



Working to Better Connect Texas Communities and Create Economic Opportunities

April 6, 2020

WASHINGTON INFRASTRUCTURE DISCUSSIONS – Support for including large-scale infrastructure investment in the next coronavirus bill had been growing in Washington until recent days. Over the weekend, Speaker Pelosi indicated that her priority now is a 4th bipartisan bill that provides additional direct payments to individuals and expanded loans to businesses, while leaving infrastructure and other possible legislative priorities for legislation to be addressed separately. The Speaker indicated the need to move swiftly to enact the legislation when Congress reconvenes on April 20th.

Republican leaders in both the House and Senate have recently voiced caution about rushing to enact a 4th coronavirus bill to include infrastructure without “pay-fors” identified and have indicated that emergency relief and infrastructure should be considered separately. Nonetheless, congressional action will be required before the end of September to reauthorize or extend the FAST Act. Complicating the challenge is that Democrats have proposed an infrastructure bill that includes things like broadband and water supply infrastructure, while Republicans have remained narrowly focused on highways and surface transportation infrastructure.



Since his election President Trump has consistently called for major funding to rebuild highways and other key systems. Last week the President renewed his call for a \$2 trillion investment in infrastructure and opened the door to borrowing as a way to fund the bill.

The I-69 Alliance executive committee is communicating with the Texas delegation in Congress and with Secretary of Transportation Chao regarding potential infrastructure funding. The Alliance strongly supports inclusion of increased federal infrastructure investment as a way to create local jobs and to build projects that will yield ongoing community benefits. The Alliance is urging lawmakers to utilize new funding to advance strategic projects of national significance such as I-69. We are further stressing the importance of enhanced inter-regional connectivity and economic development that can be achieved by completing I-69 projects passing through rural counties and communities.

JUNE DC FLY-IN - While there is tremendous uncertainty about how long business travel will be altered as a result of the virus, we have TENTATIVELY scheduled the I-69 DC Fly-In for June 24th. Recommended travel days would be June 23rd and return on June 25th. We ask that you save the dates. We will closely monitor the coronavirus situation and make a decision in May on whether to proceed with the June Fly-In date.



MORE INTERSTATE MILES ADDED TO I-69 SYSTEM - The Texas Transportation Commission just completed the process of designating an additional 2.5 miles of SH 550 in Brownsville as Interstate 169.

I-169 is a spur route of Interstate 69. It starts at I-69 East near Rancho Viejo and follows the footprint of State Highway 550 making a direct connection with the Port of Brownsville. The first 1.5 miles of the 10-mile-long spur were added to the Interstate Highway System in 2015. Approximately 6 more miles must be brought to continuous interstate standard to extend the I-169 spur to SH 48.

I-169/SH 550 is being developed by the Cameron County Regional Mobility Authority (CCRMA) which began working on the project in 2010. It provides a direct connection primarily intended to carry truck traffic associated with terminals, industrial sites and commercial operations in the port area. I-69/SH 550 is a limited access toll facility with an electronic toll collection system that integrates with all of the toll tag systems in the state.



With this addition, 210 miles of the I-69 System in Texas have been added to the national Interstate Highway System.

COMMISSION PRESENTATION TO BE RESCHEDULED - The Alliance presentation scheduled for the March meeting of the Transportation Commission was postponed and will be rescheduled for an appropriate later date.

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