



Driven by Texans

Update on

A Citizens' Plan for I-69 Texas

from the I-69 Advisory Committee

May 2011

I-69 is essential for sustaining economic competitiveness, job growth and the mobility of our state as it serves increasing demand to efficiently move people, freight and goods between population centers, ports and key border crossings. In Texas, I-69 represents nearly half of the overall length of the proposed national interstate, which extends from Michigan to Texas. The Texas portion reaches from Texarkana and Joaquin, through the gulf ports of Houston, Victoria, Corpus Christi, and Brownsville to the Texas-Mexico border in the Rio Grande Valley and Laredo.

In 2008, the Texas Transportation Commission established the I-69 Advisory Committee and five Segment Committees to assist the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) in the planning process for I-69. These committees are working to provide a locally focused, citizen plan for developing I-69. The following sections describe the creation and efforts to-date of these volunteer citizen committees. The current membership of these committees is provided on the first page of the insert included with this report.

I-69 Advisory Committee

The Texas Transportation Commission created the I-69 Advisory Committee in March 2008; membership includes citizens throughout the I-69 system in Texas. This committee was created for the purpose of facilitating and achieving consensus among affected communities and interested parties on desired transportation improvements along the proposed I-69 route in Texas.

The advisory committee has studied the community role, future needs and funding issues related to I-69 Texas. To guide the on-going work of the citizen-led committees and support future planning, the committee recommends the following guiding principles for developing I-69 Texas:

Seven Guiding Principles

- Recognize I-69 Texas as critical to moving freight, economic growth, and job creation.
- Achieve interstate designation on existing suitable highways as quickly as possible.



Seven Guiding Principles (cont.)

- Maintain public input as an essential part of all future work and decisions, with an emphasis on addressing the needs of property owners and communities.
- Maximize the use of existing highways to the greatest extent possible while seeking to reduce program costs and impacts to private property.
- Address safety, emergency evacuations, and emergency response needs.
- Pursue flexibility and efficiencies in the design and construction requirements necessary to obtain interstate designation.
- Encourage initiatives that will supplement limited highway funds so as many projects as possible are completed along the I-69 system in Texas.

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I-69 Segment Committees

The Texas Transportation Commission created five I-69 Segment Committees in September 2008. The segment committees were created for the purpose of providing locally focused input and recommendations on developing I-69 in their communities. The segment committees are composed of members along the proposed I-69 route representing cities, counties, metropolitan planning organizations, ports, chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, and the Texas Farm Bureau. The segment committees have studied environmental planning features and, along with input from their communities, are planning the best route for I-69 in their areas. The segment committees will report their findings, advice and recommendations to the Advisory Committee to integrate into a report for the Texas Transportation Commission.



The I-69 Segment One Committee studies environmental planning features along U.S. 59 in east Texas.

The proposed I-69 routes in Texas and the areas included in each of the five segment committees are shown on the second page of the insert included with this report. Each of the five committees are described as follows:

- Segment Committee One encompasses portions of U.S. 59 and U.S. 84 in northeast Texas and includes the counties of Angelina, Bowie, Cass, Harrison, Marion, Nacogdoches, Panola, Rusk, and Shelby.
- Segment Committee Two encompasses U.S. 59 through east Texas and includes the counties of Angelina, Chambers, Fort Bend, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery, Polk, and San Jacinto.
- Segment Committee Three encompasses portions of U.S. 59 and U.S. 77 and includes the counties of Bee, Brazoria, Fort Bend, Galveston, Goliad, Harris, Jackson, Refugio, Victoria and Wharton.
- Segment Committee Four encompasses portions of U.S. 59, U.S. 77, U.S. 281 and SH 44 and includes the counties of Brooks, Cameron, Hidalgo, Jim Wells, Kenedy, Kleberg, Live Oak, Nueces, San Patricio, and Willacy.
- Segment Committee Five encompasses portions of U.S. 59, U.S. 77, U.S. 281 and SH 44 and includes the counties of Duval, Jim Wells, Live Oak, McMullen, Nueces, San Patricio, Webb, and Zapata.

In November of 2010, each of the segment committees prepared Interim Update Reports that describe the work and progress of the committees. These reports are available on the TxDOT website at www.txdot.gov, by searching "I-69."

This summer, each of the segment committees will share their work with their respective communities and solicit feedback on issues related to the future of I-69. Information on the schedule for these public involvement activities will also be available through the TxDOT website listed above.

Committees' Progress and Work

The citizen-led advisory and segment committees have determined a number of factors that are important in planning and developing I-69. The segment committees have identified the transportation needs of their communities and the committees have also selected the improvements they desire in transforming existing highways in their communities to an interstate. They have also recommended potential highways to serve as I-69. The following describes the details established by the segment committees.

Major Transportation Considerations

The committee members recognize a number of factors that support the need to develop I-69 in their communities. These needs include the following:

Serve Areas That Do Not Have Interstate Service - Twenty-five of the counties in Texas that would be served by I-69 are not currently served by interstate highways. The Rio Grande Valley's population exceeds 1 million, making it the most populous urban area in the nation not served by an interstate.

Provide Safer Travel - Interstate highways are safer than two and four-lane roads. Along the I-69 route throughout Texas,

Expansion of the Panama Canal

In 2014, widening of the Panama Canal will be complete, enabling more cargo to pass through the canal. The Gulf Coast ports within Texas have been making critical infrastructure improvements to accommodate this dramatic growth in cargo shipments so they can capture increased trade from Asia. The increased volume of trade, both import and export, will further strain existing highway capacity.



fatal crashes on interstate quality freeways are less likely than on non-freeway type roads.

Improve Emergency Evacuations - The Texas Gulf Coast is routinely impacted by hurricanes that require residential evacuations and service by emergency personnel. The population of the Gulf Coast continues to grow and existing highways are inadequate during times of emergency evacuations. Additional capacity and interchanges at crossroads are necessary in many areas to address critical evacuation needs.

Serve Population & Traffic Growth - Future population growth along the route will require the capacity of a four-lane interstate freeway. The 2010 census reports that nearly 8 million Texans live in counties that would be served by I-69. Additionally, the population of these counties has increased over 23% in just the past decade. This rate of population growth exceeds the statewide average by 12%, and I-69 counties such as Montgomery, Fort Bend, Hidalgo and Webb are in the top 10 percent of fastest growth counties in the state.

Maintain and Improve Economic Competitiveness - High quality transportation is necessary for Texas and its communities to compete for new industry and jobs with service to interstate highways being a top site selection factor for new industry. In addition, trade through Texas Gulf Coast ports and across the border require interstate highway access to compete for global industries and serve Texas citizens and businesses.

Provide an Interstate Quality Highway

Committee members have consistently agreed that providing an interstate-quality highway is necessary for addressing the needs that they identified. To achieve this goal, existing roads would need to be improved to include the following:

- A divided road with at least two lanes in each direction
- Interchanges/overpasses at crossroads
- On and Off Ramps (Entrances and Exits)
- Access to main highway lanes is controlled
- Other safety designs

Recommended I-69 Texas Designation

The advisory and segment committees recommend portions of the following highway sections as part of the I-69 system in Texas.

- U.S. 59 from the Texas-Arkansas border to the Texas-Mexico border

“ Manufacturing and distribution companies tend to locate in close proximity to highway interchanges or rail systems. And with heavy trucks costing about \$1 per minute to operate, the distance from highway interchange—or the level of congestion along the road—does impact a firm’s bottom line. ”

-Site Selection Magazine, March 2010

- U.S. 77 from U.S. 59 to the Texas-Mexico border
- U.S. 84 from U.S. 59 to the Texas-Louisiana border
- U.S. 281 from U.S. 59 to the Texas-Mexico border
- SH 44 from U.S. 77 to U.S. 59

The citizens of these committees have consistently emphasized that these existing highways should be improved to interstate standards in a manner that keeps the improvements within existing right-of-way and protects private property to the greatest extent possible.

Additionally, the committees have encouraged TxDOT to work with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to seek immediate interstate designation for any portions of these highways that currently meet interstate highway standards. Committee members have also encouraged TxDOT to work with FHWA to gain exceptions to these standards for portions of these highways, such as highway sections within ranch areas of south Texas, where meeting all of these standards today may not be warranted but interstate designation is still needed.

Current Steps Towards Building I-69 Texas

I-69 represents the next generation of interstate highways in Texas, and like the original interstate system, completing I-69 will be a significant undertaking. Substantial progress has already been made, with over 200 miles of highway built to standards that are at or very near those standards required of an interstate. Most of the remaining portions of the routes along the proposed I-69 are already four-lane highways that would require the addition of interchanges and frontage roads in some areas to meet interstate quality.

Currently, TxDOT is working with local partners on a variety of design and environmental efforts with the intent of advancing projects to construction as funding becomes available. Because of this continuous local planning, small improvements are currently underway; in fact, \$470 million of construction projects have recently been completed or are underway along sections of the future I-69. These projects

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The new U.S. 281 overpass being built in Falfurrias, Texas is along the route identified as the future I-69

include new main lanes, grade separations and/or frontage roads along portions of U.S. 59, U.S. 77 and U.S. 281.

In the Rio Grande Valley, TxDOT and the Cameron County Regional Mobility Authority have partnered to advance construction on portions of U.S. 77 in Willacy County and SH 550 in Cameron County. SH 550 is a congressionally designated portion of I-69 and an important connection to the Port of Brownsville. Additionally, in Hidalgo County, the regional mobility authority is finishing plans for a new road connecting the international bridges with U.S. 281 via U.S. 83 as part of an overall Hidalgo County loop project.

There are different stages of project development underway on various projects throughout the I-69 system. To maintain momentum and continue progress, TxDOT has authorized or is seeking funding for over \$200 million in future projects along other sections of the I-69 system. Each piece of the interstate development process requires funding but investments have been and continue to be made towards achieving I-69 Texas. Input from the I-69 advisory and segment committees is vital in guiding future development.

Even with current planning and construction, additional project needs still exist. The segment committee members have identified over \$16 billion of recommended improvements for the roadways they want to serve as I-69 Texas. Without additional funding, which is subject to congressional and legislative actions, future portions of I-69 will be delayed or will require new sources of money aside from traditional federal and state programs.

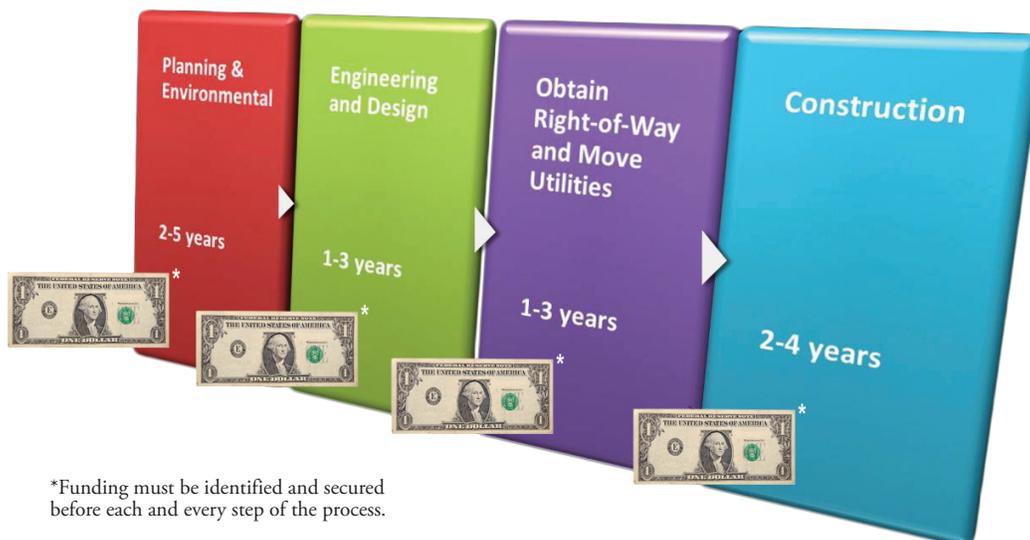
The significant needs and limited resources make the work of the committees even more important because the committees must carefully examine specific issues along the highways and identify the most urgently needed projects. The recommendations of the advisory and segment committees are the beginning of the planning process. Each project must then receive funding and follow a series of steps in the project development process shown below. Each step of the development process requires funding and funding needs may vary according to the stage of the process. As the highway project development process is completed, more sections of I-69 can be added to the system.

What is Next?

As previously noted, and consistent with our guiding principle, public input will take place to allow committee members to have an opportunity to listen to and speak to our communities. The segment committees are currently working on the format and locations for these activities that are expected to take place this summer.

Future Steps Towards Building I-69

Project Development Process



*Funding must be identified and secured before each and every step of the process.

Committee Membership

Advisory Committee

Member	Representing
Nolan Alders	Nacogdoches
Will Armstrong	Victoria
James Carlow	New Boston
Alan Clark	Houston
Carbett "Trey" Duhon	Waller
Jim Edmonds	Houston
David Garza	San Benito
Ramiro Garza	Edinburg
Jim Gonzales	Richmond
Jack Gordon	Lufkin
Judy Hawley*	Portland
Cindy Leleko	Marshall
Domingo Montalvo†	Wharton
Pat Liston†	La Feria
Arnold Saenz	Alice
David Silva	Beeville
Jerry Sparkst	Texarkana
Terry Simpson†	Sinton
Chandra Spenrath	El Campo
Steve Stewart	Houston
Joe Phillips	McAllen
John Thompson	Livingston
Jim Wehmeier†	Lufkin

Segment Committee One

Member	Appointing Entity
David Anderson	Panola County
Bob Barton	Rusk County
Rick Campbell	Shelby County
William Cork	Red River Redevelopment Authority
Joe English	Nacogdoches County
Stephen J. Frost	Cass County
James Greer	Marshall Chamber of Commerce
William Holley	City of Tenaha
Jerry Huffman	Angelina County
Jim Jeffers	City of Nacogdoches
Joe David Lee	City of Jefferson
Brad McCaleb	Texarkana MPO
Michael Meador	Texas Farm Bureau
Philip M. Medford	City of Lufkin
Robert Murray	Bowie County
Karen Owen	Longview MPO
Phil Parker	Marion County
Jerry Sparks*	City of Texarkana
Hugh Taylor	Harrison County
Charles Thomas	City of Carthage
Charles Wilcox	City of Atlanta

Segment Committee Two

Member	Appointing Entity
Don Brandon	Chambers County
Bill Brown	City of Diboll
Spencer Chambers	Port of Houston Authority
Andy Dill	Montgomery County
Ed Emmett	Harris County
Clarke Evans	City of Livingston
Grimes Fortune	City of Corrigan
Jerry Huffman	Angelina County
Kim Icenhower	Fort Bend County
Ashby Johnson	Houston Galveston Area Council
Lloyd Kirkham	City of Cleveland
Michael Kramer	City of Houston
Donny Marrs	San Jacinto County
Craig McNair	Liberty County
Sydney Murphy	Polk County Economic & Industrial Development Corp.
Tom Paben	Texas Farm Bureau
Jay Snook	Polk County
Douglas W. Spruill	City of Humble
Ronnie Thomas	Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas
Jim Wehmeier*	Lufkin/Angelina Economic Development Corp.
TBD	City of Shepherd
Jeremy Williams	City of Splendora

Segment Committee Three

Member	Appointing Entity
Leonard T. Anzaldua	Refugio County
Chandra Bondzie	Houston Galveston Area Council
David Bowman	Goliad County
Dennis Simons	Jackson County
Spencer Chambers	Port of Houston Authority
Ed Emmett	Harris County
Laura Fischer	Bee County
Tim Fitch	City of Beeville
D. Dale Fowler	City of Victoria
Stephen Gertson	Texas Farm Bureau
Joe D. Hermes	City of Edna
Ray Jaso	City of Refugio
E. J. "Joe" King	Brazoria County
Michael Kramer	City of Houston
Ray Miller	Victoria MPO
Domingo Montalvo, Jr.*	City of Wharton
Donald R. Pozzi	Victoria County
Phillip Spenrath	Wharton County
Ed Carter	City of Goliad
Lane Ward	Fort Bend County
Richard Young	City of El Campo
TBD	Galveston County
Ed Carter	Port of Victoria

Segment Committee Four

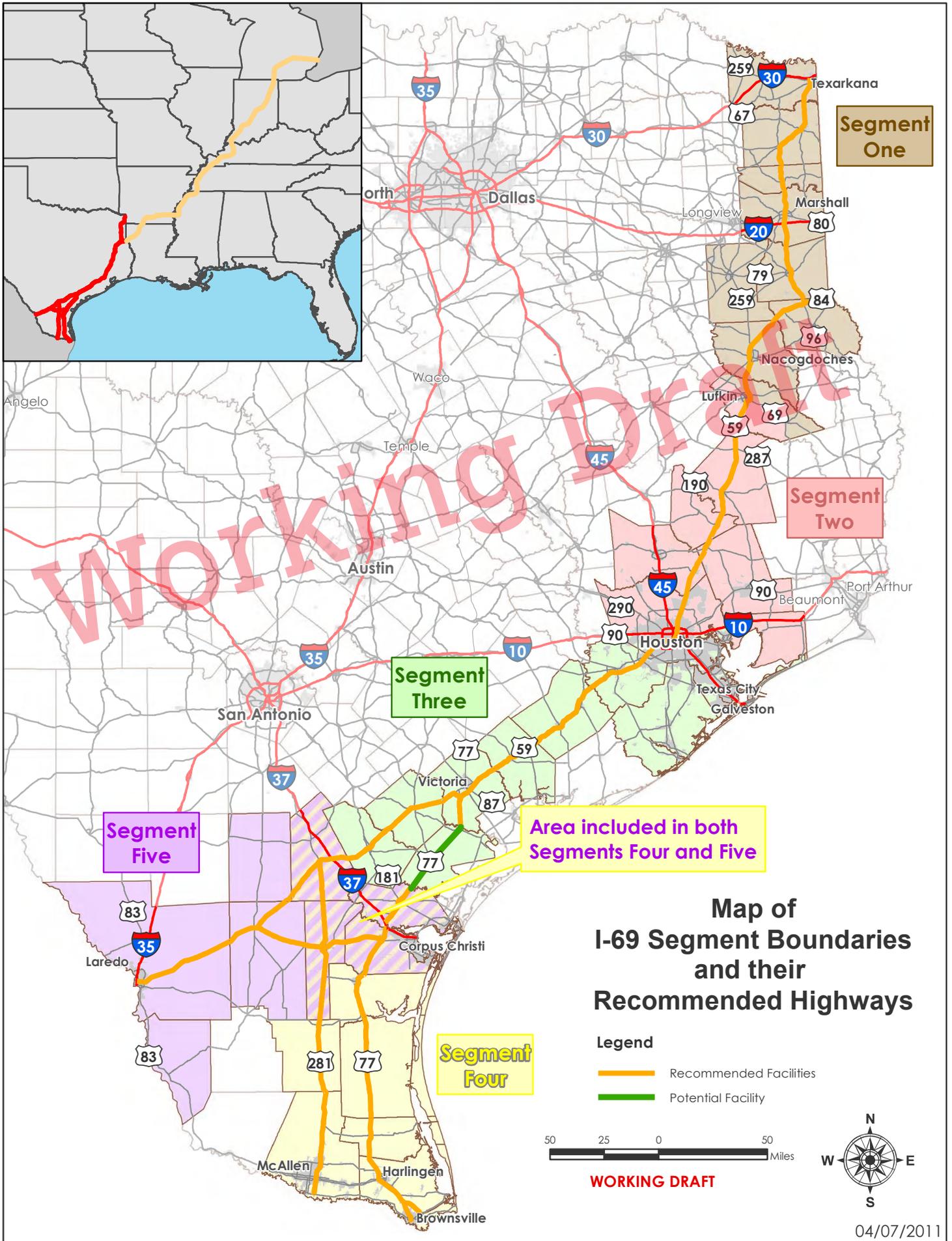
Member	Appointing Entity
Sofia Benavides	Cameron County
Frank Brogan	Port of Corpus Christi
Roy Cantu	Kleberg County
Charlie Cardenas	City of Corpus Christi
Ralph Coker	Nueces County
Susan Durham	Jim Wells County
Tecló J. Garcia	City of McAllen
Noe Garza	Hidalgo County MPO
Eddy Hernandez	Brownsville MPO
Jim Huff	Live Oak County
Wesley Jacobs	City of Falfurrias
Alan Johnson	City of Harlingen
Stanley Laskowski	City of Kingsville
Pat Liston*	Harlingen-San Benito MPO
Sergio T. Lopez	Port of Brownsville
Troy Nedbalek	Texas Farm Bureau
Tom Niskala	Corpus Christi MPO
Joseph F. Phillips	Hidalgo County
Raul M. Ramirez	Brooks County
Trey Pebley	Rio Grande Partnership
Terry Simpson	San Patricio County
Louis E. Turcotte, III	Kenedy County
TBD	Willacy County

Segment Committee Five

Member	Appointing Entity
David Ainsworth, Sr.	Corpus Christi MPO
Andrea Bierstedt	City of Freer
Richard Borchard	Port of Corpus Christi
TBD	City of Laredo
Tim Clower	Nueces County
Ray De Los Santos	City of Alice
Roberto Elizondo	Duval County
Jim Huff	Live Oak County
Pearson Knolle	Texas Farm Bureau
Brian Martinez	Zapata County
Nelda Martinez	City of Corpus Christi
Josephine Miller	San Patricio Economic Development Corp.
Rodrigo Ramon, Jr.	City of Robstown
L. Arnold Saenz	Jim Wells County
Sandy Sanders	Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce
Terry Simpson*	San Patricio County
Sylvia Steele	City of George West
James Teal	McMullen County
TBD	Laredo Urban Transportation Study
TBD	Webb County
TBD	Port of Laredo

*Committee Chairs

†Serves as a member of the I-69 advisory committee as a chair of the I-69 segment committee



Segment One

Segment Two

Segment Three

Segment Five

Segment Four

Area included in both Segments Four and Five

Map of I-69 Segment Boundaries and their Recommended Highways

