 several factors that drive freight demand and growth in  
25 Texas; and I've identified four here. The first one is

1 population growth. As we all are aware, currently in  
2 Texas we have 26 million, plus, people in Texas; and  
3 that's projected to increase up to 45 million by 2040.  
4 And freight is essentially a demander that more people  
5 consume more products and, therefore, you see more goods  
6 being transported on our transportation system. And on  
7 average, in Texas, each person consumes about 67 tons of  
8 freight a year. That's a tremendous amount of stuff  
9 that we consume.

10 The second factor driving freight demand  
11 in Texas is international trade. Texas is the critical  
12 gateway to international trade with Mexico and our  
13 partner in the north, Canada. And we see a lot of  
14 freight growth. You talked about I-35 being the main  
15 street but also I-69 serves, as well as parts of the  
16 main corridor, serve that growth.

17 And the third one is industry growth.  
18 The manufacturing sector is the largest contributor to  
19 Texas economy, and Texas is the Number 1 producer of  
20 cattle and cotton in the nation. And Texas has also led  
21 the nation in exports for the last 13 consecutive years.  
22 So it kind of gives you an idea of why the movement of  
23 goods is so important to Texas.

24 And the final factor is the energy  
25 sector. As you all know, Texas is the leading producer

1 of oil and gas in the nation.

2 In terms of freight movement and  
3 transportation contributions to the economy, nearly  
4 7 million people, 7 million jobs are indirectly related  
5 to freight. And 2.7 million jobs are directly related  
6 to freight and nearly half of the economic output of the  
7 statewide economy is dependent on freight; and from this  
8 chart, as you see, the trucking industry dominates, you  
9 know, their contributions to the Texas economy in terms  
10 of how many jobs are related to the trucking industry.

11 Throughout the freight planning process,  
12 several challenges were identified; and here, I've  
13 outlined eight broad challenges that were identified.  
14 And a lot of this is not surprising to anybody in the  
15 room here, but I'd like to touch on a few of these.

16 You know, we heard Commissioner Bugg talk  
17 about congestion issues. Again, for the freight  
18 industry, congestion is a major challenge. One of the  
19 things we heard is, you know, the choke points; and I'll  
20 talk about some of the choke points in the freight  
21 system. But limited capacity on most of the highway  
22 system; but also, when you look at the ports, you look  
23 at the rail network. You look at all the other networks  
24 that freight moves on because freight moves on all these  
25 multiple modes. So we are facing challenges in those

1 areas.

2 System operations. The need to better  
3 manage our existing infrastructure so we can maximize  
4 the investments that we've already got in terms of using  
5 technology, you know, to do that. Then the other  
6 element -- and Commissioner Moseley talked a little bit  
7 about this -- is safety concerns. You know, for the  
8 trucking industry, the lack of truck parking poses a  
9 major challenge for the industry because they're  
10 required by hours-of-service rule to be able to take a  
11 break within a certain amount of time.

12 Then the second element is the need for  
13 better incident management throughout the state,  
14 especially on some of our major freight corridors.

15 And connectivity issues. Connectivity  
16 between urban and rural areas, but also connectivity  
17 among modes, connectivity from rail to ports, rail to  
18 highway, et cetera, is a major issue.

19 And border issues as well. We have major  
20 challenges with congestion, wait times at the border,  
21 coordination at the border as well. We have several  
22 entities that are responsible for the border. So those  
23 are some of the challenges.

24 And, finally, funding. We heard a lot  
25 from the freight industry the need for flexibility in

1 funding but also the need for us to look at how we  
2 prioritize investments that address some of the most  
3 critical freight corridors and gateways in the state.

4 So when we're talking about freight,  
5 what's the magnitude of freight that we're talking  
6 about? You know, what are some of the looming  
7 challenges that we're facing? A significant amount of  
8 freight is moved on our transportation system today.  
9 And we're looking at about 2 billion tons. This is all  
10 the modes of freight, and that number is projected to  
11 climb to 3.7 billion tons by 2040. And to kind of give  
12 you an idea, the bulk of that movement, as you see on  
13 this chart, moves on highway system. And that's -- you  
14 know, we're projecting that to continue. Today we have  
15 a billion tons of freight moving on our highway system,  
16 and that's going to double to 2.2 billion by 2040.

17 And just looking specifically at the high  
18 or interstate system and how critical the interstate  
19 system is to freight movement but also at look at this:  
20 This slide here compares freight tonnage versus, you  
21 know, congestion on our highway system; and essentially  
22 what we're looking at is we're going to continue to have  
23 a limited capacity on our interstate system; but at the  
24 same time freight tonnage is projected to double.  
25 Truck/vehicle hours are going to double. And daily

1 tractors are going to double in Texas. And as  
2 population increases, then actually industry, trade, and  
3 commerce increases, we're going to see congestion  
4 literally on every single mode of transportation in the  
5 state, not just highways.

6 And this slide here, I just wanted to  
7 share this. And I think this is in line with some of  
8 the questions I already heard this morning in terms of  
9 choke points or what we call bottlenecks. In 2014 the  
10 Federal Highway generally comes up with the 250 most  
11 congested corridors in the nation, and the seven of the  
12 top 25 are here in Texas. And most of those are in the  
13 urban areas within the Texas triangle, and Houston alone  
14 has five out of the seven top freight bottlenecks.

15 And to give you a quick overview of the  
16 impact of this congestion on the trucking industry, this  
17 is in 2013. American Trucking Research Institute  
18 conducted studies across the country, and what they  
19 found in 2013 is that congestion added, on average, \$864  
20 in cost to the trucking industry and this is per truck  
21 cost; and that actually varies. And then Texas alone  
22 had \$1 billion in congestion costs to the trucking  
23 industry; and we're only behind California. Making up  
24 the nations top 10 metropolitan areas with the highest  
25 congestion costs to the trucking industry are Dallas,

1 which ranks fourth; and Houston ranks sixth.

2 In the next few slides I will  
3 specifically discuss the freight plan recommendations;  
4 and, again, this is a culmination of all the issues that  
5 were discussed earlier, the challenges, as well as some  
6 of the data elements that were analyzed to come up with  
7 this recommendation.

8 The freight plan identifies three  
9 multi-modal, broad-based recommendations. The first one  
10 is policy recommendations. The plan identifies 21  
11 policy recommendations to facilitate strategic decision  
12 making to address freight movement in the state.  
13 Several programs in initiatives were also outlined in  
14 the Freight Mobility Plan primarily to advance the  
15 policy recommendations.

16 The third element is the plan provides  
17 specific project recommendations, one to support the  
18 policy goals as well as implement some of the project  
19 recommendations.

20 The collective recommendations outlined  
21 here are statewide in nature, but it would definitely  
22 strengthen the State's freight and logistics industry  
23 and support economic growth and economic development if  
24 they're implemented in a holistic way.

25 Key policy recommendations of the freight

1 plan. We started with the development of a freight  
2 network. We have to identify where our freight moves  
3 and on which critical corridors. And essentially, you  
4 know, the freight network identifies strategic  
5 multi-modal freight facilities and, as I mentioned,  
6 these are major corridors with major freight movement.  
7 And just to give you some of the elements that we used,  
8 included freight tonnage. We looked at how much freight  
9 is moving on these facilities because we cannot blanket  
10 the entire system, especially the highway system.

11 We also looked at the trunk system to  
12 identify the trunk system, and we looked at connectivity  
13 to our major ports and borders and gateways, to  
14 airports, to energy sector areas, and urban areas. So  
15 that's how we came up with the freight network. And  
16 this is multi-modal. It includes highway, rail,  
17 waterways, and identifies all the other key gateways.

18 In addition to the freight network here  
19 are outlined some of the key policy recommendations.  
20 The first one is the need for the Department and its  
21 partners to review and modify design standards to  
22 address freight needs, especially on the highway side,  
23 you know, to address the needs of, one, oversized,  
24 overweight vehicles but also military transportation.  
25 We're a state with a lot of military installations. So,

1 again, we're looking at how we can better address those  
2 needs and also serves to address safety needs as well.

3 And our next key policy recommendation is  
4 to identify strategies to reduce crashes.

5 Commissioner Moseley talked about that. Again, let's  
6 look at corridors where we can address crashes,  
7 especially those associated with freight movement.

8 And another key policy recommendation is  
9 for the Department and its partners to develop  
10 technology strategies to implement so that we can better  
11 manage and maintain our existing infrastructure.

12 Our final key recommendation of the  
13 freight plan is for the Department and its partners to  
14 align transportation investments with economic  
15 development goals of the State.

16 And the final key -- some of the key  
17 program recommendations, again, you know, lines up with  
18 the policy recommendations. The first one is for the  
19 State to look at developing, again, under the technology  
20 umbrella, a statewide Traffic Management Center that can  
21 provide information on, let's say, incidents,  
22 weather-related -- if we have Katrina -- that can be  
23 broadcast statewide, you know, and other incidents that  
24 might impact the motoring public and the trucking  
25 industry as well as developing a statewide traffic

1 incident management program that we can effectively  
2 manage incidents, especially when it comes to trucking  
3 incidents, which generally take longer to clear than the  
4 others.

5 Other, you know, key program areas  
6 include better construction zone management, whereby we  
7 minimize the impact to the motoring public and the  
8 trucking industry. And, again, looking at our  
9 infrastructure, you know, and assessing our interchanges  
10 and bridges to make sure that we have a system that  
11 facilitates effective freight movement.

12 The final component of our freight plan  
13 recommendation is project recommendations. The plan  
14 identifies over 1200 projects that are freight related  
15 that are currently under development or in some planning  
16 phase. And the total estimated cost is more than 44.8  
17 billion. And what I would like to underscore is that  
18 the majority of these projects are not fully funded. So  
19 this number could actually be higher if all these  
20 projects were fully funded.

21 And, also, I'd like to underscore that the  
22 majority of these projects are not under the current  
23 UTP, so just, you know, to emphasize that. And, again,  
24 while the freight plan is multi-modal in nature, as you  
25 see from these two pie charts, highways dominate or make

1 up the majority of the freight recommendations and,  
2 again, because a majority of the funding is geared to  
3 highways so that we generally have more projects related  
4 to highways.

5 And in terms of next steps, we hope to  
6 get the freight plan out for public comment and then  
7 have a Freight Advisory Committee under Judge Emmett to  
8 endorse the plan, and then we'll come back to the  
9 Commission for the adoption of the Freight Mobility  
10 Plan.

11 Thank you for the opportunity to present  
12 today, and I will ask Judge Emmett --

13 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Let me do this,  
14 Director, if I might. Let me see if there are any  
15 questions for you.

16 MS. MAYS: Okay.

17 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: And then we'll have  
18 Judge Emmett come forward.

19 So let me ask, first of all, are there  
20 any questions for Director Mays at this time?

21 Yes, Commissioner Bugg.

22 COMMISSIONER BUGG: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

23 I'd just like to thank you for all the work  
24 you've done. It highlights just how much congestion  
25 really affects freight, which freight affects economic

1 development. So I would like to ask you if we could  
2 work together with this congestion project and go ahead  
3 and incorporate a lot of the work that you've done today  
4 with the work that's ongoing. So thank you very much  
5 for your work.

6 MS. MAYS: Yes, absolutely,  
7 Commission Bugg. We'll be more than happy to and  
8 honored to work with you on addressing the congestion  
9 issues because, like you mentioned, it impacts the  
10 freight industry. We heard a lot about how it impacts  
11 reliability, the on-time, a window to deliver something  
12 that generates a cost to the industry. So definitely we  
13 would be happy to work with you on that.

14 COMMISSIONER BUGG: Thank you for that.

15 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you.

16 Yes, Commissioner Austin.

17 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: Caroline, great  
18 job. I want to say thank you very much. I know we're  
19 going to hear from Judge Emmett. And I kind of wanted  
20 to reserve some of my questions until afterwards, but I  
21 wanted to compliment Judge Emmett in taking this on.  
22 You think back to the multi-modal -- and I'm going to  
23 stress multi-modal for a second -- aspects of this, how  
24 did we get to where we are on this freight committee.  
25 Judge Emmett was asked -- well, we had an interim charge

1 a few years ago from the House, Pickett, to ask -- not  
2 Pickett -- Straus to ask us to study the impact of the  
3 Panama Canal.

4 And when we did this, we had a Panama  
5 Canal task force that Judge Emmett chaired and this  
6 really -- when they completed report, the need came out  
7 and migrated into the Freight Advisory Committee. And  
8 this is something that's gone on and what this has  
9 highlighted of bringing to us better recognizing the  
10 multiple modes of transportation that are moving goods  
11 and services throughout the state and, as you talked  
12 about, the waterways.

13 This isn't just about the ports. We have  
14 a maritime division that really works with all of our  
15 ports to coordinate activity, and then we have our  
16 inland ports. Then we have our air cargo. We spend a  
17 lot of time working with our airports. We also have --  
18 and I think it's something that we tend to forget  
19 about -- you look at where a lot of this truck traffic  
20 comes into the state, it's not just our seaports, but  
21 it's also our international bridges and I think as we  
22 begin focusing on this, it is in the freight plan.  
23 Y'all did a very good job with this to highlight.

24 One question that I have is as you look  
25 at implementation -- I think I'm close -- two years ago

1 our LAR had \$25 million involved there for rail. This  
2 session we requested 500 million, and I think that was  
3 allocated. Could you explain how that increase is going  
4 to help begin to implement, identify, and really carry  
5 out this plan with that increased funding?

6 MS. MAYS: I think, you know, really any  
7 funding will help. As I mentioned in my remarks, you  
8 know, the plan identifies \$44.8 billion of needs -- or  
9 projects; and I didn't even talk about the needs that  
10 still are kind of lingering out there. We have almost  
11 28 billion of projects that are not in the current UTP,  
12 and then we've identified another \$25 billion worth of  
13 needs that we don't have any projects to address those  
14 currently that we need to plan for.

15 So, you know, \$500 million would  
16 definitely help; but it's still a long shot from what is  
17 needed in terms of addressing the needs of the freight  
18 industry from a multi-modal perspective, you know, rail,  
19 highway, waterways. We have issues on our waterways  
20 that need to be addressed. We know the cost that it  
21 would take to address that on our highway system and  
22 some of the choke points. I think some of the issues  
23 that we're talking about here, the choke points in the  
24 system, you know, that are mentioned, you know, the key  
25 freight bottlenecks, addressing those, and strategies

1 that helps address those will go a long way. But,  
2 again, funding is going to continue to be an issue and a  
3 challenge and the Freight Advisory Committee and the  
4 freight community understands that, but I think how we  
5 prioritize those will be key.

6 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: And I think what  
7 you're saying and what's in the report is critical. And  
8 I would speak to Commissioner Vandergriff. I've heard  
9 you say as you visit with the committee -- I think  
10 you've said multi-modal is a bad word. Well,  
11 multi-modal is Texas. And I think that's one of the  
12 great things that represents economic development.

13 And I would hope that as you're visiting  
14 with the respective committees and stakeholder groups is  
15 how can we better integrate this. And one thing that  
16 disturbs me, when you look at that large number that's  
17 not in the UTP, you know, you bring up a really good  
18 point. How can we make sure that those choke points  
19 when they're at the port, border entries, and when they  
20 go inland, how can we begin to remove those and make  
21 sure -- that's a very critical part. I know we've  
22 talked about reducing number of categories or we did  
23 many years ago. I participated when we went from 34  
24 down to 12. Do we need to come back and take a look at  
25 those to really address rail, other investments into

1 technology? How can we get some of this traffic off of  
2 the roads to move forward? And the waterway is  
3 critically important. But that disturbs me we have that  
4 many projects that are identified that we don't have in  
5 the UTP so we can begin to address that. You have your  
6 work cut out. Thank you, Caroline.

7 MS. MAYS: Thank you.

8 VICE-CHAIRMAN MOSELEY: Chairman.

9 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Yes, Vice-Chairman.

10 VICE-CHAIRMAN MOSELEY: I want to just  
11 say congratulations to Caroline Mays for keeping up with  
12 Chair Emmett and his Vice-Chair, now Secretary Cascos.  
13 What a wonderful report you're bringing us, and I look  
14 forward to Judge Emmett's remarks as well.

15 But it's a very dynamic document. It  
16 lays a wonderful baseline of information. These  
17 recommendations are profound. As you're hearing already  
18 from the dais, when you have a 44.8-billion-dollar  
19 estimated budget impact, that's a big number. There's  
20 approximately a billion dollars per year, in your  
21 report, related to how the trucking industry suffers.  
22 So some would say, well, that would be about 44 a year  
23 to get a return on investment. But that's really not  
24 true, is it, because we have a one-and-a-half-trillion-  
25 dollar gross state product; and we're working off of a

1 system that was significantly in place half a century  
2 ago.

3 And so this recommendation contemplates  
4 -- I'm looking at it as the next generation, is that  
5 correct, of a freight system? And I'm just curious what  
6 other states maybe are doing in this vein to understand  
7 how to move goods to market.

8 MS. MAYS: Commissioner Moseley, thank  
9 you very much for your remarks. One, I will tell you  
10 that all the other states are looking at Texas because  
11 we literally are the freight center when it comes to  
12 freight, international trade, our ports, our urban  
13 areas. So a lot of states are looking to us, especially  
14 in our freight plan development.

15 But, also, other states are a little bit  
16 ahead of the game, you know, for instance, Florida. We  
17 look to Florida as kind of our peer state as well.  
18 They're doing some significant things in terms of their  
19 funding, the mechanisms they use, and how they fund  
20 freight as a multi-modal system.

21 Other states, like Washington and Oregon,  
22 are doing other interesting things that we can learn  
23 from; but I think when it comes to the freight plan, our  
24 freight plan, a lot of states are looking at what we're  
25 doing here in Texas. And moving forward, they'll be

1 looking at how we implement our plan; and really be on  
2 the leading and cutting edge of addressing freight  
3 issues and facilitating economic development and  
4 economic growth.

5 VICE-CHAIRMAN MOSELEY: Your study,  
6 again, identifies almost \$45 billion for 1,225 projects.  
7 Are you suggesting that TxDOT be responsible for all of  
8 that, or is this just a recommendation that implies it's  
9 a group effort in putting together the next generation  
10 of freight system?

11 MS. MAYS: A great question. You know,  
12 the plan identifies a multi-modal mix of projects,  
13 including rail, highway, border, points-of-entry  
14 projects, air cover related projects. You know, so  
15 there's a multitude of entities that are going to be  
16 involved. It's going to be a collective effort, you  
17 know, to implement this project from the port community,  
18 the private sector community, the railroad community,  
19 local government, MPOs, you know, are all going to have  
20 to look at this plan and kind of look at what elements  
21 of the plan they're responsible for implementing, you  
22 know, because a lot of these are not the responsibility  
23 of TxDOT, when you look at a lot of the recommendations.  
24 But the bulk of it, you know, interstates and other  
25 major infrastructure investments on the highway side

1 will be on TxDOT.

2 VICE-CHAIRMAN MOSELEY: You had some  
3 really good slides, but the one that really jumped out  
4 at me was the one showing the projected tonnage of  
5 freight moving along Texas highways in 2040 and your  
6 calculation showed 2.2 billion tons of freight and there  
7 are some red corridors along -- the map I'm looking at  
8 shows the interstate highway system and there's a color  
9 code of red to show these roadways and corridors and  
10 then the statement under that is: Over 80 percent of  
11 truck tonnage will move on these corridors in 2040.

12 And I think that, to me, is kind of a  
13 gulp to see that we depend on these corridors already  
14 just for the movement of passengers; and we're sharing  
15 these strategic corridors with strategic hauls of  
16 freight.

17 Chairman, I think it necessitates that we  
18 really take a look at these specific routes.

19 And that was just the one slide that kind  
20 of jumped out.

21 We've talked about the demographic trend  
22 of a population explosion. We've talked about fracking  
23 and the demand for getting freight in and out of the  
24 refinery communities. We've talked about the Mexican  
25 economy, the demand for getting goods to market, and

1 then the Panama shipping line.

2 So these four things really are showing  
3 up as red lines in 2040 on some strategic corridors,  
4 Commissioner Bugg, that look like they're already  
5 congested today; and we're looking at 2.2 billion tons  
6 of freight.

7 Caroline, any thoughts?

8 And, I know, Judge Emmett, I want to hear  
9 from you on that as well.

10 Do you have any comment on that?

11 MS. MAYS: Well, I think one of the  
12 comments -- a couple of comments I will make. One is,  
13 you know, looking at addressing kind of the immediate  
14 needs, which is, you know, identifying short-term  
15 solutions using technology to better manage the  
16 infrastructure.

17 And then what I mentioned earlier,  
18 incident management, because one of the issues that  
19 chokes the system is when there's an incident and it  
20 takes -- for instance, a truck incident. On average it  
21 could be six to eight hours that the interstates are  
22 shut down.

23 And then another strategy is identifying  
24 alternate routes. One of the key findings of the  
25 freight plan was, one, the lack of efficient alternate

1 routes through our existing interstate systems. A lot  
2 of our frontage roads on the interstates act as  
3 alternate routes; but, again, we have gaps in the  
4 frontage road system. So we need to close those gaps.

5 And then we've identified alternate  
6 routes, but those alternate routes are not truck  
7 friendly. So we have to make improvements and  
8 investments in those alternate route corridors so that  
9 in the event that the interstate system is shut down, we  
10 can funnel traffic on those corridors and they don't  
11 become choke points themselves. But I think there's  
12 short-term solutions, and then there's longer-term  
13 solutions.

14 I mentioned reviewing our design  
15 standards and modifying those design standards. We have  
16 a system that was built -- you know, a lot of our  
17 interstate system was built as original; and some of the  
18 designs are still original designs, interchanges, left  
19 exits, things like that, that creates a big choke point  
20 because sometimes it's a design that actually creates a  
21 choke point on minor truck traffic.

22 And then long-term investments. We need  
23 to look at some of the strategic investments that need  
24 to be made on existing corridors but also looking at  
25 completing I-69. A lot of I-69 right now, the

1 investments that are being made is to bring I-69 to  
2 interstate standards but not really looking at the  
3 actual investments that are needed in terms of moving  
4 freight efficiently on I-69. So there's a lot that can  
5 be done beyond just looking at existing corridors,  
6 looking at improving the other corridors as well.

7 VICE-CHAIRMAN MOSELEY: Thank you, and  
8 congratulations on a job well done.

9 MS. MAYS: Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: If there are no other  
11 questions for Director Mays, we do have the Honorable Ed  
12 Emmett, County Judge of Harris County, here with us.

13 And, Judge, if you will, please come  
14 forward, stating your name for the record, who you are  
15 here representing; and give us the benefit of your  
16 remarks.

17 JUDGE EMMETT: Well, thank you,  
18 Mr. Chairman.

19 I am Ed Emmett. I am County Judge of  
20 Harris County, Texas. Harris County got a lot of  
21 notoriety on some of those earlier slides, so I'd have  
22 to note that.

23 I'm here representing your Texas Freight  
24 Advisory Committee. Congratulations on appointing it.  
25 I thank you for doing that. It's important to start by

1 complimenting the staff for the fantastic job they did.  
2 As you see, Caroline has been actively involved; but I  
3 would be remiss if I didn't also thank Marc Williams for  
4 all he did on this process, too.

5 It has been -- I guess I can say it's a  
6 labor of love. Two dozen members of this committee met  
7 all over the state regularly; and unlike a lot of  
8 committees we've all served on, this was actually a  
9 working committee. What you have before you is a  
10 PowerPoint presentation, but this is the draft plan  
11 that's going to go out to the public.

12 The committee went through it not only  
13 page by page but line by line. And there wasn't always  
14 agreement, and I think that's a good thing. We had  
15 represented in the room shippers, the people who own the  
16 freight, carriers of all modes, and then the general  
17 public. And so it was important that all of these  
18 viewpoints be taken into consideration, and that was  
19 done.

20 So thank you for creating the Freight  
21 Advisory Committee the way you did. I think it puts  
22 Texas in a good position because the realty is: Moving  
23 freight is critical to the economy. The quickest way to  
24 have an economy stagnate is for freight not to be able  
25 to move. It's just that simple.

1                   But, as we all know, there's this old  
2                   saying that "Freight doesn't vote." So when it comes  
3                   time to look at transportation projects, too frequently  
4                   we pay attention to commuters and to individuals; and we  
5                   forget about freight. But without freight moving, the  
6                   economy's going to stall and those individual won't have  
7                   a job and they won't have anyplace place to go to.

8                   And history is full of examples of where  
9                   a community, a region, an area decided to stand pat,  
10                  "Oh, we're comfortable with what were doing." Well, you  
11                  can't stand pat because somebody else is going to move  
12                  ahead of you in this world that we live in. So defining  
13                  a Texas freight network by involving the shippers and  
14                  carriers and public is absolutely critical to the future  
15                  economy and growth of the State of Texas.

16                  What this plan does, this draft plan, it  
17                  gives Texas a list from which to craft a final plan that  
18                  will allow you to put dollars where they will have the  
19                  greatest impact. Nobody believes we're ever going to  
20                  have all the dollars we'd like. That's not going to  
21                  happen. We've all been in this business far too long.

22                  So it's important, therefore, that those  
23                  like you, who make decisions of where to spend the  
24                  money, know where's the bang for the buck. That's what  
25                  this plan does.

1 I will have to stop at this point and say  
2 that one of Caroline's major tasks was to keep reminding  
3 us that this is in response to MAP-21 at the Federal  
4 level. We've got to be able to, frankly, be ahead of  
5 some of the other states. We want to be sure that what  
6 we have in here is something that will allow us to  
7 maximize the Federal dollars that are coming down, and  
8 we can match some of that, because the question was  
9 asked, "Who's going to pay for all this?" Well, it's  
10 going to be lots of different people.

11 But if we don't comply with MAP-21 -- and  
12 so, Caroline, thank you. I growled at her a few times  
13 during this. She said, "No, you have to do it this  
14 way." We even growled over some of the language that  
15 was used; and she said, "Well, that's the language that  
16 MAP-21 requires." So take it up with her if you don't  
17 like some of language; but bottom line is, this will  
18 hopefully make your job easier and keep Texas growing in  
19 a global commerce world.

20 With that in mind, anticipating a  
21 question, Mr. Chairman, of what are the priorities here,  
22 first and foremost is safety. We cannot get beyond  
23 safety. And the example I would give you is the  
24 identification of the bridges, which ones are most in  
25 need of improvement; but there are things that can be

1 done without infrastructure.

2 The whole incident management program  
3 that was talked about, it's so critical in the world we  
4 live in today. With information being so readily  
5 available, we just need to step up and do that. And  
6 that incident management program will greatly improve  
7 safety.

8 Congestion relief. We all knew the  
9 Governor cared about congestion relief. We saw it in  
10 his commercials back during the campaign. So that's  
11 something that the Governor has stated, and I certainly  
12 support him on that.

13 And there are examples throughout this  
14 plan. The Texas triangle showed up, and it is bright  
15 red by 2040 if we don't do something.

16 I-69. Now, there's got to be a bypass  
17 around the Houston area, something that will take the  
18 freight out of the ports of Freeport and Galveston and  
19 Houston and keep it out of that congested area called  
20 Harris County. And, of course, the traffic management  
21 system will help that a great deal, also.

22 International commerce. We can't be  
23 provochial. We understand that we are part of an  
24 international system; and for those of us who don't live  
25 along the border, it's easy to think, "Well, that's a

1 problem down there." But, in fact, those border  
2 projects are critical to the entire state; and what  
3 comes across that border, most of it's not stopping at  
4 the border. It's coming through. So we need to  
5 understand that dynamic, and we're getting there.

6 And, finally, the last thing I'll comment  
7 on -- and then I'll happily take your questions -- the  
8 Intracoastal Waterway is not something the average Texan  
9 thinks about. They've heard of it maybe, but the  
10 reality is a lot of freight moves on the Intracoastal  
11 Waterway. It's something that this Department and the  
12 Federal Government maybe, we hope, can work out a new  
13 arrangement of how to improve that waterway, increase  
14 the draft to where it needs to be, and improve some of  
15 the lock systems to where the barges don't have to be  
16 broken apart and then reconfigured because that just  
17 adds to the congestion on the waterway.

18 And to several points that have been  
19 made, congestion in one mode affects all the other  
20 modes. The more efficient we can have movements on the  
21 rail, on the waterway, then that enhances the movements  
22 that are on the highways and vice-versa.

23 So, Mr. Chairman, I have enjoyed  
24 participating in this. It really has been an enjoyable  
25 exercise, and it's been one of the most challenging

1 exercises in my career. So thank you very much.

2 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you very much,  
3 Judge.

4 Commissioner Austin, do you have a  
5 question or a comment?

6 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: Yes.  
7 Judge, thank you very much.

8 And for those of y'all that may not have  
9 heard this before, back during the Panama Canal Task  
10 Force -- and I think you said the same with the  
11 freight -- your opening comment on day one was, "Just  
12 because Panama Canal's opening up and we have these  
13 other corridors doesn't mean all this stuff is going to  
14 just come in, traffic and freight." Your priority was,  
15 "We need to first protect what we already have."

16 And I think that comment resonates  
17 because we have great businesses already doing business  
18 in Texas. We have goods that are being shipped out,  
19 also components that are being shipped in to reconfigure  
20 and ship back out, whichever the mode; and it comes back  
21 to economic development. Let's protect what we have  
22 because we have a lot of other states that are calling  
23 on Texas businesses to go elsewhere.

24 As you mentioned, international ports. I  
25 was with some folks from Charleston, South Carolina last

1 week. Their topic of conversation -- finally, I  
2 couldn't stand it being a Texan -- they were talking  
3 about how their port is going to be an international  
4 port for all the Panama Canal, these big Panamanian  
5 ships to distribute the East Coast. Well, I did engage.  
6 And I said, "You come out of the Panama Canal, you take  
7 a left; and you're in Texas." But our ports are going  
8 to be significant.

9           And a lot of this activity we're focusing  
10 on traffic coming through Texas and imports coming into  
11 Texas. What we forget about, compared to other states,  
12 is that we have about a 30 percent export rate going out  
13 with container ships. How do we fill up the railcars  
14 going back to the Port of Long Beach?

15           And as you look at the strikes -- you  
16 know, Texas is a right-to-work state; and with our  
17 seaports, we're able to turn goods faster and quicker  
18 than what they can on the West Coast. It's been tested  
19 and tested and tested. We have a great system; and as  
20 more businesses figure this out, that's going to  
21 continue to add more capacity and problem congestion  
22 needs.

23           But I want to thank you for what you've  
24 done. And one final question as we look at this. We  
25 can't do this ourselves. It's going take involvement,

1 as Commissioner Moseley said, with the manufacturers,  
2 the ports, the rail, the air.

3 What is the role of public/private  
4 partnerships in trying to advance some of these projects  
5 and those that we either have or don't have in the UTP?

6 JUDGE EMMETT: Well, public/private  
7 partnerships were discussed a lot, every day at every  
8 meeting because the reality is Government at any level  
9 is not going to be able to pay for all of this.

10 But to your point, I tell people all the  
11 time: Look at a map. Look at a globe. No matter where  
12 the ship comes from, Panama Canal, Brazil, India,  
13 through the Suez Canal, ships are going to get larger  
14 and larger and larger; and they're going to want to make  
15 one port call and turn around and go back.

16 Well, if you look at a map, Texas coast  
17 is perfectly situated to be that gateway for all of  
18 North American; but the only way that's going to happen,  
19 the ports have got to step up and make their  
20 improvements. The rail lines that serve all the ports  
21 are going to have to be more engaged, and they're doing  
22 as much as they can.

23 The example I'll give you on that -- not  
24 to take too much of your time -- but if an 8,000 TEU  
25 ship comes into any port, say, it's got 5,000 containers

1 on it, because a lot of them are 40 feet long, if half  
2 of those are staying in that port, that's 2500. The  
3 other 2500 containers going inland, say, to Dallas/  
4 Fort Worth you can put 2500 on trucks; or you can find a  
5 way to use rail or other technology to get them there.  
6 That's going to take private investment. So we've got  
7 to do those things if we're going to live up to our  
8 potential.

9 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: When you say  
10 private investment in other forms of rail, something  
11 like a freight shuttle?

12 JUDGE EMMETT: Freight shuttle is one  
13 alternative that's being discussed, and all those need  
14 to be on the table.

15 The railroads are investing billions of  
16 dollars in their own infrastructure. That's always  
17 important to note.

18 And then the trucking industry, we like  
19 to say, well, we build all their highways for them; but  
20 they invest, too, in equipment and in technology. And  
21 so all that investment is necessary.

22 So thank you.

23 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: Thank you very  
24 much.

25 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Any other questions of

1 the Judge?

2 Yes, Vice-Chair Moseley.

3 VICE-CHAIRMAN MOSELEY: Judge, thank you  
4 for your leadership and your willingness to spend so  
5 much time to give the State this quality benchmark of  
6 data. It's really a valuable tool, and it looks like  
7 the work's just beginning. I mean, you've identified  
8 the opportunities for us going forward.

9 This particular map in front of us,  
10 looking forward into the future, 2.2 billion tons of  
11 freight in 2040. A lot of red starts showing up. Even  
12 Amarillo's a part of this discussion, based on this map.

13 It implies that we should have a  
14 full-blown discussion with the Feds, maybe, about  
15 interstate highway design. I don't know if you guys got  
16 into that. But were there some discussions about --  
17 like, one thing -- and I'm not an engineer; but it just  
18 seems like you wouldn't want an asphalt surface on a  
19 roadway that's a freight corridor. It seems like you'd  
20 want to designate that that is a concrete roadway, and  
21 you might even have heavier designs for rebar. You  
22 might even want to talk about dedicated lanes for trucks  
23 in extremely congested sections of that corridor.

24 Did you guys have time to develop some of  
25 those discussions within your committee?

1 JUDGE EMMETT: Those discussions were  
2 held, particularly the idea of where you have dedicated  
3 lanes and things like that; but the reality we're  
4 facing -- and I've got to be careful. I don't want to  
5 be too critical of the Federal Government -- but we  
6 still don't a Surface Transportation Bill. So until we  
7 know where they are -- and that's why my comment about  
8 Caroline keeping us on track on MAP-21 is important,  
9 because when they finally get around to having a  
10 permanent Surface Transportation Bill, we want to make  
11 sure Texas is first in line to access whatever's there.  
12 So that's the bottom line.

13 VICE-CHAIRMAN MOSELEY: Well, thank you,  
14 again, for your hard work.

15 JUDGE EMMETT: Thank you.

16 VICE-CHAIRMAN MOSELEY: Wonderful  
17 product.

18 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you,  
19 Commissioners.

20 Are there any other questions or comments  
21 of Judge Emmett? If not, thank you very much for coming  
22 forward.

23 JUDGE EMMETT: Thank you very much.

24 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: And we do have some  
25 additional comment cards. I'd first ask Al Alonzi to

1 please come forward. Please state your name for the  
2 record, who you're here representing; and then give us  
3 the benefit of your remarks, sir. Thank you.

4 MR. ALONZI: Good morning, Mr. Chairman,  
5 Commissioners, General Weber. For the record, my name  
6 is Al Alonzi. I am the Division Administrator for the  
7 Federal Highway Administration here in Austin, Texas,  
8 not to...yeah, yeah.

9 (Laughter.)

10 MR. ALONZI: I won't say anything more,  
11 Judge Emmett. I am looking forward to reauthorization  
12 as you do as well.

13 (Laughter.)

14 MR. ALONZI: I wanted to just quickly  
15 remark and say congratulations, first off, on getting to  
16 this point of pulling together the first Freight  
17 Mobility Plan in Texas as the Texas Department of  
18 Transportation, not the Highway Department but as the  
19 Department of Transportation. Echoing what Commission  
20 Austin was saying a few moments ago, you're focusing on  
21 a multi-modal integrated approach to moving freight more  
22 efficiently and safely within Texas and across the  
23 country and across the globe.

24 As we all know, as Judge Emmett was  
25 saying, Texas does play a critical role, a critical link

1 in moving that freight and moving the economy and  
2 creating jobs not only here in Texas but, again, across  
3 the globe.

4 We all know that while the challenges are  
5 great -- and I think Caroline's presentation certainly  
6 pointed to that -- if you fail to plan, you're planning  
7 to fail. And this, I think, takes a tremendous first  
8 step in getting towards the goals not only of MAP-21;  
9 but I think as we look to the two reauthorization  
10 proposals now in front of Congress, one from the  
11 Administration, the other from the Senate, it not only  
12 continues to underscore the movement of freight but  
13 actually creates a freight program, which has not been  
14 done before in a Surface Transportation Bill.

15 So I think to the credit of you, of your  
16 staff, and certainly the leadership of Judge Emmett and  
17 the Freight Advisory Committee, you are, in fact,  
18 setting Texas up to benefit from whatever may come of a  
19 final authorization bill, whenever it comes. And we  
20 would certainly -- because we've been involved in your  
21 process throughout -- and it is MAP-21 compliant -- but  
22 beyond that, we would certainly pledge to work with you  
23 to maximize and leverage the Federal dollars that come  
24 through the next program to meet -- to best meet the  
25 needs of Texas. And that's all I wanted to say.

1 Thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you very much,  
3 sir. Questions or comments?

4 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: Al, first, thank  
5 you for being here. It's not often we have one of our  
6 quasi-regulators here to come in and visit, but I want  
7 to say thank you because you and your counterparts have  
8 been at the table, talking with different projects.  
9 Instead of going in a linear process, it's worked great  
10 having you at the table from the beginning.

11 And one thing is -- when we're looking at  
12 these big projects that are here, one thing, as you  
13 know, Texas has done, through the NEPA process, we've  
14 brought some of that back to us. And I know you work  
15 closely with Carlos Swanke.

16 From your perspective, how is that  
17 working? We're still in the infancy stages of  
18 implementing that. If you wouldn't mind just sharing,  
19 how is it working from y'all's perspective?

20 MR. ALONZI: Sure. Ironically, we have  
21 staff this week coming in from Washington D.C. and a few  
22 other states as well, going around Texas doing -- what  
23 that law requires is that we conduct an audit to see, in  
24 fact, how are things going now that we have assigned our  
25 responsibilities to the Department.

1                   Our first audit was conducted a few  
2 months back, several months back, and -- fairly  
3 comprehensive; and we found that you guys are well  
4 positioned to be able to take over those  
5 responsibilities and do it efficiently and effectively  
6 while taking on the roles of the Federal Government and  
7 that -- you know, the MOU was assigned only in December.

8                   So we're about nine or ten months into  
9 it, and we found tremendous progress. If you look at  
10 the number of documents compared to what it was perhaps  
11 a few years ago, clearly, it's moving forward more  
12 efficiently. It's still in it's infancy, but we  
13 continue to work closely with you guys to make sure that  
14 you succeed. And that's very much our approach to this,  
15 how can we help set you up to succeed.

16                   COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: Well, we really  
17 appreciate those comments. And what that means to  
18 Texans, while we're looking at things like Proposition 7  
19 and Proposition 1 that can or might give us more money,  
20 as we begin to implement and execute the environmental  
21 process, making sure we have the right documents in a  
22 much more efficient and faster way is going to help us  
23 be able to deliver much quicker. So I want to say thank  
24 you for working with us through that audit.

25                   And just for record, later on in agenda

1 we're going to have something about adopting our audit  
2 plan. And we had a report, Commissioner Bugg and I, in  
3 our audit committee yesterday that we have about 43  
4 different agencies that audit TxDOT. That doesn't  
5 include the ones across the street. And I know y'all  
6 are one of them, and I'm glad to hear we got a great  
7 report. Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you very much,  
9 sir, for coming forward.

10 We have a card from John LaRue.

11 Mr. LaRue, please come forward, state  
12 your name and who you're here representing for the  
13 record; and then give us the benefit of your remarks.

14 MR. LARUE: Good morning. My name is  
15 John LaRue. I'm with the Port of Corpus Christi, and  
16 I'm one of the two ports that were on your Freight  
17 Advisory Committee, along with the Port of Houston. I  
18 just want to let you know how important this plan will  
19 be for all the Texas ports, both the deep- and  
20 shallow-draft ports; and we look forward to the  
21 finalization of the plan to its implementation and  
22 execution.

23 And I wanted to also thank Judge Emmett  
24 and Caroline and the TxDOT staff for leading us through  
25 the process. It was excellent and very well done.

1 Thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you. Any  
3 questions for Mr. LaRue?

4 Yes, Mr. Commissioner Austin.

5 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: You've got a little  
6 project going on in your neck of the woods.

7 MR. LARUE: We've got a few.

8 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: A few, I was going  
9 to say. One of the things that the Judge talked about,  
10 Interstate 69. And our Federal relations team up in DC  
11 do a great job because we look at interstate  
12 designations, freight. I-69, which you've been a great  
13 part of -- the Port has been a participant, we're asking  
14 for National Freight Designation; but also during the  
15 recent water bill, Water Resource Development Bill, your  
16 port was one of the beneficiaries, as well as several  
17 others in Texas and also Intracoastal Designation of  
18 being able to move clean dredge with efficiencies and  
19 the Corps of Engineers. And you guys in the port  
20 community gave a lot of input that is going to help  
21 expedite and bring more traffic to our ports. So y'all  
22 are gearing up.

23 MR. LARUE: Thank you. And you're right.  
24 Your office and Melanie in Washington has been a  
25 tremendous asset for all Texas ports working through

1 WRDA and we, likewise, are waiting for this  
2 transportation bill to get funded.

3 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you. If there are  
4 no other questions. Thank you very much, sir, for your  
5 work on Advisory Committee. We appreciate it.

6 We have a comment card from Bruce Mann.  
7 Mr. Mann, please come forward up here, state your name  
8 and who you're representing, your title; and give us the  
9 benefit of your thoughts.

10 MR. MANN: Chairman Lewis, Commissioners,  
11 General Weber, TxDOT staff, good morning. For the  
12 record, my name is Bruce Mann. I'm the Freight Mobility  
13 Manager for the Port of Houston. On behalf of  
14 Chairman Janiece Longoria, our Port Commissioners, and  
15 our Executive Director, Roger Guenther, I'd like to  
16 express our sincere gratitude for the opportunity to  
17 comment on the Texas Freight Mobility Plan and its  
18 importance to the Port of Houston and to all the ports  
19 in the state of Texas.

20 First and foremost, we commend  
21 Judge Emmett's leadership on the Texas Freight Advisory  
22 Committee. Bringing together such a broad group of  
23 stakeholders with occasionally-competing interests can  
24 be a daunting task; however Judge Emmett and the rest of  
25 the committee have done an outstanding job. And we

1 believe that this report successfully highlights the  
2 vital task that was before our committee and is before  
3 this Commission. We believe that the important aspects  
4 of this report highlight the need to utilize all modes  
5 of transportation for movement of freight as well as  
6 exploring and studying innovative transportation  
7 technology and solutions, like the freight shuttle.

8           Furthermore, this report will help  
9 prioritize transportation investments based upon the  
10 State's vision for economic growth and global  
11 competitiveness.

12           The Port of Houston and many other Texas  
13 ports continue to invest heavily in capital projects to  
14 keep pace with growing demand, fueled by tremendous  
15 investments by industry and facilities all along the  
16 ship channel and the Gulf Coast. These billions of  
17 dollars in capital projects and manufacturing facilities  
18 will significantly increase the exports through Texas  
19 ports.

20           The Port of Houston with the vision to be  
21 America's distribution hub for the next generation  
22 firmly believes that the Texas Freight Advisory  
23 Committee's -- the Texas Freight Mobility Plan is great  
24 strategic framework for moving the state forward and  
25 ensuring that we have transportation assets in place for

1 future growth.

2 Thank you for your recognition of the  
3 importance of a freight transportation network. At the  
4 Port of Houston we stand by, ready to work together to  
5 meet the exciting challenges of handling the growth and  
6 tremendous growth that we face between now and 2040.

7 Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you very much,  
9 Mr. Mann.

10 Any questions?

11 (No audible response.)

12 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you very much for  
13 your thoughts.

14 We have a card from Glen Jones.

15 MR. JONES: I'm Glen Jones, representing  
16 Texas Farm Bureau. We'd like to express our  
17 appreciation of being on the freight committee, also  
18 part of the plan and previously part of the Panama Canal  
19 Committee. It was very educational for us and our  
20 members.

21 Texas Farm Bureau is a non-profit farm  
22 and ranch organization representing agriculture  
23 producers who produce virtually every product in Texas,  
24 cotton, wheat, free grains, cattle, sheep, fruit,  
25 vegetables, goats -- you name it -- rice, pretty much

1 our members grow it.

2           Transportation is very vital to  
3 agriculture, as you know. The first point of direct  
4 effect on us producers from transportation is getting  
5 our production items that we use, you know, fertilizer,  
6 chemicals, fuels, feed, those items. But once we do  
7 that, then the harvest becomes another sector of  
8 importance and getting our harvest from the farm or  
9 ranch to the first point of sale, like to the grain  
10 elevator or to the cotton gin or getting your cattle to  
11 auction or getting your cattle to the feed lot from the  
12 auction or going to the packer directly. So those are  
13 the direct effects upon our producers.

14           But in addition to that -- and most of  
15 that is done by truck but there's a second phase that  
16 really impacts us as much as that but we are not as  
17 directly involved in that. And that deals with when you  
18 take it to an elevator or auction at that first point of  
19 sale, then you dispose of your ownership of that  
20 commodity. Then it's given to somebody else to take  
21 that commodity and either process it further, which most  
22 agriculture products have to be done, or do something  
23 else to it to get to consumer.

24           So that second phase if that system,  
25 which uses rail, truck, and ports is not adequately

1 provided for; and it has a trickle-down effect upon what  
2 agriculture gets for their product. If it's  
3 uneconomical to transport or it's costing more to  
4 transport once it leaves the farmer's ownership, then  
5 he's going to end up getting less for his commodity in  
6 the long run.

7 Therefore, overall, we are very  
8 supportive of improving the transportation system and  
9 the work that the committee has done and what y'all do.  
10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you, Mr. Jones.

12 Any questions of Mr. Jones?

13 (No response.)

14 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you, sir.

15 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Director Mays, any final  
16 thoughts? That's all the cards we have.

17 MS. MAYS: Chairman and Commissioners,  
18 General Weber, I just would like to thank you for giving  
19 us the opportunity to come and present the Freight  
20 Mobility Plan to you. As I mentioned earlier, we will  
21 be taking this for public comment and then we'll have  
22 the Freight Advisory meet and endorse the plan and then  
23 we'll bring it back to you for adoption.

24 And I also want to thank Judge Emmett and  
25 the entire Advisory Committee that have dedicated their

1 time, spent countless hours working with us in  
2 developing this plan.

3 I also want to recognize Marc Williams  
4 that has been very instrumental, attended every single  
5 meeting, literally, you know. So he's been very  
6 instrumental.

7 I also want thank my staff. I have  
8 Sondra Johnson here and Kale. And also, now, I have  
9 assumed International Relations staff, Manuela and  
10 Eduardo, working on border issues.

11 So, again, you know, we're definitely  
12 looking at how to implement this plan. Moving forward  
13 we'll be having those discussions. And I look forward  
14 to working with you, Commissioner Bugg.

15 And, again, thank you for the  
16 opportunity.

17 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you very much,  
18 Director.

19 If there are no other questions or  
20 comments with regard to this matter, we'll get back to  
21 the General and go on with our agenda.

22 GENERAL WEBER: Next up is Item 4, the  
23 award of our Federal Aviation Grant Funding.

24 And our Director of Aviation, Dave  
25 Fulton, will present.

1 Dave.

2 MR. FULTON: Thank you, General Weber.  
3 Chairman, Commissioners. For the record, my name is  
4 Dave Fulton, Director of TxDOT's Aviation Division.  
5 This Minute Order contains a request for grant funding  
6 approval for four airport improvement projects. The  
7 total estimated cost of the request as shown in  
8 Exhibit A is approximately \$4.8 million, 4.3 in Federal  
9 funds; 500,000 in local funds. A public hearing was  
10 held on August 28th. No comments were received. We  
11 recommend approval of this Minute Order.

12 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Commissioners, are there  
13 any questions or comments with regard to this matter?  
14 If none --

15 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: I have one  
16 question.

17 Dave, we had a discussion item on a  
18 separate matter in the audit committee yesterday; and I  
19 kind of want to ask: When we give grants, are these  
20 basically passed through; or do we ever put any money  
21 into these grants at all?

22 MR. FULTON: Yes, we do. We administer  
23 the Federal Aviation grant funds for general aviation  
24 airports throughout Texas. So the Commission does make  
25 the decision on where that money goes. So it's not just

1 passed through. Your body makes that decision, and then  
2 we help the communities build that, the project, with  
3 that grant. We also have a State Grant Program that is  
4 very similar but broader than the Federal funds.

5 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: Thank you. And I  
6 guess we follow up to make sure those monies are used  
7 appropriately and the projects implemented as planned  
8 for.

9 MR. FULTON: And as was mentioned earlier  
10 about audits, we have been audited continually for the  
11 last 23 years and -- knock on wood -- we have not had a  
12 material discrepancy.

13 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: Perfect. One last  
14 comment. I know that there's talk federally about a  
15 potential government shutdown. A couple of years ago  
16 when they had this exercise this Department had looked  
17 at providing funding to keep some of the contract  
18 airports open. And I visited with Andrea yesterday. I  
19 believe that has been fixed where, if I understand this  
20 correctly, the contract airports, the other eight  
21 airports, will not be impacted should there be a  
22 government shutdown?

23 MR. FULTON: That is correct. Those are  
24 private contractors who have contracts -- existing  
25 contracts with the FAA that are not to term yet. So

1 those contracts will go on, even if the Government shuts  
2 down.

3 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: So to keep our air  
4 space safe?

5 MR. FULTON: Yes, sir.

6 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: Thank you, Dave.

7 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: If there are no other  
8 questions of Director Fulton and no other comments,  
9 then, Commissioner Vandergriff, do you move to award  
10 Federal Grant Funding for airport improvement in  
11 accordance with the staff recommendations?

12 COMMISSIONER VANDERGRUFF: I so move.

13 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: And Vice-Chair Moseley,  
14 do you second?

15 VICE-CHAIRMAN MOSELEY: Yes, sir.

16 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: If there are no other  
17 comments, then we have motion and a second. All in  
18 favor of the motion please say "Aye."

19 (Chorus of "Ayes.")

20 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Opposed, "No."

21 (No audible response.)

22 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: The motion passes  
23 unanimously.

24 General.

25 GENERAL WEBER: Next is Item 5,

1 appointment of Bicycle Advisory Committee Members.

2 Our Public Transportation Division  
3 Director Eric Gleason will present.

4 Eric.

5 MR. GLEASON: Good morning, Mr. Chairman,  
6 Commission Members, and General Weber. For the record,  
7 my name is Eric Gleason, TxDOT Director of Public  
8 Transportation.

9 Agenda Item 5, appoints four new members  
10 to TxDOT's Bicycle Advisory Committee. The Committee is  
11 charged with making recommendations to the Commission on  
12 the development of bicycling infrastructure in Texas and  
13 reviews and makes recommendations for items of mutual  
14 concern between the Department and the bicycling  
15 community.

16 The recommended appointments are as  
17 follows: Ms. Allison Kaplan from Austin to fill the  
18 vacancy created by Jason Fialkoff on his departure for  
19 Washington state. This term expires in August of 2017.  
20 Ms. Kaplan is a Transportation and Environmental Planner  
21 and previous Chair of the Austin Bicycle Advisory  
22 Committee.

23 Mr. Shawn Twing from Amarillo. Mr. Twing  
24 is an attorney and a long-time resident of the Texas  
25 panhandle. He's an avid cyclist and a triathlete.

1 Mr. Twing's term is scheduled to expire in August of  
2 2018.

3 Mr. Joseph Prichard from Dallas.

4 Mr. Prichard is a licensed architect and commercial real  
5 estate developer. He's an avid recreational cyclist and  
6 cycling advocate, and some of you may recall that last  
7 year Mr. Prichard actually addressed this Commission on  
8 his successful navigation of the Northeast Texas Trail.  
9 I think his term was he slogged his way through 130  
10 miles. Mr. Prichard's term expires in 2018.

11 And, then, finally Dr. Anne Marie  
12 Williamson from Wichita Falls. Dr. Williamson is  
13 long-serving member of the Bicycle Advisory Committee,  
14 having served for ten years before this appointment.  
15 She has been an active participant in the Wichita Falls  
16 cycling community and participates in programs that  
17 encourage and support cycling. As a healthcare  
18 professional, Dr. Williamson recognizes the emotional  
19 and physical benefits of cycling. Her term expires in  
20 August of 2018.

21 And also I want to take this opportunity  
22 to express our sincere appreciation to recognize  
23 departing members, Mr. Howard Peak of San Antonio and  
24 Ms. Margaret Charlesworth from San Angelo for their ten  
25 years of the dedicated service on the Advisory

1 Committee.

2 And with that, the staff recommends your  
3 approval of this Minute Order.

4 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Are there any questions  
5 of Director Gleason at this time?

6 (No audible response.)

7 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: If there are no  
8 questions, then, Commissioner Austin, do you move that  
9 we appoint the four new members to the Bicycle Advisory  
10 Committee --

11 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: So moved.

12 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: -- in accordance with  
13 the staff recommendations?

14 And, Commissioner Bugg, do you second  
15 that motion?

16 COMMISSIONER BUGG: I'll second that  
17 motion.

18 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: We have a motion and a  
19 second. If there's no further discussion, we'll proceed  
20 to vote. All in favor say "Aye."

21 (Chorus of Ayes.)

22 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Any opposed, "No."

23 (No audible response.)

24 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: It's unanimously  
25 carried.

1 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: Eric, are any of  
2 the new members here, by chance?

3 MR. GLEASON: They are not.

4 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you. And we'll  
5 got back to the agenda.

6 GENERAL WEBER: Eric, please continue  
7 with Item 6 Approval of Projects under 2015  
8 Transportation Alternatives Program.

9 MR. GLEASON: Agenda Item 6 was  
10 \$25.7 million in Transportation Alternatives Program, or  
11 TAP, federal funds to small urban areas of Texas with a  
12 population between 5,000 and 200,000, consistent with  
13 federal program guidance. These funds represent four  
14 years of received and anticipated federal program funds,  
15 fiscal years 2015 through fiscal years 2016. The  
16 Administrative Code requirements use TAP funds for  
17 construction of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure  
18 projects only.

19 The Department published a call for TAP  
20 projects on January 16th, 2015. Consistent with federal  
21 program requirements and the TAP, projects were  
22 solicited in areas of the state under 5,000 in  
23 population, also called non-urban, and in areas of the  
24 state between 5,000 and 200,000 in population, called  
25 small urban. An estimated \$52 million is available for

1 awards, split roughly 50/50 between the two areas,  
2 again, as required by federal program rules.

3 The Department hosted a number of  
4 opportunities for potential project sponsors to go over  
5 TxDOT call requirements and program rules, and proposals  
6 were due on or before May 4th to 2015. We received 121  
7 project applications of which 118 were judged eligible  
8 after an initial screening based on project type,  
9 location, and sponsor. Forty-three applications were  
10 received from non-urban areas, and seventy-five  
11 applications were received from small urban areas. The  
12 total requests for Federal funding was approximately  
13 \$126 million, \$31 million for projects in non-urban  
14 areas and \$95 million for projects in small urban areas.

15 TAP project nominations were reviewed by  
16 both Division and District staff including design,  
17 environmental, traffic operations division staff and  
18 selected district based bicycle pedestrian coordinators.  
19 Projects were scored using criteria published in TxDOT's  
20 2015 TAP Program Guide, which was available to all  
21 potential project interested parties on TxDOT's public  
22 transportation website.

23 Additionally, right-of-way, rail, and  
24 bridge division staff reviewed specific projects for the  
25 elements requiring this functional area of expertise.

1 Staff reviewed projects for public benefit, readiness  
2 for construction, and requirements. Federal Highway  
3 Administration staff was consulted consulted throughout  
4 the process.

5 An Evaluation Committee appointed by the  
6 Executive Director reviewed, evaluated, and confirmed  
7 the process used to reach today's recommendations.

8 Today's action awards funds to 17  
9 projects located in small urban areas of the state.  
10 These projects are listed in Exhibit A. Of the 75  
11 smaller proposals, these 17 were judged to be most  
12 consistent with intended program expenditures, readiness  
13 to construct, and straightforward from a local match  
14 standard. The cash match of an independent source of  
15 funding for project development expenses.

16 For your information, we are targeting a  
17 year-end award for projects from non-urban areas of the  
18 state. All project sponsors in these areas have  
19 received a request from us for some additional  
20 information needed to complete our evaluation of these  
21 project proposals.

22 The staff recommends your approval of  
23 this Minute Order.

24 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Are there any questions  
25 or comments -- questions of Director Gleason?

1                   COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: Eric, a couple.  
2                   Last year, we had -- y'all came forth -- and we had a  
3                   kind of cleansing, if you will. There were a lot of  
4                   grants that had been awarded that had never executed or  
5                   implemented. I think that was kind of a message to be  
6                   sent back. So on the grading criteria now, y'all are  
7                   really gauging the ability for these different entities,  
8                   cities, or whatever, to execute the contract, institute  
9                   their plan?

10                  MR. GLEASON: Yes, sir.

11                  COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: What are some of  
12                  the characteristics of a successful projects that you've  
13                  seen? I thing for those that may not be awarded, what  
14                  are some of the successful things you've seen that are  
15                  helping those communities.

16                  MR. GLEASON: Well, first of all, we got  
17                  a lot of great project ideas. And so really what it  
18                  came down to in our evaluation was where are they in the  
19                  project development process; how close are they to being  
20                  completed with that? Because, of course, these funds  
21                  will not pay for that. How complicated is the project?  
22                  Is it going into undisturbed areas of the community? Is  
23                  it using existing right-of-way? How complicated do we  
24                  think some of those unknown are? And then from -- you  
25                  know, how ready and prepared is the community to bring

1 the project through project development so that we can  
2 construct?

3 And it's really those two factors which  
4 really turned the table for us in terms of recommending  
5 these 17 as opposed to the balance of those that we  
6 received.

7 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: So there will be,  
8 by the end of the year for non-urban areas, an  
9 additional -- or a like amount of money, 25 million,  
10 that will come back out?

11 MR. GLEASON: Yes, sir.

12 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: I know with some of  
13 these projects that are not on here or whatever, there  
14 may be a need if we have additional federal funds  
15 remaining afterwards for a special call, potentially I'd  
16 like ask the Commission to consider that maybe after the  
17 first of year, after we evaluate all these potentially.

18 MR. GLEASON: Yes, sir.

19 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: One thing I do want  
20 to say, just in conversation with you and some others,  
21 one characteristic that I've seen successful -- see  
22 Tyler as example -- a lot of these projects fit into an  
23 overall master plan that cities, regardless of the size,  
24 have adopted. And I think that's something for those  
25 cities or communities that are working on this to come

1 back and look at your master plan, develop those, and  
2 make sure it fits in, that it's not just a little piece.  
3 Thank you.

4 MR. GLEASON: Thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: If there are no further  
6 questions for Director Gleason, or other comments, then  
7 Vice-Chair Moseley, do you move --

8 VICE-CHAIRMAN MOSELEY: So moved,  
9 Chairman.

10 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: -- to approve Federal  
11 funding for projects in accordance with the staff  
12 recommendations?

13 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: You do.

14 And Commissioner Vandergriff, do you  
15 second that motion?

16 COMMISSIONER VANDERGRIFF: I do.

17 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: We have a motion and a  
18 second. If there are no further comments, then we'll  
19 proceed to a vote. All in favor say "Aye."

20 (Chorus of "Ayes.")

21 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Any opposed, "No."

22 (No audible response.)

23 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: The motion carries.

24 Thank you, General.

25 GENERAL WEBER: Thanks, Eric.

1                   Next is item 7 A, Proposed Adoption of  
2 Amendments, Chapter 4, Employment Practices.

3                   Human Resources Director David McMillan  
4 will present.

5                   David.

6                   MR. McMILLAN: Good morning,  
7 Commissioners. Good morning, General. For the record,  
8 I'm David McMillan. I'm proud to be the Director of  
9 TxDOT's Human Resources Division.

10                  The Minute Order before you proposes  
11 amendments related to our sick leave pool program as a  
12 result of House Bill 1771. It was passed during the  
13 84th Legislative Session. As a result of House Bill  
14 1771, employees are now able to donate sick leave to  
15 other employees within the same agency.

16                  Prior to this, employees were only  
17 allowed to donate to the sick leave pool. The proposed  
18 amendments are necessary to get our rules in line with  
19 the statutory changes.

20                  Staff recommends approval of the Minute  
21 Order.

22                  CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Any questions of  
23 Director McMillan at this time? Any other comments? If  
24 not, Commissioner Bugg, do you move to approve --

25                  COMMISSIONER BUGG: So moved,

1 Mr. Chairman.

2 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: -- the proposal for  
3 amendments to these rules?

4 And, Commissioner Austin, do you second  
5 this motion?

6 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: I do.

7 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: We have a motion and  
8 second. If there's no further discussion, all in favor  
9 say, "Aye."

10 (Chorus of "Ayes.")

11 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Any opposed, "No."

12 (No audible response.)

13 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: The motion carries.

14 Thank you, sir.

15 General.

16 GENERAL WEBER: Next is Item 7 B,  
17 Proposed Amendments to Chapter 28, Oversized and  
18 Overweight Vehicles and Loads.

19 Our Director of Maintenance, Michael Lee,  
20 will present.

21 Michael.

22 MR. LEE: Thank you, General Weber,  
23 Chairman Lewis, and Commissioners. For the record, my  
24 name is Michael Lee. I'm the Director of the  
25 Maintenance Division of TxDOT.

1                   The Minute Order presented proposes  
2 changes to rules found in Chapter 28 of the Texas  
3 Administrative Code to implement requirements of the  
4 House Bill 1969 passed during the 84th Legislature  
5 Session. The amended rules implement surety bond  
6 requirements for the issuance of oversized and  
7 overweight permits by Hidalgo County Regional Mobility  
8 Authority.

9                   Staff recommends approval of this Minute  
10 Order.

11                   CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Are there any questions  
12 of Director Lee at this time? Any other comments?

13                   Yes, Commissioner Austin.

14                   COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: I want to  
15 compliment Hidalgo County because as we look at freight  
16 moving in and out of this area that's down by the  
17 bridge, we've looked at this. This a local community  
18 using local authority to help them find out what they're  
19 doing. And I know with the fee that they're  
20 implementing right there is going to help pay for the  
21 improvements and minimize future repairs. So they're  
22 really helping their corridor. I just want the  
23 compliment them.

24                   CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Any other questions or  
25 comments? If not, Commissioner Austin, then do you move

1 to approve these proposed amendments in accordance with  
2 staff recommendations?

3 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: So moved.

4 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: And, Commissioner  
5 Vandergriff, do you second that motion?

6 COMMISSIONER VANDERGRUFF: I second it.

7 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: We have a motion and a  
8 second. All in favor say "Aye."

9 (Chorus of "Ayes.")

10 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Any opposed, "no."

11 (No audible response.)

12 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: The motion carries.

13 General.

14 GENERAL WEBER: Next is Item 8,  
15 Compliance Office Report, Director of Compliance Office,  
16 Kristin Alexander, will present.

17 Kristin.

18 MS. ALEXANDER: Good morning, General,  
19 Commissioners. For the record, I am Kristin Alexander,  
20 Director of the Compliance Office for Texas Department  
21 of Transportation. The purpose of this report is to  
22 provide a summary of information related to  
23 investigations for the month of August 2015 in  
24 accordance with Transportation Code 201.452 and 201.454.

25 During August eight allegations were

1 assigned for investigation. Fifteen investigations were  
2 closed during the month and five of those were  
3 substantiated. No further actions are recommended at  
4 this time.

5 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you, Director.  
6 General.

7 GENERAL WEBER: Next is Item 9 A,  
8 Consideration of Cancellation of Pass Through Roll  
9 Agreements, City of Colleyville.

10 Innovative Financing and Debt Management  
11 Director Ben Asher will present.

12 Ben.

13 MR. ASHER: Thank you, General. Good  
14 morning, General, Chairman, Commissioners. For the  
15 record, I'm Ben Asher, the Debt Management Officer here  
16 at TxDOT. This item is to consider the cancellation of  
17 the authority to enter into a 14.4 million-dollar pass  
18 through agreement with the City of Colleyville for the  
19 construction of SH 26 and remove such funds from the  
20 allocations from the pass through program column.

21 Staff recommends the approval. I'd be  
22 happy to answer any questions.

23 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Members, are there any  
24 questions for Director Asher on this matter?

25 (No audible response.)

1                   CHAIRMAN LEWIS:  If not,  
2   Commissioner Vandergriff, do you move that we approve  
3   the staff recommendation with regard to this prior  
4   Minute Order and removal of the funds?

5                   COMMISSIONER VANDERGRIFF:  So moved.

6                   CHAIRMAN LEWIS:  And, Commissioner Bugg,  
7   do you second that motion?

8                   COMMISSIONER BUGG:  I second that motion.

9                   CHAIRMAN LEWIS:  We have a motion and a  
10  second.  If there's no further discussion, we'll proceed  
11  to a vote.  All in favor say, "Aye."

12                   (Chorus of "Ayes.")

13                   THE COURT:  Any opposed say, "Nay."

14                   (No audible response.)

15                   CHAIRMAN LEWIS:  There is no opposition;  
16  therefore, the motion passes.

17                   Thank you, Director.

18                   GENERAL WEBER:  Chairman, with your  
19  permission, at this time I'd like to defer item 9 B to a  
20  future meeting because this Department has received an  
21  updated request from the Alamo Regional Mobility  
22  Authority.

23                   CHAIRMAN LEWIS:  Without objection, then  
24  the matter will be deferred.

25                   GENERAL WEBER:  Moving on to Item 10, we

1 have the Removal of Toll Designation.

2 Director of Strategic Projects, Katie  
3 Nees, will present.

4 Katie.

5 MS. NEES: Thank you, General. Good  
6 morning, Chairman, Commissioners, and General Weber. My  
7 name is Katie Nees, and I'm the Director of the  
8 Strategic Projects Commission. A brief summary of the  
9 history of the Commission actions for U.S. 281 includes  
10 various actions by the Commission in 2003, 2004, and  
11 2008 to designate U.S. 281 as a toll facility and to  
12 allow the RMA to design, construct, operate, and  
13 maintain the project.

14 Earlier this month by resolution the  
15 Alamo Area MPO requested that the Commission take the  
16 necessary and appropriate action to implement the  
17 U.S. 281 project as a non-toll project.

18 Item 10 authorizes removal of the toll  
19 designation from the U.S. 281 North project from Loop  
20 1604 to Bexar/Comal County line, including the direct  
21 connectors at 1604.

22 This item also resumes previous actions  
23 relating to the contemplated transfer of the U.S. 281  
24 roadway and associated right-of-way to the Alamo  
25 Regional Mobility Authority and removal of the roadway

1 and right-of-way from the state highway system.

2 Therefore the Department and in  
3 accordance with the desires of the region, the interests  
4 of the State would be better served by not constructing  
5 U.S. 281 contract as a toll facility.

6 Staff is here to answer any questions,  
7 and we recommend acceptance of this Minute Order.

8 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Any questions for  
9 Director Nees at this time?

10 Thank you. Please remain with us, but  
11 have a seat. We have some comment cards --

12 MS. NEES: Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: -- that we'll proceed  
14 to.

15 The first comment card we have is from  
16 Commissioner Kevin Wolff.

17 Mr. Wolff, if you would, come forward,  
18 state your name for the record, who you're here  
19 representing; and then give us the benefit of your  
20 remarks.

21 MR. WOLFF: Chairman, Commissioners,  
22 General, thank you. For the record, my name is Kevin  
23 Wolff. I am County Commissioner for Precinct 3 in Bexar  
24 County as well as the Vice-Chair for the Alamo MPO.

25 To begin with, Commissioner Austin, in

1 some of your opening comments, you talked about being  
2 ready for when Proposition 7 passes, which it will pass.  
3 I just wanted to let you know --

4 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: I think we've got  
5 two votes now.

6 (Laughter.)

7 MR. WOLFF: There we go.

8 I just wanted to let you know that just  
9 in case other areas of the great state of Texas aren't  
10 ready, we have \$17 billion dollars worth of projects in  
11 San Antonio. Please feel free to send that money down.  
12 We'll take good care of it. And our new Commissioner  
13 Bugg will assist in that.

14 I, first, wanted to just obviously thank  
15 a number of entities; but I wanted to do it in a certain  
16 way. I want to thank what I call the money entities.  
17 We talk a lot about partnerships, partnering with local  
18 entities, partnering with TxDOT here in Austin,  
19 et cetera. And so I'm going to name off the entities  
20 that put money in this deal. Obviously, the  
21 Transportation Commission. Then there's Via, our  
22 bussing company. Then there's ATD, our Advanced  
23 Transportation District. Then there's Bexar County.  
24 Then there's the Alamo RMA. Then there's the MPO. And  
25 then then there's the city of San Antonio. That's a

1 true partnership. Trying to bring all those arguably  
2 very diverse organizations together and get them to, if  
3 not their fair share, at least some share in trying to  
4 pull large projects like this together, roughly  
5 500-million-dollar projects. So I wanted to thank them.

6 I also wanted to thank our Legislature in  
7 the past two sessions, first with Prop 1, now with  
8 Prop 7, and specifically our Speaker, Joe Straus.  
9 Without those dollars, we wouldn't be standing here  
10 having a conversation about a project we've been trying  
11 to get done for the better part of 15 years, a project  
12 that often has been contentious and difficult to get  
13 through. It's gone through I can't count how many  
14 iterations. But now having the opportunity to do it  
15 non-toll gives me the ability for, you know, one of the  
16 few times in my political existence where Ms. Terri Hall  
17 and I agree on something.

18 (Laughter.)

19 MR. WOLFF: So I can't tell you how much  
20 I want to thank you for that.

21 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: We have a card from her,  
22 too.

23 MR. WOLFF: Good.

24 At any rate, I also wanted to thank a  
25 couple other agencies, San Antonio Mobility Coalition,

1 which is here today, represented by Vic Boyer has been a  
2 huge lobbying arm in working on this particular project.

3 And a special thanks to our District  
4 Engineer Mario Jorge. Without his experience and input  
5 into this, again, I don't think I'd be standing here  
6 today.

7 And, lastly, on a more personal basis, I  
8 want to thank Commissioners Austin and Moseley for your  
9 advice and counsel to me in past sessions. I have found  
10 it very valuable, and I expect I will find the others  
11 just as valuable on a go-forward basis.

12 So I urge you to pass this, and I thank  
13 you for all the work.

14 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you very much,  
15 sir. Are there any questions of Commissioner Wolff at  
16 this time? If not, then, thank you very much for coming  
17 forward, sir.

18 MR. WOLFF: Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: As advertised, we do  
20 also have a comment card from Terri Hall.

21 Ms. Hall, will you please come forward  
22 and state your name and who you're here representing for  
23 the record; and give us the benefit of your thoughts.

24 MS. HALL: Absolutely. For the record,  
25 my name is Terri Hall, with Texans TURF as well as

1 Texans for Toll-Free Highways; and I'm delighted to be  
2 here with all of you. I haven't been here in a while.  
3 So, very good to see you.

4 Before we start my time, if you don't  
5 mind, I have a housekeeping issue. I also signed up to  
6 speak under citizen comment. It involves 281 as well as  
7 the HOV policies being implemented on the project. So I  
8 didn't know if could I ask your indulgence to combine  
9 both items into one; or if you want me to split up, I  
10 can split it up and come back later.

11 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: If it deals with the  
12 subject matter that's before us, you can go ahead and  
13 make your comments at this time; but you could make the  
14 same comments again at the end.

15 MS. HALL: Right. Gotcha.

16 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Feel free to.

17 MS. HALL: I'll just combine them into  
18 one then.

19 Well, I would like to thank you all for  
20 the hard that went into getting the tolls off of 281.  
21 It's been a very long, hard road; and we're finally  
22 seeing light at the end of the tunnel. So thank you  
23 very much. You often don't hear thanks from the  
24 citizens, and I want to make sure you hear that today.

25 We do have some concerns, actually

1 existing concerns with the toll project that will remain  
2 with this current proposal under the HOV plan for 281.  
3 We feel that it's shrinking highway capacity available  
4 to all vehicles. I'll explain why. While the toll  
5 elements have been removed, the conversion of an  
6 unrestricted lane of traffic that we have today will  
7 become a restricted HOV bus lane. So, in essence, no  
8 new additional highway main lane capacity will be added  
9 to the corridor as proposed right now.

10 It's really unprecedented to have an  
11 unrestricted lane open to all vehicles be converted into  
12 a restricted HOV bus lane. Since the dawn of the HOV  
13 experiment, they were either added on the shoulders of  
14 existing highways; or they were added as completely new  
15 lanes.

16 On 281 today we drive on six unrestricted  
17 highway lanes. And when I say "unrestricted," I mean  
18 not restricted by type of vehicle or mode you're  
19 traveling in. Obviously, we're impeded by stop lights,  
20 which is our big congestion problem out there.

21 But I do want to call your attention to  
22 one of the photos that you've been provided with, and it  
23 is an aerial map provided by the U.S. Geological Survey.  
24 It's this one. And you can see that at Loop 1604, which  
25 is down here at the bottom -- and this is 281 headed

1 north -- it is actually the highway that continues there  
2 and the frontage roads that stop at 1604.

3 The argument's been made that we're  
4 driving on a frontage road today. So, therefore, the  
5 additional capacity we're adding is all highway main  
6 lanes when it's actually the opposite. We're continuing  
7 right now, today, we drive on highway; and, as you know,  
8 281 goes from the border at Laredo all the way to  
9 Canada. It's a U.S. Highway, and we're driving on  
10 highway. We're not driving on a frontage road. I just  
11 wanted to make that point clear because today the other  
12 photo you have is from Google Earth; and you can see the  
13 number of cars, one car per lane. We're driving on six  
14 lanes through the southern portion of this project area.  
15 So we have six unrestricted highway lanes today. And  
16 TxDOT will tell you that we're driving on a frontage  
17 road because we're impeded by those stoplights at  
18 crossovers. They're asking us to count the frontage  
19 roads as that new highway, but frontage roads are  
20 degraded option compared to an expressway and they serve  
21 a completely different function than a highway capacity.  
22 Access roads are simply there to give access to those  
23 adjacent businesses. They're not designated for  
24 throughput.

25 Even with the addition of overpasses, we

1 fear the highway will be congested when it opens because  
2 you're actually shrinking our highway lanes available to  
3 all cars. And we're not getting the additional lane  
4 that's been promised for almost 20 years for this  
5 highway.

6 Now no new additional highway lane is  
7 being proposed, and it's been called a road diet. It's  
8 been tried in California in earnest, and it's failed.  
9 They haven't expanded their highways for decades; and  
10 they've told drivers, "If you don't like the congestion,  
11 then get into a carpool or on a bus." Yet, even with  
12 unbearable congestion -- arguably the worst in the  
13 country in, places, like, Los Angeles -- drivers haven't  
14 really changed their behavior because most can't get  
15 where they need to go door to door on a bus or through a  
16 carpool. California has some of the most congested  
17 highways in the country, and that's one of the factors  
18 causing them to flee to other states. Hint, hint.  
19 Right? Well, Texas population boom isn't going to  
20 continue if we implement the same failed policies as the  
21 states they're fleeing.

22 In fact, Governor Abbott has made several  
23 policy speeches criticizing cities for restrictive  
24 texting and cell phone bans as well as grocery bag bans  
25 and things like that that micromanage our behavior.

1 It's anti-liberty, and he has right to call them an  
2 attempt to California-ize Texas.

3 Well, that's precisely what these HOV bus  
4 lanes and dedicated bike lanes are doing across Texas.  
5 They're adopting unnecessarily restrictive anti-car  
6 policies that are trying to force Texans out of their  
7 cars and into a carpool or onto a bike or into mass  
8 transit.

9 While I know TxDOT is trying not to be  
10 talked down and must cooperate with local MPOs, if a  
11 local entity is doing something that will restrict  
12 travel or shrink capacity or create unnecessary  
13 constraint to our traffic flow, it's TxDOT's duty to  
14 intervene to ensure proper connectivity and efficiency  
15 on our state highway system. That's why we have a TxDOT  
16 and not a bunch of fiefdoms doing their own thing.

17 Uber and other ride-share are already  
18 finding and fulfilling the needs for other  
19 transportation options without big government, without  
20 taxpayer money, and without restricting the travel of  
21 others. The free market will adapt to the changing  
22 travel needs and provide options without the government  
23 trying to force Texans to use options that have proven  
24 impractical and unworkable for the vast majority of  
25 commuters.

1                   These sorts of social engineering tactics  
2                   have already been tried in Austin, too. Yet, their  
3                   congestion levels continue to rise. Removing parking  
4                   spaces from downtown, shrinking auto capacity,  
5                   implementing exclusive bus and bike lanes have only  
6                   jammed up Austin roads and made congestion worse than  
7                   before.

8                   The MPO's own consultant told them at a  
9                   workshop on August 28th that HOV lanes have done nothing  
10                  to measurably relieve highway congestion or measurably  
11                  increase the number of drivers who carpool. A professor  
12                  at UC Berkeley did a study of HOV lanes and highway  
13                  congestion which states, quote, "An HOV lane suffers 20  
14                  percent capacity loss compared with multi-lane freeway.  
15                  HOV lanes are either underutilized or suffer degraded  
16                  options" --

17                  CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Pardon me. Ms. Hall, if  
18                  you could, sum up your remarks.

19                  MS. HALL: Yes, sir.

20                  CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Your time has expired.

21                  MS. HALL: So why would we want to  
22                  implement a half-a-billion-dollar plan on 281 that we  
23                  already know is doomed to fail? So we're asking you to  
24                  help us get this right the first time. We can't afford  
25                  to make this kind of a mistake on this critical

1 corridor. We feel that the buses can certainly utilize  
2 the new frontage roads that will be add to this  
3 corridor, as they do all over San Antonio. And we're  
4 very concerned as to where the placement of this park  
5 and ride is at Stone Oak Parkway. That, in essence,  
6 this exclusive bus lane is only going to go for 3 miles  
7 before it ends and you have to merge back into regular  
8 traffic. So per NEPA, this facility that's supposed to  
9 carry the traffic projected for the corridor in the MPO  
10 2035 plan, which is double. We don't see how shrinking  
11 capacity is going to get us there.

12 And lastly, I want us to look at I-10  
13 North of 1604 in San Antonio as our example so that we  
14 can see what is going to happen on 281 from it. Today  
15 they only have four highway main lanes headed north to  
16 Boerne. It carries roughly the same number of cars as  
17 281 does today. We don't have stop lights --

18 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Ms. Hall, I will need to  
19 ask you to sum up your remarks.

20 MS. HALL: That was it.

21 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Okay.

22 MS. HALL: But, anyway, we already know  
23 that 281 is only going to have four lanes and I-10  
24 already has the same traffic count. And they don't stop  
25 lights impeding them on I-10, but this will not be

1     adequate capacity to take care of this project for the  
2     next 20 years, which is what we're supposed to do per  
3     NEPA.

4                     So, with that, thank you for your  
5     indulgence. I do appreciate it. And if you have any  
6     comments you want to make or questions, I'm certainly  
7     available.

8                     CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you. Are there  
9     any questions of Ms. Hall at this time? If not, thank  
10    you very much for coming forward.

11                    We do have a comment card, a request to  
12    make a comment from Don Dixson.

13                    Mr. Dixson, if you will, please state  
14    your name, who you're here representing, if anyone else;  
15    and then give us the benefit of your remarks.

16                    MR. DIXSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My  
17    name is Don Dixson. I'm representing myself. And  
18    there's thanks to go around to everybody for this  
19    project. I want to mention Governor Greg Abbott,  
20    Speaker Joe Straus, Senator Donna Campbell, Lyle Larson  
21    Commissioner Bruce Bugg, Judge Nelson Wolff,  
22    Commissioner Kevin Wolff. And there's many, many  
23    others. But they need to be recognized for getting this  
24    problem solved that we've all been working on so hard  
25    now for over 13 years.

1                   There are some concerns about the  
2 project, and my concerns are basically from an  
3 environmental standpoint satisfying the need and the  
4 capacity of the project and also in terms of value  
5 engineering. We started out with a project that was  
6 about \$78 million and did firm bid for basically the  
7 same length of project here. It actually had more lanes  
8 than in this one; but now it's escalated to 180,000,  
9 approximately.

10                   So from an engineering standpoint, we  
11 need to make sure that the people of San Antonio who  
12 have waited so long to get this project completed is  
13 properly value engineered and that the public gets the  
14 best product for it.

15                   I have some concerns there, especially  
16 about the HOV lane. It has been said that HOV lanes  
17 don't relieve congestion; they actually contribute to  
18 it. They have safety issues, and certainly there are  
19 fairness issues. So I would be concerned on the  
20 environmental side also that we check this out very,  
21 very thoroughly. And I'm sure it will be. But there  
22 are some concerns there that with this HOV lane, we may  
23 not be able to meet the purpose and need because I've  
24 driven this road now for 56 years and know the history  
25 completely and I cannot see how taking the three

1 existing through lanes now that's already congested and  
2 we make one of those into an HOV bus lane that we are  
3 going to improve our stead in San Antonio.

4 So you're the engineers. You're the  
5 environmental people that look at this. You make sure  
6 we get this value engineered properly and make sure we  
7 get the product that we need. I certainly want to see  
8 you pass this because we've been working a long, long  
9 time on this.

10 One other quick comment, and it relates  
11 to Governor Abbott's request to do the congestion  
12 relief. I totally support that, absolutely totally  
13 support that; and as a citizen and a business person,  
14 I'll continue to work on that. But I'm not going to  
15 advocate just throwing a lot of money at TxDOT because  
16 the public and you, too, when you get these billions of  
17 dollars, you want to make sure that these roads are  
18 built as efficiently as you can build them and at the  
19 very low cost you can for the public. And we talked  
20 about freight today that it's so important that we do  
21 this.

22 So we certainly support Governor Abbott's  
23 initiative, and we'll be working on that behalf. Be  
24 happy to answer your questions.

25 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you, sir. Any

1 questions of Mr. Dixson at this time?

2 Thank you, sir, for coming forward.

3 Those are all of the comment cards which  
4 we have. If there are any other comments -- if there  
5 are no other comments from the Commissioners --

6 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: Katie, if you  
7 would, come back up for a second.

8 The MPO that you went back through some  
9 prior Minute Orders. I think it's been pointed out this  
10 goes back even further from back then, when this  
11 project's been worked on, it's been the stated today. I  
12 support fixing this problem in San Antonio. It's been  
13 talked about for a long time. I think we're a little --  
14 you know, looking at what has happened as it stands  
15 today, not November, but as it stands today, all things  
16 being equal without any future votes, the MPO, I  
17 presume -- and this is what I'm asking -- does  
18 understand that by doing this, they're -- I'm taking  
19 this -- that they're re-prioritizing their projects as  
20 this is there Number 1 project. Is that a fair  
21 statement -- or among the top one or two?

22 MS. NEES: I'm not sure I can answer that  
23 question. I'd like to call up Marc Williams, please, to  
24 help me answer that question.

25 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: Sure.

1 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Katie.

2 Again, for the record, my name is Marc  
3 Williams. I'm the Interim Deputy Director for the  
4 Department of Transportation.

5 You asked, Commissioner Austin, how this  
6 stacks up within the top priorities of the MPO; and  
7 while they did not speak toward overall priorities  
8 within their region, their MPO specifically and in the  
9 cover letter from their Executive Director to our  
10 District Engineer, Mario Jorge, asked that the  
11 Department of Transportation take all the necessary  
12 steps to continue advancing full design of 281 to move  
13 it forward as a non-toll project and to move that  
14 forward immediately. And they have acknowledged that,  
15 in our conversations with them, that they consider this  
16 to be one of the highest priorities and are looking at  
17 this as one of their top priorities, if not the top  
18 priority, should future funding become available for the  
19 region.

20 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: And I want to  
21 stress the last part of that, should future funding  
22 become available. We're taking this vote as of today,  
23 and it's a little presumptuous to assume that Prop 7  
24 will pass. I want to have that discussion. I'm  
25 praying it passes. I know we've got two votes today --

1 and three with Don. I just want to be careful that we  
2 recognize -- that we don't get ahead of ourselves, that  
3 we do have an important vote to make; and I do applaud  
4 doing this. This is a local decision. And we want to  
5 support this, what the locals want and how they want it  
6 designed or how they want to build it, how they want to  
7 progress and change priorities. That's one of the great  
8 things about Texas; the locals that make that decision.

9 While we support that, I just don't want  
10 to be ahead thinking that there's going to be all this  
11 money there because today it's not; and should we go  
12 through, you know, be a Boy Scout, contingency planning  
13 is that the MPO does recognize that these are the  
14 choices they're going to have to re-prioritize and this  
15 could mean, in the worst-case scenario, that some  
16 projects are put off and delayed. And I just wanted to  
17 make sure that that's understood.

18 But I do support fixing this. Ever since  
19 I've been on this Commission, San Antonio -- what are we  
20 going to do about San Antonio? What are we going to do  
21 about San Antonio? And it is long overdo to get  
22 something fixed.

23 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Any other questions of  
24 Deputy Executive Director Williams at this time?

25 COMMISSIONER VANDERGRIFF: Yes. I don't

1 really have a question, but I don't know if it's  
2 appropriate until the motion is made or before the  
3 motion is made. I can do it either one.

4 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Feel free.

5 COMMISSIONER VANDERGRIFF: The thing that  
6 I want to make sure that I am certainly supportive of  
7 this motion and applaud and constantly champion local  
8 control at issue on matters like this. So a  
9 recommendation coming from San Antonio is appropriate to  
10 consider.

11 I just want to note that kind of what's  
12 good for the goose is good for the gander. We have  
13 other local communities, I'm sure, that will come to us  
14 with thoughts and recommendations as the challenges of  
15 the marketplace are shifting from the toll to non-toll  
16 world. And so I just want to say we have to be  
17 consistent in how we handle those kind of requests  
18 coming through.

19 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you,  
20 Commissioner Vandergriff.

21 Commissioner Bugg, did you have a  
22 question or a comment?

23 COMMISSIONER BUGG: I just -- first of  
24 all, it would be my honor to make the motion to approve  
25 this.

1                   CHAIRMAN LEWIS: You will certainly have  
2 the opportunity to do that.

3                   COMMISSIONER BUGG: Okay.

4                   CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Do you have a comment?

5                   COMMISSIONER BUGG: I have no questions  
6 for Marc or for Kate.

7                   CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Then, if there are no  
8 other questions of these witnesses, then, we'll get a  
9 motion on the floor and then get comments on the motion.

10                   Commissioner Bugg, do you move to  
11 approve -- pardon me. I've got to get back to the  
12 right -- to approve the removal of the toll project  
13 designation and rescind prior orders in accordance with  
14 the staff's recommendation here today; is that correct?

15                   COMMISSIONER BUGG: So moved.

16                   CHAIRMAN LEWIS: And Vice-Chairman  
17 Moseley, do you second that motion?

18                   VICE-CHAIRMAN MOSELEY: I do.

19                   CHAIRMAN LEWIS: We have a motion to  
20 second.

21                   And, Commissioner Bugg, I'm going to  
22 recognize you if you have any comments on it.

23                   COMMISSIONER BUGG: Thank you. Thank  
24 you, Mr. Chairman.

25                   I would like to thank, first of all, the

1 delegation from San Antonio that's here today led by  
2 County Commissioner Kevin Wolff and also in your role of  
3 Vice-Chairman of the Alamo Area MPO and Mario Jorge, our  
4 District Engineer I see out there. Vic Boyer and Don  
5 Durden, I believe. Ken Boyer is the President and CEO  
6 of San Antonio Mobility Coalition and Don Durden is the  
7 Chairman. And thank y'all for coming from San Antonio  
8 to Austin.

9 But the main thing that I really want to  
10 say is that, first of all, I think this is a very  
11 historic action that we're getting ready to consider  
12 taking; and that is taking tolls off a roadway system  
13 that has already been designated to be a tolled  
14 facility. And I think it's totally consistent with what  
15 Governor Abbott has indicated that he'd like the future  
16 direction to be. To the extent that there's funding  
17 possible, we'd like to be able to build future road  
18 capacity without taxes, fees, tolls, or debt.

19 I think the Texas Legislature has been  
20 very clear on the point. I think Governor Abbott has  
21 been very clear on the point. And today is really a  
22 historic action to kind of implement that thought  
23 process since the culmination of the very important  
24 work of the 84th Legislative Session, which, as  
25 Commissioner Wolff said, we wouldn't really have the

1 opportunity to have this conversation if it was not for  
2 the additional funding streams that are coming forward.

3 The other thing I'd like to say is that  
4 having been a commissioner for only six months but  
5 living in San Antonio, this -- Mario Jorge told me this  
6 really goes back to Minute Orders in 1999 on 281. And  
7 so I am delighted that the city of San Antonio, Bexar  
8 County, the Alamo Area MPO, everyone pulled together;  
9 and Mario I give you a lot of credit and your team for  
10 really helping pull this thing together. But I am just  
11 delighted at how -- this is a microcosm of how a  
12 community can come together and work together for the  
13 common good of the people in their respective  
14 communities.

15 And because of that action that was taken  
16 by the Alamo Area MPO on September the 14th, we're now  
17 able to consider granting the request of removing the  
18 tolls. And so thank you for coming up from San Antonio  
19 and being here today.

20 Thank you fellow Commissioners for just  
21 the opportunity for me to make the motion.

22 And thank you, Vice-Chairman Moseley, for  
23 seconding that motion.

24 And I'm very pleased that we are able to  
25 consider this today. Thank you.

1                   CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you,  
2 Commissioner Bugg.

3                   Commissioner Austin.

4                   COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: Yes. I am in  
5 favor of this, but I think from a policy perspective we  
6 need to be fair and truthful here. The MPO's  
7 recommendation -- and I'm reading from the resolution --  
8 does state, "Now, therefore, be it resolved by the Alamo  
9 Area MPO Transportation Policy Board that contingent  
10 upon the successful passage of Proposition 7," and it  
11 goes on that we're recommending non-tolls.

12                   And I think we need to be fair that our  
13 Minute Order does read differently than what the  
14 recommendation of the MPO request does. I think we're  
15 ahead of ourselves from a policy perspective of trying  
16 approve something that they recommend a contingent upon  
17 the passage of it. It hasn't passed. I do support it  
18 in doing this, especially after it passes.

19                   I just think we need to be transparent  
20 with what we're doing -- with what their recommendation  
21 was and what we're doing. I just really feel we're  
22 getting ahead of ourselves in doing it contingent upon,  
23 like we were very sensitive to Proposition 1. I'm not  
24 trying to approve the projects already. We talked about  
25 them. The same with Proposition 7. I think we owe it

1 to the public to be careful of not taking anticipation  
2 of what might happen but we need to plan if it does  
3 happen. So I just wanted to share that. I would third  
4 that motion, though.

5 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you.

6 Any other questions -- any other comments  
7 from any Commissioners? If not, we have a motion to  
8 approve the staff's recommendation for the removal of  
9 the toll project designation from the toll main lanes of  
10 U.S. 281 North Project and to rescind the prior Minute  
11 Order Number 111257. The motion has been seconded.  
12 I'll call for a vote.

13 All in favor of the motion say "Aye."

14 (Chorus of "Ayes.")

15 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: If there are any  
16 opposed, say "Nay."

17 (No audible response.)

18 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you. The motion  
19 carries.

20 GENERAL WEBER: Next is Item 11, the  
21 connection of U.S. 183 South Bergstrom Expressway to the  
22 state highway system.

23 Our Transportation Planning and  
24 Programming Division Director James Koch will present.

25 James.

1 MR. KOCH: Good morning, Mr. Chairman,  
2 Commissioners, and General Weber. For the record my  
3 name is James Koch, Director of Transportation and  
4 Planning Division of TxDOT.

5 I am requesting the approval for the  
6 connection of the U.S. 183 South Bergstrom Expressway  
7 Project in Travis County from U.S. 290 to State Highway  
8 71 for the segment of the state highway system. The  
9 CTRMA exercised primacy for this project in April of  
10 2014. And on July 29th, 2015 executed a design build  
11 contract. On July 30th, 2015 the Commission approved  
12 Minute Order 114314 granting approval of applications  
13 for financial assistance.

14 Prior to issuing a notice to proceed for  
15 construction, the Central Texas Regional Mobility  
16 Authority needs approval to connect to the state system  
17 per Transportation Code 370.187.

18 The staff recommends your approval of the  
19 connection with U.S. 183 Bergstrom Expressway Project.  
20 I'd be happy to answer any questions.

21 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Are there any questions  
22 for Director Koch at this time?

23 (No audible response.)

24 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Vice-Chair Moseley,  
25 would move approval of the staff recommendation?

1 VICE-CHAIRMAN MOSELEY: I do.

2 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Do we have a second?

3 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: I'll second.

4 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Commissioner Austin  
5 seconded. Any other comments? If not, we're going to  
6 vote. All in favor say "Aye."

7 (Chorus of "Ayes.")

8 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Any opposed, "No."

9 (No audible response.)

10 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Motion carries.

11 GENERAL WEBER: Next is Item 12, 2016  
12 Audit Plans. Director of Internal Audit Craig Otto will  
13 present.

14 MR. OTTO: Thank you, General Weber.  
15 Good morning, Chairman Lewis, Commissioners.

16 For the record, my name is Craig Otto,  
17 Director of the Office of Internal Audit here at TxDOT.

18 In compliance with the Texas Internal  
19 Auditing Act, the Chief Audit and Compliance Officer has  
20 to develop an audit plan for fiscal year 2016. This  
21 plan was prepared taking in risk assessment, TxDOT  
22 functions in obtaining input from internal and external  
23 stakeholders, including Commission and Administration.

24 In addition, analysis was performed to  
25 confirm that adequate resources are currently allocated

1 or dedicated to the internal audit program to ensure  
2 adequate coverage.

3 This plan includes 70 cyberspaced  
4 engagements which focus on contracting, information  
5 technology, general program management, governance key  
6 operations. In addition, it includes management action  
7 plan follow-up engagements which determines whether  
8 remediation of previously identified risks were  
9 achieved.

10 With your support, the plan has continued  
11 to focus on high-risk areas to help modernize and  
12 strengthen department operations such as our focus on  
13 information technology, vendor management, change  
14 orders, and district operations. In coordination with  
15 the Audit Subcommittee with whom we discussed this plan  
16 during yesterday's Audit Subcommittee Meeting, staff  
17 recommends approval of the FY 2016 audit plan.

18 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Any questions for  
19 Mr. Otto at this time?

20 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: Mr. Chairman, I  
21 want to say thank you to Commissioner Bugg, Benny,  
22 Craig, and the staff in putting together an audit plan.  
23 In looking at the Audit Plan, looking at one of the  
24 common themes contracts, contract implementation; and  
25 there are a lot of things that we're doing internally to

1 correct ourselves and identify, share, and train to be  
2 better stewards of our dollars. Y'all have done a  
3 tremendous job in taking a look at some very complex  
4 areas.

5 I know -- I think back to the training of  
6 all of us up here on the dais we took this last year on  
7 contract procurements that were put out by Comptroller  
8 Hager, their office. And it brings to height how are we  
9 managing contracts. The awarding of a bid is just one  
10 piece of it, but it's the follow-up. Y'all have really  
11 spent a great deal of time and looking at a lot of these  
12 practices. And as you look at moving forward, there is  
13 ample follow-up going back to identify within a district  
14 or a division that y'all are follow up. And I want to  
15 say congratulations.

16 One thing we've had in our Audit  
17 Committee, we've had follow ups from other divisions,  
18 Ethics. One thing, I want to compliment Trent Thomas.  
19 Trent is overseeing implementation of the Legislative  
20 activity that's been thrust upon us by the different  
21 sessions.

22 And I believe we can declare victory on  
23 the 82nd Session. Everything that was requested of the  
24 Department has been 100 percent implemented and  
25 completed. And I believe in the 83rd session, the last

1 session, almost a hundred percent of the major items and  
2 there were some riders, about 96 percent, so it's  
3 completed. And we have already implemented quite a bit  
4 of the early stages of what was just passed with the  
5 most recent Legislature.

6 So we are following up and monitoring it  
7 and also know we still have some outstanding at the  
8 Federal level under MAP-21. We've heard MAP-21 talked  
9 about about several times.

10 So there are a lot of things that y'all  
11 are doing. And as part of the Management Audit Plan,  
12 there are hours allocated for special things that could  
13 come up. That would be directed by Chair, the Executive  
14 Director, the Audit Committee, to come back in and take  
15 a look. Also with Brian Ragland, take a look at all  
16 numbers and follow up in implementing new system.

17 I'm really proud of what y'all are doing  
18 in finding things ourselves that we can correct and  
19 prevent future problems.

20 With that, I would be honored to move  
21 approval of the Audit Plan.

22 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: We have a motion to  
23 approve the Audit Plan for fiscal year 2016 in  
24 accordance with staff recommendations from Commissioner  
25 Austin.

1 Commission Vandergriff, do you second?

2 COMMISSIONER VANDERGRIFF: Second.

3 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: We have a motion and a  
4 second. There being no discussion, all in favor say  
5 "Aye."

6 (Chorus of "Ayes.")

7 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: All opposed, "No."

8 (No audible response.)

9 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Therefore the motion  
10 carries.

11 Thank you very much.

12 GENERAL WEBER: Craig, please continue  
13 with Item 13, Changes to the Audit Subcommittee's  
14 Charter.

15 MR. OTTO: Thank you, General Weber.

16 The Audit Subcommittee was created as a  
17 means of overseeing and ensure compliance with the  
18 intent of Sarbanes-Oxley as to reliability and  
19 transparency in financial reporting as well as to ensure  
20 the independence of the department's internal audit  
21 program by providing oversight of the internal auditor  
22 and evaluating implementation of audit recommendations.

23 In May 2014 the Commission made revisions  
24 to Minute Order 113939 to provide clarity regarding  
25 expectations of meeting the spirit of Sarbanes-Oxley.

1 The Minute Order being presented today serves to further  
2 link and add clarity to the Audit Subcommittee' Charter  
3 and includes responsibilities regarding oversight of the  
4 spirit of Sarbanes-Oxley requirements. In addition to  
5 strengthening reliability and transparency financial  
6 reporting and ensuring support for internal audit  
7 compliance, the Audit Subcommittee has been able to  
8 provide support of the Department's Legislative  
9 implementation process, as Commissioner Austin has  
10 stated previously, where we've seen a high degree of  
11 success in implementing bills and riders from the 83rd  
12 Legislative Session and are making good progress on  
13 those from the 84th session.

14 As discussed during yesterday's Audit  
15 Subcommittee meeting, this program is unique among  
16 departments of transportation and further underscores  
17 TxDOT's focus on driving accountability, transparency,  
18 and being best in class.

19 The staff recommends approval of this  
20 Minute Order.

21 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Commissioners, any  
22 comments?

23 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: Just one comment.  
24 As a best-in-class agency with others in AASHTO, with,  
25 like Benito chairs, the Audit for AASHTO and I believe

1 we are -- what I understand, we are the leader in  
2 looking at our subcommittee charter, our audit charter  
3 and the way we do things compared to other states. Is  
4 that a fair statement?

5 MR. OTTO: Yeah, that's my understanding.  
6 That's true.

7 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: Congratulations.  
8 You're well respected, the entire team, what y'all do.  
9 There's always room to keep it going and do a good job.  
10 Most importantly, while we find these things, I know  
11 Commissioner Underwood, when he chaired this, wanted to  
12 make sure we shared this in a positive aspect to teach  
13 and help our other counterparts throughout the agency  
14 learn not to make those same mistakes.

15 MR. OTTO: And I appreciate, Commissioner  
16 Austin and Commission Bugg, your inputs. In my three  
17 years here -- and I know Commissioner Bugg has been here  
18 for six months -- but your inputs, including the  
19 Chairman and other Commissioners, are taken very highly.  
20 So thank you.

21 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: In all fairness,  
22 I'm going to go the other direction. In Audit Committee  
23 yesterday, they audit current plans and procedures and  
24 one of them had labeling, labeling a bin correctly. I  
25 say that tongue in cheek is to really -- to all the men

1 and women in the agency, when you see something, let's  
2 take a look. Let's don't let common sense be discarded.  
3 Let's take a look and ask why we're doing something;  
4 and if it requires a change on common sense in a  
5 policy or procedure, we don't need to waste time, money,  
6 and resources to audit something that is -- I'm not  
7 saying -- I'm not trying to discount the process; but  
8 let's use common sense to hit the relevant.

9 MR. OTT: Absolutely. And that's why I'd  
10 like to spend as much time as we can with the business  
11 compliant here interpretation as well. So thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Are there any other  
13 questions of the Director? If not, at this time,  
14 Commissioner Bugg, do you move to approve the changes in  
15 the Audit Subcommittee Charter in accordance with staff  
16 recommendations?

17 COMMISSIONER BUGG: So moved,  
18 Mr. Chairman.

19 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: And, Commissioner  
20 Austin, do you second that motion?

21 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: I second.

22 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: We have a motion and a  
23 second. Any discussion? If not, we'll proceed to vote.  
24 All in favor say "Aye."

25 (Chorus of "Ayes.")

1 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Any opposed, "No."

2 (No audible response.)

3 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: The motion is approved.

4 We are going to be at ease for 15

5 minutes. We will resume at, say, 10 minutes until

6 12:00. So we will be at ease at this time, resuming at

7 10 minutes until 12:00.

8 (Off the record from 11:37 to 11:54 a.m.)

9 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: We are resuming at the  
10 time we said we would resume, and I'll next call on the  
11 General. I think we're we up to 14 A?

12 GENERAL WEBER: Yes, sir.

13 Next is Item 14 A, consists awarding of  
14 maintenance and department building construction  
15 contracts.

16 Director of Engineering and Operations  
17 Mark Marek will present.

18 MR. MAREK: For the record I am Mark  
19 Marek, the Director of Engineering Operations for TxDOT.

20 Item 14 A is a staff recommendation for  
21 award of highway maintenance and department building  
22 construction contracts that were let on September 2nd  
23 and 3rd, 2015. We have 23 of these projects. We  
24 received 81 bids for an overall average number of bids  
25 of three and a half per project. The low bid value was

1 a little over \$15 million and represented an overall  
2 underrun 3.6 percent.

3 The staff recommends award of all  
4 maintenance projects.

5 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Commissioners, are there  
6 any questions of Director Marek at this time? If there  
7 are no questions or other comments, then we will proceed  
8 to get a motion.

9 Commissioner Austin, do you move that we  
10 award and/or reject the highway maintenance contracts in  
11 accordance with the staff recommendations?

12 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: So moved.

13 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: And,  
14 Commissioner Vandergriff, do you second?

15 COMMISSIONER VANDERGRIFF: I do.

16 COMMISSIONER BUGG: We have a motion and  
17 a second. All in favor say "Aye."

18 (Chorus of "Ayes.")

19 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Any opposed, "Nay."

20 (No audible response.)

21 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: The motion carries.  
22 General.

23 GENERAL WEBER: Mark, please proceed with  
24 Item 14 B, Construction Contracts.

25 MR. MAREK: Item 14 B is a staff

1 recommendation for the award highway construction  
2 contracts let on September 2nd and 3rd 2015. We have 64  
3 of these projects today. We received 238 bids for an  
4 overall average of 3.7 bids per project. The low bid  
5 value was a little over 417 million. The awards were  
6 split into five mobility projects and 59 preservation  
7 projects, again, totalling a little over 417 million  
8 with an overall underrun of 3 percent.

9           The staff recommends award of all  
10 construction projects with the exception of the  
11 following two projects: Brown County Project STP 1302  
12 (0790) RGS, which consists of a roadway widening and  
13 bridge replacement project project. We received three  
14 bids for this project. The low bid came in 52 percent  
15 over the engineer's estimate of \$8 million. The  
16 District has identified various items that were bid much  
17 higher than expected.

18           The staff would like the opportunity to  
19 revisit the plans and redesign some of the elements of  
20 the project in order to be more cost effective. The  
21 staff requests that the project bids be rejected and  
22 that a revised project be relet at a later date.

23           Also, Tarrant County Project NH 2016  
24 (098) for the reconstruction of two northbound lanes and  
25 the addition of two managed lanes. We received five

1 bids on this project. The District is requesting time  
2 to evaluate the corridor for efficiencies that might be  
3 gained with modified roadway cross sections.

4 Based on this, we are recommending that  
5 the decision to award or reject this project be deferred  
6 to a future date in order to afford staff the  
7 opportunity to evaluate potential design alternatives  
8 and construction efficiencies.

9 The staff recommends award of all  
10 projects with the two exceptions as noted.

11 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Are there any questions  
12 of Director Marek on this matter?

13 COMMISSIONER BUGG: Motion.

14 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: If not,  
15 Commissioner Bugg, do you move that we award all the  
16 projects except the one that was recommended for  
17 rejection and one recommended for deferral in accordance  
18 with staff recommendations?

19 COMMISSIONER BUGG: So moved,  
20 Mr. Chairman.

21 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: And,  
22 Commissioner Vandergriff, do you second that motion?

23 COMMISSIONER VANDERGRIFF: I do.

24 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: We have a motion and a  
25 second. If there's no discussion, we'll proceed to a

1 vote. All in favor say, "Aye."

2 (Chorus of "Ayes.")

3 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Any opposed, "No."

4 (No audible response.)

5 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you. The motion  
6 carries.

7 GENERAL WEBER: Thanks, Mark.

8 That brings us to Item 15, the Eminent  
9 Domain Proceedings.

10 Director of Right-of-Way, John Campbell  
11 will present.

12 John.

13 MR. CAMPBELL: Good morning. For the  
14 record, I'm John Campbell, Director of the Right-of-Way  
15 Division. I'd like to present for your consideration  
16 this morning Item 15, which authorizes the filing of  
17 condemnation proceedings necessary for the acquisition  
18 of 31 parcels by power of eminent domain. 20 of those  
19 parcels are on non-controlled areas of the projects, and  
20 11 are on control access areas, for a total of 13  
21 right-of-way projects.

22 The staff recommends your approval of the  
23 Minute Order.

24 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Any questions at this  
25 time of Director Campbell? If not, do we have a motion,

1 Commissioner Bugg, that you would like to make for us?

2 COMMISSIONER BUGG: Chairman Lewis, it  
3 would be my honor to move that the Texas Transportation  
4 Commission authorize the Texas Department of  
5 Transportation to use the power of eminent domain to  
6 acquire the properties described in the Minute Order set  
7 forth in the agenda for the current run for  
8 construction, reconstruction, maintenance, widening,  
9 straightening, or extending the highway facilities  
10 listed in the Minute Order as a part of the state  
11 highway system and that the first record vote applies to  
12 all units of property to be condemned.

13 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you.  
14 Commissioner Bugg has moved to authorize the  
15 condemnation.

16 Vice-Chair Moseley, do you second that  
17 motion?

18 VICE-CHAIRMAN MOSELEY: Yes.

19 COMMISSIONER BUGG: We have a motion and  
20 a second. If there's no discussion, we'll proceed to a  
21 vote. All in favor say "Aye."

22 (Chorus of "Ayes.")

23 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Any opposed, "No."

24 (No audible response.)

25 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: The motion carries.

1 General.

2 GENERAL WEBER: Item 16 contains the  
3 routine minute orders, including donations to the  
4 department, real estate dispositions, transportation  
5 planning, highway designation, access control,  
6 consultation and review, and speed zones.

7 Chairman.

8 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you.

9 We do have some comment cards, and so  
10 I'll be asking these individuals, please come forward.  
11 We'll begin with Chad Nobles. If you wouldn't mind  
12 please coming forward, state your name; and you might  
13 mention you're here on Agenda Item 16 -- what is the  
14 actual number?

15 MS. CARTER: 16 D 1.

16 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: 16 D 1 with regard to  
17 Highway 249; is that correct, sir?

18 MR. CHAD NOBLES: Yes, sir.

19 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Okay. You may proceed  
20 on. State your name and your comments.

21 MR. CHAD NOBLES: My name is Chad Nobles.  
22 I am here representing myself as a property owner in  
23 Grimes County, along County Road 307. It's good to be  
24 back in front you guys again today.

25 If you recall my map from last time --

1 and I'm going to use it again -- we talked about the  
2 yellow being homes, permanent homes, actually in the  
3 area from along proposed Highway 249 Toll Road. The  
4 blue are weekend homes, and the red were barns.

5 The last time we were here we spoke. We  
6 actually have had a meeting with your TxDOT Office Chet  
7 Bowen in Bryan. On September the 11th he came out to  
8 our property. We met with him, and we were shown a map  
9 similar to this. It had some additional things on it.  
10 It had another route that actually came up the western  
11 side of our -- excuse me -- the eastern side of our  
12 property and turned and went directly across the front  
13 of our property and another route that came along the  
14 southern and went farther out west as well.

15 In addition to that, it had red circles,  
16 approximately a thousand foot, drawn around every home  
17 that was out here. What was interesting about it is one  
18 of the circles was drawn around my neighbor's property  
19 here to north and our property, and the circles actually  
20 intersected. However, there was a road, in pencil,  
21 drawn right between those two intersections, coming  
22 right through here. What I will note is that a thousand  
23 foot ended up right along property line, and there's no  
24 way that you can build that road with a lake being here  
25 because you're going to end up creeping farther south

1 into our property, with proximity maybe 400 feet or less  
2 than that to my parents' back porch. There's also a  
3 cemetery located right here.

4 So, again, that route just seemed not  
5 even reasonable to even put on the paper; but there was  
6 another route through to the west that I'm sure this  
7 property owner here would be opposed to as well. But  
8 what was more disturbing was that in the route that, as  
9 you recall, all the stakeholders that were here in white  
10 presented a letter to you stating they were okay with,  
11 there was a red circle right here. And when I asked  
12 what that red circle was, I was told that was a proposed  
13 home that that landowner talked about and wanted to put  
14 on his property.

15 I said, "Well, if that's the case, then  
16 I'm going to build my house right here where these three  
17 rows go across. I'm going to build my sister's house  
18 right here. And my neighbor wants to put his house  
19 right here."

20 So as some of you laughed, that's what we  
21 did. It was kind of silly that that was even talked  
22 about. And, again, we go back to the question of:  
23 Could somebody please tell us why the stakeholders here  
24 who have asked to go this route, which is by far the  
25 majority, and why we can't use that route.

1                   If you recall from the last question that  
2                   we were here and asked, we asked this, I think  
3                   Mr. Zapalac referred to it as, "We have one landowner  
4                   that is obviously adamantly opposed to that route." So  
5                   we went to make sure that we're on record that we are  
6                   adamantly opposed to any other route that goes through  
7                   the center of our property as well as to the north that  
8                   cut across in front of our pasture.

9                   And I was glad to hear Mr. Austin say  
10                  that you do take local consideration into things because  
11                  local's do make a lot of decisions that we have. And as  
12                  you can see from all the areas in white, the locals have  
13                  spoken. We've turned in a letter that says, "Hey, let's  
14                  go this route, along the southern route." And let's  
15                  just get on down the road. So, again -- I thank you,  
16                  again. I'll keep my time short. I appreciate it.

17                  CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Perfectly timed. Thank  
18                  you.

19                  And next we have a comment card from Amy  
20                  Nobles. If you will, please come forward, stating your  
21                  name. And I believe you're speaking on the same agenda  
22                  item; is that correct?

23                  MS. AMY NOBLES: That is correct.

24                  CHAIRMAN LEWIS: All right. Please state  
25                  your name. Proceed.

1 MS. AMY NOBLES: I am Amy Nobles, and I  
2 also want to talk to you today about 249 Toll Road along  
3 County Road 307. Before I continue, I would like you to  
4 clearly understand that prior to April of this year,  
5 TxDOT preferred route involving this section of Grimes  
6 County was posted on website and did not include any of  
7 the six iterations that we will discuss today. The  
8 exact wording on the website reads, "Six alternatives"  
9 -- which were previous, not these now -- "were presented  
10 at the open house on April 3rd, 2014. Alignment B 3 was  
11 recommended to be compared to the no build alternative.  
12 After considering comments and input received during the  
13 study, an hybrid alignment combining Alternative B and C  
14 is now preferred. This preferred alignment will be  
15 presented at a public hearing in the summer of 2015."  
16 So we're past that.

17 It appears the stakeholders' input in  
18 April of 2014 caused the preferred route by TxDOT to be  
19 moved. Why is it then that when 90 percent of  
20 stakeholders now affected by the current route want it  
21 moved, it does not move? Also, just to be clear, all  
22 routes currently being considered take land from the  
23 Nobles Family. And four routes through the front yard  
24 or the backyard, and three of those routes divide the  
25 property in half.

1           As of the Commission meeting one month  
2 ago we had still not received any information as why to  
3 route preferred by over 90 percent of stakeholders  
4 cannot be used other than, as Mr. Zapalac stated, "We  
5 have one adamantly opposed landowner." We have not  
6 received any further solid information on criteria used  
7 for route selection or clarification as to the influence  
8 one adamantly opposed property owner would hold over 90  
9 percent of the other landowners. We would like to know  
10 how the rest of us could acquire adamantly opposed  
11 status and have the routes along our properties removed  
12 from consideration.

13           Without defined criteria that TxDOT can  
14 present to stakeholders, you allow the process to be  
15 subjective, to be suspicious, and to lack integrity.  
16 The authority given to you by eminent domain is not to  
17 be taken lightly in this process. You cannot become  
18 desensitized to what you are taking from families.

19           It is my understanding that House Bill  
20 20, which has been discussed today, was authorized to  
21 address these same issues as they relate to project  
22 selection and prioritization, which would direct TxDOT  
23 to create metrics and measurement tools to evaluate  
24 projects in an equitable and impartial manner.

25           We are asking that you do the same with

1 the route you are considering along County Road 307. As  
2 an example, as Chad discussed just a minute ago, in  
3 September we met with the TxDOT office from Bryan. We  
4 were shown the maps denoting two proposed home sites.  
5 When proposed home sites are being reviewed without  
6 valid criteria, you must question the motives and basis  
7 by which the routes are been considered and evaluated.  
8 All integrity of route selection is lost at this point.

9 There are commonsense decision making  
10 processes that can be used to evaluate one route over  
11 another. For instance, on example of permanent full-  
12 time residence must be given more consideration than a  
13 second home. They're used for different purposes, have  
14 different tax and real estate definitions; and their use  
15 can be validated via tax information regarding ownership  
16 and residency.

17 Please help us make sure that the route  
18 selection for this portion along County Road 307 is  
19 evaluated in an equitable and impartial manner,  
20 operating with factual and credible information and  
21 criteria that can be supported as reasonable and  
22 logical. Thank you very much.

23 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you very much.

24 We next have a comment card from Robert  
25 Nobels.

1                   Mr. Nobles, would you please come forward  
2 and state your name. As I understand it you're also  
3 speaking on the same item?

4                   MR. ROBERT NOBLES: Yes, sir.

5                   CHAIRMAN LEWIS: I'm sorry. I need to  
6 start again.

7                   Robert, Mr. Nobles, if you will, please  
8 come up. After stating your name, you may give your  
9 thoughts; and my understanding is that you are speaking  
10 on 16 B 1, which the same subject matter.

11                  MR. ROBERT NOBLES: Yes, sir.

12                  CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you. You may  
13 proceed.

14                  MR. ROBERT NOBLES: My name is Robert  
15 Nobles, and I would like to thank you for allowing me to  
16 speak today regarding the proposed route of the 249 Toll  
17 Road through Grimes County in the area of County Road  
18 307 where we have our home and where we raise cattle and  
19 hay.

20                  We're not against progress, but we  
21 against the construction of toll roads when improvements  
22 to existing roadways, like the FM 1774 and Highway 105  
23 would better serve the area. We are against the process  
24 of eminent domain which comes with the building of this  
25 toll road, and it will take away land that we've worked

1 hard to own and make our living on and we retired on it.

2 We purchased our property in 1999 on a  
3 dead-end dirt road; and we have spent time and money  
4 building our home, planting grass, building fences,  
5 building barns, cutting and baling hay, and raising our  
6 cattle.

7 Now, TxDOT has proposed a toll road that  
8 will split our property and come within feet of our  
9 front door and back door. Bryan's TxDOT office has  
10 shown us several proposed routes, all of which will come  
11 across our property. We have discussed this with our  
12 neighbors, all of whom agree that the road should stay  
13 away from permanent homes. We are taking into  
14 consideration the permanent homes and properties of our  
15 neighbors, and we're not just trying to push the road  
16 over to cause them any more problems than what we're  
17 facing. We are simply trying to keep TxDOT from  
18 splitting our land, from taking away our beautiful  
19 views, from taking away the peace and the quiet of  
20 country living, and from taking away pastureland from  
21 our cattle, from taking away the trees and all the  
22 wildlife.

23 We are opposed to the routes presented by  
24 Bryan's TxDOT office that will come near the front or  
25 the backyards of our homes and our neighbors. And there

1 is a way, the southern route. We need your help in  
2 convincing them to keep the 249 Toll Road away from the  
3 permanent homes and from dividing property.

4 Thank you for your time.

5 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you.

6 Any questions, Commissioners? If not,  
7 thank you very much for coming forward, sir.

8 And then we have a comment card from  
9 Sandra Nobles. Please come forward and state your name  
10 for the record. And according to this card, you're  
11 speaking in regard to the same item on the agenda,  
12 correct?

13 MS. SANDRA NOBLES: Yes, sir.

14 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: You may proceed.

15 MS. SANDRA NOBLES: My name is Sandra  
16 Nobles, and I'm here to share with you how the 249 Toll  
17 Road Project and specifically this section involving  
18 County Road 307 affects our home and our lifestyle.  
19 Both my husband and I have lived our entire lives in  
20 Grimes County and raised our children in Navasota. I  
21 retired in April of this year to work with my husband on  
22 our farm where we have lived for 15 years. We work  
23 together to raise cattle, hunt, fish, and share the love  
24 of a country life with our children and grandchildren.

25 What we see and hear from our front and

1 back porches is a realness of peace, quiet, and the  
2 beauty of God's creations, the birds chirping, the  
3 squirrels scampering across the lawn, cattle grazing in  
4 the pasture, flowing green grass hayfields, trees and  
5 wooded areas that are home to deer and other wildlife.  
6 TxDOT is about to take all of this away from us with  
7 some of their proposed routes that come within feet of  
8 of my front door or my back door. Those routes will  
9 only allow us to watch and hear the cars go speeding by.

10 We are concerned about the safety of this  
11 road on our property, about the impact to our farm, and  
12 mostly the disruption of our choice for a quiet rural  
13 lifestyle. TxDOT has not been able to tell us why our  
14 property -- why some property has more value than ours.  
15 We have a farming operation. We have a cemetery on our  
16 property. We have two bodies of water and a large  
17 running creek cutting through the farm. All the  
18 criteria that TxDOT has loosely discussed with us would  
19 seem to support a route that does not bisect our  
20 property; yet, there are three routes that cut our land  
21 in half and four that are feet from our front or back  
22 porches.

23 Help us communicate to the Bryan TxDOT  
24 office that we are losing property in all of the routes;  
25 and that should not choose any of the routes that will

1 go by permanent homes. They should choose a route that  
2 is the least intrusive to full-time residents, and that  
3 would be the southern route.

4 We are not against progress; however, we  
5 are adamantly opposed to having the road in our front  
6 yard or our backyard so close to our home. Please help  
7 us preserve our home site and the land for our children  
8 and grandchildren to enjoy for years to come.

9 Thank you for your time and consideration  
10 for our concerns.

11 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you very much.  
12 Any questions for Ms. Nobles?

13 (No audible response.)

14 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: I believe that's all the  
15 cards I have. Let's see.

16 Yes, Commissioner Austin.

17 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: Yes. A different  
18 topic, but as it relates to 16 A, donations to the  
19 department. I'm looking back on page 12. We have  
20 donations to fabricate memorial highway designation  
21 signs. This is something that came up yesterday during  
22 the Audit Committee. Just in looking at implementation  
23 of bills, because there are a lot of bills that are  
24 passed that require us to work with different entities  
25 or individuals to designate a memorial highway.

1 I made a suggestion to Trent, as began  
2 looking at -- Trent Thomas for ideas going into Sunset,  
3 ideas for the next Legislative Session. It came to my  
4 attention that these memorial highways when it's given  
5 to us by the Legislature, it's there for good. And  
6 while we have a lot of open orders, if you will, I would  
7 like to maybe recommend that if it's not completed, that  
8 we don't get the donations to put up the signs within  
9 two years, that we have the opportunity to come back to  
10 the Legislative session.

11 That way we don't have to manage -- one  
12 time we were talking about something that went back to  
13 1944 on a highway. So we just need to make sure that --  
14 I would like to propose to the Legislature that we have  
15 a time limit on here to designate that. Just food for  
16 thought.

17 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Thank you,  
18 Commissioner Austin.

19 Any other comments or questions?

20 (No audible response.)

21 If not, then Commissioner Vandergriff, do  
22 you move to approve the routine minute orders?

23 COMMISSIONER VANDERGRIFF: I'm not sure I  
24 can, Chairman.

25 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Okay. Let me ask this:

1 Do we have a motion to approve the routine minute  
2 orders.

3 VICE-CHAIRMAN MOSELEY: Yes,  
4 Mr. Chairman.

5 COMMISSIONER AUSTIN: I second.

6 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Vice-Chair Moseley moves  
7 to approve the routine minute orders. Commissioner  
8 Austin seconds that motion.

9 Is there any discussion before we vote?  
10 If not, we'll proceed to a vote. All in favor of the  
11 motion to approve --

12 COMMISSIONER VANDERGRIFF: I was just  
13 going to say I wanted to confirm that the approval of  
14 this is not going to mean that we are not still in the  
15 discussion on the alignment with respect to SH 249.  
16 That's why -- I will vote for this motion, but I wasn't  
17 sure.

18 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: All right. We have a  
19 motion and a second. If there are no other comment, all  
20 in favor of the motion to approve the routine minute  
21 orders, indicate by saying "Aye."

22 (Chorus of "Ayes.")

23 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Any opposed, "No."

24 (No audible response.)

25 CHAIRMAN LEWIS: The motion is carried.

1                   At this time we will go into Executive  
2 Session, according to Government Code Section 551.071.  
3 For the record, the time is 12:16 p.m.

4                   (Off the record from 12:16 to 1:27 p.m.)

5                   CHAIRMAN LEWIS: The Commission has  
6 concluded its Executive Session.

7                   The meeting of the Texas Transportation  
8 Commission has reconvened. The time at this time is  
9 1:27 p.m. All of the action items on the agenda are  
10 completed.

11                   Is there anyone signed up for open  
12 comment today? I see none. There being no other  
13 business before the Commission, Commissioner  
14 Vandergriff, do you move that we adjourn?

15                   COMMISSIONER VANDERGRIFF: So moved.

16                   CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Commissioner Bugg, do  
17 you second that motion?

18                   COMMISSIONER BUGG: I second that motion.

19                   CHAIRMAN LEWIS: All in favor please say  
20 "Aye."

21                   (Chorus of "Ayes.")

22                   CHAIRMAN LEWIS: Any opposed, "No."  
23 There are no "no's." So the motion passes, and we are  
24 in adjournment at 1:27 p.m.

25                   (Proceeding concluded at 1:27 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Debbie D. Cunningham, CSR, Certified Shorthand Reporter, in and for the State of Texas do hereby certify that the foregoing pages 1 through 146 constitutes a full, true, and accurate transcript of stenographic notes taken by me at the time of the proceedings.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have this date subscribed my name.

Dated: October 7, 2015.



Debbie D. Cunningham, CSR

Texas CSR No. 2065

Expiration: 12/31/2016

Job No. 2124698

[0790 - 551.044.]

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|--|--|---|--|
| <b>0</b>   | <b>15</b> 96:11 126:4<br>127:1 130:8,16<br>141:22  | 117:10,11 126:23<br>128:2 136:15<br>147:12  | <b>3</b>   |
| <b>0790</b> 128:12<br><b>098</b> 128:24  | <b>150</b> 12:23<br><b>16</b> 132:2,13,15,16<br>139:10 143:18  | <b>2016</b> 81:15 118:11<br>118:20 119:17<br>121:23 128:23  | <b>3</b> 94:23 104:6 128:8<br>136:10   |
| <b>1</b>   | <b>1604</b> 93:20,21 99:24<br>100:2 104:13   | <b>2017</b> 78:19<br><b>2018</b> 79:2,10,20<br><b>2035</b> 104:10   | <b>3.6</b> 127:2<br><b>3.7</b> 34:11 128:4   |
| <b>1</b> 11:6 20:12 27:16<br>31:19 35:22 66:19<br>96:7 108:20 115:23<br>132:15,16 139:10<br>147:5  | <b>16th</b> 2:8 81:20<br><b>17</b> 83:8,11 85:5<br>95:10   | <b>2040</b> 31:3 34:11,16<br>48:5,11 49:3 55:15<br>61:11 71:6   | <b>30</b> 58:12<br><b>307</b> 132:23 136:3<br>138:1,18 139:18<br>141:18  |
| <b>1,225</b> 47:6<br><b>10</b> 35:24 92:25<br>93:18 104:12,23,25<br>126:5,7  | <b>1771</b> 87:12,14<br><b>1774</b> 139:22   | <b>2065</b> 147:20<br><b>21</b> 20:20 29:14<br>36:10 54:3,11,16<br>62:8 64:8,21 121:8<br>121:8  | <b>30th</b> 117:11<br><b>31</b> 82:13 130:18<br><b>34</b> 44:23<br><b>35</b> 11:12 16:14<br>31:14  |
| <b>100</b> 120:24<br><b>105</b> 139:22<br><b>10th</b> 19:4<br><b>11</b> 116:20 130:20  | <b>180,000</b> 106:8<br><b>183</b> 116:21 117:6,19   | <b>2124698</b> 1:25<br>147:25   | <b>370.187.</b> 117:17<br><b>3a</b> 17:20<br><b>3b</b> 28:9<br><b>3rd</b> 126:23 128:2<br>136:10   |
| <b>111257</b> 116:11<br><b>113939</b> 122:24<br><b>114314</b> 117:12   | <b>1944</b> 144:13<br><b>1969</b> 89:4<br><b>1999</b> 114:6 140:2  | <b>23</b> 76:11 126:23<br><b>238</b> 128:3<br><b>24</b> 1:12  | <b>4</b>   |
| <b>118</b> 82:7<br><b>11:37</b> 126:8<br><b>11:54</b> 126:8<br><b>11th</b> 1:10 5:18 6:9<br>133:7  | <b>2</b>   | <b>249</b> 132:17 133:3<br>136:2 139:16 141:2<br>141:16 145:15  | <b>4</b> 74:22 87:2<br><b>4.3</b> 75:8<br><b>4.8</b> 75:8<br><b>40</b> 60:1<br><b>400</b> 134:1<br><b>417</b> 128:5,7<br><b>43</b> 67:3<br><b>44</b> 45:22<br><b>44.8</b> 39:16 43:8<br>45:18<br><b>45</b> 31:3 47:6<br><b>4:01</b> 2:8<br><b>4th</b> 82:6 |
| <b>12</b> 44:24 118:11<br>143:19<br><b>12/31/2016</b> 147:21<br><b>1200</b> 39:14<br><b>121</b> 82:6<br><b>125</b> 1:10 6:9<br><b>126</b> 82:13<br><b>12:00</b> 126:6,7<br><b>12:16</b> 146:3,4<br><b>13</b> 31:21 105:25<br>122:13 130:20 | <b>2</b> 34:9<br><b>2.2</b> 34:16 48:6 49:5<br>61:10<br><b>2.7</b> 32:5<br><b>20</b> 17:21 18:5,14<br>19:9 20:15,16 21:5<br>21:9 22:12 24:6<br>101:4 103:13 105:2<br>130:18 137:20   | <b>25</b> 35:12 43:1,12<br>85:9<br><b>25.7</b> 81:10<br><b>250</b> 35:10<br><b>2500</b> 60:2,3,4<br><b>26</b> 31:2 91:19<br><b>27th</b> 17:1,5<br><b>28</b> 43:11 88:17 89:2<br><b>281</b> 93:9,11,17,19,23<br>94:5 98:6,20 99:2<br>99:16,25 100:8<br>103:22 104:14,17<br>104:23 109:12<br>114:6 116:10 | <b>5</b> 26:20 77:25 78:9<br><b>5,000</b> 59:25 81:12<br>81:22,24<br><b>50/50</b> 82:1<br><b>500</b> 43:2,15 96:5<br><b>500,000</b> 75:9<br><b>52</b> 81:25 128:14<br><b>551.044.</b> 2:10   |
| <b>13</b> 31:21 105:25<br>122:13 130:20<br><b>130</b> 79:9<br><b>1302</b> 128:11<br><b>14</b> 14:5 126:11,13<br>126:20 127:24,25<br><b>14.4</b> 91:17<br><b>146</b> 147:5<br><b>14th</b> 9:14 114:16                                       | <b>200,000</b> 81:12,24<br><b>2003</b> 93:10<br><b>2004</b> 93:10<br><b>2008</b> 93:11<br><b>201.452</b> 90:24<br><b>201.454.</b> 90:24<br><b>2013</b> 28:24 30:15<br>35:17,19<br><b>2014</b> 30:13,15 35:9<br>117:10 122:23<br>136:10,18<br><b>2015</b> 1:12 2:4,8<br>18:17 81:7,15,20<br>82:6,20 90:23 | <b>2nd</b> 126:22 128:2   |  |

[551.071. - agenda]

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p><b>551.071.</b> 146:2<br/> <b>56</b> 106:24<br/> <b>59</b> 12:22,25 13:1<br/> 128:6</p>  | <p><b>96</b> 121:2<br/> <b>9:00</b> 1:12<br/> <b>9:04</b> 2:3</p>   | <p><b>actions</b> 91:3 93:9,10<br/> 93:22<br/> <b>activate</b> 6:14<br/> <b>active</b> 6:1 79:15</p>  | <p><b>adjournment</b><br/> 146:24<br/> <b>adjust</b> 4:9<br/> <b>adjusted</b> 20:8</p>  |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>6</b></p>   | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>a</b></p>   | <p><b>actively</b> 18:10 52:2<br/> <b>activity</b> 13:12 42:15<br/> 58:9 120:20</p>   | <p><b>administer</b> 75:22<br/> <b>administration</b><br/> 20:19 23:7 63:7<br/> 64:11 83:3 118:23</p>   |
| <p><b>6</b> 81:7,9<br/> <b>610</b> 8:17<br/> <b>64</b> 128:2<br/> <b>67</b> 31:7<br/> <b>69</b> 12:21 13:1,3<br/> 14:10 31:15 50:25<br/> 50:25 51:1,4 55:16<br/> 68:10,12</p> | <p><b>a.m.</b> 1:12 2:3 126:8<br/> <b>aashto</b> 9:20 13:5<br/> 123:24,25<br/> <b>abbott</b> 7:8 8:19<br/> 12:17 15:12 16:10<br/> 101:22 105:19<br/> 113:15,20<br/> <b>abbott's</b> 7:18 107:11<br/> 107:22</p>   | <p><b>actual</b> 51:3 132:14<br/> <b>adamantly</b> 135:4,6<br/> 137:5,8,10 143:5<br/> <b>adapt</b> 102:21<br/> <b>add</b> 25:5 58:21<br/> 104:2 123:2<br/> <b>added</b> 35:19 99:8,13<br/> 99:14<br/> <b>adding</b> 12:23 100:5<br/> <b>addition</b> 14:24<br/> 37:18 72:14 100:25<br/> 118:24 119:6 123:4<br/> 128:25 133:15</p>   | <p><b>administrative</b><br/> 81:16 89:3<br/> <b>administrator</b> 63:6<br/> <b>adopted</b> 85:24<br/> <b>adopting</b> 67:1 102:5<br/> <b>adoption</b> 40:9 73:23<br/> 87:1<br/> <b>advance</b> 36:14 59:4<br/> <b>advanced</b> 95:22<br/> <b>advancing</b> 109:12<br/> <b>advertised</b> 97:19<br/> <b>advice</b> 97:9<br/> <b>advised</b> 18:12<br/> <b>advisor</b> 9:12<br/> <b>advisory</b> 23:19<br/> 28:23 29:19 30:10<br/> 40:7 42:7 44:3<br/> 51:24 52:21 64:17<br/> 67:17 69:5,21 70:22<br/> 73:22,25 78:1,10,21<br/> 79:13,25 80:9</p>  |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>7</b></p>   | <p><b>ability</b> 84:7 96:15<br/> <b>able</b> 4:1 11:16,22<br/> 12:3 33:10 52:24<br/> 54:4 58:17 59:9<br/> 66:4,23 68:18 87:14<br/> 106:23 113:17<br/> 114:17,24 123:7<br/> 142:13<br/> <b>absolutely</b> 16:11<br/> 41:6 53:14 97:24<br/> 107:12 125:9<br/> <b>acceptance</b> 94:7<br/> <b>access</b> 62:11 100:22<br/> 100:22 130:20<br/> 132:5<br/> <b>accident</b> 8:16<br/> <b>accountability</b><br/> 123:17<br/> <b>accounted</b> 20:10<br/> <b>accurate</b> 147:6<br/> <b>achieved</b> 119:9<br/> <b>acknowledged</b><br/> 109:14<br/> <b>acquire</b> 131:6<br/> 137:10<br/> <b>acquisition</b> 130:17<br/> <b>act</b> 50:2 118:19<br/> <b>action</b> 83:8 93:16<br/> 113:11,22 114:15<br/> 119:6 146:9</p> | <p><b>address</b> 2:14,20<br/> 3:12 6:2,9 7:13 15:9<br/> 15:17 21:14,21<br/> 29:10,13 30:22 34:2<br/> 36:12 37:22,23 38:1<br/> 38:2,6 43:13,21<br/> 44:1,25 45:5 137:21<br/> <b>addressed</b> 15:13<br/> 27:24 43:20 79:7<br/> <b>addressing</b> 22:9<br/> 41:8 43:17,25 47:2<br/> 49:13<br/> <b>adds</b> 56:17<br/> <b>adequate</b> 105:1<br/> 118:25 119:2<br/> <b>adequately</b> 72:25<br/> <b>adjacent</b> 100:23<br/> <b>adjourn</b> 146:14</p>  | <p><b>advocate</b> 79:6<br/> 107:15<br/> <b>aed</b> 6:13<br/> <b>aeds</b> 6:11<br/> <b>aerial</b> 99:23<br/> <b>afford</b> 103:24 129:6<br/> <b>agencies</b> 67:4 96:25<br/> <b>agency</b> 5:21 27:21<br/> 87:15 123:24<br/> 124:13 125:1<br/> <b>agenda</b> 2:7,23,24<br/> 3:4,8,13,16 4:2<br/> 16:24 17:18 66:25<br/> 74:21 78:9 81:5,9<br/> 131:7 132:13<br/> 135:21 141:11</p>  |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>8</b></p>   | <p><b>8</b> 5:23 90:14 128:15<br/> <b>8,000</b> 59:24<br/> <b>80</b> 48:10<br/> <b>81</b> 126:24<br/> <b>82nd</b> 120:23<br/> <b>83rd</b> 120:25 123:11<br/> <b>84th</b> 87:13 89:4<br/> 113:24 123:13<br/> <b>864</b> 35:19</p>  | <p><b>additional</b> 12:21<br/> 20:6 62:25 83:19<br/> 85:9,14 99:8 100:5<br/> 101:3,6 114:2 133:9<br/> <b>additionally</b> 21:2<br/> 82:23<br/> <b>address</b> 2:14,20<br/> 3:12 6:2,9 7:13 15:9<br/> 15:17 21:14,21<br/> 29:10,13 30:22 34:2<br/> 36:12 37:22,23 38:1<br/> 38:2,6 43:13,21<br/> 44:1,25 45:5 137:21<br/> <b>addressed</b> 15:13<br/> 27:24 43:20 79:7<br/> <b>addressing</b> 22:9<br/> 41:8 43:17,25 47:2<br/> 49:13<br/> <b>adds</b> 56:17<br/> <b>adequate</b> 105:1<br/> 118:25 119:2<br/> <b>adequately</b> 72:25<br/> <b>adjacent</b> 100:23<br/> <b>adjourn</b> 146:14</p> | <p><b>advance</b> 36:14 59:4<br/> <b>advanced</b> 95:22<br/> <b>advancing</b> 109:12<br/> <b>advertised</b> 97:19<br/> <b>advice</b> 97:9<br/> <b>advised</b> 18:12<br/> <b>advisor</b> 9:12<br/> <b>advisory</b> 23:19<br/> 28:23 29:19 30:10<br/> 40:7 42:7 44:3<br/> 51:24 52:21 64:17<br/> 67:17 69:5,21 70:22<br/> 73:22,25 78:1,10,21<br/> 79:13,25 80:9<br/> <b>advocate</b> 79:6<br/> 107:15<br/> <b>aed</b> 6:13<br/> <b>aeds</b> 6:11<br/> <b>aerial</b> 99:23<br/> <b>afford</b> 103:24 129:6<br/> <b>agencies</b> 67:4 96:25<br/> <b>agency</b> 5:21 27:21<br/> 87:15 123:24<br/> 124:13 125:1<br/> <b>agenda</b> 2:7,23,24<br/> 3:4,8,13,16 4:2<br/> 16:24 17:18 66:25<br/> 74:21 78:9 81:5,9<br/> 131:7 132:13<br/> 135:21 141:11</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>9</b></p>   | <p><b>9</b> 6:8 91:7 92:19<br/> <b>9/11</b> 14:6<br/> <b>90</b> 136:19 137:3,8<br/> <b>911</b> 6:6,6,8<br/> <b>95</b> 82:14</p>   | <p><b>address</b> 2:14,20<br/> 3:12 6:2,9 7:13 15:9<br/> 15:17 21:14,21<br/> 29:10,13 30:22 34:2<br/> 36:12 37:22,23 38:1<br/> 38:2,6 43:13,21<br/> 44:1,25 45:5 137:21<br/> <b>addressed</b> 15:13<br/> 27:24 43:20 79:7<br/> <b>addressing</b> 22:9<br/> 41:8 43:17,25 47:2<br/> 49:13<br/> <b>adds</b> 56:17<br/> <b>adequate</b> 105:1<br/> 118:25 119:2<br/> <b>adequately</b> 72:25<br/> <b>adjacent</b> 100:23<br/> <b>adjourn</b> 146:14</p>  | <p><b>advocate</b> 79:6<br/> 107:15<br/> <b>aed</b> 6:13<br/> <b>aeds</b> 6:11<br/> <b>aerial</b> 99:23<br/> <b>afford</b> 103:24 129:6<br/> <b>agencies</b> 67:4 96:25<br/> <b>agency</b> 5:21 27:21<br/> 87:15 123:24<br/> 124:13 125:1<br/> <b>agenda</b> 2:7,23,24<br/> 3:4,8,13,16 4:2<br/> 16:24 17:18 66:25<br/> 74:21 78:9 81:5,9<br/> 131:7 132:13<br/> 135:21 141:11</p>  |

[agenda - asking]

|   |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p>146:9<br/> <b>ago</b> 12:11 14:5,5<br/> 42:1,25 44:23 46:2<br/> 63:20 66:11 76:15<br/> 137:2 138:2<br/> <b>agree</b> 96:17 140:12<br/> <b>agreed</b> 26:21<br/> <b>agreement</b> 52:14<br/> 91:18<br/> <b>agreements</b> 91:9<br/> <b>agriculture</b> 71:22<br/> 72:3,22 73:2<br/> <b>ahead</b> 12:1 13:25<br/> 14:9,11 41:2 46:16<br/> 53:12 54:4 98:12<br/> 110:2,10 115:15,22<br/> <b>aid</b> 6:15<br/> <b>aim</b> 5:24<br/> <b>air</b> 42:16 47:14 59:2<br/> 77:3<br/> <b>airport</b> 75:6 77:10<br/> <b>airports</b> 37:14 42:17<br/> 75:24 76:18,20,21<br/> <b>al</b> 62:25 63:6 65:4<br/> <b>alamo</b> 92:21 93:15<br/> 93:24 94:24 95:24<br/> 113:3 114:8,16<br/> 115:8<br/> <b>alexander</b> 90:16,18<br/> 90:19<br/> <b>align</b> 38:14<br/> <b>alignment</b> 136:10<br/> 136:13,14 145:15<br/> <b>allegations</b> 90:25<br/> <b>allison</b> 78:17<br/> <b>allocate</b> 20:1,21<br/> <b>allocated</b> 20:13 43:3<br/> 118:25 121:12<br/> <b>allocating</b> 20:25<br/> <b>allocations</b> 18:21<br/> 91:20<br/> <b>allow</b> 53:18 54:6<br/> 93:12 137:14 142:9<br/> <b>allowed</b> 87:17</p> | <p><b>allowing</b> 139:15<br/> <b>alonzi</b> 62:25 63:4,6<br/> 63:10,14 65:20<br/> <b>alternate</b> 14:13<br/> 49:24,25 50:3,5,6,8<br/> <b>alternative</b> 60:13<br/> 136:11,13<br/> <b>alternatives</b> 81:8,10<br/> 129:7 136:8<br/> <b>amarillo</b> 78:23<br/> <b>amarillo's</b> 61:12<br/> <b>amen</b> 10:16<br/> <b>amended</b> 89:5<br/> <b>amendments</b> 87:2<br/> 87:11,18 88:3,17<br/> 90:1<br/> <b>america's</b> 70:21<br/> <b>american</b> 35:17<br/> 59:18<br/> <b>amount</b> 31:8 33:11<br/> 34:7 85:9<br/> <b>ample</b> 120:13<br/> <b>amy</b> 135:19,23<br/> 136:1,1<br/> <b>analysis</b> 118:24<br/> <b>analyzed</b> 36:6<br/> <b>analyzing</b> 29:23<br/> <b>anderson</b> 24:3 25:11<br/> <b>andrea</b> 76:18<br/> <b>angeles</b> 101:13<br/> <b>angelo</b> 79:24<br/> <b>anne</b> 79:11<br/> <b>announce</b> 9:7<br/> <b>answer</b> 24:24 91:22<br/> 94:6 107:24 108:22<br/> 108:24 117:20<br/> <b>anti</b> 102:1,5<br/> <b>anticipated</b> 81:14<br/> <b>anticipating</b> 54:20<br/> <b>anticipation</b> 116:1<br/> <b>antonio</b> 79:23 95:11<br/> 95:25 96:25 104:3<br/> 104:13 106:11<br/> 107:3 108:12<br/> 110:19,20,21 111:9</p> | <p>113:1,6,7 114:5,7<br/> 114:18<br/> <b>anxious</b> 13:10<br/> <b>anybody</b> 32:14<br/> <b>anyplace</b> 53:7<br/> <b>anyway</b> 104:22<br/> <b>apart</b> 56:16<br/> <b>appears</b> 136:17<br/> <b>applaud</b> 110:3<br/> 111:7<br/> <b>applications</b> 82:7,9<br/> 82:11 117:12<br/> <b>applies</b> 131:11<br/> <b>appoint</b> 80:9<br/> <b>appointed</b> 16:3 19:7<br/> 19:9 83:5<br/> <b>appointees</b> 22:25<br/> <b>appointing</b> 23:21<br/> 51:24<br/> <b>appointment</b> 78:1<br/> 79:14<br/> <b>appointments</b> 78:16<br/> <b>appoints</b> 78:9<br/> <b>appreciate</b> 10:23<br/> 12:12 13:8,15 15:3<br/> 66:17 69:5 105:5<br/> 124:15 135:16<br/> <b>appreciation</b> 71:17<br/> 79:22<br/> <b>appreciative</b> 19:13<br/> 27:17<br/> <b>approach</b> 20:21<br/> 63:21 66:14<br/> <b>appropriate</b> 93:16<br/> 111:2,9<br/> <b>appropriately</b> 76:7<br/> <b>approval</b> 16:25 75:6<br/> 75:11 80:3 81:7<br/> 83:22 87:20 89:9<br/> 91:21 117:5,12,16<br/> 117:18,25 119:17<br/> 121:21 123:19<br/> 130:22 145:13<br/> <b>approve</b> 17:5,8<br/> 86:10 87:24 90:1</p> | <p>92:2 111:24 112:11<br/> 112:12 115:16,24<br/> 116:8 121:23<br/> 125:14 144:22<br/> 145:1,7,11,20<br/> <b>approved</b> 117:11<br/> 126:3<br/> <b>approximately</b> 5:23<br/> 45:20 75:8 82:12<br/> 106:9 133:16<br/> <b>april</b> 30:13 117:9<br/> 136:4,10,18 141:21<br/> <b>architect</b> 79:4<br/> <b>area</b> 5:6,8,13,20<br/> 8:14 10:6 15:22<br/> 16:1 20:17 53:9<br/> 55:17,19 82:25<br/> 89:16 93:15 100:14<br/> 113:3 114:8,16<br/> 115:9 133:3 139:17<br/> 139:23<br/> <b>areas</b> 15:2,2,5 33:1<br/> 33:16 35:13,24<br/> 37:14,14 39:5 46:13<br/> 81:11,22,23 82:1,10<br/> 82:11,14,14 83:9,17<br/> 83:18 84:22 85:8<br/> 95:9 119:11 120:4<br/> 130:19,20 135:12<br/> 142:5<br/> <b>arguably</b> 96:1<br/> 101:12<br/> <b>argument's</b> 100:3<br/> <b>arm</b> 97:2<br/> <b>arrangement</b> 56:13<br/> <b>asher</b> 91:11,13,15<br/> 91:24<br/> <b>asked</b> 8:9 16:5<br/> 41:25 54:9 109:5,10<br/> 134:11,24 135:2,2<br/> <b>asking</b> 7:11 68:13<br/> 100:18 103:23<br/> 108:17 132:10<br/> 137:25</p> |
|---|--|--|--|

[aspect - beneficiaries]

|  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p><b>aspect</b> 15:1 124:12<br/> <b>aspects</b> 41:23 70:3<br/> <b>asphalt</b> 61:18<br/> <b>assemble</b> 19:15<br/> <b>assessing</b> 39:9<br/> <b>assessment</b> 118:21<br/> <b>asset</b> 68:25<br/> <b>assets</b> 70:25<br/> <b>assigned</b> 18:10<br/>             65:24 66:7 91:1<br/> <b>assist</b> 95:13<br/> <b>assistance</b> 117:13<br/> <b>associated</b> 18:22<br/>             24:6 38:7 93:24<br/> <b>assume</b> 15:7 109:23<br/> <b>assumed</b> 74:9<br/> <b>atd</b> 95:22<br/> <b>attack</b> 27:14<br/> <b>attacking</b> 27:23<br/> <b>attempt</b> 102:2<br/> <b>attended</b> 74:4<br/> <b>attention</b> 53:4 99:21<br/>             144:4<br/> <b>attorney</b> 78:24<br/> <b>auction</b> 72:11,12,18<br/> <b>audible</b> 28:6 71:11<br/>             77:21 80:6,23 86:22<br/>             88:12 90:11 91:25<br/>             92:14 116:17<br/>             117:23 118:9 122:8<br/>             126:2 127:20 130:4<br/>             131:24 143:13<br/>             144:20 145:24<br/> <b>audience</b> 10:10,12<br/>             25:7 26:1<br/> <b>audit</b> 65:23 66:1,24<br/>             67:1,3,4 75:18<br/>             118:12,12,17,19,20<br/>             119:1,15,16,17,22<br/>             119:23 120:16<br/>             121:11,14,21,23<br/>             122:13,16,20,22<br/>             123:2,6,7,14,25<br/>             124:2,22,23 125:6<br/>             125:15 143:22</p> | <p><b>audited</b> 76:10<br/> <b>auditing</b> 118:19<br/> <b>auditor</b> 122:21<br/> <b>audits</b> 76:10<br/> <b>august</b> 17:1,5 75:10<br/>             78:19 79:1,20 90:23<br/>             90:25 103:9<br/> <b>austin</b> 1:10,16 2:5<br/>             10:7,8 13:23 14:1<br/>             41:16,17 44:6 57:4<br/>             57:6 60:9,23 63:7<br/>             63:20 65:4 66:16<br/>             68:4,5,8 75:15 76:5<br/>             76:13 77:3,6 78:17<br/>             78:21 80:8,11 81:1<br/>             84:1,11 85:7,12,19<br/>             88:4,6 89:13,14,25<br/>             90:3 94:25 95:4,18<br/>             97:8 103:2,6 108:6<br/>             108:25 109:5,20<br/>             113:8 115:3,4 118:3<br/>             118:4 119:20<br/>             121:25 123:9,23<br/>             124:7,16,21 125:20<br/>             125:21 127:9,12<br/>             135:9 143:16,17<br/>             144:18 145:5,8<br/> <b>authority</b> 18:22<br/>             89:8,18 91:17 92:22<br/>             93:25 117:16<br/>             137:16<br/> <b>authorization</b> 64:19<br/> <b>authorize</b> 131:4,14<br/> <b>authorized</b> 137:20<br/> <b>authorizes</b> 93:18<br/>             130:16<br/> <b>auto</b> 103:4<br/> <b>available</b> 5:21 6:11<br/>             6:15 23:2 55:5<br/>             81:25 82:20 99:3<br/>             101:2 105:7 109:18<br/>             109:22<br/> <b>average</b> 31:7 35:19<br/>             49:20 56:8 126:24<br/>             128:4</p> | <p><b>aviation</b> 74:23,24<br/>             75:4,23,23<br/> <b>avid</b> 78:25 79:5<br/> <b>award</b> 74:23 77:9<br/>             83:17 126:21 127:3<br/>             127:10 128:1,9<br/>             129:5,9,15<br/> <b>awarded</b> 84:4,13<br/> <b>awarding</b> 120:9<br/>             126:13<br/> <b>awards</b> 82:1 83:8<br/>             128:5<br/> <b>aware</b> 8:15 31:1<br/> <b>aye</b> 17:13 77:18<br/>             80:20 86:19 88:9<br/>             90:8 92:11 116:13<br/>             118:6 122:5 125:24<br/>             127:17 130:1<br/>             131:21 145:21<br/>             146:20<br/> <b>eyes</b> 17:14 77:19<br/>             80:21 86:20 88:10<br/>             90:9 92:12 116:14<br/>             118:7 122:6 125:25<br/>             127:18 130:2<br/>             131:22 145:22<br/>             146:21</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>b</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>b</b> 88:16 92:19<br/>             127:24,25 136:10<br/>             136:13 139:10<br/> <b>back</b> 6:22 8:10 10:1<br/>             10:11,11,15,19,22<br/>             12:5 13:9,18,20<br/>             18:7 28:8,24 30:12<br/>             40:8 41:22 44:24<br/>             55:10 57:9,20,20<br/>             58:14 59:15 65:14<br/>             66:2,2 73:23 74:20<br/>             81:5 84:6 85:10<br/>             86:1 98:10 104:7<br/>             108:7,8,10,10<br/>             112:11 114:6 120:5<br/>             120:13 121:14</p> | <p>132:24 134:2,22<br/>             140:9 142:1,8,21<br/>             143:19 144:9,12<br/> <b>backyard</b> 136:24<br/>             143:6<br/> <b>backyards</b> 140:25<br/> <b>bad</b> 44:10<br/> <b>bag</b> 101:24<br/> <b>balance</b> 7:25 85:5<br/> <b>baling</b> 140:5<br/> <b>bang</b> 53:24<br/> <b>bans</b> 101:24,24<br/> <b>barge</b> 14:6<br/> <b>barges</b> 56:15<br/> <b>barns</b> 133:4 140:5<br/> <b>base</b> 5:25<br/> <b>based</b> 18:24 20:21<br/>             36:9 61:12 70:9<br/>             82:8,18 129:4<br/> <b>baseline</b> 45:16<br/> <b>basement</b> 5:7<br/> <b>basically</b> 2:25 26:20<br/>             75:20 106:2,6<br/> <b>basis</b> 20:25 97:7,11<br/>             138:6<br/> <b>bass</b> 19:5<br/> <b>beach</b> 58:14<br/> <b>beautiful</b> 140:18<br/> <b>beauty</b> 142:2<br/> <b>began</b> 21:10 144:1<br/> <b>beginning</b> 7:2 11:3<br/>             21:14 61:7 65:10<br/> <b>behalf</b> 69:13 107:23<br/> <b>behavior</b> 8:24<br/>             101:14,25<br/> <b>believe</b> 10:19 12:4<br/>             13:3 25:18 70:1,3<br/>             76:19 113:5 120:22<br/>             120:25 123:25<br/>             135:21 143:14<br/> <b>believes</b> 53:19 70:22<br/> <b>ben</b> 91:11,12,15<br/> <b>benchmark</b> 61:5<br/> <b>beneficiaries</b> 68:16</p> |
|--|---|--|--|

[benefit - canada]

|   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p><b>benefit</b> 4:4,11 51:15<br/>63:3 64:18 67:13<br/>69:9 83:1 94:19<br/>97:23 105:15<br/><b>benefits</b> 79:19<br/><b>benito</b> 123:25<br/><b>benny</b> 119:21<br/><b>bergstrom</b> 116:21<br/>117:6,19<br/><b>berkeley</b> 103:12<br/><b>best</b> 8:10 9:8 16:15<br/>64:24 106:14<br/>123:18,24<br/><b>better</b> 33:2,13 38:1<br/>38:10 39:6 42:9<br/>44:15 49:15 94:4<br/>96:11 120:2 139:23<br/><b>bexar</b> 93:20 94:23<br/>95:23 114:7<br/><b>beyond</b> 51:5 54:22<br/>64:22<br/><b>bicycle</b> 78:1,10,21<br/>79:13 80:9 81:17<br/>82:18<br/><b>bicycling</b> 78:12,14<br/><b>bid</b> 106:6 120:9<br/>126:25 128:4,14,16<br/><b>bids</b> 126:24,24<br/>128:3,4,14,21 129:1<br/><b>big</b> 27:14 30:12<br/>45:19 50:19 58:4<br/>65:12 99:20 102:19<br/><b>bike</b> 102:4,7 103:5<br/><b>bill</b> 17:21 62:6,10<br/>64:14,19 68:15,15<br/>69:2 87:12,13 89:4<br/>137:19<br/><b>billion</b> 26:20 34:9<br/>34:11,15,16 35:22<br/>39:17 43:8,11,12<br/>45:18,20 47:6 48:6<br/>49:5 61:10 95:10<br/>103:22<br/><b>billions</b> 60:15 70:16<br/>107:16</p> | <p><b>bills</b> 123:11 143:23<br/>143:23<br/><b>bin</b> 124:24<br/><b>birds</b> 142:2<br/><b>bisect</b> 142:19<br/><b>bit</b> 30:1 33:6 46:15<br/>121:3<br/><b>blanket</b> 37:9<br/><b>blown</b> 61:14<br/><b>blue</b> 3:16 133:4<br/><b>board</b> 115:9<br/><b>bodies</b> 142:16<br/><b>body</b> 76:1<br/><b>boerne</b> 104:16<br/><b>bomb</b> 6:1<br/><b>bond</b> 89:5<br/><b>boom</b> 101:19<br/><b>booth</b> 6:12<br/><b>border</b> 27:9 33:19<br/>33:20,21,22 44:19<br/>47:13 55:25 56:1,3<br/>56:4 74:10 100:8<br/><b>borders</b> 37:13<br/><b>bottlenecks</b> 35:9,14<br/>43:25<br/><b>bottom</b> 23:8 54:17<br/>62:12 99:25<br/><b>bowen</b> 133:7<br/><b>boxes</b> 23:8<br/><b>boy</b> 110:12<br/><b>boyer</b> 97:1 113:4,5<br/><b>branded</b> 13:1<br/><b>brazil</b> 59:12<br/><b>brazoria</b> 15:13<br/><b>brazos</b> 5:19<br/><b>break</b> 33:11<br/><b>brian</b> 121:15<br/><b>bridge</b> 14:6 82:24<br/>89:17 128:13<br/><b>bridges</b> 39:10 42:21<br/>54:24<br/><b>brief</b> 22:23 93:8<br/><b>briefed</b> 24:1<br/><b>briefing</b> 4:19 6:21<br/>21:7 23:1 28:20</p> | <p><b>briefly</b> 5:2<br/><b>bright</b> 55:14<br/><b>brightest</b> 9:9<br/><b>bring</b> 10:15 14:18<br/>44:17 51:1 68:21<br/>73:23 84:25 96:1<br/><b>bringing</b> 42:9 45:13<br/>69:22<br/><b>brings</b> 120:8 130:8<br/><b>briscoe</b> 12:5<br/><b>broad</b> 32:13 36:9<br/>69:22<br/><b>broadcast</b> 38:23<br/><b>broader</b> 20:16 76:4<br/><b>broken</b> 56:16<br/><b>brought</b> 65:14<br/><b>brown</b> 128:11<br/><b>bruce</b> 1:17 69:6,12<br/>105:21<br/><b>bryan</b> 133:7 138:3<br/>142:23<br/><b>bryan's</b> 140:9,24<br/><b>buck</b> 53:24<br/><b>budget</b> 45:19<br/><b>bugg</b> 1:17 7:3,5 15:7<br/>15:11,21 16:2 17:4<br/>17:7 32:16 40:21,22<br/>41:7,14 49:4 67:2<br/>74:14 80:14,16<br/>87:24,25 92:6,8<br/>95:13 105:21<br/>111:21,23 112:3,5<br/>112:10,15,21,23<br/>115:2 119:21<br/>124:16,17 125:14<br/>125:17 127:16<br/>129:13,15,19 131:1<br/>131:2,14,19 146:16<br/>146:18<br/><b>bugg's</b> 27:22<br/><b>build</b> 60:19 76:2<br/>107:18 110:6<br/>113:17 117:10<br/>133:24 134:16,17<br/>136:11</p> | <p><b>building</b> 1:9 5:7,16<br/>126:14,21 139:24<br/>140:4,4,5<br/><b>built</b> 7:14 50:16,17<br/>107:18<br/><b>bulk</b> 34:12 47:24<br/><b>bullet</b> 19:12,21<br/>20:11<br/><b>bunch</b> 102:16<br/><b>bureau</b> 71:16,21<br/><b>bus</b> 8:16 99:7,12<br/>101:11,15 102:3<br/>103:5 104:6 107:2<br/><b>buses</b> 104:1<br/><b>business</b> 16:25<br/>17:18 22:4 29:7<br/>53:21 57:17 107:13<br/>125:10 146:13<br/><b>businesses</b> 57:17,23<br/>58:20 100:23<br/><b>bussing</b> 95:22<br/><b>bypass</b> 55:16</p> |
|   |   |  | <b>c</b>  |
|   |   |  | <p><b>c</b> 2:1 136:13 147:1,1<br/><b>calculation</b> 48:6<br/><b>california</b> 35:23<br/>101:8,16 102:2<br/><b>call</b> 2:3,16 3:14 6:6<br/>6:6,8 35:9 59:15<br/>81:19 82:5 85:15<br/>95:16 99:21 102:1<br/>108:23 116:12<br/>126:10<br/><b>called</b> 4:7 7:9 18:15<br/>24:19 55:19 81:23<br/>81:24 101:7<br/><b>calling</b> 57:22<br/><b>campaign</b> 13:4<br/>55:10<br/><b>campaigning</b> 13:7<br/><b>campbell</b> 105:20<br/>130:10,13,14,25<br/><b>canada</b> 31:13 100:9</p>                                   |

**[canal - charlesworth]**

|  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| <b>canal</b> 42:3,5 57:9<br>58:4,6 59:12,13<br>71:18<br><b>canal's</b> 57:12<br><b>cancellation</b> 91:8,16<br><b>capacity</b> 32:21<br>34:23 58:21 99:3,8<br>100:5,21 102:12<br>103:4,14 104:11<br>105:1 106:4 113:18<br><b>capital</b> 70:13,17<br><b>capitol</b> 5:20 6:10<br><b>car</b> 16:13 100:13<br>102:5<br><b>card</b> 2:16,16,22,24<br>3:9,15,16 67:10<br>69:6 71:14 94:15<br>96:21 97:20 105:11<br>135:19 138:24<br>141:8,10<br><b>cards</b> 2:16 3:14<br>62:25 73:16 94:11<br>108:3 132:9 143:15<br><b>care</b> 95:12 105:1<br><b>cared</b> 55:9<br><b>career</b> 57:1<br><b>careful</b> 13:11 62:4<br>110:1 116:1<br><b>cargo</b> 42:16<br><b>carlos</b> 65:15<br><b>carolina</b> 57:25<br><b>caroline</b> 28:12,13,17<br>41:17 45:6,11 49:7<br>52:2 54:12 62:8<br>67:24<br><b>caroline's</b> 54:2 64:5<br><b>carpool</b> 101:11,16<br>102:7 103:11<br><b>carried</b> 80:25<br>145:25<br><b>carriers</b> 52:16 53:14<br><b>carries</b> 17:16 86:23<br>88:13 90:12 104:16<br>116:19 118:10<br>122:10 127:21 | 130:6 131:25<br><b>carry</b> 43:4 104:9<br><b>carrying</b> 12:17<br><b>cars</b> 100:13 101:3<br>102:7 104:16 142:9<br><b>cart</b> 12:1<br><b>carter</b> 1:20 132:15<br><b>cascos</b> 45:12<br><b>case</b> 5:2 6:1 95:9<br>110:15 134:15<br><b>cash</b> 83:14<br><b>categories</b> 18:20,21<br>19:23,24 20:4,7<br>44:22<br><b>cattle</b> 31:20 71:24<br>72:10,11 139:18<br>140:6,21 141:23<br>142:3<br><b>cause</b> 140:16<br><b>caused</b> 136:18<br><b>causing</b> 101:18<br><b>cede</b> 8:2<br><b>celebrated</b> 12:21<br><b>cell</b> 2:13 6:6 101:24<br><b>cemetery</b> 134:3<br>142:15<br><b>center</b> 38:20 46:11<br>135:7<br><b>central</b> 117:15<br><b>centrally</b> 5:10<br><b>century</b> 46:1<br><b>ceo</b> 113:5<br><b>certain</b> 33:11 95:15<br><b>certainly</b> 23:2,12<br>27:8,19 55:11 64:5<br>64:16,20,22 104:1<br>105:6 106:18 107:7<br>107:22 111:6 112:1<br><b>certified</b> 147:3<br><b>certify</b> 147:5<br><b>cetera</b> 33:18 95:19<br><b>chad</b> 132:11,18,21<br>132:21 138:2<br><b>chair</b> 1:15,16 28:22<br>45:12,12 61:2 77:13 | 78:21 86:7 94:24<br>117:24 121:13<br>131:16 145:6<br><b>chaired</b> 22:21 42:5<br>124:11<br><b>chairman</b> 2:2 4:16<br>6:22,23 7:6,16,20<br>7:25 8:4,6,7,8,9 9:6<br>9:19,22,24,24 10:4<br>10:5 13:14,19,25<br>14:16 16:3,6,17,18<br>17:9,12,15,25 19:6<br>22:21,22 24:23 25:1<br>25:7 26:10 27:22<br>28:2,16 40:13,17,22<br>41:15 45:8,8,9,9,10<br>47:5 48:2,17 51:7<br>51:10,18 54:21<br>56:23 57:2 60:25<br>61:3 62:13,16,18,24<br>63:4 65:2 67:8 68:2<br>69:3,10,14 71:8,12<br>73:11,14,15,17<br>74:17 75:3,12 77:7<br>77:13,15,16,20,22<br>78:5 80:4,7,12,18<br>80:22,24 81:4 83:24<br>86:5,8,9,10,13,17,21<br>86:23 87:22 88:1,2<br>88:7,11,13,23 89:11<br>89:24 90:4,7,10,12<br>91:5,14,23 92:1,6,9<br>92:15,18,23 93:6<br>94:8,13,21 96:21<br>97:14,19 98:11,16<br>103:17,20 104:18<br>104:21 105:8,16<br>107:25 110:23<br>111:4,19 112:1,4,7<br>112:16,16,18,19,24<br>113:3,7 114:22<br>115:1 116:5,15,18<br>117:1,21,24 118:1,2<br>118:4,8,10,15<br>119:18,20 121:22 | 122:3,7,9 123:21<br>124:19 125:12,18<br>125:19,22 126:1,3,9<br>127:5,13,19,21<br>129:11,14,20,21,24<br>130:3,5,24 131:2,13<br>131:18,23,25 132:7<br>132:8,16,19 135:17<br>135:24 138:23<br>139:5,12 141:5,14<br>143:11,14 144:17<br>144:24,25 145:3,4,6<br>145:18,23,25 146:5<br>146:16,19,22<br><b>chairs</b> 23:18 26:11<br>123:25<br><b>challenge</b> 15:25<br>32:18 33:9 44:3<br><b>challenged</b> 9:5<br><b>challenges</b> 14:19,21<br>32:12,13,25 33:20<br>33:23 34:7 36:5<br>64:4 71:5 111:14<br><b>challenging</b> 27:16<br>56:25<br><b>champion</b> 111:7<br><b>chance</b> 81:2<br><b>change</b> 110:7<br>119:13 125:4<br><b>changed</b> 101:14<br><b>changes</b> 87:19 89:2<br>122:13 125:14<br><b>changing</b> 102:21<br><b>channel</b> 70:16<br><b>chapter</b> 87:2 88:17<br>89:2<br><b>characteristic</b> 85:21<br><b>characteristics</b><br>84:12<br><b>charge</b> 41:25<br><b>charged</b> 15:15,23<br>28:25 78:11<br><b>charleston</b> 57:25<br><b>charlesworth</b> 79:24 |
|--|--|--|--|

**[chart - commissioner]**

|   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
| <b>chart</b> 22:13 24:15<br>32:8 34:13<br><b>charter</b> 122:14<br>123:2 124:2,2<br>125:15<br><b>charts</b> 39:25<br><b>check</b> 106:20<br><b>cheek</b> 124:25<br><b>chemicals</b> 72:6<br><b>chet</b> 133:6<br><b>chief</b> 1:20 118:19<br><b>children</b> 141:20,24<br>143:7<br><b>chirping</b> 142:2<br><b>choice</b> 142:12<br><b>choices</b> 110:14<br><b>choke</b> 7:13 11:9,10<br>15:17 32:19,20 35:9<br>43:22,23 44:18<br>50:11,19,21<br><b>chokes</b> 49:19<br><b>choose</b> 142:25 143:1<br><b>chorus</b> 17:14 77:19<br>80:21 86:20 88:10<br>90:9 92:12 116:14<br>118:7 122:6 125:25<br>127:18 130:2<br>131:22 145:22<br>146:21<br><b>christi</b> 67:15<br><b>circle</b> 134:11,12<br><b>circles</b> 133:15,18,19<br><b>cities</b> 11:10,11 84:8<br>85:23,25 101:23<br><b>citizen</b> 98:6 107:13<br><b>citizens</b> 15:19 98:24<br><b>city</b> 12:22 91:9,18<br>95:25 114:7<br><b>clarification</b> 137:7<br><b>clarity</b> 122:24 123:2<br><b>class</b> 123:18,24<br><b>clean</b> 68:18<br><b>cleansing</b> 84:3<br><b>clear</b> 11:15 27:6<br>39:3 100:11 113:20 | 113:21 136:21<br><b>clearly</b> 66:11 136:4<br><b>clerk</b> 1:20 2:19 3:10<br><b>cleveland</b> 12:25<br><b>climb</b> 34:11<br><b>clip</b> 9:20<br><b>close</b> 42:25 50:4<br>84:19 143:6<br><b>closed</b> 91:2<br><b>closely</b> 65:15 66:13<br><b>coalition</b> 96:25<br>113:6<br><b>coast</b> 58:5,18 59:16<br>70:16<br><b>code</b> 2:10 48:9 81:16<br>89:3 90:24 117:17<br>146:2<br><b>collaborate</b> 21:23<br><b>collective</b> 36:20<br>47:16<br><b>collectively</b> 26:2<br><b>colleyville</b> 91:9,18<br><b>color</b> 3:15 48:8<br><b>column</b> 91:20<br><b>comal</b> 93:20<br><b>comb</b> 25:18<br><b>combine</b> 98:8,17<br><b>combining</b> 136:13<br><b>come</b> 2:17 3:1,10<br>4:7,8,18 10:10,19<br>10:24 18:6 26:22<br>36:6 40:8,18 44:24<br>51:13 57:14 58:6<br>63:1 64:18,23 65:6<br>67:11 69:7 73:19<br>85:10,25 94:17<br>97:21 98:10 108:7<br>111:13 114:12<br>121:13,14 132:10<br>135:20 139:1,8<br>140:8,10,24 141:9<br>142:7 143:8 144:9<br><b>comes</b> 25:19 30:23<br>35:10 39:2 42:20<br>46:11,23 53:2 56:3 | 57:20 59:12,25<br>64:19 139:24<br><b>comfortable</b> 53:10<br><b>coming</b> 9:14 10:9,22<br>13:3 20:6 54:7 56:4<br>58:10,10 62:21<br>65:21 67:9 97:16<br>105:10 108:2 111:9<br>111:18 113:7 114:2<br>114:18 132:12<br>133:21 141:7<br><b>commander</b> 17:10<br><b>commend</b> 69:20<br><b>comment</b> 2:16,22<br>3:24 4:4 11:15 40:6<br>49:10 56:6 57:5,11<br>57:16 62:7,25 69:6<br>69:17 73:21 76:14<br>94:11,15 97:20 98:6<br>105:11,12 107:10<br>108:3 111:22 112:4<br>123:23 132:9<br>135:19 138:24<br>141:8 145:19<br>146:12<br><b>comments</b> 2:21 3:14<br>3:17,19,21 4:5 7:1,2<br>7:3 12:18 19:16<br>25:5 28:5 49:12,12<br>62:20 65:3 66:17<br>74:20 75:10,13 77:8<br>77:17 83:25 86:6,18<br>87:23 89:12,25 95:1<br>98:13,14 105:6<br>108:4,5 112:9,22<br>116:6 118:5 123:22<br>127:7 132:20<br>136:12 144:19<br><b>commerce</b> 35:3<br>54:19 55:22<br><b>commercial</b> 79:4<br><b>commercials</b> 55:10<br><b>commission</b> 1:1,14<br>1:20 2:5,14 3:12,24<br>4:1,3 7:10,12 8:10 | 9:12 13:22 14:24<br>15:16 16:5 17:2<br>18:6 22:2 23:7<br>24:25 25:19 27:12<br>27:21 28:23 40:9<br>41:7 63:19 70:3<br>75:24 78:6,11 79:7<br>85:16 93:8,9,10,15<br>95:21 110:19<br>117:11 118:23<br>122:1,23 124:16<br>131:4 137:1 146:5,8<br>146:13<br><b>commission's</b> 25:6<br><b>commissioner</b> 7:3,5<br>7:23,24 8:5 10:7,8<br>12:20 13:23 14:1<br>15:7,11,21 16:2,7<br>16:21 17:4,7,11<br>25:3,4 27:22 28:3<br>28:15 32:16 33:6<br>38:5 40:21,22 41:14<br>41:16,17 44:6,8<br>46:8 49:4 57:4,6<br>59:1 60:9,23 65:4<br>66:16 67:2 68:4,5,8<br>74:14 75:15 76:5,13<br>77:3,6,9,12 80:8,11<br>80:14,16 81:1 84:1<br>84:11 85:7,12,19<br>86:14,16 87:24,25<br>88:4,6 89:13,14,25<br>90:3,4,6 92:2,5,6,8<br>94:16,23,25 95:4,12<br>97:15 105:21,22<br>108:6,25 109:5,20<br>110:25 111:5,20,21<br>111:23 112:3,5,10<br>112:15,21,23 113:2<br>113:25 114:4 115:2<br>115:3,4 118:3,4<br>119:20,21 121:24<br>122:2 123:9,23<br>124:7,11,15,17,21<br>125:14,17,19,21 |
|---|--|--|---|

[commissioner - consulted]

|  |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| <p>127:9,12,14,15,16<br/>129:13,15,19,22,23<br/>131:1,2,14,19<br/>143:16,17 144:18<br/>144:21,23 145:5,7<br/>145:12 146:13,15<br/>146:16,18</p> <p><b>commissioners</b> 4:23<br/>7:1,17 15:1,4 16:16<br/>16:20 17:3,25 19:6<br/>19:14 25:2 28:4,16<br/>62:19 63:5 69:10,14<br/>73:17 75:3,12 87:7<br/>88:23 90:19 91:14<br/>93:6 94:21 97:8<br/>108:5 114:20 116:7<br/>117:2 118:15<br/>123:21 124:19<br/>127:5 141:6</p> <p><b>committed</b> 7:17</p> <p><b>committee</b> 9:8 18:9<br/>19:8,12,20 21:3,7,8<br/>21:10,25 22:3,17,19<br/>22:23,25 23:3,4,19<br/>23:23 24:1,8,10,12<br/>24:16 25:24 26:2,8<br/>26:21 27:1,1 28:23<br/>28:24 29:19 40:7<br/>41:24 42:7 44:3,9<br/>51:24 52:6,9,12,21<br/>61:25 64:17 67:3,17<br/>69:5,22,25 70:2<br/>71:17,19 73:9,25<br/>75:18 78:1,10,10,22<br/>79:13 80:1,10 83:5<br/>120:17 121:14<br/>124:22 143:22</p> <p><b>committee's</b> 70:23</p> <p><b>committees</b> 23:15<br/>23:18 24:20 30:10<br/>44:14 52:8</p> <p><b>commodity</b> 72:20,21<br/>73:5</p> <p><b>common</b> 114:13<br/>119:24 125:2,4,8</p> | <p><b>commonsense</b> 138:9</p> <p><b>communicate</b><br/>142:23</p> <p><b>communication</b><br/>2:13</p> <p><b>communities</b> 48:24<br/>76:2 84:15 85:25<br/>111:13 114:14</p> <p><b>community</b> 29:7<br/>44:4 47:17,18,18<br/>53:9 68:20 78:15<br/>79:16 84:22,25<br/>89:17 114:12</p> <p><b>community's</b> 11:20</p> <p><b>commuters</b> 53:4<br/>102:25</p> <p><b>company</b> 95:22</p> <p><b>compared</b> 58:11<br/>66:10 100:20<br/>103:14 124:3<br/>136:11</p> <p><b>compares</b> 34:20</p> <p><b>competing</b> 69:23</p> <p><b>competitiveness</b><br/>70:11</p> <p><b>complete</b> 2:15,18<br/>22:1 83:20</p> <p><b>completed</b> 6:21 42:6<br/>84:20 106:12<br/>120:25 121:3 144:7<br/>146:10</p> <p><b>completely</b> 99:14<br/>100:21 106:25</p> <p><b>completing</b> 50:25</p> <p><b>complex</b> 120:3</p> <p><b>compliance</b> 90:15<br/>90:15,20 118:18,19<br/>122:17 123:7</p> <p><b>compliant</b> 64:21<br/>125:11</p> <p><b>complicated</b> 84:21<br/>84:23</p> <p><b>compliment</b> 41:21<br/>89:15,23 120:18</p> | <p><b>complimentary</b><br/>19:13</p> <p><b>complimenting</b> 52:1</p> <p><b>comply</b> 54:11</p> <p><b>component</b> 39:12</p> <p><b>components</b> 57:19</p> <p><b>comprehensive</b> 10:2<br/>29:17 30:8 66:3</p> <p><b>comprised</b> 22:3</p> <p><b>comptroller</b> 120:7</p> <p><b>concern</b> 78:14</p> <p><b>concerned</b> 15:9<br/>104:4 106:19<br/>142:10</p> <p><b>concerns</b> 33:7 98:25<br/>99:1 106:1,2,15,22<br/>143:10</p> <p><b>concluded</b> 146:6,25</p> <p><b>concludes</b> 24:23</p> <p><b>concrete</b> 61:20</p> <p><b>condemnation</b><br/>130:17 131:15</p> <p><b>condemned</b> 131:12</p> <p><b>conditions</b> 18:20</p> <p><b>conduct</b> 65:23</p> <p><b>conducted</b> 35:18<br/>66:1</p> <p><b>confirm</b> 118:25<br/>145:13</p> <p><b>confirmed</b> 83:6</p> <p><b>congested</b> 7:13<br/>15:17 35:11 49:5<br/>55:19 61:23 101:1<br/>101:16 107:1</p> <p><b>congestion</b> 7:10<br/>15:6 18:19 27:7<br/>32:17,18 33:20<br/>34:21 35:3,16,19,22<br/>35:25 40:24 41:2,8<br/>55:8,9 56:17,19<br/>58:21 99:20 101:10<br/>101:12 103:3,6,10<br/>103:13 106:17<br/>107:11</p> | <p><b>congratulations</b><br/>45:11 51:8,24 63:15<br/>120:15 124:7</p> <p><b>congress</b> 5:19 64:10</p> <p><b>connect</b> 117:16</p> <p><b>connection</b> 116:21<br/>117:6,19</p> <p><b>connectivity</b> 18:20<br/>27:8 33:15,15,16,17<br/>37:12 102:14</p> <p><b>connectors</b> 93:21</p> <p><b>consecutive</b> 31:21</p> <p><b>consider</b> 85:16<br/>91:16 109:15<br/>111:10 113:11<br/>114:17,25</p> <p><b>consideration</b> 10:3<br/>52:18 91:8 130:15<br/>135:10 137:12<br/>138:12 140:14<br/>143:9</p> <p><b>considered</b> 136:22<br/>138:7</p> <p><b>considering</b> 136:12<br/>138:1</p> <p><b>consistent</b> 81:12,20<br/>83:12 111:17<br/>113:14</p> <p><b>consists</b> 126:13<br/>128:12</p> <p><b>constantly</b> 111:7</p> <p><b>constitutes</b> 147:6</p> <p><b>constraint</b> 102:13</p> <p><b>construct</b> 83:13<br/>85:2 93:12</p> <p><b>constructing</b> 94:4</p> <p><b>construction</b> 39:6<br/>81:17 83:2 91:19<br/>117:15 126:14,22<br/>127:24 128:1,10<br/>129:8 131:8 139:21</p> <p><b>consultant</b> 103:8</p> <p><b>consultation</b> 132:6</p> <p><b>consulted</b> 83:3,3</p> |
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[consume - data]

|   |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p><b>consume</b> 31:5,9<br/> <b>consumer</b> 72:23<br/> <b>consumes</b> 31:7<br/> <b>container</b> 58:13<br/> <b>containers</b> 59:25<br/>         60:3<br/> <b>containing</b> 2:7<br/> <b>contains</b> 75:5 132:2<br/> <b>contemplated</b> 93:23<br/> <b>contemplates</b> 46:3<br/> <b>contentious</b> 96:12<br/> <b>contingency</b> 110:12<br/> <b>contingent</b> 115:9,16<br/>         115:22<br/> <b>continually</b> 76:10<br/> <b>continue</b> 12:16<br/>         21:23 34:14,22 44:2<br/>         58:21 66:13 70:13<br/>         81:6 101:20 103:3<br/>         107:14 109:12<br/>         122:12 136:3<br/> <b>continued</b> 18:5<br/>         19:22 21:17 119:10<br/> <b>continues</b> 25:9<br/>         64:12 100:1<br/> <b>continuing</b> 21:5<br/>         24:19 100:6<br/> <b>contract</b> 76:17,20<br/>         84:8 94:5 117:11<br/>         119:24 120:7<br/> <b>contracting</b> 119:4<br/> <b>contractors</b> 76:24<br/> <b>contracts</b> 76:24,25<br/>         77:1 119:24 120:9<br/>         126:15,22 127:10<br/>         127:24 128:2<br/> <b>contribute</b> 9:10<br/>         106:17<br/> <b>contributions</b> 32:3,9<br/> <b>contributor</b> 31:18<br/> <b>control</b> 111:8<br/>         130:20 132:5<br/> <b>controlled</b> 130:19<br/> <b>convened</b> 8:12</p> | <p><b>conversation</b> 58:1<br/>         85:20 96:10 114:1<br/> <b>conversations</b><br/>         109:15<br/> <b>conversion</b> 99:5<br/> <b>converted</b> 99:11<br/> <b>convincing</b> 141:2<br/> <b>cooperate</b> 102:10<br/> <b>coordinate</b> 42:15<br/> <b>coordinated</b> 15:8<br/> <b>coordinating</b> 9:16<br/> <b>coordination</b> 33:21<br/>         119:14<br/> <b>coordinators</b> 82:18<br/> <b>core</b> 22:7 23:25<br/>         25:12,15<br/> <b>corps</b> 68:19<br/> <b>corpus</b> 67:15<br/> <b>correct</b> 46:5 76:23<br/>         112:14 120:1<br/>         121:18 132:17<br/>         135:22,23 141:12<br/> <b>correctly</b> 76:20<br/>         124:24<br/> <b>corridor</b> 31:16<br/>         61:19,23 89:22 99:9<br/>         104:1,3,9 129:2<br/> <b>corridors</b> 33:14<br/>         34:3 35:11 37:3,6<br/>         38:6 48:7,9,11,13<br/>         48:15 49:3 50:8,10<br/>         50:24 51:5,6 57:13<br/> <b>cost</b> 35:20,21 39:16<br/>         41:12 43:20 75:7<br/>         107:19 128:20<br/> <b>costing</b> 73:3<br/> <b>costs</b> 35:22,25<br/> <b>cotton</b> 31:20 71:24<br/>         72:10<br/> <b>counsel</b> 1:20 97:9<br/> <b>count</b> 96:13 100:18<br/>         104:24<br/> <b>counterparts</b> 65:7<br/>         124:13</p> | <p><b>countless</b> 74:1<br/> <b>country</b> 10:18 35:18<br/>         63:23 101:13,17<br/>         140:20 141:24<br/> <b>county</b> 13:2 15:13<br/>         22:10 51:12,12,19<br/>         51:20,20 55:20 89:7<br/>         89:15 93:20 94:23<br/>         94:24 95:23 113:2<br/>         114:8 117:7 128:11<br/>         128:23 132:23,23<br/>         136:3,6 138:1,18<br/>         139:17,17 141:18<br/>         141:20<br/> <b>couple</b> 49:12 76:15<br/>         84:1 96:25<br/> <b>course</b> 9:12 26:12<br/>         55:20 84:20<br/> <b>court</b> 92:13<br/> <b>cover</b> 47:14 109:9<br/> <b>coverage</b> 119:2<br/> <b>craft</b> 53:17<br/> <b>craig</b> 118:12,16<br/>         119:22 122:12<br/> <b>crashes</b> 38:4,6<br/> <b>create</b> 102:12<br/>         137:23<br/> <b>created</b> 9:20 28:23<br/>         78:18 122:16<br/> <b>creates</b> 50:19,20<br/>         64:13<br/> <b>creating</b> 15:16<br/>         52:20 64:2<br/> <b>creations</b> 142:2<br/> <b>credible</b> 138:20<br/> <b>credit</b> 64:15 114:9<br/> <b>creek</b> 142:17<br/> <b>creeping</b> 133:25<br/> <b>criteria</b> 82:19 84:6<br/>         137:6,13 138:6,21<br/>         142:18<br/> <b>critical</b> 31:11 34:3<br/>         34:18 37:3 44:7,21<br/>         52:23 53:14 55:3<br/>         56:2 62:5 63:25,25</p> | <p>103:25<br/> <b>critically</b> 45:3<br/> <b>criticizing</b> 101:23<br/> <b>cross</b> 129:3<br/> <b>crossovers</b> 100:18<br/> <b>csr</b> 147:3,20,20<br/> <b>ctrma</b> 117:9<br/> <b>culmination</b> 36:4<br/>         113:23<br/> <b>cunningham</b> 147:3<br/>         147:20<br/> <b>curious</b> 46:5<br/> <b>current</b> 18:19 20:2,3<br/>         29:15 39:22 43:11<br/>         99:2 124:23 131:7<br/>         136:20<br/> <b>currently</b> 19:1<br/>         28:18 31:1 39:15<br/>         43:14 118:25<br/>         136:22<br/> <b>custom</b> 6:25<br/> <b>customer</b> 22:2 23:21<br/>         24:12<br/> <b>customers</b> 22:7<br/> <b>cut</b> 45:6 135:8<br/>         142:20<br/> <b>cutting</b> 47:2 140:5<br/>         142:17<br/> <b>cyberspaced</b> 119:3<br/> <b>cycling</b> 79:6,16,17<br/>         79:19<br/> <b>cyclist</b> 78:25 79:5</p> |
|   |  |  | <b>d</b>   |
|   |  |  | <p><b>d</b> 1:15 2:1 132:15,16<br/>         147:3,20<br/> <b>d.c.</b> 65:21<br/> <b>daily</b> 34:25<br/> <b>dais</b> 3:1 4:8 45:18<br/>         120:6<br/> <b>dallas</b> 35:25 60:3<br/>         79:3<br/> <b>darran</b> 24:3 25:11<br/> <b>data</b> 27:25 29:17,24<br/>         36:6 61:6</p>   |

[date - dispose]

|   |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p><b>date</b> 128:22 129:6<br/>147:10</p> <p><b>dated</b> 147:12</p> <p><b>daughter</b> 10:14</p> <p><b>daunting</b> 69:24</p> <p><b>dave</b> 74:24 75:1,4<br/>75:17 77:6</p> <p><b>david</b> 87:3,5,8</p> <p><b>dawn</b> 99:12</p> <p><b>day</b> 21:19 24:17<br/>57:11 59:7</p> <p><b>days</b> 2:9 14:6,10</p> <p><b>dc</b> 68:10</p> <p><b>dead</b> 140:3</p> <p><b>deal</b> 55:21 95:20<br/>120:11</p> <p><b>deals</b> 72:17 98:11</p> <p><b>deaths</b> 8:24</p> <p><b>debbie</b> 147:3,20</p> <p><b>debt</b> 91:10,15<br/>113:18</p> <p><b>decades</b> 101:9</p> <p><b>december</b> 66:7</p> <p><b>decided</b> 53:9</p> <p><b>decision</b> 18:24 36:11<br/>75:25 76:1 110:4,8<br/>129:5 138:9</p> <p><b>decisions</b> 53:23<br/>135:11</p> <p><b>declare</b> 120:22</p> <p><b>dedicated</b> 61:22<br/>62:2 73:25 79:25<br/>102:4 119:1</p> <p><b>deep</b> 67:19</p> <p><b>deepest</b> 8:17</p> <p><b>deer</b> 142:5</p> <p><b>defer</b> 6:22 92:19</p> <p><b>deferral</b> 129:17</p> <p><b>deferred</b> 92:24<br/>129:5</p> <p><b>defined</b> 137:13</p> <p><b>defining</b> 53:12</p> <p><b>definitely</b> 36:21<br/>41:12 43:16 74:11</p> | <p><b>definitions</b> 138:14</p> <p><b>degraded</b> 100:20<br/>103:15</p> <p><b>degree</b> 123:10</p> <p><b>delayed</b> 110:16</p> <p><b>delegation</b> 113:1</p> <p><b>delighted</b> 98:1 114:7<br/>114:11</p> <p><b>deliver</b> 41:11 66:23</p> <p><b>demand</b> 30:24 31:10<br/>48:23,25 70:14</p> <p><b>demander</b> 31:4</p> <p><b>demographic</b> 48:21</p> <p><b>denoting</b> 138:4</p> <p><b>departing</b> 79:23</p> <p><b>department</b> 1:1<br/>11:3 18:2,8,13,16<br/>18:25 19:14 20:17<br/>22:9 24:5 28:25<br/>37:20 38:9,13 56:11<br/>63:17,18,19 65:25<br/>76:16 78:14 81:19<br/>82:3 90:20 92:20<br/>94:2 109:4,11<br/>119:12 120:24<br/>126:14,21 131:4<br/>132:4 143:19</p> <p><b>department's</b> 17:20<br/>122:20 123:8</p> <p><b>departments</b> 123:16</p> <p><b>departure</b> 78:18</p> <p><b>depend</b> 48:13</p> <p><b>dependent</b> 32:7</p> <p><b>deputy</b> 17:21 18:2<br/>109:3 110:24</p> <p><b>described</b> 131:6</p> <p><b>desensitized</b> 137:18</p> <p><b>design</b> 8:23 11:19<br/>11:24 37:21 50:14<br/>50:15,20 61:15<br/>82:16 93:12 109:12<br/>117:10 129:7</p> <p><b>designate</b> 61:20<br/>93:11 143:25<br/>144:15</p> | <p><b>designated</b> 12:25<br/>100:23 113:13</p> <p><b>designation</b> 68:14<br/>68:17 93:1,19<br/>112:13 116:9 132:5<br/>143:20</p> <p><b>designations</b> 68:12</p> <p><b>designed</b> 110:6</p> <p><b>designs</b> 50:18,18<br/>61:21</p> <p><b>desire</b> 3:8</p> <p><b>desires</b> 94:3</p> <p><b>details</b> 21:21</p> <p><b>determines</b> 119:7</p> <p><b>develop</b> 28:25 38:9<br/>61:24 86:1 118:20</p> <p><b>developed</b> 29:5</p> <p><b>developer</b> 79:5</p> <p><b>developing</b> 24:4<br/>30:2 38:19,25 74:2</p> <p><b>development</b> 12:15<br/>16:9 18:23 29:8,11<br/>29:16,21 30:4,7<br/>36:23 37:1 38:15<br/>39:15 41:1 44:12<br/>46:14 47:3 57:21<br/>68:15 78:12 83:15<br/>84:19 85:1</p> <p><b>device</b> 6:14</p> <p><b>devices</b> 2:13</p> <p><b>dewitt</b> 1:9</p> <p><b>dfw</b> 26:1</p> <p><b>dial</b> 6:8</p> <p><b>dictating</b> 20:20</p> <p><b>die</b> 8:12 9:4</p> <p><b>diet</b> 101:7</p> <p><b>different</b> 3:14,15<br/>54:10 65:8 67:4<br/>84:7 100:21 120:20<br/>138:13,14 143:17<br/>143:24</p> <p><b>differently</b> 115:13</p> <p><b>difficult</b> 96:12</p> <p><b>direct</b> 23:1 72:3,13<br/>93:20 137:22</p> | <p><b>directed</b> 121:13</p> <p><b>direction</b> 113:16<br/>124:22</p> <p><b>directive</b> 7:18</p> <p><b>directly</b> 32:5 72:12<br/>72:17 133:12</p> <p><b>director</b> 1:19 4:14<br/>17:22 18:2 28:11,18<br/>40:14,20 51:11<br/>69:15 73:15 74:18<br/>74:24 75:4 77:8<br/>78:3,7 80:5 83:6,25<br/>86:6 87:3,8,23<br/>88:19,24 89:12<br/>90:15,20 91:5,11,24<br/>92:17 93:2,7 94:9<br/>109:3,9 110:24<br/>116:24 117:3,22<br/>118:12,17 121:14<br/>125:13 126:16,19<br/>127:6 129:12<br/>130:10,14,25</p> <p><b>dirt</b> 140:3</p> <p><b>discarded</b> 125:2</p> <p><b>discount</b> 125:7</p> <p><b>discrepancy</b> 76:12</p> <p><b>discuss</b> 5:1,15 36:3<br/>136:7</p> <p><b>discussed</b> 27:1 36:5<br/>59:7 60:13 119:15<br/>123:14 137:20<br/>138:2 140:11<br/>142:18</p> <p><b>discussion</b> 9:15,16<br/>9:21 17:12,20 19:10<br/>19:19,22 26:12,24<br/>28:10 61:12,14<br/>75:17 80:19 88:8<br/>92:10 109:24 122:4<br/>125:23 129:25<br/>131:20 145:9,15</p> <p><b>discussions</b> 23:14<br/>61:16,25 62:1 74:13</p> <p><b>dispose</b> 72:19</p> |
|---|--|--|--|

[dispositions - engaged]

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p><b>dispositions</b> 132:4<br/> <b>disruption</b> 142:12<br/> <b>distribute</b> 58:5<br/> <b>distribution</b> 70:21<br/> <b>district</b> 82:16,18<br/> 95:23 97:3 109:10<br/> 113:4 119:14<br/> 120:13 128:16<br/> 129:1<br/> <b>districts</b> 20:23<br/> <b>disturbing</b> 134:8<br/> <b>disturbs</b> 44:16 45:3<br/> <b>dive</b> 21:20<br/> <b>diverse</b> 96:2<br/> <b>divide</b> 136:24<br/> <b>dividing</b> 141:3<br/> <b>division</b> 42:14 63:6<br/> 75:4 78:2 82:16,17<br/> 82:24 87:9 88:25<br/> 116:24 117:4<br/> 120:14 130:15<br/> <b>divisions</b> 120:17<br/> <b>dixson</b> 105:12,13,16<br/> 105:17 108:1<br/> <b>document</b> 45:15<br/> <b>documents</b> 66:10,21<br/> <b>doing</b> 16:22 18:8<br/> 20:2,13 46:6,18,22<br/> 46:25 51:25 53:10<br/> 57:17 59:21 65:22<br/> 89:19 102:4,11,16<br/> 108:18 110:4<br/> 115:18,20,21,22<br/> 119:25 121:11,17<br/> 125:3<br/> <b>dollar</b> 45:18,25<br/> 91:17 96:5 103:22<br/> <b>dollars</b> 45:20 53:18<br/> 53:20 54:7 60:16<br/> 64:23 70:17 95:10<br/> 96:9 107:17 120:2<br/> <b>domain</b> 130:9,18<br/> 131:5 137:16<br/> 139:24</p> | <p><b>dominate</b> 39:25<br/> <b>dominates</b> 32:8<br/> <b>don</b> 105:12,17 110:1<br/> 113:4,6<br/> <b>donate</b> 87:14,17<br/> <b>donations</b> 132:3<br/> 143:18,20 144:8<br/> <b>donna</b> 105:20<br/> <b>doomed</b> 103:23<br/> <b>door</b> 5:17 101:15,15<br/> 140:9,9 142:8,8<br/> <b>dots</b> 20:17<br/> <b>double</b> 11:25 34:16<br/> 34:24,25 35:1<br/> 104:10<br/> <b>downtown</b> 103:4<br/> <b>dozen</b> 52:6<br/> <b>dps</b> 9:15,17<br/> <b>dr</b> 9:11 79:11,12,18<br/> <b>draft</b> 17:2 22:1<br/> 52:10 53:16 56:14<br/> 67:20<br/> <b>drawn</b> 133:16,18,21<br/> <b>dredge</b> 68:18<br/> <b>drive</b> 30:24 99:16<br/> 100:7<br/> <b>driven</b> 29:17,18,24<br/> 106:24<br/> <b>driver</b> 8:24<br/> <b>drivers</b> 101:10,13<br/> 103:11<br/> <b>driving</b> 31:10 100:4<br/> 100:9,10,13,16<br/> 123:17<br/> <b>due</b> 82:6<br/> <b>duly</b> 13:1<br/> <b>durden</b> 113:5,6<br/> <b>duty</b> 102:13<br/> <b>dynamic</b> 45:15 56:5</p> | <p><b>early</b> 24:13,17 28:24<br/> 121:4<br/> <b>earnest</b> 101:8<br/> <b>earth</b> 100:12<br/> <b>ease</b> 126:4,6<br/> <b>easier</b> 54:18<br/> <b>easily</b> 10:24<br/> <b>east</b> 1:10 5:18 6:9<br/> 58:5<br/> <b>eastern</b> 133:11<br/> <b>easy</b> 55:25<br/> <b>echoing</b> 63:19<br/> <b>economic</b> 12:15<br/> 16:8 29:8,11 32:6<br/> 36:23,23 38:14<br/> 40:25 44:12 47:3,4<br/> 57:21 70:10<br/> <b>economy</b> 15:19<br/> 31:19 32:3,7,9<br/> 48:25 52:23,24<br/> 53:15 64:1<br/> <b>economy's</b> 53:6<br/> <b>ed</b> 51:11,19<br/> <b>edge</b> 47:2<br/> <b>eduardo</b> 74:10<br/> <b>educational</b> 71:19<br/> <b>effect</b> 72:4 73:1<br/> <b>effective</b> 39:11<br/> 128:20<br/> <b>effectively</b> 7:15<br/> 21:22 39:1 66:5<br/> <b>effects</b> 72:13<br/> <b>efficiencies</b> 68:18<br/> 129:2,8<br/> <b>efficiency</b> 102:14<br/> <b>efficient</b> 49:25 56:20<br/> 66:22<br/> <b>efficiently</b> 51:4<br/> 63:22 66:5,12<br/> 107:18<br/> <b>effort</b> 16:4,16 23:25<br/> 25:9 27:18 47:9,16<br/> <b>efforts</b> 14:17 19:13<br/> 19:14 23:11,25 24:5<br/> 24:6 25:11,14</p> | <p><b>eight</b> 32:13 49:21<br/> 76:20 90:25<br/> <b>either</b> 59:5 72:21<br/> 99:13 103:15 111:3<br/> <b>element</b> 33:6,12<br/> 36:16<br/> <b>elements</b> 36:6 37:7<br/> 47:20 82:25 99:5<br/> 128:19<br/> <b>elevator</b> 5:14 72:10<br/> 72:18<br/> <b>eligible</b> 82:7<br/> <b>emergency</b> 6:4<br/> <b>eminent</b> 130:8,18<br/> 131:5 137:16<br/> 139:24<br/> <b>emmett</b> 13:2 28:22<br/> 30:11 40:7,12,18<br/> 41:19,21,25 42:5<br/> 45:12 49:8 51:12,17<br/> 51:19 59:6 60:12<br/> 62:1,15,21,23 63:11<br/> 63:24 64:16 67:23<br/> 69:24 73:24<br/> <b>emmett's</b> 45:14<br/> 69:21<br/> <b>emotional</b> 79:18<br/> <b>emphasize</b> 39:23<br/> <b>emphasized</b> 20:15<br/> 21:2<br/> <b>employed</b> 30:7<br/> <b>employees</b> 25:12<br/> 87:14,15,16<br/> <b>employment</b> 87:2<br/> <b>encourage</b> 79:17<br/> <b>ended</b> 133:23<br/> <b>endorse</b> 40:8 73:22<br/> <b>ends</b> 104:7<br/> <b>endure</b> 8:20<br/> <b>energy</b> 31:24 37:14<br/> <b>enforcement</b> 9:15<br/> <b>engage</b> 22:11 58:5<br/> <b>engaged</b> 10:22 27:5<br/> 59:21</p> |
|   | <p><b>e</b></p>   |   |   |
|   | <p><b>e</b> 2:1,1 147:1,1<br/> <b>earlier</b> 36:5 49:17<br/> 51:21 73:20 76:9<br/> 93:14</p>   |   |   |

[engagement - farm]

|   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p><b>engagement</b> 10:14<br/>23:13 25:8 29:20,25<br/>30:8,14<br/><b>engagements</b> 30:16<br/>119:4,7<br/><b>engaging</b> 9:8<br/><b>engineer</b> 61:17 97:4<br/>109:10 113:4<br/><b>engineer's</b> 128:15<br/><b>engineered</b> 106:13<br/>107:6<br/><b>engineering</b> 103:1<br/>106:5,10 126:16,19<br/><b>engineers</b> 11:18<br/>68:19 107:4<br/><b>enhances</b> 56:21<br/><b>enjoy</b> 143:8<br/><b>enjoyable</b> 56:24<br/><b>enjoyed</b> 56:23<br/><b>enjoying</b> 12:15<br/><b>ensure</b> 102:14 119:1<br/>122:17,19<br/><b>ensuring</b> 70:25<br/>123:6<br/><b>enter</b> 91:17<br/><b>entire</b> 37:10 56:2<br/>73:25 124:8 141:19<br/><b>entities</b> 33:22 47:15<br/>84:7 95:15,16,18,19<br/>143:24<br/><b>entity</b> 102:11<br/><b>entries</b> 44:19<br/><b>entry</b> 47:13<br/><b>environmental</b><br/>66:20 78:20 82:17<br/>106:3,20 107:5<br/><b>equal</b> 9:4 108:16<br/><b>equipment</b> 60:20<br/><b>equitable</b> 137:24<br/>138:19<br/><b>eric</b> 78:3,4,7 81:1,6<br/>84:1 86:25<br/><b>escalated</b> 106:8<br/><b>especially</b> 13:11<br/>33:14 37:10,22 38:7</p> | <p>39:2 46:13 106:15<br/>115:18<br/><b>essence</b> 99:7 104:5<br/><b>essentially</b> 29:6 31:4<br/>34:21 37:3<br/><b>established</b> 22:20<br/><b>estate</b> 79:5 132:4<br/>138:14<br/><b>estimate</b> 128:15<br/><b>estimated</b> 39:16<br/>45:19 75:7 81:25<br/><b>et</b> 33:18 95:19<br/><b>ethics</b> 120:18<br/><b>evacuate</b> 5:11<br/><b>evaluate</b> 85:17<br/>129:2,7 137:23<br/>138:10<br/><b>evaluated</b> 83:6<br/>138:7,19<br/><b>evaluating</b> 122:22<br/><b>evaluation</b> 83:5,20<br/>84:18<br/><b>event</b> 5:11 6:4 50:9<br/><b>everybody</b> 10:1<br/>26:12 105:18<br/><b>exact</b> 136:8<br/><b>example</b> 54:23<br/>59:23 85:22 104:13<br/>138:2,11<br/><b>examples</b> 53:8 55:13<br/><b>excellent</b> 67:25<br/><b>exception</b> 128:10<br/><b>exceptions</b> 129:10<br/><b>exciting</b> 71:5<br/><b>exclusive</b> 23:11<br/>103:5 104:6<br/><b>excuse</b> 133:11<br/><b>execute</b> 11:4,16<br/>66:20 84:8<br/><b>executed</b> 84:4<br/>117:10<br/><b>executing</b> 14:21<br/><b>execution</b> 67:22<br/><b>executive</b> 1:19 4:14<br/>4:24 17:22 18:2</p> | <p>30:18 69:15 83:6<br/>109:9 110:24<br/>121:13 146:1,6<br/><b>exercise</b> 56:25 76:16<br/><b>exercised</b> 117:9<br/><b>exercises</b> 57:1<br/><b>exhibit</b> 75:8 83:10<br/><b>exist</b> 19:23<br/><b>existence</b> 96:16<br/><b>existing</b> 30:21 33:3<br/>38:11 50:1,24 51:5<br/>76:24 84:23 99:1,14<br/>107:1 139:22<br/><b>exit</b> 5:17<br/><b>exiting</b> 5:16<br/><b>exits</b> 5:15,18 50:19<br/><b>expanded</b> 101:9<br/><b>expect</b> 18:5 24:11,15<br/>97:10<br/><b>expectations</b> 122:25<br/><b>expected</b> 128:17<br/><b>expedite</b> 68:21<br/><b>expenditures</b> 83:12<br/><b>expenses</b> 83:15<br/><b>experience</b> 97:4<br/><b>experiment</b> 99:13<br/><b>expertise</b> 82:25<br/><b>expiration</b> 147:21<br/><b>expire</b> 79:1<br/><b>expired</b> 103:20<br/><b>expires</b> 78:19 79:10<br/>79:19<br/><b>explain</b> 43:3 99:4<br/><b>explanatory</b> 2:25<br/><b>exploring</b> 70:6<br/><b>explosion</b> 48:22<br/><b>export</b> 58:12<br/><b>exports</b> 31:21 70:18<br/><b>express</b> 69:16 71:16<br/>79:22<br/><b>expressway</b> 100:20<br/>116:21 117:6,19<br/><b>extending</b> 131:9<br/><b>extensive</b> 29:19</p> | <p><b>extent</b> 113:16<br/><b>exterior</b> 5:5<br/><b>external</b> 118:22<br/><b>extinguishers</b> 5:22<br/><b>extremely</b> 61:23</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>f</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>f</b> 147:1<br/><b>faa</b> 76:25<br/><b>fabricate</b> 143:20<br/><b>face</b> 71:6<br/><b>faces</b> 10:10<br/><b>facilitate</b> 36:11<br/><b>facilitates</b> 39:11<br/><b>facilitating</b> 47:3<br/><b>facilities</b> 37:5,9<br/>70:15,17 131:9<br/><b>facility</b> 5:4,14 93:11<br/>94:5 104:8 113:14<br/><b>facing</b> 5:18 32:25<br/>34:7 62:4 140:17<br/><b>fact</b> 14:18 19:3 56:1<br/>64:17 65:24 101:22<br/><b>factor</b> 31:10,24<br/><b>factored</b> 27:9<br/><b>factors</b> 18:18 30:24<br/>85:3 101:17<br/><b>factual</b> 138:20<br/><b>fail</b> 64:6,7 103:23<br/><b>failed</b> 101:8,20<br/><b>fair</b> 96:3 108:20<br/>115:6,12 124:4<br/><b>fairly</b> 29:16 66:2<br/><b>fairness</b> 106:19<br/>124:21<br/><b>fall</b> 13:12<br/><b>falls</b> 79:12,15<br/><b>familiar</b> 18:6<br/><b>families</b> 8:18 137:18<br/><b>family</b> 136:23<br/><b>fantastic</b> 52:1<br/><b>far</b> 15:9 53:21<br/>134:24<br/><b>farm</b> 71:16,21,21<br/>72:8 141:22 142:11</p> |
|---|--|---|--|

[farm - freight]

|   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p>142:17<br/> <b>farmer's</b> 73:4<br/> <b>farming</b> 142:15<br/> <b>farther</b> 133:14,25<br/> <b>faster</b> 58:17 66:22<br/> <b>favor</b> 17:13 77:18<br/> 80:20 86:19 88:8<br/> 90:8 92:11 115:5<br/> 116:13 118:6 122:4<br/> 125:24 127:17<br/> 130:1 131:21<br/> 145:10,20 146:19<br/> <b>fear</b> 101:1<br/> <b>federal</b> 20:18 35:10<br/> 54:3,7 56:12 62:5<br/> 63:7 64:23 66:6<br/> 68:10 74:23 75:8,23<br/> 76:4 77:10 81:11,13<br/> 81:14,20 82:2,12<br/> 83:2 85:14 86:10<br/> 121:8<br/> <b>federally</b> 76:14<br/> <b>feds</b> 61:14<br/> <b>fee</b> 89:19<br/> <b>feed</b> 72:6,11<br/> <b>feedback</b> 4:5<br/> <b>feel</b> 95:11 98:16<br/> 99:3 104:1 111:4<br/> 115:21<br/> <b>fees</b> 113:18<br/> <b>feet</b> 5:23 60:1 134:1<br/> 140:8 142:7,21<br/> <b>fellow</b> 7:17 16:7,16<br/> 17:3 114:20<br/> <b>felt</b> 22:14<br/> <b>fences</b> 140:4<br/> <b>fertilizer</b> 72:5<br/> <b>fialkoff</b> 78:18<br/> <b>fiefdoms</b> 102:16<br/> <b>fifteen</b> 91:1<br/> <b>figure</b> 58:20<br/> <b>file</b> 17:5<br/> <b>filed</b> 2:7<br/> <b>filing</b> 130:16</p> | <p><b>fill</b> 2:18,24 3:16<br/> 58:13 78:17<br/> <b>final</b> 31:24 38:12,16<br/> 39:12 53:17 58:24<br/> 64:19 73:15<br/> <b>finalization</b> 67:21<br/> <b>finally</b> 33:24 56:6<br/> 58:1 62:9 79:11<br/> 98:21<br/> <b>financial</b> 117:13<br/> 122:19 123:5<br/> <b>financing</b> 91:10<br/> <b>find</b> 5:12 60:4 89:18<br/> 97:10 124:10<br/> <b>finding</b> 102:18<br/> 121:18<br/> <b>findings</b> 49:24<br/> <b>fine</b> 25:18<br/> <b>fire</b> 5:12,22,23,25<br/> <b>firm</b> 106:6<br/> <b>firmly</b> 70:22<br/> <b>first</b> 2:22 6:15 12:8<br/> 16:24 19:11,12<br/> 25:20 29:5,22 30:25<br/> 36:9 37:20 38:18<br/> 40:19 54:22 57:15<br/> 62:11,25 63:15,16<br/> 64:7 65:4 66:1<br/> 69:20 72:3,9,18<br/> 84:16 85:17 94:15<br/> 95:14 96:7 103:24<br/> 111:23 112:25<br/> 113:10 131:11<br/> <b>fiscal</b> 81:15,15<br/> 118:20 121:23<br/> <b>fish</b> 141:23<br/> <b>fit</b> 85:22<br/> <b>fits</b> 86:2<br/> <b>five</b> 35:14 82:10<br/> 91:2 128:6,25<br/> <b>fixed</b> 76:19 110:22<br/> <b>fixing</b> 108:12 110:18<br/> <b>flee</b> 101:18<br/> <b>fleeing</b> 101:21</p> | <p><b>flexibility</b> 27:14<br/> 33:25<br/> <b>floor</b> 5:13 6:16<br/> 112:9<br/> <b>floors</b> 5:15<br/> <b>florida</b> 46:16,17<br/> <b>flow</b> 102:13<br/> <b>flowing</b> 142:4<br/> <b>fm</b> 139:22<br/> <b>focus</b> 7:12 16:5 27:7<br/> 27:21 119:4,11,12<br/> 123:17<br/> <b>focused</b> 15:16 19:20<br/> 27:2<br/> <b>focuses</b> 29:6<br/> <b>focusing</b> 42:22 58:9<br/> 63:20<br/> <b>folks</b> 10:25 13:6<br/> 14:2 57:25<br/> <b>follow</b> 6:2 76:6<br/> 119:7 120:10,13,14<br/> 120:17 121:16<br/> <b>following</b> 6:5 21:6<br/> 121:6 128:11<br/> <b>follows</b> 78:17<br/> <b>food</b> 144:15<br/> <b>foot</b> 133:16,23<br/> <b>football</b> 13:10<br/> <b>force</b> 42:5 57:10<br/> 102:6,23<br/> <b>foregoing</b> 147:5<br/> <b>foremost</b> 54:22<br/> 69:20<br/> <b>forget</b> 42:18 53:5<br/> 58:11<br/> <b>forgets</b> 3:25<br/> <b>forgot</b> 13:23<br/> <b>formal</b> 23:4<br/> <b>former</b> 12:11<br/> <b>forms</b> 60:10<br/> <b>formula</b> 27:15<br/> <b>formulas</b> 19:25 27:2<br/> <b>fort</b> 60:4<br/> <b>forth</b> 84:2 131:7</p> | <p><b>fortunately</b> 14:22<br/> <b>forty</b> 82:9<br/> <b>forward</b> 3:1,10 4:7<br/> 4:19 7:21 12:3<br/> 13:14 14:14 15:20<br/> 20:5,9 21:4,12,15<br/> 26:25 40:18 45:2,14<br/> 46:25 51:14 61:8,10<br/> 62:22 63:1,11 66:11<br/> 67:9,11,20 69:7<br/> 70:24 74:12,13<br/> 94:17 97:11,17,21<br/> 105:10 108:2<br/> 109:13,14 114:2<br/> 120:12 132:10,12<br/> 135:20 139:1 141:7<br/> 141:9<br/> <b>found</b> 35:19 66:3,9<br/> 89:2 97:9<br/> <b>four</b> 23:8,10 30:25<br/> 49:2 75:6 78:9 80:9<br/> 81:13 104:15,23<br/> 136:23 142:21<br/> <b>fourth</b> 19:21 36:1<br/> <b>fracking</b> 48:22<br/> <b>framework</b> 70:24<br/> <b>frankly</b> 54:4<br/> <b>free</b> 71:24 95:11<br/> 98:1,16 102:21<br/> 111:4<br/> <b>freeport</b> 55:18<br/> <b>freeway</b> 103:14<br/> <b>freight</b> 28:10,11,18<br/> 28:21,22 29:1,4,6<br/> 29:10,13,18 30:4,10<br/> 30:18,23,24 31:4,8<br/> 31:10,14 32:2,5,6,7<br/> 32:11,17,20,24,24<br/> 33:14,25 34:3,4,5,8<br/> 34:10,15,19,20,24<br/> 35:14 36:3,8,12,14<br/> 36:22,25 37:1,2,4,5<br/> 37:6,8,8,15,18,22<br/> 38:7,13 39:11,12,14<br/> 39:24 40:1,6,7,9,25</p> |
|---|--|---|--|

[freight - going]

|  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <p>40:25 41:10,24 42:7<br/>                 42:22 43:17,25 44:3<br/>                 44:4 46:5,11,12,14<br/>                 46:20,23,24 47:2,10<br/>                 48:5,6,16,23 49:6<br/>                 49:25 51:4,23 52:16<br/>                 52:20,23,24 53:2,5<br/>                 53:5,13 55:18 56:10<br/>                 57:11,14 60:11,12<br/>                 61:11,19 63:16,21<br/>                 64:1,12,13,17 67:16<br/>                 68:12,14 69:12,17<br/>                 69:21 70:5,7,22,23<br/>                 71:3,17 73:19,22<br/>                 89:15 107:20<br/> <b>frequently</b> 53:3<br/> <b>freshman</b> 12:8<br/> <b>friendly</b> 50:7<br/> <b>front</b> 5:17 61:9<br/>                 64:10 132:24<br/>                 133:12 135:8<br/>                 136:23 140:9,24<br/>                 141:25 142:8,21<br/>                 143:5<br/> <b>frontage</b> 50:2,4<br/>                 100:2,4,10,16,18,19<br/>                 104:2<br/> <b>fruit</b> 71:24<br/> <b>fueled</b> 70:14<br/> <b>fuels</b> 72:6<br/> <b>fulfilling</b> 102:18<br/> <b>full</b> 10:9 53:8 61:14<br/>                 109:12 138:11<br/>                 143:2 147:6<br/> <b>fully</b> 9:17 39:18,20<br/> <b>fulton</b> 74:25 75:2,4<br/>                 75:22 76:9,23 77:5<br/>                 77:8<br/> <b>function</b> 100:21<br/> <b>functional</b> 82:25<br/> <b>functions</b> 118:22<br/> <b>fund</b> 46:19<br/> <b>fundamentally</b> 27:6<br/> <b>funded</b> 27:15 39:18<br/>                 39:20 69:2</p> | <p><b>funding</b> 18:20,21<br/>                 19:23,24 20:4,6,7<br/>                 26:9 27:2,14 33:24<br/>                 34:1 40:2 43:5,7<br/>                 44:2 46:19 74:23<br/>                 75:5 76:17 77:10<br/>                 82:12 83:15 86:11<br/>                 109:18,21 113:16<br/>                 114:2<br/> <b>funds</b> 20:21,25 75:9<br/>                 75:9,23 76:4 81:11<br/>                 81:13,14,16 83:8<br/>                 84:20 85:14 91:19<br/>                 92:4<br/> <b>funnel</b> 50:10<br/> <b>further</b> 72:21 80:19<br/>                 86:5,18 88:8 91:3<br/>                 92:10 108:10 123:1<br/>                 123:16 137:6<br/> <b>furthermore</b> 70:8<br/> <b>future</b> 16:9 24:20<br/>                 30:22 53:14 61:10<br/>                 71:1 89:21 92:20<br/>                 108:16 109:18,21<br/>                 113:15,17 121:19<br/>                 129:6<br/> <b>fy</b> 119:17</p> | <p><b>gear</b> 11:23<br/> <b>geared</b> 40:2<br/> <b>gearing</b> 11:6 68:22<br/> <b>general</b> 1:19,20 4:14<br/>                 4:16,21 6:20,24<br/>                 17:17,19,25 28:8,9<br/>                 28:14,16 52:16 63:5<br/>                 69:11 73:18 74:21<br/>                 74:22 75:2,23 77:24<br/>                 77:25 78:6 81:6<br/>                 86:24,25 87:7 88:15<br/>                 88:16,22 90:13,14<br/>                 90:18 91:6,7,13,14<br/>                 92:18,25 93:5,6<br/>                 94:22 116:20 117:2<br/>                 118:11,14 119:5<br/>                 122:12,15 126:11<br/>                 126:12 127:22,23<br/>                 130:7 132:1,2<br/> <b>generally</b> 35:10 39:3<br/>                 40:3<br/> <b>generates</b> 27:12<br/>                 41:12<br/> <b>generation</b> 46:4<br/>                 47:9 70:21<br/> <b>geological</b> 99:23<br/> <b>getting</b> 48:23,25<br/>                 56:5 63:15 64:8<br/>                 72:4,8,10,11 73:5<br/>                 98:20 101:3 105:23<br/>                 113:11 115:22<br/> <b>gin</b> 72:10<br/> <b>give</b> 2:18 3:7,10,21<br/>                 4:3,11 18:4 27:25<br/>                 29:3,21 34:11 35:15<br/>                 37:7 51:15 54:23<br/>                 59:23 61:5 63:2<br/>                 66:19 67:13 69:8<br/>                 75:19 94:19 97:23<br/>                 100:22 105:15<br/>                 114:9 139:8<br/> <b>given</b> 72:20 137:16<br/>                 138:12 144:4<br/> <b>gives</b> 26:14 31:22<br/>                 53:17 96:15</p> | <p><b>giving</b> 4:5 13:16<br/>                 22:25 73:18<br/> <b>glad</b> 13:18 67:6<br/>                 135:9<br/> <b>gleason</b> 78:3,5,7<br/>                 80:5 81:3,9 83:25<br/>                 84:10,16 85:11,18<br/>                 86:4,6<br/> <b>glen</b> 71:14,15<br/> <b>global</b> 54:19 70:10<br/> <b>globe</b> 59:11 63:23<br/>                 64:3<br/> <b>go</b> 7:21 8:17 9:2<br/>                 11:11,23,24 12:19<br/>                 12:24 13:25 14:14<br/>                 15:20 21:4 23:5<br/>                 41:2 44:1,20 52:11<br/>                 53:7 57:23 59:15<br/>                 74:21 77:1 82:4<br/>                 95:7 97:11 98:12<br/>                 101:15 104:6<br/>                 105:18 110:11<br/>                 124:22 134:17,22<br/>                 134:24 135:14<br/>                 142:9 143:1 146:1<br/> <b>goals</b> 20:24 24:4<br/>                 29:9 36:18 38:15<br/>                 64:8<br/> <b>goats</b> 71:25<br/> <b>god's</b> 142:2<br/> <b>goes</b> 12:6 75:25<br/>                 100:8 108:10 114:6<br/>                 115:11 135:6<br/> <b>going</b> 2:3 4:13 9:4<br/>                 9:15 11:4,17,19,21<br/>                 13:10,11 16:5,6<br/>                 18:8 20:9 21:23<br/>                 22:1,3 23:20 25:17<br/>                 26:16 27:7,11,16<br/>                 34:16,22,25 35:1,3<br/>                 41:19,22 43:3 44:2<br/>                 47:15,16,19 52:11<br/>                 53:6,11,19,20 54:9<br/>                 54:10 57:13 58:3,7<br/>                 58:12,14,20,25 59:9</p> |
|  | <b>g</b>  |   |  |
|  | <p><b>g</b> 2:1<br/> <b>gained</b> 129:3<br/> <b>galveston</b> 55:18<br/> <b>game</b> 46:16<br/> <b>games</b> 13:10<br/> <b>gander</b> 111:12<br/> <b>gaps</b> 50:3,4<br/> <b>gas</b> 32:1<br/> <b>gateway</b> 31:12<br/>                 59:17<br/> <b>gateways</b> 34:3 37:13<br/>                 37:17<br/> <b>gathering</b> 5:20<br/> <b>gauge</b> 27:3<br/> <b>gauging</b> 84:7</p>   |   |  |

[going - highest]

|   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>59:13,14,18,21 60:3<br/>60:6,7 61:8 65:9,22<br/>65:24 66:22 67:1<br/>68:6,8,20 72:12<br/>73:5 84:22 89:20<br/>95:19 101:19 104:6<br/>104:11,14,23 107:3<br/>107:14 110:10,14<br/>110:20,20 112:21<br/>118:5 120:13 124:9<br/>124:22 126:4 133:1<br/>133:25 134:16,17<br/>144:2 145:13,14<br/><b>good</b> 4:21,23 10:8<br/>10:11 17:24 28:15<br/>28:15 30:20 42:23<br/>44:17 48:3 52:14,22<br/>63:4 67:14 69:11<br/>78:5 87:6,7 90:18<br/>91:13 93:5 95:12<br/>96:23 98:3 111:12<br/>111:12 114:13<br/>117:1 118:15<br/>123:12 124:9<br/>130:13 132:23<br/>144:5<br/><b>goods</b> 31:5,23 42:10<br/>46:7 48:25 57:18<br/>58:17<br/><b>google</b> 100:12<br/><b>goose</b> 111:12<br/><b>gotcha</b> 98:15<br/><b>governance</b> 119:5<br/><b>government</b> 2:10<br/>47:19 56:12 59:8<br/>62:5 66:6 76:15,22<br/>77:1 102:19,22<br/>146:2<br/><b>governor</b> 7:8,18<br/>8:19 11:8,14 12:5,7<br/>12:11,17 15:12,12<br/>15:23 16:4,10 23:17<br/>27:24 55:9,11<br/>101:22 105:19<br/>107:11,22 113:15</p> | <p>113:20<br/><b>governor's</b> 15:25<br/>23:16<br/><b>grading</b> 84:6<br/><b>graduated</b> 10:15<br/><b>graham</b> 1:20<br/><b>grain</b> 72:9<br/><b>grains</b> 71:24<br/><b>grandchildren</b><br/>141:24 143:8<br/><b>grant</b> 74:23 75:5,23<br/>76:3,3 77:10<br/><b>granted</b> 11:3<br/><b>granting</b> 114:17<br/>117:12<br/><b>grants</b> 75:19,21 84:4<br/><b>grass</b> 140:4 142:4<br/><b>grassroots</b> 30:19<br/><b>gratitude</b> 69:16<br/><b>grazing</b> 142:3<br/><b>great</b> 10:20 12:4,9<br/>16:22 41:17 44:12<br/>47:11 55:21 57:17<br/>58:19 64:5 65:9<br/>67:6 68:11,12 70:23<br/>84:17 95:9 110:7<br/>120:11<br/><b>greatest</b> 53:19<br/><b>greatly</b> 55:6<br/><b>green</b> 23:8 142:4<br/><b>greer</b> 1:9 5:6<br/><b>greg</b> 105:19<br/><b>gridlock</b> 15:5,10<br/><b>grim</b> 14:12<br/><b>grimes</b> 132:23 136:5<br/>139:17 141:20<br/><b>grocery</b> 101:24<br/><b>gross</b> 45:25<br/><b>group</b> 4:10 21:19<br/>22:6,7,11 23:21<br/>24:2,12 25:16 26:2<br/>27:25 47:9 69:22<br/><b>groups</b> 23:10,12<br/>44:14</p> | <p><b>grow</b> 72:1<br/><b>growing</b> 54:18<br/>70:14<br/><b>growled</b> 54:12,14<br/><b>growth</b> 30:24 31:1<br/>31:14,16,17 36:23<br/>47:4 53:15 70:10<br/>71:1,5,6<br/><b>guenther</b> 69:15<br/><b>guess</b> 52:5 76:6<br/><b>guests</b> 4:25<br/><b>guidance</b> 81:13<br/><b>guide</b> 29:12 82:20<br/><b>guidelines</b> 5:2<br/><b>gulf</b> 70:16<br/><b>gulp</b> 48:13<br/><b>guys</b> 61:15,24 66:3<br/>66:13 68:19 132:24</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>h</b></p> <p><b>hager</b> 120:8<br/><b>half</b> 32:6 45:24 46:1<br/>60:1 103:22 126:25<br/>136:25 142:21<br/><b>hall</b> 96:16 97:20,21<br/>97:24,25 98:15,17<br/>103:17,19,21<br/>104:18,20,22 105:9<br/><b>hallways</b> 5:9<br/><b>handed</b> 3:9<br/><b>handle</b> 111:17<br/><b>handling</b> 71:5<br/><b>happen</b> 53:21 59:18<br/>104:14 116:2,3<br/><b>happened</b> 108:14<br/><b>happens</b> 16:14<br/><b>happily</b> 56:7<br/><b>happy</b> 9:7 24:24<br/>41:7,13 91:22<br/>107:24 117:20<br/><b>hard</b> 15:4 16:22<br/>62:14 98:20,21<br/>105:24 140:1<br/><b>harris</b> 13:2 51:12,20<br/>51:20 55:20</p> | <p><b>harvest</b> 72:7,8<br/><b>hat</b> 25:9<br/><b>hauls</b> 48:15<br/><b>hay</b> 139:19 140:5<br/><b>hayfields</b> 142:4<br/><b>hb</b> 18:5,14 19:9<br/>20:15,16 21:5,9<br/>22:12 24:6<br/><b>headed</b> 99:25<br/>104:15<br/><b>healthcare</b> 79:17<br/><b>hear</b> 22:7 29:18<br/>41:19 49:8 67:6<br/>98:23,24 135:9<br/>141:25 142:9<br/><b>heard</b> 32:16,19<br/>33:24 35:8 41:10<br/>44:8 56:9 57:9<br/>121:8<br/><b>hearing</b> 1:9 21:10<br/>45:17 75:9 136:15<br/><b>heavier</b> 61:21<br/><b>heavily</b> 70:13<br/><b>height</b> 4:9 120:8<br/><b>held</b> 30:12,13,15<br/>62:2 75:10<br/><b>help</b> 11:20,20,23<br/>16:6,7,16 43:4,7,16<br/>55:21 66:15,22<br/>68:20 70:8 76:2<br/>89:18,20 103:24<br/>108:24 119:11<br/>124:13 138:17<br/>141:1 142:23 143:6<br/><b>helping</b> 22:11 28:25<br/>84:15 89:22 114:10<br/><b>helps</b> 44:1<br/><b>hey</b> 135:13<br/><b>hidalgo</b> 89:7,15<br/><b>high</b> 34:17 119:11<br/>123:10<br/><b>higher</b> 39:19 128:17<br/><b>highest</b> 35:24<br/>109:16</p> |
|---|---|--|--|

[highlight - indulgence]

|  |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| <p><b>highlight</b> 42:23 70:4<br/> <b>highlighted</b> 42:9<br/> <b>highlights</b> 40:24<br/> 70:1<br/> <b>highly</b> 124:19<br/> <b>highway</b> 8:11,13,17<br/> 8:25 20:18 32:21<br/> 33:18 34:13,15,21<br/> 35:10 37:10,16,22<br/> 43:19,21 47:13,25<br/> 48:8 61:15 63:7,18<br/> 83:2 94:1 99:3,8,17<br/> 100:1,5,7,9,10,15,19<br/> 100:21 101:1,2,5,6<br/> 102:15 103:10,12<br/> 104:15 116:22<br/> 117:7,8 126:21<br/> 127:10 128:1 131:9<br/> 131:11 132:5,17<br/> 133:3 139:22<br/> 143:20,25 144:13<br/> <b>highways</b> 35:5<br/> 39:25 40:3,4 48:5<br/> 56:22 60:19 98:1<br/> 99:14 101:9,17<br/> 144:4<br/> <b>hint</b> 101:18,18<br/> <b>historic</b> 113:11,22<br/> <b>history</b> 53:8 93:9<br/> 106:24<br/> <b>hit</b> 125:8<br/> <b>hold</b> 137:8<br/> <b>holistic</b> 36:24<br/> <b>home</b> 10:16 133:16<br/> 134:13 138:4,5,13<br/> 139:18 140:4<br/> 141:18 142:5 143:6<br/> 143:7<br/> <b>homes</b> 133:2,2,4<br/> 140:13,14,25 141:3<br/> 143:1<br/> <b>honor</b> 12:9 16:3<br/> 111:24 131:3<br/> <b>honorable</b> 51:11</p> | <p><b>honored</b> 41:8<br/> 121:20<br/> <b>hope</b> 40:5 44:13<br/> 56:12<br/> <b>hopefully</b> 8:1 25:19<br/> 54:18<br/> <b>hopper</b> 11:25<br/> <b>horrified</b> 9:1<br/> <b>hosted</b> 82:3<br/> <b>hours</b> 33:10 34:25<br/> 49:21 74:1 121:12<br/> <b>house</b> 17:21 19:8<br/> 21:2,6,10 22:17<br/> 23:17,18 24:19 26:8<br/> 42:1 87:12,13 89:4<br/> 134:16,17,18<br/> 136:10 137:19<br/> <b>housekeeping</b> 98:5<br/> <b>houston</b> 8:14 12:20<br/> 12:23 35:13 36:1<br/> 55:17,19 67:17<br/> 69:13,18 70:12,20<br/> 71:4<br/> <b>hov</b> 98:7 99:2,7,12<br/> 99:12 102:3 103:9<br/> 103:12,13,15<br/> 106:16,16,22 107:2<br/> <b>howard</b> 79:23<br/> <b>hub</b> 70:21<br/> <b>huge</b> 97:2<br/> <b>human</b> 87:3,9<br/> <b>hundred</b> 121:1<br/> <b>hunt</b> 141:23<br/> <b>husband</b> 141:19,21<br/> <b>hybrid</b> 136:13</p> | <p><b>identifies</b> 36:8,10<br/> 37:4,17 39:14 43:8<br/> 47:6,12<br/> <b>identify</b> 3:3 7:12<br/> 15:17 37:2,12 38:4<br/> 43:4 120:1,13<br/> <b>identifying</b> 29:24<br/> 49:14,23<br/> <b>iii</b> 1:16<br/> <b>immediate</b> 49:13<br/> <b>immediately</b> 109:14<br/> <b>impact</b> 35:16 38:24<br/> 39:7 42:2 45:19<br/> 53:19 142:11<br/> <b>impacted</b> 76:21<br/> <b>impacts</b> 41:9,10<br/> 72:16<br/> <b>impartial</b> 137:24<br/> 138:19<br/> <b>impeded</b> 99:19<br/> 100:17<br/> <b>impeding</b> 104:25<br/> <b>implement</b> 11:4<br/> 36:18 38:10 43:4<br/> 47:1,17 66:20 74:12<br/> 89:3,5 93:16 101:20<br/> 103:22 113:22<br/> <b>implementation</b><br/> 18:5,23 21:5 42:25<br/> 67:21 119:24<br/> 120:19 122:22<br/> 123:9 143:22<br/> <b>implemented</b> 36:24<br/> 76:7 84:5 98:7<br/> 120:24 121:3<br/> <b>implementing</b> 47:21<br/> 65:18 89:20 103:5<br/> 121:16 123:11<br/> <b>implies</b> 47:8 61:13<br/> <b>importance</b> 69:18<br/> 71:3 72:8<br/> <b>important</b> 10:14<br/> 11:5 16:8 22:14<br/> 27:11 31:23 45:3<br/> 51:25 52:17 53:22</p> | <p>60:17 62:8 67:18<br/> 70:3 107:20 110:3<br/> 113:23<br/> <b>importantly</b> 124:10<br/> <b>imports</b> 58:10<br/> <b>impractical</b> 102:24<br/> <b>improve</b> 55:6 56:13<br/> 56:14 107:3<br/> <b>improvement</b> 30:22<br/> 54:25 75:6 77:10<br/> <b>improvements</b> 50:7<br/> 59:20 89:21 139:21<br/> <b>improving</b> 51:6 73:8<br/> <b>incident</b> 33:13 39:1<br/> 49:18,19,20 55:2,6<br/> <b>incidents</b> 38:21,23<br/> 39:2,3<br/> <b>inclement</b> 5:3<br/> <b>include</b> 23:15 24:7<br/> 39:6 67:5 136:6<br/> <b>included</b> 5:8 30:18<br/> 37:8<br/> <b>includes</b> 37:16 93:9<br/> 119:3,6 123:3<br/> <b>including</b> 47:13<br/> 82:16 93:20 118:23<br/> 124:18 132:3<br/> <b>incorporate</b> 41:3<br/> <b>incorporated</b> 30:3,6<br/> <b>increase</b> 31:3 43:3<br/> 56:13 70:18 103:11<br/> <b>increased</b> 43:5<br/> <b>increases</b> 35:2,3<br/> <b>independence</b><br/> 122:20<br/> <b>independent</b> 83:14<br/> <b>india</b> 59:12<br/> <b>indicate</b> 145:21<br/> <b>indicated</b> 113:15<br/> <b>indirectly</b> 32:4<br/> <b>individual</b> 53:6<br/> <b>individuals</b> 53:4<br/> 132:10 143:25<br/> <b>indulgence</b> 98:8<br/> 105:5</p> |
|  | <p><b>i</b></p>  |   |  |
|  | <p><b>idea</b> 29:21 31:22<br/> 34:12 62:2<br/> <b>ideas</b> 84:17 144:2,3<br/> <b>identification</b> 54:24<br/> <b>identified</b> 19:21<br/> 30:25 32:12,13<br/> 43:12 45:4 50:5<br/> 61:7 119:8 128:16</p>   |   |  |

[industry - jumped]

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p><b>industry</b> 11:22 22:4<br/>29:7 31:17 32:8,10<br/>32:18 33:8,9,25<br/>35:2,16,20,23,25<br/>36:22 38:25 39:8<br/>41:10,12 43:18<br/>45:21 60:18 70:15<br/><b>infancy</b> 65:17 66:12<br/><b>influence</b> 137:7<br/><b>information</b> 18:18<br/>23:5 24:21 38:21<br/>45:16 55:4 83:16,20<br/>90:22 119:4,13<br/>137:2,6 138:15,20<br/><b>infrastructure</b><br/>15:14 26:9 33:3<br/>38:11 39:9 47:25<br/>49:16 55:1 60:16<br/>78:12 81:17<br/><b>initial</b> 18:14 19:15<br/>82:8<br/><b>initiative</b> 7:12 15:16<br/>107:23<br/><b>initiatives</b> 30:19<br/>36:13<br/><b>inland</b> 42:16 44:20<br/>60:3<br/><b>innovative</b> 70:6<br/>91:10<br/><b>innovators</b> 9:9<br/><b>input</b> 21:11 23:12<br/>68:20 97:4 118:22<br/>136:12,17<br/><b>inputs</b> 124:16,18<br/><b>inside</b> 5:4 12:22,22<br/><b>installations</b> 37:25<br/><b>instance</b> 46:16<br/>49:20 138:11<br/><b>institute</b> 35:17 84:8<br/><b>instructions</b> 6:2<br/><b>instrumental</b> 74:4,6<br/><b>integrate</b> 44:15<br/><b>integrated</b> 63:21<br/><b>integrity</b> 137:15<br/>138:8</p> | <p><b>intended</b> 83:12<br/><b>intent</b> 18:3 122:18<br/><b>interchanges</b> 39:9<br/>50:18<br/><b>interest</b> 19:22<br/><b>interested</b> 82:21<br/><b>interesting</b> 46:22<br/>133:17<br/><b>interests</b> 69:23 94:3<br/><b>interim</b> 17:21 18:2<br/>28:11,18 41:25<br/>109:3<br/><b>interior</b> 5:9<br/><b>internal</b> 24:2 25:16<br/>118:12,17,18,22<br/>119:1 122:20,21<br/>123:6<br/><b>internally</b> 119:25<br/><b>international</b> 28:11<br/>28:19 31:11,12<br/>42:21 46:12 55:22<br/>55:24 57:24 58:3<br/>74:9<br/><b>interpretation</b><br/>125:11<br/><b>intersected</b> 133:20<br/><b>intersections</b> 133:21<br/><b>interstate</b> 12:21<br/>13:1 34:18,18,23<br/>48:8 50:1,9,17 51:2<br/>61:15 68:10,11<br/><b>interstates</b> 11:12<br/>47:24 49:21 50:2<br/><b>intervene</b> 102:14<br/><b>intracoastal</b> 56:8,10<br/>68:17<br/><b>intrusive</b> 143:2<br/><b>invest</b> 60:20 70:13<br/><b>investigation</b> 91:1<br/><b>investigations</b> 90:23<br/>91:1<br/><b>investing</b> 60:15<br/><b>investment</b> 29:12<br/>45:23 60:6,10,21</p> | <p><b>investments</b> 33:4<br/>34:2 38:14 44:25<br/>47:25 50:8,22,23<br/>51:1,3 70:9,15<br/><b>invitees</b> 23:13<br/><b>involved</b> 14:15 43:1<br/>47:16 52:2 64:20<br/>72:17<br/><b>involvement</b> 29:25<br/>30:3,6 58:25<br/><b>involves</b> 98:6<br/><b>involving</b> 53:13<br/>136:5 141:17<br/><b>ironically</b> 65:20<br/><b>island</b> 14:8<br/><b>issuance</b> 89:6<br/><b>issue</b> 20:16 33:18<br/>44:2 98:5 111:8<br/><b>issues</b> 8:2 15:6,10<br/>29:8,23,23 32:17<br/>33:15,19 36:4 41:9<br/>43:19,22 47:3 49:18<br/>74:10 106:18,19<br/>137:21<br/><b>issuing</b> 117:14<br/><b>item</b> 2:23 3:4,8,16<br/>17:20 19:12 20:11<br/>28:9 74:22 75:17<br/>77:25 78:9 81:7,9<br/>87:1 88:16 90:14<br/>91:7,16 92:19,25<br/>93:18,22 116:20<br/>118:11 122:13<br/>126:13,20 127:24<br/>127:25 130:8,16<br/>132:2,13 135:22<br/>139:3 141:11<br/><b>items</b> 2:7 3:9,13 4:2<br/>19:10,21 21:12 27:8<br/>72:5,6 78:13 98:9<br/>121:1 128:16 146:9<br/><b>iterations</b> 96:14<br/>136:7<br/><b>ize</b> 102:2</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>j</b></p> <p><b>j</b> 1:17<br/><b>jackson</b> 7:8<br/><b>james</b> 19:5 116:24<br/>116:25 117:3<br/><b>jammed</b> 103:6<br/><b>janiece</b> 69:14<br/><b>january</b> 81:20<br/><b>jason</b> 78:18<br/><b>jeff</b> 1:16,16,20<br/><b>job</b> 1:25 16:23 41:18<br/>42:23 51:8 52:1<br/>53:7 54:18 68:11<br/>69:25 120:3 124:9<br/>147:25<br/><b>jobs</b> 32:4,5,10 64:2<br/><b>joe</b> 1:19 4:14 96:8<br/>105:20<br/><b>john</b> 67:10,15<br/>130:10,12,14<br/><b>johnson</b> 74:8<br/><b>join</b> 2:12 8:19<br/><b>jones</b> 71:14,15,15<br/>73:11,12<br/><b>jorge</b> 97:4 109:10<br/>113:3 114:5<br/><b>joseph</b> 79:3<br/><b>jr</b> 1:17<br/><b>judge</b> 13:2 28:22<br/>29:18 30:11 40:7,12<br/>40:18 41:19,21,25<br/>42:5 45:14 49:8<br/>51:12,13,17,19 57:3<br/>57:7 59:6 60:12<br/>61:1,3 62:1,15,21<br/>62:23 63:11,24<br/>64:16 67:23 68:9<br/>69:21,24 73:24<br/>105:21<br/><b>judged</b> 82:7 83:11<br/><b>july</b> 117:10,11<br/><b>jumped</b> 48:3,20</p> |
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[kale - lewis]

|   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p><b>k</b></p> <p><b>kale</b> 74:8</p> <p><b>kaplan</b> 78:17,20</p> <p><b>kate</b> 112:6</p> <p><b>katie</b> 93:2,4,7 108:6 109:1</p> <p><b>katrina</b> 38:22</p> <p><b>keep</b> 54:2,18 55:19 70:14 76:17 77:3 124:9 135:16 140:17 141:2</p> <p><b>keeping</b> 45:11 62:8</p> <p><b>ken</b> 113:5</p> <p><b>kevin</b> 94:16,22 105:22 113:2</p> <p><b>key</b> 15:1,2 19:10,18 22:7 36:25 37:17,19 38:3,8,12,16,16 39:5 43:24 44:5 49:24 119:5</p> <p><b>kids</b> 13:7,8,10</p> <p><b>killed</b> 14:8</p> <p><b>kind</b> 16:4 21:14 22:5,15 23:9 25:14 29:3 31:22 34:11 41:19 43:10 46:17 47:20 48:12,19 49:13 75:19 84:3,5 103:25 111:11,17 113:22 134:21</p> <p><b>kits</b> 6:15</p> <p><b>knew</b> 55:8</p> <p><b>knock</b> 76:11</p> <p><b>know</b> 2:19 3:15 7:16 10:9,17 11:2,3,7,24 12:6,12,17 13:6,14 14:3 24:1 25:7 28:24 29:4,10 31:25 32:9,16,19 33:5,7 34:6,14,21 37:4,23 38:17,23 39:5,9,23 41:18 43:6,8,15,18 43:20,24,24 44:17 44:21 46:16 47:11</p> | <p>47:14,17,19,22,24 49:8,13,14 50:16 53:1,24 58:16 61:15 62:7 63:24 64:4 65:13,14 66:7 67:5 67:18 72:3,5 74:5 74:11 76:14 84:25 85:12 89:19 95:3,8 96:15 98:8 100:7 102:9 103:23 104:22 106:24 108:14 109:25 110:12 111:1 120:5 121:7 124:10,17 137:9</p> <p><b>koch</b> 116:24 117:1,3 117:22</p> <p><b>kristin</b> 90:16,17,19</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>I</b></p> <p><b>labeling</b> 124:24,24</p> <p><b>labor</b> 52:6</p> <p><b>lack</b> 33:8 49:25 137:15</p> <p><b>lake</b> 7:8 133:24</p> <p><b>land</b> 6:7,7 136:22 139:25 140:18 142:20 143:7</p> <p><b>landowner</b> 134:13 135:3 137:5</p> <p><b>landowners</b> 137:9</p> <p><b>lane</b> 99:6,7,8,11,12 100:13 101:3,6 103:13,14 104:6 106:16,22 107:2</p> <p><b>lanes</b> 61:22 62:3 99:15,17 100:6,14 100:15 101:2 102:4 102:4 103:5,9,12,15 104:15,23 106:7,16 107:1 116:9 128:24 128:25</p> <p><b>language</b> 54:14,15 54:17</p> | <p><b>lar</b> 43:1</p> <p><b>laredo</b> 100:8</p> <p><b>large</b> 44:16 96:4 142:16</p> <p><b>larger</b> 59:13,14,14</p> <p><b>largest</b> 31:18</p> <p><b>larson</b> 105:20</p> <p><b>larue</b> 67:10,11,14,15 68:3,7,23</p> <p><b>lastly</b> 22:13 23:24 97:7 104:12</p> <p><b>late</b> 24:16</p> <p><b>laughed</b> 134:20</p> <p><b>laughter</b> 63:9,13 95:6 96:18</p> <p><b>law</b> 65:23</p> <p><b>lawn</b> 5:20 142:3</p> <p><b>lays</b> 45:16</p> <p><b>lead</b> 16:4,15</p> <p><b>leader</b> 124:1</p> <p><b>leaders</b> 22:4,4</p> <p><b>leadership</b> 10:5 15:2 15:24 27:22,23 30:11,12 61:4 64:16 69:21</p> <p><b>leading</b> 31:25 47:2 67:24</p> <p><b>learn</b> 46:22 124:14</p> <p><b>leave</b> 11:11 87:11,14 87:17</p> <p><b>leaves</b> 73:4</p> <p><b>leaving</b> 10:22</p> <p><b>led</b> 9:11 31:20 113:1</p> <p><b>lee</b> 88:19,22,24 89:12</p> <p><b>left</b> 10:10 50:18 58:7</p> <p><b>legislation</b> 18:15,15 19:4 21:22 29:15</p> <p><b>legislative</b> 18:9 87:13 113:24 120:19 123:8,12 144:3,10</p> <p><b>legislature</b> 13:16 19:11 21:13 26:6 27:5,13 89:4 96:6</p> | <p>113:19 121:5 144:5 144:14</p> <p><b>length</b> 106:7</p> <p><b>letter</b> 109:9 134:10 135:13</p> <p><b>level</b> 22:9,10,10 25:9 30:18 54:4 59:8 121:8</p> <p><b>levels</b> 5:8 103:3</p> <p><b>lever</b> 5:24</p> <p><b>leverage</b> 26:17 64:23</p> <p><b>lewis</b> 1:15 2:2 6:23 7:6,20 8:4,9 9:6,22 10:4 13:19,25 14:16 16:6,18 17:9,12,15 19:6 25:1,7 27:22 28:2 40:13,17 41:15 45:9 51:10 57:2 60:25 62:18,24 65:2 67:8 68:2 69:3,10 71:8,12 73:11,14,15 74:17 75:12 77:7,13 77:16,20,22 80:4,7 80:12,18,22,24 81:4 83:24 86:5,10,13,17 86:21,23 87:22 88:2 88:7,11,13,23 89:11 89:24 90:4,7,10,12 91:5,23 92:1,6,9,15 92:23 94:8,13 96:21 97:14,19 98:11,16 103:17,20 104:18 104:21 105:8 107:25 110:23 111:4,19 112:1,4,7 112:16,19 115:1 116:5,15,18 117:21 117:24 118:2,4,8,10 118:15 119:18 121:22 122:3,7,9 123:21 125:12,19 125:22 126:1,3,9 127:5,13,19,21 129:11,14,21,24</p> |
|---|---|--|--|

[lewis - marc]

|   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p>130:3,5,24 131:2,13<br/>131:23,25 132:8,16<br/>132:19 135:17,24<br/>138:23 139:5,12<br/>141:5,14 143:11,14<br/>144:17,25 145:6,18<br/>145:23,25 146:5,16<br/>146:19,22<br/><b>liberty</b> 102:1<br/><b>licensed</b> 79:4<br/><b>lieutenant</b> 23:16<br/><b>life</b> 15:19 16:11<br/>141:24<br/><b>lifestyle</b> 141:18<br/>142:13<br/><b>light</b> 98:22<br/><b>lightly</b> 137:17<br/><b>lights</b> 99:19 104:17<br/>104:25<br/><b>likewise</b> 69:1<br/><b>limit</b> 144:15<br/><b>limited</b> 3:19 32:21<br/>34:23<br/><b>limits</b> 12:22<br/><b>line</b> 6:7,7 35:7 49:1<br/>52:13,13 54:17<br/>62:11,12 87:18<br/>93:20 133:23<br/><b>linear</b> 65:9<br/><b>lines</b> 38:17 49:3<br/>59:20<br/><b>lingering</b> 43:10<br/><b>link</b> 63:25 123:2<br/><b>list</b> 22:1 53:17<br/><b>listed</b> 83:10 131:10<br/><b>literally</b> 35:4 46:11<br/>74:5<br/><b>little</b> 30:1 33:6 46:15<br/>68:5 86:2 108:13<br/>109:23 127:1 128:5<br/>128:7<br/><b>live</b> 8:14 53:12 55:4<br/>55:24 60:7<br/><b>lived</b> 141:19,22</p> | <p><b>lives</b> 8:16 141:19<br/><b>living</b> 114:5 140:1<br/>140:20<br/><b>loads</b> 88:18<br/><b>lobby</b> 5:12<br/><b>lobbying</b> 97:2<br/><b>local</b> 20:22 22:4,9<br/>47:19 75:9 83:13<br/>89:17,18 95:17<br/>102:10,11 110:4<br/>111:7,13 135:10<br/><b>local's</b> 135:11<br/><b>locals</b> 110:5,8<br/>135:12<br/><b>located</b> 5:10,14 83:9<br/>134:3<br/><b>location</b> 82:9<br/><b>lock</b> 56:15<br/><b>logical</b> 138:22<br/><b>logistics</b> 36:22<br/><b>long</b> 26:8 43:16 44:1<br/>50:22 53:21 58:14<br/>60:1 73:6 78:24<br/>79:13 98:21 106:12<br/>107:8,8 108:13<br/>110:21<br/><b>longer</b> 39:3 50:12<br/><b>longoria</b> 69:14<br/><b>look</b> 8:22 13:14<br/>20:23 27:3 32:22,22<br/>32:23 34:1,19 38:6<br/>38:19 42:19,24<br/>44:16,24 45:13<br/>46:17 47:20,20,23<br/>48:18 49:4 50:23<br/>53:3 58:15,24 59:11<br/>59:11,16 64:9 66:9<br/>67:20 68:11 74:13<br/>86:1 89:15 104:12<br/>107:5 120:3,12<br/>121:15,15 125:2,3<br/><b>looked</b> 37:8,11,12<br/>76:16 89:17<br/><b>looking</b> 11:9 14:12<br/>20:5,11 21:16,18</p> | <p>34:9,17,22 38:1<br/>39:8 46:4,10,13,24<br/>47:1 48:7 49:5,13<br/>50:24 51:2,5,6<br/>61:10 63:11 65:11<br/>66:18 74:12 108:14<br/>109:16 119:23,23<br/>120:11 124:2<br/>143:19,22 144:2<br/><b>looks</b> 29:7 61:6<br/><b>looming</b> 34:6<br/><b>loop</b> 93:19 99:24<br/><b>loosely</b> 142:18<br/><b>los</b> 101:13<br/><b>losing</b> 142:24<br/><b>loss</b> 8:15,20 103:14<br/><b>lost</b> 8:18 138:8<br/><b>lot</b> 10:25,25 12:15<br/>14:2 15:3 16:14<br/>26:14 27:19 29:24<br/>31:13 32:14 33:24<br/>37:25 41:3,10 42:17<br/>42:19 46:13,24<br/>47:22,23 50:1,16,25<br/>51:4,20 52:7 56:10<br/>57:22 58:9 59:7<br/>60:1 61:11 68:20<br/>72:11 84:3,17 85:22<br/>95:17 107:15 114:9<br/>119:25 120:11<br/>121:10 135:11<br/>143:23 144:6<br/><b>lots</b> 54:10<br/><b>love</b> 52:6 141:23<br/><b>loved</b> 8:18<br/><b>low</b> 107:19 126:25<br/>128:4,14<br/><b>lower</b> 5:8<br/><b>lt</b> 1:19<br/><b>luxuries</b> 12:15<br/><b>lyle</b> 105:20</p> | <p><b>main</b> 11:12 31:14,16<br/>99:8 100:5 104:15<br/>113:9 116:9<br/><b>maintain</b> 18:19<br/>38:11 93:13<br/><b>maintenance</b> 18:19<br/>88:19,25 126:14,21<br/>127:4,10 131:8<br/><b>major</b> 11:10 27:23<br/>32:18 33:9,14,18,19<br/>37:6,6,13 47:25<br/>54:2 121:1<br/><b>majority</b> 39:18,22<br/>40:1,2 102:24<br/>134:25<br/><b>making</b> 12:14 18:24<br/>35:23 36:12 66:21<br/>78:11 123:12 138:9<br/><b>maloy</b> 4:18,21<br/><b>manage</b> 33:3 38:11<br/>39:2 49:15 144:11<br/><b>managed</b> 128:25<br/><b>management</b> 33:13<br/>38:20 39:1,6 49:18<br/>55:2,6,20 91:10,15<br/>119:5,6,13 121:11<br/><b>manager</b> 69:13<br/><b>managing</b> 120:9<br/><b>mann</b> 69:6,7,10,12<br/>71:9<br/><b>manner</b> 137:24<br/>138:19<br/><b>manuela</b> 74:9<br/><b>manufacturers</b> 59:1<br/><b>manufacturing</b><br/>31:18 70:17<br/><b>map</b> 20:20 29:14<br/>48:7 54:3,11,16<br/>59:11,16 61:9,12<br/>62:8 64:8,21 99:23<br/>121:8,8 132:25<br/>133:8<br/><b>maps</b> 5:14 138:4<br/><b>marc</b> 17:22,23 18:1<br/>25:10 26:4 27:1</p> |
|   |  | <b>m</b>  |  |
|   |  | <b>magnitude</b> 34:5   |  |

[marc - morning]

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p>28:7 52:3 74:3<br/>108:23 109:2 112:6<br/><b>marek</b> 126:17,18,19<br/>127:6,25 129:12<br/><b>margaret</b> 79:24<br/><b>marie</b> 79:11<br/><b>mario</b> 97:4 109:10<br/>113:3 114:5,9<br/><b>maritime</b> 42:14<br/><b>mark</b> 126:17,18<br/>127:23 130:7<br/><b>market</b> 46:7 48:25<br/>102:21<br/><b>marketplace</b> 111:15<br/><b>marshal</b> 3:20<br/><b>mass</b> 102:7<br/><b>master</b> 27:20 85:23<br/>86:1<br/><b>masters</b> 27:19<br/><b>match</b> 54:8 83:13,14<br/><b>material</b> 76:12<br/><b>materialize</b> 20:4<br/><b>matter</b> 4:6 59:11<br/>74:20 75:13,18<br/>91:24 92:24 98:12<br/>129:12 139:10<br/><b>matters</b> 111:8<br/><b>maximize</b> 33:3 54:7<br/>64:23<br/><b>mays</b> 28:12,14,17<br/>40:16,20 41:6 43:6<br/>45:7,11 46:8 47:11<br/>49:11 51:9,11 73:15<br/>73:17<br/><b>mcmillan</b> 87:3,6,8<br/>87:23<br/><b>mean</b> 23:11 27:4<br/>57:13 61:7 99:17<br/>110:15 145:14<br/><b>means</b> 66:17 122:17<br/><b>measurably</b> 103:10<br/>103:10<br/><b>measurement</b><br/>137:23</p> | <p><b>measures</b> 25:21<br/><b>mechanisms</b> 46:19<br/><b>medical</b> 6:4<br/><b>meet</b> 20:2 22:22<br/>23:2 64:24,24 71:5<br/>73:22 106:23<br/><b>meeting</b> 1:1 2:4,6,9<br/>2:12,15 6:18,18,25<br/>8:1 9:8 15:14 17:1,6<br/>21:6 23:4 24:7,7,9<br/>24:13,15 26:7 59:8<br/>74:5 92:20 119:16<br/>122:25 123:15<br/>133:6 137:1 146:7<br/><b>meetings</b> 21:17<br/>24:20 30:14<br/><b>meets</b> 2:9 29:14<br/><b>melanie</b> 68:24<br/><b>member</b> 26:1 79:13<br/><b>members</b> 1:14 4:1<br/>8:9 18:10 19:11,15<br/>19:17,19 21:2 22:2<br/>22:24 23:2,16 24:25<br/>25:12 26:21 52:6<br/>71:20 72:1 78:1,6,9<br/>79:23 80:9 81:2<br/>91:23<br/><b>membership</b> 22:1<br/><b>memorial</b> 143:20,25<br/>144:4<br/><b>men</b> 10:25 124:25<br/><b>mention</b> 7:7,19<br/>13:23 105:19<br/>132:13<br/><b>mentioned</b> 15:11<br/>22:16 23:20 24:18<br/>25:10 30:5 37:5<br/>41:9 43:7,24 49:17<br/>50:14 57:24 73:20<br/>76:9<br/><b>mentioning</b> 7:21<br/><b>merge</b> 25:22 104:7<br/><b>merging</b> 25:14<br/><b>message</b> 11:8 84:5</p> | <p><b>messages</b> 19:18<br/><b>met</b> 22:17,24 52:6<br/>133:8 138:3<br/><b>method</b> 20:2<br/><b>metrics</b> 25:22<br/>137:23<br/><b>metropolitan</b> 20:22<br/>35:24<br/><b>mexican</b> 48:24<br/><b>mexico</b> 31:12<br/><b>michael</b> 25:25 88:19<br/>88:21,24<br/><b>microcosm</b> 114:11<br/><b>micromanage</b><br/>101:25<br/><b>microphone</b> 4:8,14<br/><b>migrated</b> 42:7<br/><b>miles</b> 12:23,24 79:10<br/>104:6<br/><b>military</b> 37:24,25<br/><b>million</b> 31:2,3 32:4<br/>32:4,5 43:1,2,15<br/>75:8 81:10,25 82:13<br/>82:13,14 85:9 91:17<br/>96:5 106:6 127:1<br/>128:5,7,15<br/><b>mind</b> 54:20 65:18<br/>98:5 132:11<br/><b>mindful</b> 27:18<br/><b>minimize</b> 39:7 89:21<br/><b>minor</b> 50:21<br/><b>minute</b> 9:20 75:5,11<br/>80:3 83:23 87:10,20<br/>89:1,9 92:4 94:7<br/>108:9 114:6 115:13<br/>116:10 117:12<br/>122:24 123:1,20<br/>130:23 131:6,10<br/>132:3 138:2 144:22<br/>145:1,7,20<br/><b>minutes</b> 3:19 16:25<br/>17:2,5 126:5,5,7<br/><b>missed</b> 10:13<br/><b>mission</b> 24:4 25:16</p> | <p><b>mistake</b> 103:25<br/><b>mistakes</b> 124:14<br/><b>mix</b> 47:12<br/><b>mobility</b> 28:10,21<br/>29:1,4,10 36:14<br/>40:9 63:17 69:12,17<br/>70:23 73:20 89:7<br/>92:21 93:25 96:25<br/>113:6 117:15 128:6<br/><b>modal</b> 36:9 37:5,16<br/>39:24 41:22,23<br/>43:18 44:10,11<br/>46:20 47:12 63:21<br/><b>mode</b> 2:14 35:4<br/>56:19 57:20 99:18<br/><b>modernize</b> 119:11<br/><b>modes</b> 32:25 33:17<br/>34:10 42:10 52:16<br/>56:20 70:4<br/><b>modified</b> 129:3<br/><b>modify</b> 37:21<br/><b>modifying</b> 50:15<br/><b>moments</b> 63:20<br/><b>money</b> 20:1 26:14<br/>26:18 53:24 66:19<br/>75:20,25 85:9 95:11<br/>95:16,20 102:20<br/>107:15 110:11<br/>125:5 140:3<br/><b>monies</b> 76:6<br/><b>monitoring</b> 121:6<br/><b>month</b> 9:7,14 10:13<br/>12:19 13:6 14:9<br/>18:17 19:5 24:11<br/>25:20 90:23 91:2<br/>93:14 137:1<br/><b>months</b> 30:13 66:2,2<br/>66:8 114:4 124:18<br/><b>morning</b> 4:21,23,25<br/>5:2 6:18 10:8 17:24<br/>28:15,16,20,21 29:2<br/>35:8 63:4 67:14<br/>69:11 78:5 87:6,7<br/>90:18 91:14 93:6<br/>117:1 118:15</p> |
|---|---|---|---|

[morning - north]

|   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p>130:13,16<br/> <b>morris</b> 25:25<br/> <b>moseley</b> 1:16 8:6,7<br/>           9:24 12:20 13:5<br/>           33:6 38:5 45:8,10<br/>           46:8 47:5 48:2 51:7<br/>           59:1 61:2,3 62:13<br/>           62:16 77:13,15 86:7<br/>           86:8 97:8 112:17,18<br/>           114:22 117:24<br/>           118:1 131:16,18<br/>           145:3,6<br/> <b>motion</b> 17:5,7,10,13<br/>           17:15 77:17,18,22<br/>           80:15,17,18 86:15<br/>           86:17,23 88:5,7,13<br/>           90:5,7,12 92:7,8,9<br/>           92:16 111:2,3,7,24<br/>           112:9,9,17,19<br/>           114:21,23 116:4,7<br/>           116:11,13,18<br/>           118:10 121:22<br/>           122:3,9 125:20,22<br/>           126:3 127:8,16,21<br/>           129:13,22,24 130:5<br/>           130:25 131:17,19<br/>           131:25 145:1,8,11<br/>           145:16,19,20,25<br/>           146:17,18,23<br/> <b>motives</b> 138:6<br/> <b>motoring</b> 38:24 39:7<br/> <b>mou</b> 66:7<br/> <b>move</b> 5:4 12:2 20:5<br/>           21:11 45:2 46:7<br/>           48:11 52:25 53:11<br/>           68:18 77:9,12 80:8<br/>           86:7 87:24 89:25<br/>           92:2 109:12,13<br/>           112:10 117:25<br/>           121:20 125:14<br/>           127:9 129:15 131:3<br/>           136:21 144:22<br/>           146:14<br/> <b>moved</b> 34:8 80:11<br/>           86:8 87:25 90:3</p> | <p>92:5 112:15 125:17<br/>           127:12 129:19<br/>           131:14 136:19,21<br/>           146:15<br/> <b>movement</b> 31:22<br/>           32:2 34:12,19 36:12<br/>           37:6 38:7 39:11<br/>           48:14 64:12 70:5<br/> <b>movements</b> 56:20<br/>           56:21<br/> <b>moves</b> 32:24,24<br/>           34:13 37:2 56:10<br/>           145:6<br/> <b>moving</b> 34:15 37:9<br/>           42:10 46:25 48:5<br/>           51:3 52:22 53:5<br/>           63:21 64:1,1 66:11<br/>           70:24 74:12 89:16<br/>           92:25 120:12<br/> <b>mpo</b> 93:15 94:24<br/>           95:24 104:9 108:8<br/>           108:16 109:6,8<br/>           110:13 113:3 114:8<br/>           114:16 115:9,14<br/> <b>mpo's</b> 103:8 115:6<br/> <b>mpos</b> 47:19 102:10<br/> <b>multi</b> 36:9 37:5,16<br/>           39:24 41:22,23<br/>           43:18 44:10,11<br/>           46:20 47:12 63:21<br/>           103:14<br/> <b>multifaceted</b> 30:8<br/> <b>multiple</b> 32:25<br/>           42:10<br/> <b>multitude</b> 47:15<br/> <b>mutual</b> 78:13</p> | <p>97:22,25 105:14,17<br/>           109:2 117:3 118:16<br/>           132:12,20,21<br/>           135:21,25 139:2,8<br/>           139:14 141:9,15<br/>           147:11<br/> <b>named</b> 24:11<br/> <b>nation</b> 20:18 31:20<br/>           31:21 32:1 35:11<br/> <b>national</b> 68:14<br/> <b>nations</b> 35:24<br/> <b>nature</b> 36:21 39:24<br/> <b>navasota</b> 141:20<br/> <b>navigation</b> 79:8<br/> <b>nay</b> 92:13 116:16<br/>           127:19<br/> <b>near</b> 21:25 140:24<br/> <b>nearly</b> 32:3,6<br/> <b>necessarily</b> 23:11<br/> <b>necessary</b> 60:21<br/>           87:18 93:16 109:11<br/>           130:17<br/> <b>necessitates</b> 48:17<br/> <b>neck</b> 68:6<br/> <b>need</b> 2:15 3:3 8:1<br/>           11:16,19,21 13:11<br/>           13:15 16:6,6 21:21<br/>           26:18,20 27:20,25<br/>           33:2,12,25 34:1<br/>           37:20 42:6 43:14,20<br/>           44:24 50:4,22,23<br/>           54:25 55:5 56:4<br/>           57:15 60:13 70:4<br/>           85:14 101:15<br/>           104:18 105:23<br/>           106:3,11,23 107:7<br/>           115:6,12,19 116:2<br/>           125:5 139:5 141:1<br/>           144:13<br/> <b>needed</b> 43:17 51:3<br/>           83:20<br/> <b>needs</b> 20:3,8 21:14<br/>           22:9 29:6,13,25<br/>           30:22,22 37:22,23<br/>           38:2,2 43:8,9,13,17</p> | <p>49:14 56:14 58:22<br/>           64:25 102:18,22<br/>           117:16<br/> <b>nees</b> 93:3,5,7 94:9<br/>           94:12 108:22<br/> <b>neighbor</b> 134:18<br/> <b>neighbor's</b> 133:18<br/> <b>neighbors</b> 140:12,15<br/>           140:25<br/> <b>nelson</b> 105:21<br/> <b>nepa</b> 65:13 104:8<br/>           105:3<br/> <b>network</b> 32:23 37:2<br/>           37:4,15,18 53:13<br/>           71:3<br/> <b>networks</b> 32:23<br/> <b>neutral</b> 3:5<br/> <b>never</b> 84:4<br/> <b>new</b> 7:14 13:12<br/>           56:12 78:9 80:9<br/>           81:2 95:12 99:8,14<br/>           100:19 101:6 104:2<br/>           121:16<br/> <b>newly</b> 19:7<br/> <b>nh</b> 128:23<br/> <b>nice</b> 13:20<br/> <b>nichols</b> 22:21,22<br/> <b>nine</b> 66:8<br/> <b>no's</b> 146:23<br/> <b>nobels</b> 138:25<br/> <b>nobles</b> 132:11,18,21<br/>           132:21 135:20,23<br/>           136:1,1,23 139:1,4<br/>           139:7,11,14,15<br/>           141:9,13,15,16<br/>           143:12<br/> <b>nominations</b> 82:15<br/> <b>non</b> 71:21 81:23<br/>           82:10,13 83:17 85:8<br/>           93:17 96:15 109:13<br/>           111:15 115:11<br/>           130:19<br/> <b>north</b> 31:13 59:18<br/>           93:19 100:1 104:13<br/>           104:15 116:10</p> |
|   | <p><b>n</b> 2:1<br/> <b>name</b> 3:5 4:7,9 18:1<br/>           26:10 28:17 51:14<br/>           63:1,5 67:12,14<br/>           69:7,12 71:25 75:3<br/>           78:7 88:24 93:7<br/>           94:18,22 95:19</p>  |  |   |

[north - parking]

|  |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <p>133:19 135:7<br/> <b>northbound</b> 128:24<br/> <b>northeast</b> 79:8<br/> <b>note</b> 2:5 3:18,23<br/> 25:25 51:22 60:17<br/> 111:11 133:22<br/> <b>noted</b> 19:12 26:4,4<br/> 129:10<br/> <b>notes</b> 147:7<br/> <b>notice</b> 2:6 13:4<br/> 117:14<br/> <b>notoriety</b> 51:21<br/> <b>november</b> 24:13,17<br/> 108:15<br/> <b>number</b> 3:4 8:24 9:3<br/> 13:21 14:19,20<br/> 31:19 34:10 39:19<br/> 44:16,22 45:19<br/> 66:10 82:3 95:15<br/> 100:13 103:11<br/> 104:16 108:20<br/> 116:11 126:24<br/> 132:14<br/> <b>numbers</b> 121:16<br/> <b>numerous</b> 30:15</p> | <p><b>officer</b> 91:15 118:19<br/> <b>officials</b> 22:4<br/> <b>oh</b> 53:10<br/> <b>oil</b> 32:1<br/> <b>okay</b> 40:16 104:21<br/> 112:3 132:19<br/> 134:10 144:25<br/> <b>old</b> 53:1<br/> <b>once</b> 72:6 73:4<br/> <b>ones</b> 8:18 54:24 67:5<br/> <b>ongoing</b> 24:6 41:4<br/> <b>onsite</b> 6:3<br/> <b>open</b> 3:14,23 4:4 7:1<br/> 7:3 23:12 76:18<br/> 99:11 136:10 144:6<br/> 146:11<br/> <b>opening</b> 7:2,21<br/> 57:11,12 95:1<br/> <b>opens</b> 101:1<br/> <b>operate</b> 93:12<br/> <b>operating</b> 138:20<br/> <b>operation</b> 142:15<br/> <b>operations</b> 33:2<br/> 82:17 119:6,12,14<br/> 126:16,19<br/> <b>operator</b> 6:8<br/> <b>opportunities</b> 61:8<br/> 82:4<br/> <b>opportunity</b> 11:7,13<br/> 12:10,19 13:16 19:7<br/> 21:20 22:6,22 40:11<br/> 69:16 73:19 74:16<br/> 79:21 96:14 112:2<br/> 114:1,21 128:18<br/> 129:7 144:9<br/> <b>opposed</b> 77:20<br/> 80:22 85:5 86:21<br/> 88:11 90:10 92:13<br/> 116:16 118:8 122:7<br/> 126:1 127:19 130:3<br/> 131:23 134:7 135:4<br/> 135:6 137:5,8,10<br/> 140:23 143:5<br/> 145:23 146:22</p> | <p><b>opposite</b> 100:6<br/> <b>opposition</b> 92:15<br/> <b>option</b> 100:20<br/> <b>options</b> 102:19,22<br/> 102:23 103:16<br/> <b>oral</b> 3:2<br/> <b>order</b> 2:4 3:21 16:25<br/> 21:21 75:5,11 80:3<br/> 83:23 87:10,21 89:1<br/> 89:10 92:4 94:7<br/> 115:13 116:11<br/> 117:12 122:24<br/> 123:1,20 128:20<br/> 129:6 130:23 131:6<br/> 131:10<br/> <b>orders</b> 108:9 112:13<br/> 114:6 119:14 132:3<br/> 144:6,22 145:2,7,21<br/> <b>oregon</b> 46:21<br/> <b>organization</b> 3:6<br/> 21:8,18,24 23:22<br/> 24:8,9,16 71:22<br/> <b>organizations</b> 19:2<br/> 20:23 23:6 25:23<br/> 96:2<br/> <b>original</b> 50:17,18<br/> <b>ott</b> 125:9<br/> <b>otto</b> 118:12,14,16<br/> 119:19 122:15<br/> 124:5,15<br/> <b>outlined</b> 18:14<br/> 21:13 29:14 32:13<br/> 36:13,20 37:19<br/> <b>outlines</b> 23:9 29:9<br/> <b>output</b> 32:6<br/> <b>outreach</b> 30:18<br/> <b>outstanding</b> 69:25<br/> 121:7<br/> <b>overall</b> 73:7 85:23<br/> 109:7 126:24 127:1<br/> 128:4,8<br/> <b>overdo</b> 110:21<br/> <b>overpasses</b> 100:25<br/> <b>overseas</b> 10:15</p> | <p><b>oversee</b> 11:23<br/> <b>overseeing</b> 120:19<br/> 122:17<br/> <b>oversight</b> 25:8<br/> 122:21 123:3<br/> <b>oversized</b> 37:23<br/> 88:17 89:6<br/> <b>overview</b> 29:3 35:15<br/> <b>overweight</b> 37:24<br/> 88:18 89:7<br/> <b>owe</b> 115:25<br/> <b>owner</b> 132:22 134:7<br/> 137:8<br/> <b>ownership</b> 72:19<br/> 73:4 138:15<br/> <b>oxley</b> 122:18,25<br/> 123:4</p>  |
| <p><b>o</b></p>  |  |   | <p><b>p</b></p>   |
| <p><b>o</b> 2:1<br/> <b>oak</b> 104:5<br/> <b>objection</b> 9:19 92:23<br/> <b>objectives</b> 29:10<br/> <b>obtaining</b> 118:22<br/> <b>obviously</b> 24:21<br/> 95:14,20 99:19<br/> 135:4<br/> <b>occasionally</b> 69:23<br/> <b>occupational</b> 4:18<br/> <b>occurred</b> 14:5<br/> <b>october</b> 9:14 24:10<br/> 24:17 147:12<br/> <b>office</b> 23:16 68:24<br/> 90:15,15,20 118:17<br/> 120:8 133:6 138:3<br/> 140:9,24 142:24</p>   |  |   | <p><b>p</b> 2:1<br/> <b>p.m.</b> 2:8 146:3,4,9<br/> 146:24,25<br/> <b>pace</b> 70:14<br/> <b>packer</b> 72:12<br/> <b>padre</b> 14:8<br/> <b>page</b> 52:13,13<br/> 143:19<br/> <b>pages</b> 147:5<br/> <b>painful</b> 8:20<br/> <b>painfully</b> 8:15<br/> <b>palestine</b> 12:7<br/> <b>panama</b> 42:3,4 49:1<br/> 57:9,12 58:4,6<br/> 59:12 71:18<br/> <b>panamanian</b> 58:4<br/> <b>panhandle</b> 78:25<br/> <b>paper</b> 13:10 134:5<br/> <b>parcels</b> 130:18,19<br/> <b>pardon</b> 103:17<br/> 112:11<br/> <b>parent</b> 8:20<br/> <b>parents</b> 13:7 134:2<br/> <b>park</b> 104:4<br/> <b>parking</b> 16:13 33:8<br/> 103:3</p> |

**[parkway - portion]**

|  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p><b>parkway</b> 104:5<br/> <b>part</b> 14:25 20:1,14<br/> 20:15 21:8 23:14<br/> 25:20 27:9,24 44:21<br/> 55:23 61:12 68:13<br/> 71:18,18 96:11<br/> 109:21 121:11<br/> 131:10<br/> <b>participant</b> 68:13<br/> 79:15<br/> <b>participate</b> 12:11<br/> <b>participated</b> 44:23<br/> <b>participates</b> 79:16<br/> <b>participating</b> 56:24<br/> <b>particular</b> 25:9 61:9<br/> 97:2<br/> <b>particularly</b> 19:20<br/> 62:2<br/> <b>parties</b> 82:21<br/> <b>partner</b> 9:17 31:13<br/> <b>partnering</b> 95:17,18<br/> <b>partners</b> 37:21 38:9<br/> 38:13<br/> <b>partnership</b> 96:1<br/> <b>partnerships</b> 59:4,7<br/> 95:17<br/> <b>parts</b> 31:15<br/> <b>pass</b> 11:6,15 13:13<br/> 26:13 91:8,17,20<br/> 95:2 97:12 107:8<br/> 109:24<br/> <b>passage</b> 11:2 115:10<br/> 115:17<br/> <b>passed</b> 75:20 76:1<br/> 87:12 89:4 115:17<br/> 121:4 143:24<br/> <b>passengers</b> 48:14<br/> <b>passes</b> 11:7 77:22<br/> 92:16 95:2 109:25<br/> 115:18 146:23<br/> <b>pasture</b> 135:8 142:4<br/> <b>pastureland</b> 140:20<br/> <b>pat</b> 53:9,11<br/> <b>pay</b> 53:4 54:9 59:9<br/> 84:21 89:20</p> | <p><b>peace</b> 140:19 142:1<br/> <b>peak</b> 79:23<br/> <b>pedestrian</b> 81:17<br/> 82:18<br/> <b>peer</b> 46:17<br/> <b>pencil</b> 133:20<br/> <b>people</b> 8:1 25:7<br/> 26:22 31:2,4 32:4<br/> 52:15 54:10 59:10<br/> 106:11 107:5<br/> 114:13<br/> <b>percent</b> 48:10 58:12<br/> 103:14 120:24<br/> 121:1,2 127:2 128:8<br/> 128:14 136:19<br/> 137:3,9<br/> <b>perfect</b> 76:13<br/> <b>perfectly</b> 59:17<br/> 135:17<br/> <b>perform</b> 6:5<br/> <b>performance</b> 18:24<br/> 20:5,21,24,24 25:21<br/> <b>performed</b> 118:24<br/> <b>period</b> 3:22<br/> <b>permanent</b> 62:10<br/> 133:2 138:11<br/> 140:13,14 141:3<br/> 143:1<br/> <b>permission</b> 92:19<br/> <b>permits</b> 89:7<br/> <b>perry</b> 12:11<br/> <b>person</b> 31:7 107:13<br/> <b>personal</b> 97:7<br/> <b>personally</b> 22:22<br/> <b>personnel</b> 6:3<br/> <b>perspective</b> 25:6<br/> 43:18 65:16,19<br/> 115:5,15<br/> <b>phase</b> 39:16 72:15<br/> 72:24<br/> <b>phone</b> 6:7 101:24<br/> <b>phones</b> 2:13<br/> <b>photo</b> 100:12<br/> <b>photos</b> 99:22</p> | <p><b>physical</b> 6:8 79:19<br/> <b>pick</b> 10:14<br/> <b>pickett</b> 42:1,2<br/> <b>pie</b> 39:25<br/> <b>piece</b> 86:2 120:10<br/> <b>pin</b> 5:23<br/> <b>place</b> 5:3 9:18 46:1<br/> 53:7 70:25<br/> <b>placement</b> 104:4<br/> <b>places</b> 101:13<br/> <b>placing</b> 2:12<br/> <b>plan</b> 11:23 14:21<br/> 28:10,21 29:1,4,5,9<br/> 29:12,16,22 30:18<br/> 36:3,8,10,14,16<br/> 37:1 38:13 39:12,13<br/> 39:24 40:6,8,10<br/> 42:22 43:5,8,14<br/> 46:14,23,24 47:1,12<br/> 47:20,21 49:25<br/> 52:10 53:16,16,17<br/> 53:25 55:14 63:17<br/> 64:6 67:2,18,21<br/> 69:17 70:23 71:18<br/> 73:20,22 74:2,12<br/> 84:9 85:23 86:1<br/> 99:2 103:22 104:10<br/> 116:2 118:20,21<br/> 119:3,7,10,15,17,22<br/> 119:23 121:11,21<br/> 121:23<br/> <b>planned</b> 76:7<br/> <b>planner</b> 78:20<br/> <b>planners</b> 7:14<br/> <b>planning</b> 11:19 19:1<br/> 19:8 20:22 21:7,24<br/> 22:18,20 23:22 24:8<br/> 24:9,16 25:23 26:9<br/> 30:4,7 32:11 39:15<br/> 64:6 110:12 116:23<br/> 117:4 132:5<br/> <b>plans</b> 15:9 118:12<br/> 124:23 128:19<br/> <b>planting</b> 140:4</p> | <p><b>play</b> 63:25<br/> <b>playing</b> 9:23<br/> <b>please</b> 4:3 51:13<br/> 63:1,1 67:11 69:7<br/> 77:18 81:6 94:10<br/> 95:11 97:21 105:13<br/> 108:23 122:12<br/> 127:23 132:10,12<br/> 134:23 135:20,24<br/> 138:17 139:1,7<br/> 141:9 143:6 146:19<br/> <b>pleased</b> 114:24<br/> <b>pledge</b> 64:22<br/> <b>plus</b> 31:2<br/> <b>point</b> 21:1,25 25:15<br/> 27:5,6 44:18 50:19<br/> 50:21 54:1 59:10<br/> 63:16 72:3,9,18<br/> 100:11 113:20,21<br/> 138:8<br/> <b>pointed</b> 64:6 108:9<br/> <b>points</b> 7:13 11:9,10<br/> 15:18 32:19,20 35:9<br/> 43:22,23 44:18<br/> 47:13 50:11 56:18<br/> <b>policies</b> 98:7 101:20<br/> 102:6<br/> <b>policy</b> 25:8 36:10,11<br/> 36:15,18,25 37:19<br/> 38:3,8,18 101:23<br/> 115:5,9,15 125:5<br/> <b>political</b> 96:16<br/> <b>pool</b> 87:11,17<br/> <b>population</b> 31:1<br/> 35:2 48:22 81:12,23<br/> 81:24 101:19<br/> <b>porch</b> 134:2<br/> <b>porches</b> 142:1,22<br/> <b>port</b> 44:19 47:17<br/> 58:3,4,14 59:15,25<br/> 60:2 67:15,17 68:13<br/> 68:16,19 69:13,14<br/> 69:18 70:12,20 71:4<br/> <b>portion</b> 100:14<br/> 138:18</p> |
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[ports - projects]

|  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p><b>ports</b> 32:22 33:17<br/>37:13 42:13,15,16<br/>46:12 55:18 57:24<br/>58:7 59:2,19,20<br/>67:16,19,20 68:21<br/>68:25 69:18 70:13<br/>70:19 72:25</p> <p><b>poses</b> 33:8</p> <p><b>position</b> 3:3 52:22</p> <p><b>positioned</b> 66:4</p> <p><b>positive</b> 19:16<br/>124:12</p> <p><b>possible</b> 113:17</p> <p><b>posted</b> 2:23 136:6</p> <p><b>potential</b> 20:12 60:8<br/>76:15 82:4,21 129:7</p> <p><b>potentially</b> 20:8<br/>85:15,17</p> <p><b>power</b> 130:18 131:5</p> <p><b>powerful</b> 8:21</p> <p><b>powerpoint</b> 52:10</p> <p><b>practices</b> 8:10 87:2<br/>120:12</p> <p><b>praying</b> 109:25</p> <p><b>precinct</b> 94:23</p> <p><b>precisely</b> 102:3</p> <p><b>predominantly</b><br/>23:10</p> <p><b>preferred</b> 136:5,14<br/>136:14,18 137:3</p> <p><b>prepare</b> 19:15</p> <p><b>prepared</b> 14:13<br/>84:25 118:21</p> <p><b>present</b> 17:22 28:12<br/>40:11 73:19 74:25<br/>78:3 87:4 88:20<br/>90:16 91:11 93:3<br/>116:24 118:13<br/>126:17 130:11,15<br/>137:14</p> <p><b>presentation</b> 18:3<br/>24:24 26:19 52:10<br/>64:5</p> <p><b>presented</b> 89:1<br/>123:1 134:10 136:9</p> | <p>136:15 140:23</p> <p><b>preservation</b> 128:6</p> <p><b>preserve</b> 143:7</p> <p><b>president</b> 113:5</p> <p><b>presume</b> 108:17</p> <p><b>presumptuous</b><br/>109:23</p> <p><b>pretty</b> 25:15 71:25</p> <p><b>prevent</b> 121:19</p> <p><b>previous</b> 78:21<br/>93:22 136:9</p> <p><b>previously</b> 18:12<br/>71:18 119:8 123:10</p> <p><b>prichard</b> 79:3,4,7</p> <p><b>prichard's</b> 79:10</p> <p><b>primacy</b> 117:9</p> <p><b>primarily</b> 36:14</p> <p><b>primary</b> 5:6,17<br/>27:19</p> <p><b>prior</b> 2:9 26:7 87:16<br/>92:3 108:9 112:13<br/>116:10 117:14<br/>136:4</p> <p><b>priorities</b> 11:20<br/>54:21 109:6,7,16,17<br/>110:7</p> <p><b>prioritization</b> 18:25<br/>20:13,14 137:22</p> <p><b>prioritize</b> 34:2 44:5<br/>70:9 110:14</p> <p><b>prioritizing</b> 108:19</p> <p><b>priority</b> 12:14 57:14<br/>109:18</p> <p><b>private</b> 11:22 47:18<br/>59:3,6 60:6,10<br/>76:24</p> <p><b>probably</b> 7:22 25:6</p> <p><b>problem</b> 15:13 56:1<br/>58:21 99:20 105:24<br/>108:12</p> <p><b>problems</b> 27:23<br/>121:19 140:16</p> <p><b>procedure</b> 125:5</p> <p><b>procedures</b> 124:23</p> | <p><b>proceed</b> 28:5 80:19<br/>86:19 92:10 94:13<br/>117:14 125:23<br/>127:7,23 129:25<br/>131:20 132:19<br/>135:25 139:13<br/>141:14 145:10</p> <p><b>proceeding</b> 146:25</p> <p><b>proceedings</b> 130:9<br/>130:17 147:8</p> <p><b>process</b> 18:13 19:2<br/>20:14 21:5,9 22:16<br/>23:5 29:16,20,24<br/>30:3,4,6,7,9,18<br/>32:11 52:4 64:21<br/>65:9,13 66:21 67:25<br/>72:21 83:4,7 84:19<br/>113:23 123:9 125:7<br/>137:14,17 139:23</p> <p><b>processes</b> 138:10</p> <p><b>procurements</b> 120:7</p> <p><b>produce</b> 71:23</p> <p><b>producer</b> 31:19,25</p> <p><b>producers</b> 71:23<br/>72:4,13</p> <p><b>product</b> 45:25 62:17<br/>71:23 73:2 106:14<br/>107:7</p> <p><b>production</b> 72:5</p> <p><b>productive</b> 6:18</p> <p><b>products</b> 31:5 72:22</p> <p><b>professional</b> 79:18</p> <p><b>professor</b> 103:11</p> <p><b>profit</b> 71:21</p> <p><b>profound</b> 45:17</p> <p><b>program</b> 38:17 39:1<br/>39:5 55:2,6 64:13<br/>64:24 76:3 81:8,10<br/>81:13,14,21 82:2,5<br/>82:20 83:12 87:11<br/>91:20 119:1,5<br/>122:21 123:15</p> <p><b>programming</b><br/>116:24</p> | <p><b>programs</b> 36:13<br/>79:16</p> <p><b>progress</b> 66:9 110:7<br/>123:12 139:20<br/>143:4</p> <p><b>project</b> 18:22,24<br/>36:17,18 39:13 41:2<br/>47:17 68:6 76:2<br/>82:4,7,8,15,21<br/>83:15,18,21 84:17<br/>84:19,21 85:1,1<br/>93:13,17,17,19<br/>96:10,11 97:2 98:7<br/>99:1 100:14 105:1<br/>105:19 106:2,4,5,7<br/>106:12 108:20<br/>109:13 112:12<br/>116:9,10 117:7,9,19<br/>126:25 128:4,11,13<br/>128:13,14,20,21,22<br/>128:23 129:1,5<br/>137:21 141:17</p> <p><b>project's</b> 108:11</p> <p><b>projected</b> 31:3<br/>34:10,24 48:4 104:9</p> <p><b>projecting</b> 34:14</p> <p><b>projections</b> 18:18</p> <p><b>projects</b> 11:24 12:3<br/>14:12 21:1 27:15<br/>39:14,18,20,22 40:3<br/>43:9,11,13 45:4<br/>47:6,12,14,14 53:3<br/>56:2 59:4 65:8,12<br/>70:13,17 75:6 76:7<br/>81:7,18,20,21 82:13<br/>82:14,19,24 83:1,9<br/>83:10,17 84:12<br/>85:13,22 86:11 93:2<br/>93:8 95:10 96:4,5<br/>108:19 110:16<br/>115:24 126:23<br/>127:4 128:3,6,7,10<br/>128:11 129:10,16<br/>130:19,21 137:24</p> |
|--|--|--|---|

[promised - recognized]

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p><b>promised</b> 101:4<br/> <b>prompt</b> 6:13<br/> <b>prop</b> 11:1,6 13:13<br/> 20:12,12 96:7,8<br/> 109:23<br/> <b>proper</b> 102:14<br/> <b>properly</b> 13:7<br/> 106:13 107:6<br/> <b>properties</b> 131:6<br/> 137:11 140:14<br/> <b>property</b> 131:12<br/> 132:22 133:8,12,13<br/> 133:18,19,23 134:1<br/> 134:7,14 135:7<br/> 136:25 137:8 140:2<br/> 140:8,11 141:3<br/> 142:11,14,14,16,20<br/> 142:24<br/> <b>proposal</b> 88:2 99:2<br/> <b>proposals</b> 64:10<br/> 82:5 83:11,21<br/> <b>propose</b> 144:14<br/> <b>proposed</b> 87:1,17<br/> 88:17 90:1 99:9<br/> 101:7 133:3 134:12<br/> 138:4,5 139:16<br/> 140:7,10 142:7<br/> <b>proposes</b> 87:10 89:1<br/> <b>proposition</b> 26:13<br/> 27:16 66:18,19 95:2<br/> 115:10,23,25<br/> <b>prospects</b> 20:6<br/> <b>protect</b> 57:15,21<br/> <b>proud</b> 87:8 121:17<br/> <b>proven</b> 102:23<br/> <b>provide</b> 4:19 27:13<br/> 38:21 90:22 102:22<br/> 122:24 123:8<br/> <b>provided</b> 17:2 73:1<br/> 99:22,23<br/> <b>provides</b> 18:17<br/> 36:16<br/> <b>providing</b> 15:2<br/> 24:21 28:20 76:17<br/> 122:21</p> | <p><b>provocial</b> 55:23<br/> <b>proximity</b> 134:1<br/> <b>public</b> 2:6 6:2 23:12<br/> 30:14 38:24 39:7<br/> 40:6 52:11,17 53:14<br/> 59:3,6 73:21 75:9<br/> 78:2,7 82:21 83:1<br/> 106:13 107:16,19<br/> 116:1 136:15<br/> <b>published</b> 81:19<br/> 82:19<br/> <b>pull</b> 5:12,13,22 96:4<br/> 114:10<br/> <b>pulled</b> 114:8<br/> <b>pulling</b> 63:16<br/> <b>purchased</b> 140:2<br/> <b>purpose</b> 90:21<br/> 106:23<br/> <b>purposes</b> 138:13<br/> <b>push</b> 140:15<br/> <b>put</b> 13:5,8 22:16<br/> 53:18 60:4 75:20<br/> 95:20 110:16 120:7<br/> 134:5,13,18 144:8<br/> <b>puts</b> 52:21<br/> <b>putting</b> 18:13 47:9<br/> 119:22</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>q</b></p> <p><b>quality</b> 15:18,19<br/> 16:11 61:5<br/> <b>quasi</b> 65:6<br/> <b>question</b> 42:24<br/> 47:11 54:8,21 57:5<br/> 58:24 75:16 108:23<br/> 108:24 111:1,22<br/> 134:22 135:1 138:6<br/> <b>questions</b> 6:17<br/> 24:24 25:2 28:5<br/> 35:8 40:15,20 41:20<br/> 51:11 56:7 60:25<br/> 62:20 65:3 68:3<br/> 69:4 71:10 73:12<br/> 74:19 75:13 77:8<br/> 80:4,8 83:24,25</p> | <p>86:6 87:22 89:11,24<br/> 91:22,24 94:6,8<br/> 97:15 105:6,9<br/> 107:24 108:1<br/> 110:23 112:5,8<br/> 116:6 117:20,21<br/> 119:18 125:13<br/> 127:6,7 129:11<br/> 130:24 141:6<br/> 143:12 144:19<br/> <b>quick</b> 29:3 35:15<br/> 107:10<br/> <b>quicker</b> 58:17 66:23<br/> <b>quickest</b> 52:23<br/> <b>quickly</b> 25:15 63:14<br/> <b>quiet</b> 140:19 142:1<br/> 142:12<br/> <b>quite</b> 26:10 121:3<br/> <b>quote</b> 103:13</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>r</b></p> <p><b>r</b> 2:1 147:1<br/> <b>ragland</b> 121:15<br/> <b>rail</b> 32:23 33:17,17<br/> 37:16 43:1,18 44:25<br/> 47:13 56:21 59:2,20<br/> 60:5,10 72:25 82:23<br/> <b>railcars</b> 58:13<br/> <b>railroad</b> 11:14 12:6<br/> 47:18<br/> <b>railroads</b> 60:15<br/> <b>raise</b> 139:18 141:23<br/> <b>raised</b> 19:11 141:20<br/> <b>raising</b> 140:5<br/> <b>ranch</b> 71:22 72:9<br/> <b>randy</b> 10:11<br/> <b>ranks</b> 36:1,1<br/> <b>rate</b> 58:12 96:24<br/> <b>reach</b> 3:8 83:7<br/> <b>reaching</b> 22:24<br/> <b>react</b> 22:6<br/> <b>read</b> 22:6 115:13<br/> <b>readily</b> 55:4<br/> <b>readiness</b> 83:1,12</p> | <p><b>reading</b> 13:9 115:7<br/> <b>reads</b> 136:8<br/> <b>ready</b> 11:23,24 71:4<br/> 84:25 95:2,10<br/> 113:11<br/> <b>real</b> 16:3 79:4 132:4<br/> 138:14<br/> <b>reality</b> 8:21 56:10<br/> 59:8 62:3<br/> <b>really</b> 10:19,23<br/> 12:12,24 13:8 18:4<br/> 20:16,20,23 21:9,13<br/> 21:18,20 22:5 23:9<br/> 26:2 27:2,7 29:17<br/> 30:17,19 40:25 42:6<br/> 42:14 43:4,6 44:17<br/> 44:25 45:23 47:1<br/> 48:3,3,18 49:2 51:2<br/> 56:24 61:6 66:16<br/> 72:16 84:7,17 85:3<br/> 85:4 89:22 99:10<br/> 101:14 111:1 113:9<br/> 113:21,25 114:6,10<br/> 115:21 120:10<br/> 121:17 124:25<br/> <b>realness</b> 142:1<br/> <b>reality</b> 52:22<br/> <b>reasonable</b> 134:5<br/> 138:21<br/> <b>reauthorization</b><br/> 63:11 64:9<br/> <b>rebar</b> 61:21<br/> <b>recall</b> 79:6 132:25<br/> 134:9 135:1<br/> <b>received</b> 75:10<br/> 81:14 82:6,10,11<br/> 83:19 85:6 92:20<br/> 126:24 128:3,13,25<br/> 136:12 137:2,6<br/> <b>recognition</b> 71:2<br/> <b>recognize</b> 74:3<br/> 79:22 110:2,13<br/> 112:22<br/> <b>recognized</b> 105:23</p> |
|---|---|---|---|

**[recognizes - residents]**

|  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| <b>recognizes</b> 26:14<br>79:18<br><b>recognizing</b> 42:9<br><b>recommend</b> 75:11<br>94:7 115:16 144:7<br><b>recommendation</b><br>36:7 38:3,8,12<br>39:13 46:3 47:8<br>92:3 111:9 112:14<br>115:7,14,20 116:8<br>117:25 126:20<br>128:1<br><b>recommendations</b><br>10:2 30:2 36:3,9,10<br>36:11,15,17,19,20<br>36:25 37:19 38:17<br>38:18 39:13 40:1<br>45:17 47:23 77:11<br>78:11,13 80:13 83:7<br>86:12 90:2 111:14<br>121:24 122:22<br>125:16 127:11<br>129:18<br><b>recommended</b><br>78:16 91:3 129:16<br>129:17 136:11<br><b>recommending</b> 85:4<br>115:11 129:4<br><b>recommends</b> 80:2<br>83:22 87:20 89:9<br>91:21 117:18<br>119:17 123:19<br>127:3 128:9 129:9<br>130:22<br><b>reconfigure</b> 57:19<br><b>reconfigured</b> 56:16<br><b>reconstructed</b> 14:9<br><b>reconstruction</b><br>128:24 131:8<br><b>reconvened</b> 146:8<br><b>record</b> 2:6 3:7 18:1<br>28:17 51:14 63:2,5<br>66:25 67:13 69:12<br>75:3 78:6 87:7<br>88:23 90:19 91:15 | 94:18,22 97:23,24<br>109:2 117:2 118:16<br>126:8,18 130:14<br>131:11 135:5<br>141:10 146:3,4<br><b>recreational</b> 79:5<br><b>red</b> 48:7,9 49:3<br>55:15 61:11 133:4<br>133:15 134:11,12<br><b>redesign</b> 128:19<br><b>redmond</b> 10:11<br><b>reduce</b> 8:24 38:4<br><b>reducing</b> 44:22<br><b>referred</b> 23:22<br>135:3<br><b>refinery</b> 48:24<br><b>regard</b> 2:23 14:17<br>15:3,25 25:23 74:20<br>75:13 92:3 132:16<br>141:11<br><b>regarding</b> 122:24<br>123:3 138:15<br>139:16<br><b>regardless</b> 85:23<br><b>region</b> 53:9 94:3<br>109:8,19<br><b>regional</b> 89:7 92:21<br>93:25 117:15<br><b>register</b> 3:2<br><b>registration</b> 2:17<br><b>regretfully</b> 8:11<br><b>regular</b> 17:6 104:7<br><b>regularly</b> 52:7<br><b>regulators</b> 65:6<br><b>reject</b> 127:10 129:5<br><b>rejected</b> 128:21<br><b>rejection</b> 129:17<br><b>relate</b> 137:21<br><b>related</b> 3:15 8:10<br>9:9 32:4,5,10 38:22<br>39:14 40:3 45:21<br>47:14 87:11 90:22<br><b>relates</b> 29:9 107:10<br>143:18 | <b>relating</b> 93:23<br><b>relations</b> 68:10 74:9<br><b>relet</b> 128:22<br><b>relevant</b> 125:8<br><b>reliability</b> 41:11<br>122:18 123:5<br><b>reliance</b> 26:17<br><b>relief</b> 7:10 27:8 55:8<br>55:9 107:12<br><b>relieve</b> 103:10<br>106:17<br><b>rely</b> 22:8 26:23<br><b>relying</b> 11:18<br><b>remain</b> 94:10 99:1<br><b>remaining</b> 85:15<br><b>remark</b> 63:15<br><b>remarkable</b> 26:11<br>26:24<br><b>remarks</b> 43:7 45:14<br>46:9 51:16 63:3<br>67:13 94:20 103:18<br>104:19 105:15<br><b>remediation</b> 119:8<br><b>remember</b> 14:7<br><b>remind</b> 22:15<br><b>reminded</b> 4:1 14:3,4<br><b>reminder</b> 14:12<br><b>reminding</b> 54:2<br><b>remiss</b> 52:3<br><b>removal</b> 92:4 93:1<br>93:18,25 112:12<br>116:8<br><b>remove</b> 44:20 91:19<br><b>removed</b> 99:5<br>137:11<br><b>removing</b> 103:3<br>114:17<br><b>repairs</b> 89:21<br><b>replacement</b> 128:13<br><b>reply</b> 11:17<br><b>report</b> 8:10 10:1<br>18:14,16 19:3,15<br>42:6 44:7 45:13,21<br>67:2,7 70:1,4,8<br>90:15,21 | <b>reporter</b> 147:4<br><b>reporting</b> 26:5<br>122:19 123:6<br><b>represent</b> 11:22<br>81:13<br><b>representatives</b> 22:5<br>23:15<br><b>represented</b> 52:15<br>97:1 127:1<br><b>representing</b> 3:6,7<br>4:10,11 51:15,23<br>63:2 67:12 69:8<br>71:15,22 94:19<br>97:22 105:14,17<br>132:22<br><b>represents</b> 44:12<br><b>request</b> 75:5,7 83:19<br>92:21 105:11<br>107:11 114:17<br>115:14<br><b>requested</b> 15:7 43:2<br>93:15 120:23<br><b>requesting</b> 117:5<br>129:1<br><b>requests</b> 82:12<br>111:17 128:21<br><b>require</b> 143:24<br><b>required</b> 18:14<br>33:10 82:2<br><b>requirements</b> 2:10<br>17:21 20:19 22:12<br>29:14 81:16,21 82:5<br>83:2 89:3,6 123:4<br><b>requires</b> 54:16<br>65:23 125:4<br><b>requiring</b> 82:25<br><b>rescind</b> 112:13<br>116:10<br><b>research</b> 35:17<br><b>reserve</b> 7:25 41:20<br><b>residence</b> 138:12<br><b>residency</b> 138:16<br><b>resident</b> 78:24<br><b>residents</b> 143:2 |
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[resolution - seat]

|  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
| <p><b>resolution</b> 93:14<br/>115:7<br/><b>resolved</b> 115:8<br/><b>resonates</b> 57:16<br/><b>resource</b> 68:15<br/><b>resources</b> 20:12<br/>87:3,9 118:25 125:6<br/><b>respect</b> 25:23 27:13<br/>145:15<br/><b>respected</b> 124:8<br/><b>respective</b> 44:14<br/>114:13<br/><b>respond</b> 3:24 7:18<br/>14:11 20:8 21:21<br/>22:11<br/><b>responding</b> 21:12<br/>24:21<br/><b>response</b> 17:20 19:9<br/>28:6 54:3 71:11<br/>73:13 77:21 80:6,23<br/>86:22 88:12 90:11<br/>91:25 92:14 116:17<br/>117:23 118:9 122:8<br/>126:2 127:20 130:4<br/>131:24 143:13<br/>144:20 145:24<br/><b>responsibilities</b><br/>65:25 66:5 123:3<br/><b>responsibility</b> 47:22<br/><b>responsible</b> 33:22<br/>47:7,21<br/><b>rest</b> 69:24 137:10<br/><b>restrict</b> 102:11<br/><b>restricted</b> 99:7,12<br/>99:18<br/><b>restricting</b> 102:20<br/><b>restrictive</b> 101:23<br/>102:5<br/><b>restrooms</b> 5:10<br/><b>result</b> 12:16 87:12<br/>87:13<br/><b>results</b> 21:9<br/><b>resume</b> 126:5,10<br/><b>resumes</b> 93:22</p> | <p><b>resuming</b> 126:6,9<br/><b>retired</b> 140:1 141:21<br/><b>return</b> 45:23<br/><b>revenue</b> 18:18 26:17<br/><b>review</b> 37:21 132:6<br/><b>reviewed</b> 19:16<br/>82:15,24 83:1,6<br/>138:5<br/><b>reviewing</b> 50:14<br/><b>reviews</b> 78:13<br/><b>revised</b> 128:22<br/><b>revisions</b> 122:23<br/><b>revisit</b> 128:19<br/><b>rgs</b> 128:12<br/><b>ric</b> 1:9<br/><b>rice</b> 71:25<br/><b>richmond</b> 12:25<br/><b>ride</b> 11:14 12:4,9<br/>102:17 104:5<br/><b>riders</b> 121:2 123:11<br/><b>right</b> 16:11,22 17:9<br/>26:10 50:25 58:16<br/>66:21 68:23 82:23<br/>84:23 89:20 93:24<br/>94:1 98:15 99:9<br/>100:7 101:19 102:1<br/>103:24 112:12<br/>130:10,14,21<br/>133:21,22,23 134:3<br/>134:11,16,18,19<br/>135:24 145:18<br/><b>rise</b> 103:3<br/><b>risk</b> 118:21 119:11<br/><b>risks</b> 119:8<br/><b>rma</b> 93:12 95:24<br/><b>road</b> 10:20 50:4<br/>98:21 100:4,10,17<br/>101:7 106:24<br/>113:17 132:23<br/>133:3,20,24 135:15<br/>136:2,3 138:1,18<br/>139:17,17,25 140:3<br/>140:7,12,15 141:2<br/>141:17,18 142:11<br/>143:5</p> | <p><b>roads</b> 7:14 45:2 50:2<br/>100:2,19,19,22<br/>103:6 104:2 107:17<br/>139:21<br/><b>roadway</b> 8:23 9:3<br/>61:19,20 93:24,25<br/>113:12 128:12<br/>129:3<br/><b>roadways</b> 9:17 48:9<br/>139:22<br/><b>robert</b> 138:24 139:4<br/>139:7,11,14,14<br/><b>robin</b> 1:20<br/><b>roger</b> 69:15<br/><b>role</b> 14:25 15:7,24<br/>59:3 63:25 113:2<br/><b>roles</b> 66:6<br/><b>roll</b> 91:8<br/><b>ron</b> 26:10<br/><b>room</b> 1:9 32:15<br/>52:15 124:9<br/><b>roughly</b> 82:1 96:4<br/>104:16<br/><b>roundtable</b> 9:16<br/><b>route</b> 12:22 50:8<br/>133:10,13 134:4,6,8<br/>134:24,25 135:4,6<br/>135:14,14 136:5,18<br/>136:20 137:3,7<br/>138:1,8,10,17<br/>139:16 141:1<br/>142:19 143:1,3<br/><b>routed</b> 23:6<br/><b>routes</b> 5:16 14:13<br/>48:18 49:24 50:1,3<br/>50:6,6 136:22,23,24<br/>137:11 138:7<br/>140:10,23 142:7,8<br/>142:20,24,25<br/><b>routine</b> 132:3<br/>144:22 145:1,7,20<br/><b>rows</b> 134:17<br/><b>rule</b> 33:10<br/><b>rules</b> 82:2,5 87:18<br/>88:3 89:2,5</p> | <p><b>run</b> 73:6 131:7<br/><b>running</b> 142:17<br/><b>rural</b> 33:16 142:12<br/><b>rusk</b> 12:7</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>s</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>safe</b> 6:18 77:4<br/><b>safely</b> 63:22<br/><b>safer</b> 9:18<br/><b>safety</b> 4:18,19 5:2<br/>6:21 8:11 9:10 13:6<br/>13:8 14:1 33:7 38:2<br/>54:22,23 55:7<br/>106:18 142:10<br/><b>sale</b> 72:9,19<br/><b>san</b> 79:23,24 95:11<br/>95:25 96:25 104:3<br/>104:13 106:11<br/>107:3 108:12<br/>110:19,20,21 111:9<br/>113:1,6,7 114:5,7<br/>114:18<br/><b>sandra</b> 141:9,13,15<br/>141:15<br/><b>sarbanes</b> 122:18,25<br/>123:4<br/><b>satisfy</b> 27:19<br/><b>satisfying</b> 106:3<br/><b>saw</b> 55:9<br/><b>saying</b> 44:7 53:2<br/>63:20,25 125:7<br/>145:21<br/><b>says</b> 2:25 135:13<br/><b>scampering</b> 142:3<br/><b>scenario</b> 110:15<br/><b>scheduled</b> 79:1<br/><b>scheduling</b> 21:18<br/><b>school</b> 13:9<br/><b>scored</b> 82:19<br/><b>scout</b> 110:12<br/><b>screening</b> 82:8<br/><b>seaports</b> 42:20<br/>58:17<br/><b>seat</b> 94:11</p> |
|--|---|--|---|

[seats - social]

|  |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <p><b>seats</b> 13:8</p> <p><b>second</b> 17:10,13<br/>19:21 31:10 33:12<br/>41:23 72:15,24<br/>77:14,17 80:14,16<br/>80:19 86:15,18 88:4<br/>88:8 90:5,6,8 92:7,8<br/>92:10 108:7 112:17<br/>112:20 118:2,3<br/>122:1,2,4 125:20,21<br/>125:23 127:14,17<br/>129:22,25 131:16<br/>131:20 138:13<br/>145:5,19 146:17,18</p> <p><b>secondary</b> 5:8,18</p> <p><b>seconded</b> 116:11<br/>118:5</p> <p><b>seconding</b> 114:23</p> <p><b>seconds</b> 145:8</p> <p><b>secretary</b> 2:8 45:12</p> <p><b>section</b> 2:10 28:12<br/>28:19 136:5 141:17<br/>146:2</p> <p><b>sections</b> 61:23 129:3</p> <p><b>sector</b> 31:18,25<br/>37:14 47:18 72:7</p> <p><b>security</b> 6:3,12</p> <p><b>see</b> 10:10,11,19,21<br/>12:9 17:4 30:9 31:5<br/>31:13 32:8 34:12<br/>35:3 39:25 40:14<br/>48:13 52:2 65:23<br/>85:21 98:3 99:24<br/>100:12 104:10,14<br/>106:25 107:7 113:4<br/>125:1 135:12<br/>141:25 143:15<br/>146:12</p> <p><b>seeing</b> 9:16 98:22</p> <p><b>seen</b> 22:13 25:20<br/>84:13,14 85:21<br/>123:10</p> <p><b>segment</b> 117:8</p> <p><b>select</b> 19:8 21:7,10<br/>22:17,19 23:18</p> | <p>24:20 26:8 27:1</p> <p><b>selected</b> 82:18</p> <p><b>selecting</b> 21:1</p> <p><b>selection</b> 18:22<br/>137:7,22 138:8,18</p> <p><b>self</b> 2:25</p> <p><b>senate</b> 22:19,25 23:2<br/>23:4,17,18 24:19<br/>64:11</p> <p><b>senator</b> 105:20</p> <p><b>send</b> 95:11</p> <p><b>sense</b> 125:2,4,8</p> <p><b>sensitive</b> 115:23</p> <p><b>sent</b> 84:6</p> <p><b>separate</b> 75:18</p> <p><b>september</b> 1:12 2:4<br/>2:8 18:16,17 19:4<br/>114:16 126:22<br/>128:2 133:7 138:3</p> <p><b>serve</b> 18:1 28:18<br/>31:16 59:20 100:20<br/>139:23</p> <p><b>served</b> 52:8 79:14<br/>94:4</p> <p><b>serves</b> 29:12 31:15<br/>38:2 123:1</p> <p><b>service</b> 33:10 79:25</p> <p><b>services</b> 42:11</p> <p><b>serving</b> 79:13</p> <p><b>session</b> 43:2 87:13<br/>89:5 113:24 120:23<br/>120:25 121:1<br/>123:12,13 144:3,10<br/>146:2,6</p> <p><b>sessions</b> 96:7 97:9<br/>120:21</p> <p><b>set</b> 10:2 11:20 23:4<br/>24:10 66:15 131:6</p> <p><b>setting</b> 64:18</p> <p><b>seven</b> 2:9 35:11,14</p> <p><b>seventy</b> 82:10</p> <p><b>sh</b> 91:19 145:15</p> <p><b>shallow</b> 67:20</p> <p><b>share</b> 5:14 35:7 96:3<br/>96:3 102:17 116:3</p> | <p>120:1 141:16,23</p> <p><b>shared</b> 124:12</p> <p><b>sharing</b> 22:2 48:14<br/>65:18</p> <p><b>shawn</b> 78:23</p> <p><b>sheep</b> 71:24</p> <p><b>shelter</b> 5:3,6,8</p> <p><b>shifting</b> 111:15</p> <p><b>ship</b> 57:20 59:12,25<br/>70:16</p> <p><b>shipped</b> 57:18,19</p> <p><b>shippers</b> 52:15<br/>53:13</p> <p><b>shipping</b> 49:1</p> <p><b>ships</b> 58:5,13 59:13</p> <p><b>shooter</b> 6:1</p> <p><b>short</b> 49:14 50:12<br/>135:16</p> <p><b>shorthand</b> 147:4</p> <p><b>shot</b> 43:16</p> <p><b>shoulders</b> 99:13</p> <p><b>show</b> 48:9</p> <p><b>showed</b> 48:6 55:14</p> <p><b>showing</b> 48:4 49:2<br/>61:11</p> <p><b>shown</b> 75:7 133:8<br/>138:4 140:10</p> <p><b>shows</b> 48:8</p> <p><b>shrink</b> 102:12</p> <p><b>shrinking</b> 99:3<br/>101:2 103:4 104:10</p> <p><b>shut</b> 49:22 50:9</p> <p><b>shutdown</b> 76:15,22</p> <p><b>shuts</b> 77:1</p> <p><b>shuttle</b> 60:11,12<br/>70:7</p> <p><b>sick</b> 87:11,14,17</p> <p><b>side</b> 5:24,24 37:22<br/>47:25 106:20<br/>133:11,11</p> <p><b>sides</b> 13:3</p> <p><b>sidney</b> 4:18,20 6:20</p> <p><b>signature</b> 147:19</p> <p><b>signed</b> 98:5 146:11</p> | <p><b>significant</b> 34:7<br/>46:18 58:8</p> <p><b>significantly</b> 46:1<br/>70:18</p> <p><b>signing</b> 12:21</p> <p><b>signs</b> 143:21 144:8</p> <p><b>silent</b> 2:13</p> <p><b>silly</b> 134:21</p> <p><b>similar</b> 3:17 76:4<br/>133:9</p> <p><b>simmons</b> 26:10</p> <p><b>simple</b> 52:25</p> <p><b>simply</b> 100:22<br/>140:17</p> <p><b>sincere</b> 69:16 79:22</p> <p><b>single</b> 35:4 74:4</p> <p><b>sir</b> 11:17 63:3 65:3<br/>67:9 69:4 73:14<br/>77:5,15 84:10 85:11<br/>85:18 88:14 97:15<br/>97:17 103:19<br/>107:25 108:2<br/>126:12 132:17,18<br/>139:4,11 141:7,13</p> <p><b>sister's</b> 134:17</p> <p><b>site</b> 143:7</p> <p><b>sites</b> 138:4,5</p> <p><b>sitting</b> 16:7</p> <p><b>situated</b> 59:17</p> <p><b>six</b> 49:21 99:16<br/>100:13,15 114:4<br/>124:18 136:7,8</p> <p><b>sixth</b> 36:1</p> <p><b>size</b> 85:23</p> <p><b>slide</b> 19:22 23:9<br/>30:9 34:20 35:6<br/>48:19</p> <p><b>slides</b> 36:2 48:3<br/>51:21</p> <p><b>slogged</b> 79:9</p> <p><b>small</b> 81:11,25<br/>82:11,14 83:9</p> <p><b>smaller</b> 83:11</p> <p><b>social</b> 103:1</p> |
|--|--|---|---|

[solicited - strengthening]

|   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| <p><b>solicited</b> 81:22<br/> <b>solid</b> 137:6<br/> <b>solutions</b> 49:15<br/> 50:12,13 70:7<br/> <b>solved</b> 105:24<br/> <b>somebody</b> 6:6 53:11<br/> 72:20 134:23<br/> <b>sondra</b> 74:8<br/> <b>sorry</b> 10:13 139:5<br/> <b>sort</b> 22:6<br/> <b>sorts</b> 103:1<br/> <b>source</b> 83:14<br/> <b>south</b> 14:7 57:25<br/> 116:21 117:6<br/> 133:25<br/> <b>southern</b> 100:14<br/> 133:14 135:14<br/> 141:1 143:3<br/> <b>space</b> 77:4<br/> <b>spaces</b> 103:4<br/> <b>speak</b> 4:2 14:2 44:8<br/> 98:6 109:7 139:16<br/> <b>speaker</b> 23:17 96:8<br/> 105:20<br/> <b>speaker's</b> 2:16<br/> <b>speaking</b> 30:16<br/> 135:21 139:3,9<br/> 141:11<br/> <b>special</b> 85:15 97:3<br/> 121:12<br/> <b>specialist</b> 4:18<br/> <b>specially</b> 18:25<br/> <b>specific</b> 21:20 23:13<br/> 24:11 36:17 48:18<br/> 82:24<br/> <b>specifically</b> 15:12,15<br/> 15:15,23 20:11<br/> 34:17 36:3 96:8<br/> 109:8 141:17<br/> <b>speech</b> 7:8,9<br/> <b>speeches</b> 101:23<br/> <b>speed</b> 132:6<br/> <b>speeding</b> 142:9<br/> <b>spend</b> 42:16 53:23<br/> 61:4 125:10</p> | <p><b>spent</b> 74:1 120:11<br/> 140:3<br/> <b>spirit</b> 122:25 123:4<br/> <b>split</b> 82:1 98:9,10<br/> 128:6 140:8<br/> <b>splitting</b> 140:18<br/> <b>spoke</b> 15:15 133:5<br/> <b>spoken</b> 135:13<br/> <b>sponsor</b> 82:9<br/> <b>sponsors</b> 82:4 83:18<br/> <b>squeeze</b> 5:24<br/> <b>squirrels</b> 142:3<br/> <b>stacks</b> 109:6<br/> <b>stacy</b> 24:3 25:11<br/> <b>staff</b> 1:18 11:18<br/> 14:22 15:8,23 19:5<br/> 19:14 22:24 23:16<br/> 24:2 25:10 27:12<br/> 52:1 64:16 65:21<br/> 67:24 69:11 74:7,9<br/> 77:11 80:2,13 82:16<br/> 82:17,24 83:1,3,22<br/> 86:11 87:20 89:9<br/> 90:2 91:21 92:3<br/> 94:6 117:18,25<br/> 119:16,22 121:24<br/> 123:19 125:15<br/> 126:20 127:3,11,25<br/> 128:9,18,21 129:6,9<br/> 129:18 130:22<br/> <b>staff's</b> 112:14 116:8<br/> <b>stages</b> 65:17 121:4<br/> <b>stagnate</b> 52:24<br/> <b>stairwells</b> 5:7,9<br/> <b>stakeholder</b> 19:1<br/> 21:8,24 22:3 23:21<br/> 23:22 24:8,10,12,16<br/> 29:17,20,25 30:2,5<br/> 30:8,13 44:14<br/> <b>stakeholders</b> 18:9<br/> 20:22 69:23 118:23<br/> 134:9,23 136:17,20<br/> 137:3,14<br/> <b>stall</b> 53:6</p> | <p><b>stand</b> 5:23 25:17<br/> 53:9,11 58:2 71:4<br/> <b>standard</b> 83:14<br/> <b>standards</b> 37:21<br/> 50:15,15 51:2<br/> <b>standing</b> 96:9 97:5<br/> <b>standpoint</b> 106:3,10<br/> <b>stands</b> 108:14,15<br/> <b>start</b> 17:19 51:25<br/> 98:4 139:6<br/> <b>started</b> 12:5 37:1<br/> 106:5<br/> <b>starts</b> 61:11<br/> <b>state</b> 2:8 4:9 6:10<br/> 9:2 10:18,18 11:14<br/> 12:2,6,14 14:2,13<br/> 16:9 20:3,7 22:5<br/> 27:20 30:14,16<br/> 33:13 34:3 35:5<br/> 36:12 37:25 38:15<br/> 38:19 42:11,20<br/> 45:25 46:17 52:7<br/> 53:15 56:2 58:16<br/> 61:5 63:1 67:11<br/> 69:7,19 70:24 76:3<br/> 78:19 81:22,24 83:9<br/> 83:18 94:1,4,18<br/> 95:9 97:22 102:15<br/> 105:13 115:8<br/> 116:22 117:7,8,16<br/> 131:10 132:12,20<br/> 135:24 139:2 141:9<br/> 147:4<br/> <b>state's</b> 7:13 15:17<br/> 20:8 36:22 70:10<br/> <b>stated</b> 55:11 108:11<br/> 123:10 137:4<br/> <b>statement</b> 3:1,2 8:19<br/> 48:10 108:21 124:4<br/> <b>statements</b> 7:21<br/> <b>states</b> 46:6,10,13,15<br/> 46:21,24 54:5 57:22<br/> 58:11 65:22 101:18<br/> 101:21 103:13<br/> 124:3</p> | <p><b>statewide</b> 22:10<br/> 32:7 36:21 38:20,23<br/> 38:25<br/> <b>stating</b> 51:14 134:10<br/> 135:20 139:8<br/> <b>station</b> 5:12<br/> <b>stations</b> 5:13<br/> <b>status</b> 137:11<br/> <b>statutory</b> 87:19<br/> <b>stay</b> 5:4 140:12<br/> <b>staying</b> 60:2<br/> <b>stead</b> 107:3<br/> <b>stenographic</b> 147:7<br/> <b>step</b> 6:13,13 21:4<br/> 29:22 55:5 59:19<br/> 64:8<br/> <b>steps</b> 6:5 29:22 40:5<br/> 109:12<br/> <b>stewards</b> 120:2<br/> <b>stone</b> 104:5<br/> <b>stop</b> 54:1 99:19<br/> 100:2 104:17,24<br/> <b>stoplights</b> 100:17<br/> <b>stopping</b> 56:3<br/> <b>stp</b> 128:11<br/> <b>straightening</b> 131:9<br/> <b>straightforward</b><br/> 83:13<br/> <b>strategic</b> 36:11 37:4<br/> 48:15,15 49:3 50:23<br/> 70:24 93:2,8<br/> <b>strategies</b> 38:4,10<br/> 43:25<br/> <b>strategy</b> 23:25 25:12<br/> 25:16 49:23<br/> <b>straus</b> 42:2 96:8<br/> 105:20<br/> <b>streams</b> 114:2<br/> <b>street</b> 1:10 5:18,20<br/> 6:9 11:12 31:15<br/> 67:5<br/> <b>strengthen</b> 36:22<br/> 119:12<br/> <b>strengthening</b> 123:5</p> |
|---|--|---|---|

[strengths - texans]

|  |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| <p><b>strengths</b> 30:21<br/> <b>stress</b> 41:23 109:21<br/> <b>strikes</b> 58:15<br/> <b>strittmatter</b> 24:3<br/>             25:11<br/> <b>struck</b> 14:6<br/> <b>structure</b> 22:15<br/> <b>stuck</b> 16:13<br/> <b>students</b> 8:15<br/> <b>studies</b> 35:18<br/> <b>study</b> 42:2 47:5<br/>             103:12 136:13<br/> <b>studying</b> 26:6 70:6<br/> <b>stuff</b> 31:8 57:13<br/> <b>subcommittee</b><br/>             119:15,16 122:16<br/>             123:2,7,15 124:2<br/>             125:15<br/> <b>subcommittee's</b><br/>             122:13<br/> <b>subject</b> 98:12<br/>             139:10<br/> <b>subjective</b> 137:15<br/> <b>submit</b> 18:16<br/> <b>submitted</b> 19:3<br/> <b>subscribed</b> 147:11<br/> <b>substantiated</b> 91:3<br/> <b>succeed</b> 66:14,15<br/> <b>success</b> 123:11<br/> <b>successful</b> 15:20<br/>             79:8 84:12,14 85:21<br/>             115:10<br/> <b>successfully</b> 70:1<br/> <b>suez</b> 59:13<br/> <b>suffer</b> 103:15<br/> <b>suffers</b> 45:21 103:13<br/> <b>suggesting</b> 47:7<br/> <b>suggestion</b> 144:1<br/> <b>sum</b> 30:17 103:18<br/>             104:19<br/> <b>summary</b> 90:22<br/>             93:8<br/> <b>summer</b> 30:15,15<br/>             136:15</p> | <p><b>summit</b> 15:14 30:12<br/> <b>sunset</b> 23:19 144:2<br/> <b>support</b> 27:25 29:11<br/>             36:17,23 55:12<br/>             79:17 107:12,13,22<br/>             108:12 110:5,9,18<br/>             115:17 119:10<br/>             123:6,8 142:19<br/> <b>supported</b> 138:21<br/> <b>supportive</b> 26:13<br/>             73:8 111:6<br/> <b>supposed</b> 104:8<br/>             105:2<br/> <b>sure</b> 3:20 14:25 15:8<br/>             24:5 39:10 44:18,21<br/>             54:5 62:11 65:20<br/>             66:13,21 76:6 86:2<br/>             98:24 106:11,21<br/>             107:5,6,17 108:22<br/>             108:25 110:17<br/>             111:6,13 124:12<br/>             134:6 135:5 138:17<br/>             144:13,23 145:17<br/> <b>surety</b> 89:5<br/> <b>surface</b> 61:18 62:6<br/>             62:10 64:14<br/> <b>surprising</b> 32:14<br/> <b>survey</b> 99:23<br/> <b>suspicious</b> 137:15<br/> <b>swanke</b> 65:15<br/> <b>sweep</b> 5:24<br/> <b>swiftly</b> 7:15<br/> <b>symbolizes</b> 9:21,25<br/> <b>symbols</b> 8:21<br/> <b>sympathies</b> 8:17<br/> <b>system</b> 6:3 8:11,13<br/>             8:25 10:20 11:12<br/>             22:8 30:21 31:6<br/>             32:21,22 33:2 34:8<br/>             34:13,15,18,19,21<br/>             34:23 37:10,10,11<br/>             37:12 39:10 43:21<br/>             43:24 46:1,5,20<br/>             47:10 48:8 49:19<br/>             50:4,9,16,17 55:21</p> | <p>55:24 58:19 72:24<br/>         73:8 94:1 102:15<br/>         113:12 116:22<br/>         117:8,16 121:16<br/>         131:11<br/> <b>systems</b> 9:3 50:1<br/>         56:15</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>t</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>t</b> 147:1,1<br/> <b>table</b> 2:17 60:14<br/>             65:8,10 85:4<br/> <b>tactics</b> 103:1<br/> <b>tail</b> 26:3<br/> <b>take</b> 11:3 12:8 15:24<br/>             33:10 39:3 43:21<br/>             44:24 48:18 54:16<br/>             55:17 56:7 58:6,25<br/>             59:24 60:6 66:4<br/>             72:18,20 79:21<br/>             93:15 95:12 105:1<br/>             109:11 121:14,15<br/>             125:2,3 135:10<br/>             136:22 139:25<br/>             142:6<br/> <b>taken</b> 8:16 15:1<br/>             52:18 114:15<br/>             124:19 137:17<br/>             147:7<br/> <b>takes</b> 9:25 10:21<br/>             49:20 64:7<br/> <b>talk</b> 3:8 10:21 26:22<br/>             29:18 30:1 32:16,20<br/>             43:9 61:22 76:14<br/>             95:17 136:2<br/> <b>talked</b> 31:14 33:6<br/>             38:5 42:11 44:22<br/>             48:21,22,24 55:3<br/>             68:9 95:1 102:10<br/>             107:19 108:13<br/>             115:24 121:8 133:1<br/>             134:13,21<br/> <b>talking</b> 11:1 29:1<br/>             34:4,5 43:23 58:2<br/>             65:8 144:12</p> | <p><b>tap</b> 81:11,16,19,21<br/>             82:15,20<br/> <b>targeting</b> 83:16<br/> <b>targets</b> 20:24<br/> <b>tarrant</b> 128:23<br/> <b>task</b> 27:17 42:5 57:9<br/>             69:24 70:2<br/> <b>tasked</b> 25:7<br/> <b>tasks</b> 13:21 54:2<br/> <b>tax</b> 138:14,15<br/> <b>taxes</b> 113:18<br/> <b>taxpayer</b> 102:20<br/> <b>teach</b> 124:12<br/> <b>teaching</b> 13:7<br/> <b>team</b> 4:24 24:1<br/>             25:12,16 68:10<br/>             114:9 124:8<br/> <b>technology</b> 8:23 9:9<br/>             9:10,13 33:5 38:10<br/>             38:19 45:1 49:15<br/>             60:5,20 70:7 119:5<br/>             119:13<br/> <b>tell</b> 46:9 59:10 96:19<br/>             100:16 134:23<br/>             142:13<br/> <b>ten</b> 9:4 66:8 79:14<br/>             79:24<br/> <b>tend</b> 42:18<br/> <b>term</b> 12:8 26:8<br/>             49:14 50:12,12,22<br/>             76:25 78:19 79:1,9<br/>             79:10,19<br/> <b>terms</b> 11:5 20:4<br/>             21:12,17 26:3 32:2<br/>             32:9 33:4 35:8 40:5<br/>             43:17 46:18 51:3<br/>             85:4 106:4<br/> <b>terri</b> 96:16 97:20,25<br/> <b>tested</b> 58:18,19,19<br/> <b>testify</b> 19:7<br/> <b>teu</b> 59:24<br/> <b>texan</b> 16:12 56:8<br/>             58:2<br/> <b>texans</b> 8:12 9:4<br/>             13:15 14:8 66:18</p> |
|--|--|---|--|

[texans - toll]

|  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>97:25 98:1 102:6,23<br/> <b>texas</b> 1:1,10 2:4,5<br/>                 7:8,9 9:2,3,11 10:16<br/>                 11:11,12,14 12:6<br/>                 16:9 17:1 27:20<br/>                 28:10,20,22 30:10<br/>                 30:25 31:2,2,7,11<br/>                 31:11,19,19,20,23<br/>                 31:25 32:9 35:1,12<br/>                 35:13,21 44:11<br/>                 46:10,25 48:5 51:20<br/>                 51:23 52:22 53:13<br/>                 53:15,17 54:18<br/>                 55:14 57:18,23 58:7<br/>                 58:10,11,16 59:16<br/>                 62:11 63:7,17,17,22<br/>                 63:25 64:2,18,25<br/>                 65:13,22 67:19<br/>                 68:17,25 69:17,19<br/>                 69:21 70:12,18,22<br/>                 70:23 71:16,21,23<br/>                 75:24 78:12,24 79:8<br/>                 81:11 89:2 90:20<br/>                 95:9 101:19 102:2,4<br/>                 110:8 113:19<br/>                 117:15 118:18<br/>                 131:3,4 146:7 147:4<br/>                 147:20<br/> <b>texting</b> 101:24<br/> <b>thank</b> 2:2 4:16,21<br/>                 6:19,20,23 7:5,20<br/>                 7:24 8:4,7 9:22 10:3<br/>                 10:4,9 13:18,19,20<br/>                 14:14,16 16:2,2,17<br/>                 16:18 17:15 25:1<br/>                 28:2,7,14 40:11,23<br/>                 41:4,14,15,18 45:6<br/>                 45:7 46:8 51:7,9,17<br/>                 51:25 52:3,20 54:12<br/>                 57:1,2,7 58:23<br/>                 60:22,23 61:3 62:13<br/>                 62:15,18,21,23 63:3<br/>                 65:1,2,4,7 66:23<br/>                 67:7,8,23 68:1,2,23<br/>                 69:3,4 71:2,7,8,12</p> | <p>73:10,11,14,18,24<br/>                 74:7,15,17 75:2<br/>                 76:5 77:6 81:4 86:3<br/>                 86:4,24 88:14,22<br/>                 91:5,13 92:17 93:5<br/>                 94:10,12,22 95:14<br/>                 95:16 96:5,6,20,24<br/>                 97:8,12,14,16,18<br/>                 98:19,22 105:4,8,9<br/>                 105:16 107:25<br/>                 108:2 109:1 111:19<br/>                 112:23,23,25 113:7<br/>                 114:18,20,22,25<br/>                 115:1 116:5,18<br/>                 118:14 119:21<br/>                 122:11,15 124:20<br/>                 125:11 130:5<br/>                 131:13 132:8<br/>                 135:15,17 138:22<br/>                 138:23 139:12,15<br/>                 141:4,5,7 143:9,11<br/>                 144:17<br/> <b>thanks</b> 16:19 86:25<br/>                 97:3 98:23 105:18<br/>                 130:7<br/> <b>themes</b> 119:24<br/> <b>thing</b> 13:24 44:15<br/>                 52:14 56:6 61:17<br/>                 65:11,12 84:13<br/>                 85:19 102:16 111:5<br/>                 113:9 114:3,10<br/>                 120:16,18<br/> <b>things</b> 12:13 16:22<br/>                 21:16 26:5 32:19<br/>                 44:12 46:18,22 49:2<br/>                 50:19 54:25 60:7<br/>                 62:3 65:24 66:18<br/>                 68:9 84:14 101:25<br/>                 108:15 110:8<br/>                 119:25 121:10,12<br/>                 121:18 124:3,10<br/>                 133:9 135:10<br/> <b>think</b> 9:20 12:14<br/>                 14:3,11,20 16:8,10<br/>                 25:6 26:9 35:7</p> | <p>41:22 42:18,21,25<br/>                 43:2,6,22 44:4,6,9<br/>                 44:11 46:23 48:12<br/>                 48:17 49:11 50:11<br/>                 52:14,21 55:25<br/>                 57:10,16 64:5,7,9<br/>                 64:15 79:9 84:5,24<br/>                 85:24 95:4 97:5<br/>                 108:9,13 113:10,14<br/>                 113:19,20 115:5,12<br/>                 115:14,19,25 120:5<br/>                 126:11 135:2<br/> <b>thinking</b> 11:4 12:2<br/>                 110:10<br/> <b>thinks</b> 56:9<br/> <b>third</b> 19:21 20:11<br/>                 31:17 36:16 116:3<br/> <b>thomas</b> 120:18<br/>                 144:2<br/> <b>thoroughly</b> 106:21<br/> <b>thought</b> 113:22<br/>                 144:16<br/> <b>thoughts</b> 3:11,20<br/>                 4:4,12 8:17 14:17<br/>                 49:7 69:9 71:13<br/>                 73:16 97:23 111:14<br/>                 139:9<br/> <b>thousand</b> 133:16,22<br/> <b>threat</b> 6:2<br/> <b>three</b> 3:19 14:6<br/>                 18:18 19:18 36:8<br/>                 82:9 106:25 110:1<br/>                 124:16 126:25<br/>                 128:13 134:16<br/>                 136:24 142:20<br/> <b>throughput</b> 100:24<br/> <b>throwing</b> 107:15<br/> <b>thrust</b> 120:20<br/> <b>thursday</b> 1:11<br/> <b>tied</b> 24:6<br/> <b>tiger</b> 26:3<br/> <b>time</b> 2:11 3:19,22<br/>                 4:13,17 6:19 7:2,4<br/>                 7:25 8:1,2,12 14:10<br/>                 16:21 21:25 27:3</p> | <p>33:11 34:24 40:20<br/>                 41:11 42:17 53:3<br/>                 59:11,24 61:5,24<br/>                 74:1 78:24 80:5<br/>                 87:23 89:12 91:4<br/>                 92:19 94:9 97:16<br/>                 98:4,13 103:20,24<br/>                 105:9 107:9 108:1<br/>                 108:13 110:24<br/>                 117:22 119:19<br/>                 120:11 125:5,10,13<br/>                 126:6,10 127:6<br/>                 129:1 130:25<br/>                 132:25 133:5<br/>                 135:16 138:12<br/>                 140:3 141:4 143:2,9<br/>                 144:12,15 146:1,3,8<br/>                 146:8 147:7<br/> <b>timed</b> 135:17<br/> <b>times</b> 33:20 54:12<br/>                 96:16 121:9<br/> <b>title</b> 3:6 69:8<br/> <b>today</b> 2:15 5:22 18:3<br/>                 19:23 34:8,14 40:12<br/>                 41:3 49:5 55:4 97:1<br/>                 97:6 98:24 99:6,16<br/>                 100:4,7,11,15<br/>                 104:14,17 107:20<br/>                 108:11,15,15<br/>                 109:22,25 110:11<br/>                 112:14 113:1,21<br/>                 114:19,25 123:1<br/>                 128:3 132:24 136:2<br/>                 136:7 137:20<br/>                 139:16 146:12<br/> <b>today's</b> 2:12 17:18<br/>                 83:7,8<br/> <b>told</b> 101:10 103:8<br/>                 114:5 134:12<br/> <b>toll</b> 93:1,11,17,18<br/>                 94:5 96:15 98:1<br/>                 99:1,4 109:13<br/>                 111:15,15 112:12<br/>                 116:9,9 133:3 136:2<br/>                 139:16,21,25 140:7</p> |
|--|---|--|--|

[toll - uneconomical]

|  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <p>141:2,16<br/> <b>tolled</b> 113:13<br/> <b>tolling</b> 26:17<br/> <b>tolls</b> 26:24 98:20<br/> 113:12,18 114:18<br/> 115:11<br/> <b>tongue</b> 124:25<br/> <b>tonnage</b> 34:20,24<br/> 37:8 48:4,11<br/> <b>tons</b> 31:7 34:9,11,15<br/> 48:6 49:5 61:10<br/> <b>tool</b> 61:6<br/> <b>tools</b> 137:23<br/> <b>toothed</b> 25:18<br/> <b>top</b> 35:12,14,24<br/> 108:21 109:6,17,17<br/> <b>topic</b> 9:9,25 18:6<br/> 58:1 143:18<br/> <b>tornado</b> 5:3<br/> <b>total</b> 39:16 75:7<br/> 82:12 130:20<br/> <b>totalling</b> 128:7<br/> <b>totally</b> 107:12,12<br/> 113:14<br/> <b>touch</b> 32:15<br/> <b>tpp</b> 28:19<br/> <b>track</b> 62:8<br/> <b>tractors</b> 35:1<br/> <b>trade</b> 27:9 28:11,19<br/> 31:11,12 35:2 46:12<br/> <b>traffic</b> 15:5 38:20,25<br/> 42:19 45:1 50:10,21<br/> 55:20 57:14 58:10<br/> 68:21 82:17 99:6<br/> 102:13 104:8,9,24<br/> <b>tragic</b> 8:16<br/> <b>trail</b> 79:8<br/> <b>train</b> 11:14 12:4,8<br/> 120:1<br/> <b>training</b> 120:5<br/> <b>transcript</b> 147:6<br/> <b>transfer</b> 93:23<br/> <b>transit</b> 102:8<br/> <b>transparency</b><br/> 122:19 123:5,17</p> | <p><b>transparent</b> 115:19<br/> <b>transport</b> 73:3,4<br/> <b>transportation</b> 1:1<br/> 2:5 7:10,14 12:13<br/> 12:16 15:14 17:1<br/> 19:8 20:3 21:6 22:8<br/> 22:17,20 23:17<br/> 26:15 29:5,8,13,15<br/> 30:21 31:6 32:3<br/> 34:8 35:4 37:24<br/> 38:14 42:10 53:3<br/> 62:6,10 63:18,19<br/> 64:14 69:2 70:5,6,9<br/> 70:25 71:3 72:2,4<br/> 73:8 78:2,8,20 81:8<br/> 81:10 82:22 90:21<br/> 90:24 95:21,23<br/> 102:19 109:4,11<br/> 115:9 116:23 117:3<br/> 117:17 123:16<br/> 131:3,5 132:4 146:7<br/> <b>transported</b> 31:6<br/> <b>travel</b> 10:17 102:12<br/> 102:20,22<br/> <b>traveling</b> 99:19<br/> <b>travis</b> 117:7<br/> <b>trees</b> 140:21 142:4<br/> <b>tremendous</b> 31:8<br/> 64:7 66:9 68:25<br/> 70:14 71:6 120:3<br/> <b>trend</b> 48:21<br/> <b>trent</b> 120:18,19<br/> 144:1,2<br/> <b>triangle</b> 35:13 55:14<br/> <b>triathlete</b> 78:25<br/> <b>trickle</b> 73:1<br/> <b>tried</b> 101:8 103:2<br/> <b>trillion</b> 45:24<br/> <b>truck</b> 33:8 34:25<br/> 35:20 42:19 48:11<br/> 49:20 50:6,21 72:15<br/> 72:25<br/> <b>trucking</b> 32:8,10<br/> 33:8 35:16,17,20,22<br/> 35:25 38:24 39:2,8</p> | <p>45:21 60:18<br/> <b>trucks</b> 60:4 61:22<br/> <b>true</b> 45:24 96:1<br/> 124:6 147:6<br/> <b>trunk</b> 11:11 37:11<br/> 37:12<br/> <b>trust</b> 27:12<br/> <b>truthful</b> 115:6<br/> <b>try</b> 16:15<br/> <b>trying</b> 7:17 12:1<br/> 59:4 96:1,3,10<br/> 102:6,9,23 115:15<br/> 115:24 125:7<br/> 140:15,17<br/> <b>tryon</b> 1:15<br/> <b>tti</b> 26:19<br/> <b>tunnel</b> 98:22<br/> <b>turf</b> 97:25<br/> <b>turn</b> 4:13 17:17 28:8<br/> 58:17 59:15<br/> <b>turned</b> 85:4 133:12<br/> 135:13<br/> <b>twelve</b> 19:24 30:10<br/> <b>twing</b> 78:23,23<br/> <b>twing's</b> 79:1<br/> <b>two</b> 2:21 9:20 11:5<br/> 14:5 21:19 24:17<br/> 25:20 30:13 39:25<br/> 42:25 52:6 64:9<br/> 67:16 82:1 85:3<br/> 95:5 96:7 108:21<br/> 109:25 128:11,24<br/> 128:25 129:10<br/> 133:21 138:4<br/> 142:16 144:9<br/> <b>txdot</b> 6:7 11:9 14:4<br/> 14:9,10,19,21 19:5<br/> 23:7,25 25:13 29:5<br/> 47:7,23 48:1 67:4<br/> 67:24 69:11 78:7<br/> 82:5 88:25 91:16<br/> 95:18 100:16 102:9<br/> 102:15 107:15<br/> 117:4 118:17,21<br/> 126:19 133:6 136:5</p> | <p>136:18 137:13,22<br/> 138:3 140:7,9,17,24<br/> 142:6,13,18,23<br/> <b>txdot's</b> 75:4 78:10<br/> 82:19,21 87:9<br/> 102:13 123:17<br/> <b>tyler</b> 85:22<br/> <b>type</b> 82:8 99:18<br/> <b>types</b> 2:21</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>u</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>u.s.</b> 13:1 93:9,11,17<br/> 93:19,23 94:5 99:23<br/> 100:9 116:10,21<br/> 117:6,7,19<br/> <b>uber</b> 102:17<br/> <b>uc</b> 103:12<br/> <b>ultimate</b> 11:1<br/> <b>umbrella</b> 38:20<br/> <b>unanimously</b> 77:23<br/> 80:24<br/> <b>unbearable</b> 101:12<br/> <b>underrun</b> 127:2<br/> 128:8<br/> <b>underscore</b> 39:17<br/> 39:21 64:12<br/> <b>underscores</b> 123:16<br/> <b>understand</b> 4:3<br/> 16:12 26:15 46:6<br/> 55:23 56:5 76:19<br/> 108:18 124:1 136:4<br/> 139:2<br/> <b>understanding</b><br/> 29:23 30:20 124:5<br/> 137:19 139:9<br/> <b>understands</b> 44:4<br/> <b>understood</b> 26:21<br/> 110:17<br/> <b>undertaking</b> 13:21<br/> <b>underutilized</b><br/> 103:15<br/> <b>underwood</b> 124:11<br/> <b>undisturbed</b> 84:22<br/> <b>uneconomical</b> 73:3</p> |
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[unique - weber]

|   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| <p><b>unique</b> 123:15<br/> <b>units</b> 131:12<br/> <b>university</b> 9:11<br/> <b>unknown</b> 84:24<br/> <b>unnecessarily</b> 102:5<br/> <b>unnecessary</b> 102:12<br/> <b>unprecedented</b><br/> 99:10<br/> <b>unrestricted</b> 99:6,11<br/> 99:16,17 100:15<br/> <b>unworkable</b> 102:24<br/> <b>upcoming</b> 24:9<br/> <b>update</b> 18:4,7<br/> <b>updated</b> 21:9 92:21<br/> <b>updating</b> 25:18<br/> <b>uplifting</b> 16:20<br/> <b>ups</b> 120:17<br/> <b>urban</b> 33:16 35:13<br/> 37:14 46:12 81:11<br/> 81:23,25 82:10,11<br/> 82:13,14 83:9,17<br/> 85:8<br/> <b>urge</b> 97:12<br/> <b>use</b> 5:22 6:13,14<br/> 7:11 20:24 22:7<br/> 46:19 60:5 72:5<br/> 81:16 102:23 125:8<br/> 131:5 133:1 134:25<br/> 138:14<br/> <b>uses</b> 72:25<br/> <b>usually</b> 3:25<br/> <b>utilize</b> 70:4 104:1<br/> <b>utp</b> 19:24,25 20:13<br/> 39:23 43:11 44:17<br/> 45:5 59:5</p> | <p><b>values</b> 24:4<br/> <b>vandergriff</b> 1:17<br/> 7:23,24 8:5 17:10<br/> 17:11 19:6 25:3,4<br/> 28:3 44:8 77:9,12<br/> 86:14,16 90:5,6<br/> 92:2,5 110:25 111:5<br/> 111:20 122:1,2<br/> 127:14,15 129:22<br/> 129:23 144:21,23<br/> 145:12 146:14,15<br/> <b>varies</b> 35:21<br/> <b>various</b> 26:5 93:10<br/> 128:16<br/> <b>vast</b> 102:24<br/> <b>vegetables</b> 71:25<br/> <b>vehicle</b> 34:25 99:18<br/> <b>vehicles</b> 37:24 88:18<br/> 99:4,11<br/> <b>vein</b> 46:6<br/> <b>vendor</b> 119:13<br/> <b>versa</b> 56:22<br/> <b>versus</b> 34:20<br/> <b>vic</b> 97:1 113:4<br/> <b>vice</b> 1:16 8:6,7 9:24<br/> 10:5 45:8,9,10,12<br/> 47:5 48:2 51:7<br/> 56:22 61:2,3 62:13<br/> 62:16 77:13,15 86:7<br/> 86:8 94:24 112:16<br/> 112:18 113:3<br/> 114:22 117:24<br/> 118:1 131:16,18<br/> 145:3,6<br/> <b>victor</b> 1:17<br/> <b>victory</b> 120:22<br/> <b>video</b> 9:20,23 13:5<br/> <b>viewpoints</b> 52:18<br/> <b>views</b> 4:6 140:19<br/> <b>vigilantly</b> 8:22<br/> <b>virtually</b> 71:23<br/> <b>vision</b> 24:4 70:10,20<br/> <b>visit</b> 8:2 44:9 65:6<br/> <b>visited</b> 76:18</p> | <p><b>visiting</b> 44:13<br/> <b>vital</b> 70:2 72:2<br/> <b>volunteers</b> 6:5<br/> <b>vote</b> 13:16 53:2<br/> 80:20 86:19 92:11<br/> 109:22 110:3<br/> 116:12 118:6<br/> 125:23 130:1<br/> 131:11,21 145:9,10<br/> 145:16<br/> <b>votes</b> 95:5 108:16<br/> 109:25<br/> <b>voting</b> 13:14,15</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>w</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>wait</b> 24:19 33:20<br/> <b>waited</b> 106:12<br/> <b>waiting</b> 69:1<br/> <b>walls</b> 5:5<br/> <b>walton</b> 9:11<br/> <b>want</b> 2:2,25 3:18,23<br/> 22:10 24:5 25:25<br/> 41:18 45:10 49:8<br/> 54:5 58:23 59:14<br/> 61:18,20,22 62:4,10<br/> 65:6 66:23 67:18<br/> 73:24 74:3,7 75:19<br/> 79:21 85:19 89:14<br/> 89:22 95:16 96:20<br/> 97:8 98:9,24 99:21<br/> 103:21 104:12<br/> 105:6,19 107:7,17<br/> 109:20,24 110:1,4,5<br/> 110:5,6,6,9 111:6<br/> 111:11,16 113:9<br/> 119:21 120:14,18<br/> 136:2,20<br/> <b>wanted</b> 7:7,18 35:6<br/> 41:19,21 63:14<br/> 64:25 67:23 95:3,8<br/> 95:14,15 96:5,6,24<br/> 100:11 110:16<br/> 116:3 124:11<br/> 134:13 145:13</p> | <p><b>wants</b> 26:13 134:18<br/> <b>washington</b> 46:21<br/> 65:21 68:24 78:19<br/> <b>waste</b> 125:5<br/> <b>watch</b> 142:9<br/> <b>water</b> 68:15,15<br/> 142:16<br/> <b>waterway</b> 45:2 56:8<br/> 56:11,13,17,21<br/> <b>waterways</b> 37:17<br/> 42:12 43:19,19<br/> <b>way</b> 14:20 36:24<br/> 44:1 52:21,23 54:14<br/> 59:18 60:5 66:22<br/> 79:9 82:23 84:23<br/> 93:24 94:1 95:16<br/> 100:8 124:3 130:10<br/> 130:14,21 133:24<br/> 141:1 144:11<br/> <b>ways</b> 26:23<br/> <b>we've</b> 8:12 12:2,16<br/> 19:24 22:16 33:4<br/> 43:12 44:21 48:21<br/> 48:22,24 50:5 52:8<br/> 53:21 54:4 60:6<br/> 64:20 65:13 68:7<br/> 89:17 95:4 96:10<br/> 105:24 107:8<br/> 109:25 120:16,17<br/> 121:8 123:10<br/> 135:13 139:25<br/> <b>weaknesses</b> 30:20<br/> <b>weather</b> 5:3 38:22<br/> <b>weber</b> 1:19 4:15,16<br/> 6:20 17:19,25 28:9<br/> 28:14,16 63:5 69:11<br/> 73:18 74:22 75:2<br/> 77:25 78:6 81:6<br/> 86:25 88:16,22<br/> 90:14 91:7 92:18,25<br/> 93:6 116:20 117:2<br/> 118:11,14 122:12<br/> 122:15 126:12<br/> 127:23 130:7 132:2</p> |
| <b>v</b>  |  |   |   |
| <p><b>vacancy</b> 78:18<br/> <b>valid</b> 138:6<br/> <b>validated</b> 138:15<br/> <b>valuable</b> 61:6 97:10<br/> 97:11<br/> <b>value</b> 106:4,13<br/> 107:6 126:25 128:5<br/> 142:14</p>  |  |   |   |

[website - zones]

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <p><b>website</b> 82:22 136:6<br/>136:8</p> <p><b>week</b> 14:5 58:1<br/>65:21</p> <p><b>weekend</b> 133:4</p> <p><b>went</b> 26:25 27:2<br/>44:23 52:12 98:20<br/>108:8 133:12,14<br/>135:5 144:12</p> <p><b>west</b> 5:19 58:18<br/>133:14 134:6</p> <p><b>western</b> 133:10</p> <p><b>whatever's</b> 62:11</p> <p><b>wheat</b> 71:24</p> <p><b>wheel</b> 16:13</p> <p><b>whereof</b> 147:10</p> <p><b>whichever</b> 3:18<br/>57:20</p> <p><b>white</b> 134:9 135:12</p> <p><b>wichita</b> 79:12,15</p> <p><b>widening</b> 128:12<br/>131:8</p> <p><b>wildlife</b> 140:22<br/>142:5</p> <p><b>williams</b> 4:24 17:22<br/>17:24 18:1 52:3<br/>74:3 108:23 109:1,3<br/>110:24</p> <p><b>williamson</b> 1:9<br/>79:12,12,18</p> <p><b>willingness</b> 61:4</p> <p><b>window</b> 41:11</p> <p><b>windows</b> 5:5</p> <p><b>wise</b> 14:1</p> <p><b>wish</b> 2:14,19</p> <p><b>witness</b> 147:10</p> <p><b>witnesses</b> 112:8</p> <p><b>wolff</b> 94:16,17,21,23<br/>95:7 96:19,23 97:15<br/>97:18 105:21,22<br/>113:2,25</p> <p><b>women</b> 10:25 125:1</p> <p><b>wonderful</b> 14:22<br/>45:13,16 62:16</p> | <p><b>wood</b> 76:11</p> <p><b>wooded</b> 142:5</p> <p><b>woods</b> 68:6</p> <p><b>word</b> 44:10</p> <p><b>wording</b> 136:8</p> <p><b>words</b> 7:11</p> <p><b>work</b> 7:10,13 8:22<br/>8:23 10:5,25 13:21<br/>15:3,4,7 16:20<br/>17:18 18:7 22:8<br/>40:23 41:2,3,4,5,8<br/>41:13 45:6 56:12<br/>58:16 62:14 64:22<br/>65:14 66:13 69:5<br/>71:4 73:9 97:13<br/>107:14 113:24<br/>114:12 141:21,22<br/>143:24</p> <p><b>work's</b> 61:7</p> <p><b>worked</b> 65:9 108:11<br/>139:25</p> <p><b>working</b> 11:9 15:22<br/>15:22 16:22 18:11<br/>21:14 23:10 24:3<br/>42:17 45:25 52:9<br/>65:17,19 66:24<br/>68:25 74:1,10,14<br/>85:25 97:2 105:24<br/>107:8,23</p> <p><b>works</b> 27:4 42:14</p> <p><b>workshop</b> 21:19<br/>24:18 103:9</p> <p><b>world</b> 26:4,15,16<br/>53:12 54:19 55:3<br/>111:16</p> <p><b>worse</b> 103:6</p> <p><b>worst</b> 101:12 110:15</p> <p><b>worth</b> 43:12 60:4<br/>95:10</p> <p><b>wrda</b> 69:1</p> | <p>73:9 84:2,6 113:7<br/>120:2,10,14 121:10<br/>121:17 124:8</p> <p><b>y'all's</b> 65:19</p> <p><b>yard</b> 136:23 143:6</p> <p><b>yeah</b> 25:4 63:8,8<br/>124:5</p> <p><b>year</b> 9:3 12:8 31:8<br/>45:20,22 79:7 83:17<br/>84:2 85:8,17 118:20<br/>120:6 121:23 136:4<br/>141:21</p> <p><b>years</b> 12:11 14:5<br/>19:25 31:21 42:1,25<br/>44:23 66:11 76:11<br/>76:15 79:14,25<br/>81:14,15,15 96:11<br/>101:4 105:2,25<br/>106:24 124:17<br/>141:22 143:8 144:9</p> <p><b>yellow</b> 2:22,24<br/>133:2</p> <p><b>yesterday</b> 7:7 11:8<br/>15:12 67:3 75:18<br/>76:18 124:23<br/>143:21</p> <p><b>yesterday's</b> 119:16<br/>123:14</p> |
|   |   | <b>z</b>  |
|   |   | <p><b>zapalac</b> 135:3 137:4</p> <p><b>zone</b> 39:6</p> <p><b>zones</b> 132:6</p>   |
|   | <b>y</b>  |   |
|   | <p><b>y'all</b> 6:19 10:22<br/>11:15 14:7 42:23<br/>57:8 67:5 68:21</p>   |   |