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Krusee to chair Transportation Committee

County advocates in key transportation leadership roles in both House, Senate

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Leader Staff

AUSTIN — Williamson County transportation should get fair treatment this legislative session as area representatives in both the Senate and House take leadership roles on the committees responsible for handling transportation legislation.

Rep. Mike Krusee, R-Round Rock, had his expected Transportation Committee chairmanship made official Jan. 30 and Sen. Steve Ogden, R-Bryan, was appointed to the chair position on the Senate Committee on Infrastructure and Development and Security two weeks ago.



Krusee

Also on Jan. 30, Krusee moderated a policy orientation panel on the subject of transportation as part of a four-day program hosted by the

Texas Public Policy Foundation (TPPF), a conservative think tank based in San Antonio.

Krusee and the three-man panel consisting of a national transportation analyst, a TPPF board member active in transportation issues and a representative from Gov. Rick Perry's office, pointed out the loss of revenue and increased pollution resulting from the traffic congestion that is worsening in all of the state's major metro areas.

Krusee is advocating Perry's Trans Texas Corridor Plan as one of the steps towards a solution. The plan, introduced

by Perry last year, includes toll and non-toll roads, high-speed freight and commuter rail, water lines, oil and gas pipelines, electric transmission lines and telecommunications infrastructure to be built in the same corridors running generally parallel with existing highway systems on cheaper land without the disruption of the existing corridors. The plan also allows for "creative" ways to finance and manage the construction of new roadways including toll revenues and Regional Mobility Authorities.

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Krusee earns House committee chair

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Krusee said that one way to consider raising funds is by borrowing. Texas is one of seven states that do not use debt to finance highway projects, Krusee said, adding that judging by current interest rates, now is the time to change that.

"Frankly, we should be borrowing like a drunken sailor to get these roads built," Krusee said.

Krusee added that he doesn't believe Texans will stand for statewide tax plans to raise revenue for transportation but they may vote for taxes that will be spent on regional transportation projects. He pointed out that voters in the city of Round Rock

approved a half-cent sales tax to fund city transportation infrastructure construction.

"We're looking at giving the people of the Austin region the opportunity to create revenue streams for themselves," Krusee said. "This is a great opportunity for Central Texas to enable our Regional Mobility Authority to quickly build some infrastructure and it's an opportunity to enable the governor's vision."

Before the session began, Krusee filed five bills related to the powers of Texas regional mobility authorities (RMA) to raise money and acquire land for the construction of transportation projects.

Krusee is also serving on the Civil Practices and Redistricting Committees.

Ogden is serving on the Criminal Justice, Education and Finance committees. District 20 Rep. Dan Gattis, R-Georgetown, is serving as vice chair of the Civil Practices committee and as a member of the State Affairs Committee.

Gattis co-authored a bill with Rep. Warren Chisum, R-Pampa, that would make any state-sanctioned recognition of same-sex unions illegal. Ogden has authored legislation congratulating the football team of Calvert High School for winning the six-man state championship and congratulating the members of the Texas Agricultural Lifetime Leadership program VIII class.

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