I-69 Corridor Program
Corridor Segment Committee Meeting

MEMORANDUM OF MEETING

SUBJECT: Corridor Segment Committee #5 – Meeting #2

DATE: August 11, 2009

LOCATION: Coastal Bend College, Alice Campus, Alice, Texas

ATTENDING: Attendants are listed on attached sign-in sheets

Meeting purpose:

The meeting was held to solicit input from the Corridor Segment Committee #5 (CSC 5) on the planning and development of an I-69 Corridor Program that will address local, regional and statewide transportation issues and needs. Meeting format followed the Agenda attached to these notes. The meeting was called to order and continued as follows:

Welcome/Introductions and Presentations:

Thanks were given to the host of the meeting, Coastal Bend College, Alice Campus. CSC 5 Members then introduced themselves. TxDOT representatives explained that these meetings will be structured to obtain input for the I-69 planning process which will then be linked to the NEPA process. Input from each of the five CSCs will be used to ultimately develop an I-69 Corridor Program. The CSCs will also have an opportunity to provide input into the Program’s Public Involvement Plan. There is a focus to get I-69 on the ground and the solution might include multi-modal projects.

The following topics were covered in the presentation:

- Welcome/Introductions
- Role of Corridor Segment Committee in Developing the I-69 Corridor Program
- Transportation Needs – Identification of Transportation Problems and Challenges
- Existing and Planned Highways in the I-69 Corridor – What is Out There Today and What is Planned

Brainstorming Session #1 – Identification of Transportation Problems and Challenges:
Art Garcia explained the process for the brainstorming session. Each committee member will be asked to describe transportation problems and challenges to consider when developing the I-69 Corridor Program. The problems and challenges may be associated with safety, access, mobility and congestion inherent to their region. The committee members provided the following input during the brainstorming session:
1. Committee Member (Josephine Miller) – Identified transportation issues related to San Patricio Economic Development Corporation such as:
   i. Merge distance onto controlled access facilities can be insufficient. There are several occurrences where existing entrance and exit ramps are in close proximity. Avoid weave conditions when upgrading a facility to interstate standards.
   ii. Use technology to control congestion (ITS). New technologies might include automatic control of vehicle spacing.
   iii. Current and forecasted mix of heavy trucks and car traffic deteriorate highway safety.

2. Committee Member (Tim Clower) – Identified transportation issues related to Nueces County such as:
   i. There are numerous at grade rail road crossings that result in both congestion and pose a serious safety hazard for communities and travelers in the region. For instance, there is a lack of grade separated rail on SH 44 in San Diego, on US 77 in Odem, and on other potential I-69 facilities and other local roads connecting to these facilities.
   ii. Some active railroads include UP in Brownsville and KCS in Laredo. A Railroad District has been established within the area and is actively promoting rail oriented planning and safety improvements.
   iii. Dr. Lawrence at Texas A&M has done research on freight rail activity associated with trade between the United States and Mexico.
   iv. Connectivity and accessibility to the Port of Corpus Christi is insufficient.

3. Committee Member (Terry Simpson) – Identified transportation issues related to San Patricio County such as:
   i. The mix of heavy truck traffic and cars deteriorates highway safety on US 77 from IH 37 to the Valley. Consider separation of cars and trucks.
   ii. Traffic mobility in Odem is poor as a result of through traffic congestion and an at-grade rail crossing on US 77.
   iii. The north connection between IH 37 and US 77 does not meet driver expectation and needs improvement.

4. Committee Member (Pearson Knolle) – Identified transportation issues such as:
   i. There is an insufficient number of safety rest stops in the region.

5. Committee Member (Terry Simpson) – Identified transportation issues related to San Patricio County such as:
   i. Rest stops located in the median cause safety concerns because of left lane merge and diverge.

6. Committee Member (Keith Selman) – Identified transportation issues such as:
   i. Rest stops should only be located outside of the mainlanes.
   ii. Tolled truck rest stops should be considered.
   iii. Increased heavy truck traffic will expedite roadway deterioration and increase maintenance requirements.

7. Committee Member (Terry Arnold) – Identified transportation issues such as:
   i. I-69 will generate increased truck traffic that will require truck safety rest stops.
ii. City streets are not designed to accommodate the movement and heavy loads of trucks.

8. Committee Member (Terry Simpson) – Identified transportation issues related to San Patricio County such as:
   i. The lack access (ingress and egress) has inhibited economic development including the development of new distribution centers.
   ii. Roadways and interchanges should be designed and reinforced to accommodate heavy truck loads in areas where frequent truck traffic will occur.

9. Proxy Committee Member (Jimmie McGee) inquired if I-69 will be two or three lanes because of lack of adequate capacity to accommodate growing vehicular traffic.
   a. TxDOT answered that I-69 would be designed to accommodate forecasted traffic and may include two lanes or three lanes with restricted truck lanes depending on what is required to meet the transportation needs.

10. Proxy Committee Member (Ray De Los Santos, Jr.) – Identified transportation issues such as:
    i. The I-69 Corridor Program needs to consider the proximity of the proposed Interstate and frontage roads to homes and growing populated areas. Proximity of upgradeable facilities to residential areas causes safety concerns for pedestrians, such as along US 281 from Alice to Ben Bolt.

11. Committee Member (Roberto Elizondo) asked if relief routes would be considered, and where they would be located, for instance in Freer and San Diego?
   a. TxDOT answered that it is the role of the CSC to determine the criteria for determining the need for and location of relief routes.

12. Committee Member (Terry Simpson) – Identified transportation issues related to San Patricio County such as:
    i. Need to coordinate with communities elsewhere within Texas that have experienced rapid growth and increased truck traffic such as Hutto and Round Rock. He suggested that officials from those communities make a presentation to the CSC.

13. Committee Member (Adolph Poenisch) – Identified transportation issues related to McMullen County such as:
    i. The mix of farm and ranch equipment with cars and trucks on highways deteriorates highway safety. Consideration also needs to be given to moving farm and ranch equipment over or under new highways.

14. Proxy Committee Member (Jimmie McGee) – Identified transportation issues related to George West such as:
    i. The need to educate truckers and communities on safely utilizing a modern interstate facility to reduce car / heavy truck conflicts.
15. Committee Member (Rosalva Guerra) – Identified transportation issues related to Zapata County such as:
   i. Increase in traffic has led to safety and access concerns along the US 83 travel corridor between Port of Laredo and Brownsville.
   ii. There is a lack of alternate connectivity between Mexico and the United States. Laredo experiences congestion at the border connections. Consider a new international bridge connecting Mexico to Highway 16 and 83 in Zapata. Zapata is currently pursuing an International Bridge Permit.
   iii. Primary commodity in Zapata County is gas production.

16. Committee Member (Roberto Elizondo) – Identified transportation issues related to Duval County such as:
   i. Heavy truck traffic through the Cities of San Diego and Freer deteriorate safety in these communities.

17. Committee Member (Josephine Miller) – Identified transportation related issues such as:
   i. At grade rail crossing in Odem and increased heavy truck traffic in Rivera, Refugio and elsewhere along the US77 corridor deteriorates highway safety and contributes to congestion. Consideration should be given to relief routes in Odem and Refugio.
   ii. US 77 has experienced a 17% increase in truck volumes.

18. Committee Member (Tim Clower) – Identified transportation issues related to Nueces County such as:
   i. Because of congestion and safety issues associated with at-grade railroad crossings, consider relocating rail out of San Diego and Odem in lieu of grade separations. Consider rail relocations adjacent to relief routes.
   ii. Consider using tolls to also fund railroad grade separation projects.
   iii. Consider extending the KCS Rail from Robstown to Victoria.

19. Committee Member (Keith Selman) – Identified transportation issues such as:
   i. To accomplish what Tim Clower said above (#17), there will be a need for new legislation to require railroad companies to correct existing at-grade rail crossing safety concerns.
   ii. As railroad expands, joint planning with the railroad could be implemented to coordinate and leverage resources.

20. Committee Member (Nelda Martinez) – Identified transportation issues such as:
   i. The Panama Canal expansion, expected to be completed in 2014, will generate increased container ship traffic at Texas Ports because neither the east nor west coast ports have the capacity to accommodate the additional demand. The anticipated increase in Texas Port activity could overtax existing port facility access between Corpus Christi and Laredo.
   ii. The I-69 program should also consider alternatives to trucks for transporting freight and cargo, such as the freight shuttle. TTI is investigating the feasibility of the freight shuttle. Dr Steven Roop is developing a prototype freight shuttle system.
   iii. South Texas needs to work as a region as a strategic partnership with Cities to determine what transportation improvements would best serve the anticipated increase in traffic.
21. Committee Member (Tim Clower) noted that:
   i. Other counties should get rail districts in place to coordinate and fund rail facility improvements. He noted that railroad insurance costs would fall if railroads were moved out of urban settings and didn’t have to contend with the liabilities of so many at-grade highway crossings. Relocating railroads would also reduce damages associated with derailments and spills. The I-69 program should consider partnering with rail districts and work towards establishing new rail districts to address current funding shortfalls and to address the existing at-grade rail crossing safety issues.
   ii. Need to establish a continuous series of rail districts along the I-69 corridor to generate a unified effort to pursue funding to off-set current funding shortfalls in developing and implementing an I-69 corridor program to address the identified transportation problems.

22. Committee Member (Nelda Martinez) requested a status update on the Comprehensive Development Agreement (CDA) and public-private partnerships (PPP) in Texas.
   a. TxDOT responded by indicating that TxDOT has limited authority with PPPs and CDAs. The I-69 CDA authority south of Refugio has been extended for two years.

23. Committee Member (Nelda Martinez) requested a status update on the Zachary/ACS Contract.
   a. TxDOT indicated that the Zachary/ACS Contract was at the Texas Attorney General’s Office for Legal Sufficiency Review.

24. Committee Member (Nelda Martinez) asked what funding mechanisms are available to develop and implement an I-69 Corridor Program and are the current funding mechanisms being used as intended to maintain and improve the existing transportation system.
   a. TxDOT responded by indicating that transportation funding mechanisms may include Gas Tax, Tiger Grants, Stimulus Funds, TRZs, TIFs, Tolls/User Fees and Private investment. However, the availability of such funding mechanisms still needs to be determined. TxDOT also indicated that a portion of the gas tax is being used for purposes other than transportation such as education.

25. Committee Member (Terry Arnold) commented that funding mechanisms must be dedicated for their intended use to maintain and improve the transportation system.

26. Committee Member (Keith Selman) commented that VMT could be conducted at the time of annual vehicle inspection. This would essentially remove the cost of technology that is frequently referenced as an obstacle. If there was a revenue split with local communities or counties, local support could possibly be garnered.

27. Committee Member (Nelda Martinez) commented that coordination with state legislators is necessary to develop a strategic comprehensive funding mechanism plan for the I-69 Corridor Program.

28. Committee Member (Josephine Miller) commented that there also needs to be coordination with the MPOs to identify mechanisms to address I-69 funding shortfalls.
29. Committee Member (Tim Clower) – Identified transportation issues related to Nueces County such as:
   i. A new 300 acre “Port of Americas” facility is planned to be located in Robstown along SH 44. It will be a major intermodal hub. Rail connectivity to the facility will be important.
   ii. Multimodal access and connectivity between the following ports will increasingly become insufficient to effectively transport cargo as containership traffic and port activity increases:
       i. Port of Laredo (largest inland port)
       ii. Port of LaQuinta (planned)
       iii. Port of Brownsville
       iv. Port of Americas (planned in Robstown)
       v. Port of Corpus Christi
   iii. Trucks experience delays along SH44, which connects the Port of Corpus Christi and the Port of Laredo, as well as on other routes used to connect to the Ports of San Antonio and the Port of Houston.

30. Proxy Committee Member (Ray De Los Santos, Jr.) – Identified transportation issues in Alice such as:
   i. East/west traffic in Alice encounters 13 traffic signals.

31. Committee Member (Keith Selman) commented that KCS is considering circling Laredo with a rail line.

32. Committee Member (Arnold Saenz) asked what were the east/west traffic volumes in Alice.
   a. TxDOT Corpus Christi District estimated it at approximately 20,000.

33. Committee Member (Nelda Martinez) commented that there is a need to identify “Freight Shuttle” partners to facilitate advancement of developing a demonstration project in Texas.

34. Committee Member (Rosalva Guerra) – Identified transportation issues related to Zapata County such as:
   i. Need to consider freight container storage, warehousing, staging, and distribution deficiencies and needs along the I-69 Corridor. While Hebronville has at-grade rail safety issues, there is expansive land between Hebronville and Zapata to accommodate container warehousing and distribution facilities.

Conclusion and Adjourn:

1. Doise Miers concluded the meeting.
   a. Next meeting will be in October and at that time a committee chair will be elected.
   b. She suggested the possibility of a Yahoo Group for email communication and there were no objections.
   c. Those who wish to be a chair candidate will need to submit bios.
   d. Punched packets of materials will be given at future meetings so there is no need to bring notebooks to every meeting unless committee members wish to do so.
   e. Committee members should review their contact information and provide updates.
f. She requested volunteers for hosting future meetings.

The meeting was then adjourned.

Attachments:
1. Agenda
2. Sign-In Sheet
3. Handouts

Meeting Staff included:
Ed Pensock-TxDOT/TTA, Doug Booher-TxDOT/TTA, Dieter Billek-TxDOT/TTA,
Doise Miers-TxDOT/GPA, Art Garcia-Consultant, Tina Brown-Consultant,
Joe Shalkowski-Consultant, Ariel Carmona-Consultant, Michael Sexton-Consultant
Welcome/Introductions
Facilitator
Arturo Garcia

Role of Corridor Segment Committee in Developing the I-69 Corridor Program
Ed Pensock, P.E.
Director, Corridor Systems
TxDOT - TTA
Doug Booher
Environmental Manager
TxDOT - TTA

TxDOT Presentation
- Transportation Needs – Identification of Transportation Problems and Challenges
  Doug Booher
  Environmental Manager
  TxDOT - TTA
- Existing and Planned Highways in the I-69 Corridor – What is Out There Today and What is Planned
  Dieter Billek, P.E.
  Director, Advanced Project Development
  TxDOT – TTA

Brainstorming Session
- Identification of Transportation Problems and Challenges to Consider in Developing the I-69 Corridor Program
- What Highways and Other Transportation Facilities Should be Considered in Developing the I-69 Corridor Program
Arturo Garcia
Facilitator

Committee Organization and Wrap Up
Doise Miers
Legislative Analyst
TxDOT - Government and Public Affairs Division (GPA)

Adjourn
Arturo Garcia
Facilitator
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Corridor Segment Committee 5
Meeting #2

August 11, 2009

Alice, Texas
Welcome/Introductions
Facilitator

Arturo Garcia

Role of Corridor Segment Committee in Developing the I-69 Corridor Program
Ed Pensock, P.E.
Director, Corridor Systems
TxDOT - TTA

Doug Booher
Environmental Manager
TxDOT - TTA

TxDOT Presentation
- Transportation Needs – Identification of Transportation Problems and Challenges
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- Existing and Planned Highways in the I-69 Corridor – What is Out There Today and What is Planned
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  Director, Advanced Project Development
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Brainstorming Session
- Identification of Transportation Problems and Challenges to Consider in Developing the I-69 Corridor Program
  Arturo Garcia
  Facilitator

- What Highways and Other Transportation Facilities Should be Considered in Developing the I-69 Corridor Program

Committee Organization and Wrap Up
Doise Miers
Legislative Analyst
TxDOT - Government and Public Affairs Division (GPA)

Adjourn
Arturo Garcia
Facilitator
I-69 Corridor Segment Committee

August 11, 2009
Alice, Texas

Welcome / Introductions

Arturo Garcia - Facilitator

Role of Corridor Segment Committee in Developing the I-69 Corridor Program

Ed Pensock, P.E. / Doug Booher
Texas Turnpike Authority Division
Role of Corridor Segment Committee in Developing the I-69 Corridor Program

- How do we make this an Interstate facility?
- When do we upgrade existing roadways?
- When do we develop new relief routes?
- What roadways connect to the facility?
- How do we pay for these facilities?

Role of Corridor Segment Committee in Developing the I-69 Corridor Program

- Identify Transportation Problems and Challenges
- Identify What Highways and Other Transportation Facilities Should be Considered in Developing the I-69 Corridor Program
- Update Inventory of Planning Features

Role of Corridor Segment Committee in Developing the I-69 Corridor Program (Contd.)

- Establish Program Goals and Objectives
- Refine the Public Involvement Plan
- Determine the Types of Transportation Improvements Needed
Role of Corridor Segment Committee in Developing the I-69 Corridor Program (Contd.)

- Set Criteria for Determining the Need to Consider Relief Routes
- Determine the Criteria to use in Defining and Prioritizing Individual Projects for the I-69 Corridor Program

Role of Corridor Segment Committee in Developing the I-69 Corridor Program (Contd.)

- Develop Program Funding Criteria
- Review I-69 Corridor Program of Projects

Transportation Needs – Identification of Transportation Problems and Challenges
Project Need – WHY?

• The project need defines the current and future transportation problems and challenges to be addressed.
• It answers the questions... WHY a project should be developed, WHY it’s necessary to impact environmental resources, and WHY the expenditure of funds is necessary and worthwhile.

Project Need – Problem Definition Principles

• It describes the transportation problems and challenges that an area, transportation corridor, or specific network faces
• It does NOT identify solutions to resolve a problem
• It is supported by data that helps to define the problem(s)

Existing and Planned Highways in the I-69 Corridor – What is Out There Today and What is Planned

Dieter Billek, P.E.
Director, Advanced Project Development
Texas Turnpike Authority Division
Interstate Design Standards

- Controlled Access
- Grade Separated Interchanges
- On- and Off-Ramps to the Mainlanes
- No driveways onto the Mainlanes

Interstate Design Standards (Contd.)

- Center Median
- Minimum Lane and Shoulder Widths
- Designed for Higher Speeds

Existing Controlled Access Highways – I-69 Corridor
Existing and Planned Controlled Access Highways – I-69 Corridor

Existing and Planned Controlled Access Highways – Segment 5

Brainstorming Session

Arturo Garcia - Facilitator
Brainstorming Session – Part 1

• Identification of Transportation Problems and Challenges to Consider in Developing the I-69 Corridor Program

Brainstorming Session – Part 2

• What Highways and Other Transportation Facilities Should be Considered in Developing the I-69 Corridor Program

Committee Organization and Wrap Up

Doise Miers
Legislative Analyst
Government and Public Affairs Division, TxDOT