



Texas Public Policy FOUNDATION

March 12, 2009

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The Honorable John Carona
Texas Senate
Texas Capitol, Room 4E.2
Austin, Texas 78701

Re: March 10th transportation discussion

Dear Senator Carona:

Thank you for reaching out and taking time to discuss your legislation intended to improve transportation infrastructure in Texas. I believe our call on Tuesday was very productive, helping to clarify your intent to empower local communities, as well as providing the Foundation the opportunity to share concerns about your two pieces of legislation that would raise the gas tax statewide and allow a separate increase in taxes and fees in the DFW Metroplex.

We appreciate your desire to reduce traffic congestion and agree that transportation is an important issue that Texas policymakers must address. While we clearly disagree on the best way to meet those ends, we share a common desire to make Texas a great place to live and work.

As we discussed on the call, the Foundation does not see a need for government to increase taxes to reduce traffic congestion. As you are aware, state government spending between 2003 and 2008 increased 45 percent, from \$59.1 billion to \$85.7 billion. More locally, from 2005 to 2007, Dallas County's general fund expenditures ballooned by 16.5 percent, in spite of the fact that the county's population only grew 2.7 percent during the same period, according to the latest data available from the Census Bureau. And from 2005 to 2007, Tarrant County's general fund expenditures grew 19.5 percent despite the county's population growing by only 6.1 percent.

Spending at the state and local levels has been excessive in light of the fact that the state's population has only grown 9.9 percent from 2003 to 2008, according to the Census Bureau. If the state and local communities believe transportation is in crisis, we suggest that this excessive spending be diverted to transportation funding.

Along these lines, we enthusiastically agree with you that the state must end the practice of diverting transportation funds to non-transportation purposes. You have been a vocal leader on this issue and we look forward to helping you raise awareness of the need to fix this problem.

As we agreed during our call, we look forward to working with your office to identify a path forward to address our state's transportation problems. While we will have to agree to disagree in the short-term on raising taxes to fund transportation spending, we do believe that a long-term collaborative approach will prove beneficial for the development of sound public policy.

To begin that research process, and to help us understand the scope of your current plan that you said could solve the DFW transportation problem, we would appreciate receiving any analysis related to the rail plan's ability to reduce traffic congestion, and the amount of revenue you expect to be generated from your legislation.

Thank you again for your commitment to improving our state, and for reaching out to us on this very important matter. We will continue to be in contact with your office, and please do not hesitate to call if we can address any concerns or questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brooke Rollins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B".

Brooke Rollins
President