

April 22, 2024

❑ **PRODUCTIVE DC FLY-IN** – Leaders from the I-69 Alliance participating in the I-69 DC Fly-in last week met with members of Congress and the Administration to highlight the national significance of I-69 and the need for federal funding to support the project. Leaders from several of the other seven states along the I-69 Corridor stretching to Michigan participated in the Fly-in to further underscore the national merits and impact of I-69. The Alliance thanks the sponsors that helped make the Fly-in such a productive event (see sponsors and photos on Page 2).

have on loss of gas tax revenues for transportation and public education, and impacts on the oil and gas economy of Texas. This year is the 15th anniversary of the 2030 Committee Report on unmet highway funding needs. Patrick has charged Senators with reviewing implementation and outcomes of key funding and policy initiatives over those years and report on trends or patterns to guide future planning and governance. This effort could provide the basis for authorization of a new study to identify unmet funding needs for transportation.



Members of I-69 delegation meet with U.S. Senator Ted Cruz

❑ **WASHINGTON REPORT** – There is an increasing gap between revenues flowing into the federal Highway Trust Fund and federal spending on highways. The gap has been funded from General Revenue over the past 20 years. The current authorization for federal highway programs expires in September 2026. That means highway funding policy as Congress and the Administration negotiate how much to spend, how to direct that spending, and how to pay for it. That includes a look at federal fuel taxes which have not been raised since 1993, a new tax or fee such as taxes on vehicle miles traveled, or transfers from the General Fund. All are challenging in a “no new taxes” environment.

❑ **SENATE INTERIM CHARGES** – Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick has directed the Senate Transportation Committee to take a fresh look at overall transportation funding in the state. That includes aviation, maritime ports, border points of entry and public transportation. The committee is to make recommendations on how to ensure these sectors meet current demands and are prepared for future growth. That would likely include looking at new revenue streams that do not compete with the state highway fund. The committee, headed by Chairman Robert Nichols, is also to evaluate the impact that widespread adoption of all-electric vehicles could

❑ **GROWTH TREND** - Population growth is a key input that TxDOT uses in deciding which highway projects to fund. The Commission heard its annual population update in March and the state is now growing at a rate of about 1,300 a day. The long-term trend of rural counties losing population has slowed somewhat in the last four years. The greatest percentage of future growth statewide is expected to be concentrated in the ring counties adjacent to Houston, San Antonio/Austin and Dallas/Fort Worth. Despite that trend, commissioners have been allocating more funding to the long stretches of the I-69 System that need

to be built through low population counties.

❑ **SIGNING I-69 PROJECTS** – The Alliance is working with TxDOT’s Transportation Planning and Programming Division to identify ways to possibly speed up the process of adding I-69 segments to the Interstate Highway System once construction is complete. On average that process takes about a year before I-69 signs can go up. Discussions also include looking at opportunities to utilize a provision of federal law passed at the urging of the Alliance in 2012 which specifies that a complete section that is not currently connected to an existing interstate can be added to the national system if TxDOT has a plan to complete that connection by the year 2037.

❑ **BOARD MEMBERS** – Additions to the Alliance board in recent months include Laredo Mayor Victor Trevino, Victoria City Councilman Duane Crocker and Lufkin City Councilman Wes Suiter.

❑ **WHARTON GROUNDBREAKING** – The planned US 59 Wharton Relief Route project groundbreaking ceremony set for April 23 has been postponed. We will let you know when a new date is set.

❑ **FORT BEND PROJECT** – TxDOT has awarded a \$53 million project to protect the I-69 bridge structures over the Brazos River in Sugar Land. Work will include stabilizing the river banks.

## Thanks to Our I-69 DC Fly-In Sponsors



Fly-In participants get words of encouragement from Speaker Mike Johnson



Rep. Henry Cuellar (TX-28) of Laredo, co-chair of the I-69 Congressional Caucus, welcomes Fly-In participants



Alliance Chair Sydney Murphy, Melisa Montemayor and Francis Spruiell (l-r) brief Senator Cruz and staff on upcoming I-69 projects



Judge Murphy, Tecló Garcia and Jennifer Shepard meeting with staff of Rep. Monica De La Cruz (TX-15) of Edinburg



Alliance for I-69 Texas

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