



LOCAL FUNDING OPTIONS FOR TRANSPORTATION

Envision Central Texas Summary and Statement of Position

October 2010

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Summary and Statement of Position

In 2001, Envision Central Texas (ECT) was created to assist in the public development and implementation of a regional vision addressing the growth of Central Texas. Our ongoing role is to serve as a catalyst for regional cooperation and planning in order to realize the common Vision elements as appropriate across the many communities of Central Texas. These elements focus on preserving and enhancing our natural resources, economic vitality, social equity and overall quality of living. The principles articulated in the regional Vision include:

- An effective transportation system that improves mobility throughout the region, increases choices of how we get around, including roads, rail, trails and bikeways, and is coordinated with land use planning.
- Protection of our environment and natural resources so we will have the open space, parks and trails that people cherish, preserve our ecologically sensitive land and ensure sustainable clean water and air for future generations.
- A diverse and thriving economy with a robust base of businesses throughout the region and quality job opportunities for our citizens.
- A variety of housing choices that are affordable for everyone in the region and offer a mix of styles, such as neighborhoods with pedestrian-friendly streets or housing within walking distance of transit and stores.
- Preservation of our region's unique character by protecting and enhancing our neighborhoods, towns, rural areas, historic sites and special sense of place.
- An understanding that social equity and racial harmony are core values that strengthen us and actions that foster respect, civility and opportunities for all.
- A region-wide understanding that our fortunes are tied together requiring planning, participation and collaboration by stakeholders throughout our region to ensure a successful and livable Central Texas in the future.

A key to achieving the ECT regional Vision is the improvement and expansion of the Central Texas transportation system. Therefore, within all of Envision Central Texas' advocacy efforts, the transportation system has been and continues to be a prime focus, both related to improving mobility as well as the efficacy of funding. Texas, along with the rest of the country, is facing a transportation funding crisis that affects roadways as well as rail, bus and other public transit.

In January 2009, ECT created a Working Group to study local funding options for transportation in anticipation of these issues being discussed in the 81st Texas Legislative Session and to determine ECT's position on this issue. A position paper was created by this Working Group and adopted by the ECT Board in March 2009, but unfortunately, no local funding bills were enacted by the 81st Legislature.

In anticipation that the 82nd Legislature might once again take up the issue of local option transportation funding, the Transportation and Land Use Committee of ECT was asked to review the prior position paper and suggest what position ECT should take on transportation funding at the Legislature. As before, this effort is not focused on trying to surface or develop new ideas on this issue, or to compete with other entities who have weighed in on the subject, but instead is focused on fulfilling ECT's responsibility to engage and sustain a high-level conversation on the state and growth of our regional transportation system.

Position Statement

In order to ensure that the region's Vision becomes a reality, Envision Central Texas believes local jurisdictions need more options for generating funds from local sources for local transportation projects. Even before the national recession and economic stimulus raised hopes of funding, regions across Texas were wrestling with their limited options for addressing their mobility issues. In Central Texas, as in many fast growing regions, continued congestion and poor mobility has a negative impact on regional economic development and quality of life for all citizens.

Envision Central Texas recognizes that the general principle of providing more funding options is distinct but inseparable from what specific options are allowed as the principle is put into practice. ECT believes that regional authorities and local governments, in the face of limited funding availability at the state level, need more tools and greater flexibility in order to be able to provide funding for transportation projects appropriate and supported within their region. Further, ECT believes new options for funding should be robust enough to provide sufficient funding for the completion of significant projects. ECT also believes, as a general matter, that funds generated within a region should be used for projects approved by the applicable regional transportation planning entity.

Envision Central Texas believes that all components of the transportation system within a region should be eligible for funds generated by these new options within the region, including roadways, rail and bus transit and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. These components should be planned and implemented to support each other in an effective network. In addition, ECT believes that improvements in traffic safety should be a high priority in the region. Envision Central Texas also strongly believes that local funding options should reinforce regional land use planning and transportation coordination among the jurisdictions.

In conclusion, Envision Central Texas believes that a well-funded, balanced transportation system is important to the long-term sustainability of the Central Texas region. To achieve this balanced system, ECT believes that the Texas Legislature should provide a wide of range of options for local funding of transportation. ECT recognizes that there are many different perspectives regarding specific tools and that solutions appropriate for some communities would not be appropriate in others. However, ECT encourages a transparent, deliberative public process through which the residents of Central Texas can decide for themselves which options are most appropriate to implement in this region.

ECT Action Items

In educating others about our position, Envision Central Texas will take the following actions:

- Conduct ongoing educational efforts to raise public awareness regarding the transportation funding challenges in Central Texas and the implications that not addressing this challenge will have for our region;
- Offer testimony before committees of the 82nd Texas Legislative Session as a resource on legislation that supports the positions in this document and the principles identified by ECT; and
- Following the 82nd Texas Legislative Session, ECT will integrate the directives from any successful legislation related to local option funding into ECT's ongoing activities on coordinated infrastructure planning and future activities.

For any questions, clarifications or requests for further discussion on this Position Statement, please contact Sally Campbell, ECT Executive Director, at 512-916-6037 and scampbell@envisioncentraltexas.com.