



# TxDOT

## Texas Department of Transportation Prepared Remarks

### *The Future is Now*

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Audience: Fifth Annual Transportation Forum

Date and Time: Thursday, January 7, 2010 at 8 a.m.

Location: Hilton Austin  
500 E. 4th Street  
Austin, Texas 78701  
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Speech Length: Approximately 30 minutes

*Note: Speaker may deviate from prepared text.*

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## Major Themes of this Presentation:

- The future is here.
  - Millions of cars; millions in population; congested highways; scarce transportation dollars; uncertainty of federal reauthorization fall
  - The “check engine” light is on.
- State is facing rapid change:
  - The way we fuel our cars.
    - Alternatively fueled vehicles
    - Nissan Leaf – all electric car
    - AIRPod – compressed air car
    - All still depend on transportation infrastructure – built with gasoline taxes – but won’t contribute to the account to pay for that infrastructure
  - Electric car chargers on our system.
    - e-Tec program to deploy electric cars and chargers in five pilot states
    - Nissan has already started talks with Reliant Energy in Houston



- Texas Transportation Institute will study how this will impact our system – and what we can do to prepare for it.
- Existing funding sources to address these changes won't be enough.
  - \$332 billion delta between Texas' transportation needs and available funding between now and 2030.
  - No federal reauthorization bill in hand.
  - State gas tax revenue – unpredictable
- We are making some progress.
  - Federal stimulus
  - Proposition 12
- We need to hear from Texans.
  - Interstate 35 Corridor Mobility Blueprint
  - Town hall meetings
  - Input on our long-range transportation plan and strategic planning efforts
  - How will rail fit into the picture?
- We need Texans to help us find solutions.
- The issues at large:



- Texas is a principal gateway for trade
- Our highway corridors are the major carriers of that trade.
- Rail plays an equally important part in the trade picture.
- Texas transportation needs in a nutshell.
- We must meet those needs.



## This Presentation as Talking Points

- Thanks to conference co-hosts:
  - TGR/TA, AGC, TTI
- The future is here.
  - When most people talk about the future, there's an automatic assumption that the "future" is years away, decades away.
  - Truth is, future isn't that far away.
  - It's waiting for us to take actions to address it.
  - The evidence:
    - 21 million cars on an 80,000-mile state system;
    - 24 million people living in the state, with a population that's growing every day;
    - highways so congested in some parts of Texas that 30-minute commutes turn into an hour;
    - transportation dollars so scarce that construction to relieve that congestion is taking a back seat to maintenance;
    - uncertainty from Washington that dollars we send will come back to us in time and in sufficient amounts for us to plan for the future.
- What is facing this state is change; rapid change.



- Like the way we fuel our vehicles.
- Gasoline is no longer the only – or preferred choice – for powering our cars.
- Automakers are introducing non-conventional fuels (ethanol, hydrogen and electricity) into the vehicle fleet.
- Americans are buying them. More than 634,000 thousand alternative fuel vehicles on our nation’s highways in 2006.
  - US DOT: Texans drive more of them than drivers in Florida, New York and Arizona combined.
- Auto Alliance: almost 70 models are on the market today. That’s up from 12 less than a decade ago. And new models are being planned.
- Last month, Ford announced it may invest up to \$500 million to produce its next generation of hybrids, plug-in hybrids, and lithium-ion battery packs.
- Ford isn’t alone.

### **The Future is Change – and Nissan is Leading the “Charge”**

- Nissan: next year, will introduce its first zero-emission, all-electric call called the LEAF.
  - Powered by lithium-ion batteries that can charge from a standard 110-volt outlet
  - Car can get up to 100 miles on a single charge.



- For Texans, that's about a one-way trip from Austin to College Station.
- Car expected to cost no more to buy and run than traditional gas-powered counterparts.
- Fully electric cars could account for 10 percent of all car sales by 2020.
- Nissan is taking the LEAF on a zero emission tour of 22 cities in 11 states. Only Texas stop is Houston in February.
- So sure of the LEAF's popularity, the company is planning to take reservations for the car a year before it rolls off assembly lines in America.

### **Running on Air**

- Motor Development International has developed the AIRPod.
  - Has specially adapted piston engine that allows it to run on compressed air – stored in on-board tanks that hold about 180 times as much pressure as ordinary tires.
  - Manufacturers are hoping to launch it in the United States, probably within the next three to four years.

### **Alternatives = fewer \$\$**

- Manufacturers are looking for other ways to power vehicles.
- That's a big plus for the environment, but we have to temper that good news with a little reality. That's not such a good thing for the transportation bank account.



- Although electric hybrids, hybrids and others of that order use our highway system, they don't pay gasoline taxes, and those taxes fuel our transportation system.
- Not only do we face declining revenue if all-electric cars grow in popularity, our transportation infrastructure must accommodate them.

### **Electric Car Chargers – On the Right of Way?**

- US DOT is already taking steps in that direction.
- In August, DOT awarded nearly a \$100 million grant to Electric Transportation Engineering Corporation of e-Tec.
- e-Tec has partnered with Nissan to deploy up to 4,700 LEAF cars, and more than 11,000 charging stations to support them in Arizona, California, Oregon, Tennessee and Washington.
- If it is approved, several hundred “fast-charge” stations could be placed along interstate highways and major roads to connect population areas.
- The company has announced plans to deploy charge stations along Interstate 10 between Phoenix and Tucson, creating the country's first electric vehicle corridor.
- While Texas is not on the project deployment list, the handwriting is on the wall.
- Nissan has already started talks with Reliant Energy to promote a charging infrastructure for electric cars in Houston.





- Recently, the Comptroller's Office awarded \$11 in federal grant money to several government agencies to promote alternative fuel use in government vehicles.
- El Paso: \$265,000 grant to install 32 electric car plug-in stations across the city.
- North Central Texas Council of Governments: \$2.5 million grant to buy alternative vehicles, install refueling stations, including electric recharging systems.
- That's why we've asked TTI to monitor the e-Tec Project.

### **MPGs – the Trend is Up**

- Let's assume that most future car sales will be for the old gasoline powered engine.
- Even that may not mean more money in highway coffers.
- President Obama proposed a new fuel standard that could show up on 2012 to 2016 model cars.
  - Requires a minimum 35.5 mpg
  - That's up from current 27.5 mpg standard

### **State Gas Tax Revenues Today**

- Over the last two fiscal years, revenue has dipped about 2 percent.



- From September to December of 2009, revenues were just over 1 percent lower than they were that same time a year ago.
- And if fluctuations continue, we'll have to change our transportation program because the money simply won't be there.

### **Can We Count on the Federal Knight in Shinning Armor?**

- Federal funding picture is just as hazy.
- For second time in as many years, Congress has had to bail out an ailing highway trust fund.
- SAFETEA-LU expired September 30.
- Three continuing resolutions passed to extend the law. Last one expires on February 28.

### **Putting Stimulus Dollars to Work for Texas**

- Would be unfair to say we haven't made some progress.
- Federal stimulus: \$2.5 billion to transportation in Texas.
- As of November, we've executed contracts on more than 500 construction, transit and aviation projects.
- Contracts have created or retained more than 7,000 jobs.

### **Proposition 12 – Moving in the Right Direction**

- This past session, Texas Legislature authorized Transportation Commission to issue up to \$2 billion in general revenue bonds for highway improvement projects around the state.
- In November, more than 70 projects approved.



- We're going to devote our energies to deliver these projects on time and on budget.
- We've committed to Texans to do that. But we could and can do a lot more – if the funding was available.

### **The Needs Exceed the Means**

- 2030: Texas needs \$315 billion over the next two decades
- That's if we had the money in hand. Since nobody's writing us a check today to take care of the debt, it's going to be a while before we can.
- Figure doesn't include any of TxDOT's other responsibilities like ferries and planning and engineering.
- When you add it all up, final tally, true costs of future transportation needs is \$487 billion.
- Traditional funding: \$155 billion in revenues
- That's a \$332 billion gap
- We have to look for new solutions.

### **Listening to Texans about the Future**

- At TxDOT, we're already asking the questions: how do we shape the future? How do we bring about fundamental change so we don't leave the next generation a transportation system that doesn't serve its needs?
- Best way to get answers to those questions is to ask Texans.

### **My 35**

- Efforts have paid off.



- Texans will be leading the next round of development for the interstate.
- I-35 Corridor Advisory Committee as laid out My 35, which will be the I-35 Corridor Mobility Blueprint.
- In it, Texans will identify corridor needs and create regional transportation plans. Plans that will be the basis for future improvements along the corridor.
- Blueprint could be complete by August.
- My 35 is our new laboratory for public involvement.

### **Sunset**

- Public wants a voice in decisions about transportation.
- Took that into account when we began updating our long-range Statewide Transportation Plan.
- Legislators want us to match our planning picture with a reliable funding forecast.
- Plan will incorporate all modes of transportation.
- Commission formed a work group to help us simplify and improve our planning process.
- Just a few months ago, created agency's first rail division under Bill Glavin's leadership.
- For all our efforts, we can't fill that \$332 billion delta alone.
- We can't develop the transportation policy we need to improve our infrastructure.



- The answer to our problems is wherever Texans who care about this state gather. It's in chambers of commerce in East Texas; it's in city council meetings in the Valley; it's in this room today.

### **Conclusion**

- We began forum by asking some straightforward questions.
- We've gathered some of the best and brightest minds from around the country to share their ideas about where we go from here.
- So here's my request: for the rest of the conference, don't be content to just take notes. Take action. Listen for the next big idea and get together with your colleagues to discuss it.
- Talk with as many Texans as you can about how we should prepare for our future.
- Today's a good day to get started.



# Speech

## Introduction

Good morning, and welcome to the Fifth annual Transportation Forum. Thank you for joining us. Please, continue to enjoy your breakfast.

It is my pleasure to share the dais with Shelley Row with U-S DOT's Research and Innovative Technology Administration. Thank you so much, Shelley for taking part in our Forum. You'll be hearing from Shelley a little later this morning.

Let me also thank our forum co-hosts: the always interesting and entertaining, Lawrence Olsen, and the Texas Good Roads/Transportation Association;

... our exceptional construction partners, Tom Johnson and the Associated General Contractors;

... our ever-efficient research and conference planning partners, Dr. Dennis Christensen and the Texas Transportation Institute.

There wouldn't be a Transportation Forum without you. We appreciate all you've done.



And while I'm handing out recognition, let me also thank our Government and Public Affairs Division ... especially Coby Chase ... Helen Havelka ... Deana Ricks ... and Tan Renwick, for putting this forum together. You've done yeoman's work.

And if some of you recognize Deana away from the hallowed halls of TxDOT and the Forum, you're right. She's played in a couple of episodes of "Friday Night Lights." We're very proud of you, Deana.

She'll be signing autographs during the break.

### **The Future is Here**

Hope you enjoyed our video intro. It is the perfect lead-in for what I want to talk to you about this morning. It's actually the theme for our entire forum. The future of transportation.

When most people talk about the future, there's an automatic assumption that the "future" is years away, decades away.

So far away, in fact, that the future becomes the future's problem. Or at the very least, someone else's problem. Certainly not ours.

But the truth is, the future isn't that far away. It's here. And it's waiting for us to taking actions to address it.



Witness the evidence:

- 21 million cars on an 80,000-mile state system.
- 24 million people living in the state today, with a population that is growing every day. In every region of the state.
- Highways so congested in some parts of Texas that 30-minute commutes turn into an hour.
- Transportation dollars so scarce that construction to relieve that congestion is taking a back seat to maintenance.
- Uncertainty from Washington that fuel tax dollars we send to our nation's capital will come back to us – in time and in sufficient amounts that allow us to plan for the future.

The future **is** already here. And like the “check engine” light on a car’s dashboard, we have to give it our full attention – now – or it could spell trouble for us down the road.

### **The Future is Change**

It’s pretty obvious that what this state is facing in the future is change. Rapid change.





Like change in the way we fuel our cars.

Gasoline is no longer the only – or preferred choice – for powering our passenger cars.

More and more, automakers are introducing non-conventional fuels like ethanol, hydrogen and electricity into their vehicle fleets. And Americans are buying them.

Already, there were more than 634 thousand alternative fueled vehicles on our nation's highways in 2006.

And according to the U-S Department of Transportation, Texans drove more of these cars than drivers in Florida, New York and Arizona combined.

Auto Alliance – an association of some of the top vehicle makers – reports that almost 70 models of alternative fueled cars are on the market today. That's up from **12** less than a decade ago. And new models are being planned.

Just last month, Ford announced that it may invest up to \$500 million to produce its next generation hybrids, plug-in hybrids, and lithium-ion battery packs.



## The Future is Change – and Nissan is Leading the “Charge”

Ford isn't alone.

Next year, Nissan will introduce its first zero-emission, **all-electric** car called the LEAF.

Powered by lithium-ion batteries that can charge from a standard 110 volt outlet, Nissan claims the car will get up to 100 miles on a single charge. For us Texans, that's about a one-way trip from Austin to College Station.

And Nissan expects the car will cost no more to buy and run than traditional gas-powered counterparts.

The LEAF is not just the stuff of Popular Science. Nor is its appeal just to the technophile or environmentalist.

Nissan is gambling that the car – and other electric vehicles like it – will become mass market hits. So much so that fully electric vehicles could account for 10 percent of all car sales by 2020.

To prove that its hunch will pay off, Nissan is taking the LEAF on a zero emission tour of 22 cities in 11 states. It's only Texas stop is in Houston in February.



So sure of the LEAF's popularity, the company is planning to take reservations for the car a year before it rolls off assembly lines in America.

### **Running on Air**

The LEAF may have some competition. Albeit, of a different kind. A car that literally runs on air. Compressed air, that is.

The French company – Motor Development International – has developed the AIRPod, its answer to clean transport.

The AIRPod has a specially adapted piston engine that allows it to run on compressed air – stored in on-board tanks that hold about 180 times as much pressure as ordinary tires.

The car – which looks more like an egg on four small wheels – isn't just unique in its fueling system.

In the AIRPod, the steering wheel has been replaced with a joystick ... front-seat space is limited to a driver only ... and backseat passengers – limited to a maximum of three people – face the rear of the car.

In Europe, the car is already set to serve as passenger and cargo shuttles for Air France and K-L-M Airlines.



And manufacturers are hoping to launch it in the United States, probably within the next three to four years.

At a top speed of 30 to 40 miles an hour, I'm not sure we'll see the AIRPod cruising on Interstate 35, but the point is car makers are looking for other ways to power vehicles.

They want to reduce fossil fuel use. And that's a plus – **a big plus** – for our environment.

But we have to temper that good news with a little reality. It is **not** such a great thing for the transportation bank account.

Although electric cars, hybrids and others of that order use our highway system, they don't pay gasoline taxes, and those taxes fuel our transportation system.

And when we can't depend on that revenue source, we **will** pay for it – with deteriorating roads, and gridlocked highways.

### **Electric Car Chargers – On the Right of Way?**

Not only do we face declining revenue if all-electric cars grow in popularity, our transportation infrastructure must accommodate them.

The U-S D-O-T is already taking steps in that direction.



In August, D-O-T awarded a nearly \$100 million grant to Electric Transportation Engineering Corporation or e-Tec.

e-Tec has partnered with Nissan to deploy up to 4,700 LEAF cars, and more than 11,000 charging stations to support them in Arizona ... California ... Oregon ... Tennessee ... and Washington.

Under the program, charging infrastructure will be set up in each of the five pilot markets ... with chargers installed in drivers' homes ... and in commercial and public locations.

If it is approved, several hundred "fast-charge" stations could be placed along interstate highways and major roads to connect population areas.

The company has announced plans to deploy charge stations along Interstate 10 between Phoenix and Tucson, creating the country's first electric vehicle corridor.

And the company is developing all-electric vehicle agreements with other areas ... Washington, D.C. ... Raleigh, North Carolina ... Vancouver ... and Mexico City.

Now, while Texas is not on the project deployment list, the handwriting is on the wall.



Nissan has already started talks with Reliant Energy to promote a charging infrastructure for electric cars in Houston.

In November, when Reliant and e-Tec announced their partnership, the president of Reliant said – and I’m quoting here – “we can now see a clear path to having thousands – even hundreds of thousands – of zero-emission cars on Texas roads in the next several years.”

Recently, the Comptroller’s Office awarded \$11 million in federal grant money to several government agencies to promote alternative fuel use in government vehicles.

The funds can be used to buy alternative fuel vehicles ... convert existing vehicles to alternative fuel sources ... and buy equipment for alternative refueling stations.

El Paso will be using the \$256,000 in grant money it received to install 32 electric car plug-in stations across the city.

And the North Central Council of Governments will use part of its \$2-and-a-half million grant to buy alternative vehicles ... and install refueling stations, including electric recharging systems.

That’s why we’ve asked the Texas Transportation Institute to monitor the e-Tec Project.



That project ... the largest deployment of electric vehicles and charge infrastructure in history ... will have a profound effect on our transportation infrastructure.

Under our agreement with T-T-I, the institute will evaluate the project and make recommendations for our future planning.

That includes infrastructure changes – and costs – Texas will need to accommodate an electric car environment.

I want to thank Rick Collins and our Research and Technology Division for working on this project.

### **MPGs – the Trend is Up**

Now, let's assume for a minute that Americans won't be swayed by the lure of new car technology, and most future car sales will be for that old standby – the gasoline-powered engine.

Even that may not mean more money for highway coffers.

Back in May, President Obama proposed a new fuel standard that could show up on 2012 to 2016 model-year cars. It requires that new cars get a minimum 35-and-a-half miles to a gallon. That's up from the current 27-and-a-half miles per gallon standard.



Another possible hit to the highway fund. A fund that's already challenged.

Just look at state gas tax revenues lately. Over the last two fiscal years, revenue has dipped about 2 percent.

From September to December of 2009, revenues were just over one percent lower than they were that same time a year ago.

And if fluctuations in our major funding source continue, we will have to change our transportation program because the money simply won't be there.

### **Can We Count on the Federal Knight in Shining Armor?**

And the federal funding picture is kinda hazy, as well.

For the second time in as many years, Congress recently had to bail out an ailing highway trust fund with general revenues – just to meet **existing** state funding commitments.

Not only are we dealing with that uncertainty, but the last multi-year surface transportation authorization – a 2005 law known as "SAFETEA-LU" – expired September 30, 2009.





Congress has passed **three** continuing resolutions to temporarily extend SAFETEA-LU while lawmakers debate what the next bill should include. This last extension expires February 28.

### **Putting Stimulus Dollars to Work for Texas**

Now, it would be unfair to say that we haven't made some progress.

The President's economic stimulus plan brought \$2-and-a-half billion dollars to transportation in Texas.

And as of November, we've executed contracts on more than 500 construction, transit and aviation projects.

And according to our contractors, these projects have created or retained more than 7,000 jobs.

### **Proposition 12 – Moving in the Right Direction**

This past session, the Texas Legislature also took steps to make more money available for transportation.

They authorized the Transportation Commission to issue up to \$2 billion in general revenue bonds for highway improvement projects around the state.



And in November, the Commission approved more than 70 projects that will be funded with these Proposition 12 bonds. Projects that would have continued to sit on the shelf if the Legislature hadn't made the decision to move forward with the money.

Six of the approved projects – valued at a little over \$1 billion – will build an additional lane on Interstate 35 through most of Hill, McLennan and Bell counties. From 2006 to 2008, more than 3,000 crashes occurred on I-35 between Hillsboro and Salado. We're doing something about that now.

A \$79 million project to construct additional lanes on Loop 375 in El Paso will provide better access to Fort Bliss. By 2012, the population at that 160-year-old post is projected to increase 300 percent. This project is going to help ease the increased traffic from that growth.

We're going to use Prop 12 money to finally ease gridlock on some of the busiest highways in Houston and San Antonio.

And we're going to upgrade more than 300 centerline miles of roadway in 35 counties around the state. Making those roads not only better to drive on, but avoiding costly repairs later.

We're going to devote our energies to deliver these projects on time and on budget.



Texans trust us to use this bond money wisely, and we're going to make sure we deliver on that trust.

And while we have committed to Texans to make the most of this money, we could and can do a lot more – if other funding was available.

### **The Needs Exceed the Means**

The 2030 Committee, an independent group selected by the Transportation Commission, estimated that Texas needs \$315 billion over the next two decades ...

... to keep congestion from worsening around the state,

... to keep up with bridge maintenance,

... to maintain our pavements,

... and to make our rural roads safer.

A couple of things to keep in mind about that figure.

That's \$315 billion **if** we had the money in hand. Since nobody's writing us a check today to take care of the debt, it's going to be a while before we can.



And – here’s point two – that figure doesn’t include any of TxDOT’s other responsibilities like ferries, and planning and engineering.

So, when you add all that up, the final tally – the true cost – of our future transportation needs in this state is \$487 billion.

If we continue to pay for our roads and bridges using mostly vehicle registration fees and gasoline taxes, we’re not even going to come close to that.

Traditional funding is only going to bring in about \$155 billion in revenues over that 20-year timeframe.

Follow the math. That’s a \$332 billion gap. Gap. Sounds like something that’s easy to fix. \$332 billion is not a gap. It’s more like the Grand Canyon.

And we will not find the money doing the same things we’ve always done.

The financial challenges we’re facing in transportation **don’t** mean congestion in Texas will get a **little** worse. Or roads will get a **little** rougher. Or projects will take a **little** longer to complete.

There are no little problems in a \$332 billion deficit.



A \$332 billion deficit means needed projects won't get built.

A \$332 billion deficit means maintenance will be deferred.

A \$332 billion deficit means the economy of Texas will suffer as businesses can't get products to market, or businesses move for more transportation-friendly states.

A \$332 billion deficit means we have to look for new solutions.

### **Listening to Texans about the Future**

At TxDOT, we've already begun to ask the questions: how do we shape the future? How do we bring about fundamental change so we don't leave the next generation a transportation system that doesn't serve its needs?

And we've found that the best way to get the answers to those questions – or at the very least – to focus attention on them – is to engage Texans in planning their transportation system.

Listening to Texans. That's what we've spent most of 2009 doing. Listening to and hearing from Texans from all walks of life.

And the effort's paid off for one of the state's most congested corridors.



## My 35

Last October, we announced that future development on I-35 would no longer be under the T-T-C 35 umbrella.

Instead, Texans will be leading the next round of development for the interstate.

The I-35 Corridor Advisory Committee has laid out My 35, which will be the I-35 Corridor Mobility Blueprint.

In it, Texans will identify corridor needs and create regional transportation plans. Plans that will be the basis for future improvements along the corridor.

We expect that blueprint will be completed by next August, and we'll have some concrete proposals we can use to expand and improve Interstate 35.

My 35 is the new laboratory we will use for public involvement. This means we'll be using this type of public collaborative process to develop other statewide corridors in the future.

And of course, in 2010 we'll be hosting and holding more town hall meetings across the state. Another opportunity to hear from Texans.



## Sunset

Quite frankly, it's a lesson we learned during the Sunset process.

And what we heard during months of hearings and meetings was that the public wants a voice in the decisions about transportation in this state.

And we took that into account when we began updating our long-range Statewide Transportation Plan, just one of many Sunset Commission recommendations.

Legislators wanted us to match our planning picture with a reliable funding forecast.

And the plan had to incorporate all modes of transportation, not just highways, but aviation, public transportation, rail, water ports, even pipelines.

We're attacking that order from several angles.

We're looking at other state D-O-T plans to find out if there's a model we can adapt for our needs.

Second, we're capturing and forecasting funding trends.

Working with the Association of Texas Metropolitan Planning Organizations and T-T-I, we've come up with a model that will let us plan for changes in the funding picture.



If it's a drop in fuel tax revenue, or a spike in population, we'll be able to see how that will affect our bottom line.

The Transportation Commission also formed a work group to help us simplify and improve our planning process. The group includes representatives from different transportation modes and regions around the state.

Ultimately, that will help us make better decisions about where to put the money so it can meet the most demand.

As I mentioned, the "new" statewide plan will include other modes of transportation.

Just a few months ago, we created TxDOT's first rail division.

Bill Glavin heads that new division. Bill has worked in the rail industry for more than 30 years, including stints with Burlington Northern Railroad, North American RailNet and, most recently, as a consultant with R-V-B-A and Associates.

Under Bill's leadership, we'll expand our current rail planning efforts, and better position the state to become a leader in freight and passenger rail.





We're also updating our 2011-2015 Strategic Plan to align transportation projects with statewide transportation goals.

Goals – and strategic direction statements – we're developing in concert with Texans.

For the past few months, TxDOT has been meeting with public and private stakeholders around the state to get their input on the direction this agency should take.

We've been asking the hard questions:

- What should the state's transportation goals be?
- What strategies should we have to meet those goals?
- How should TxDOT's performance be measured against those goals?

To put it simply, we're being accountable to you.

But for all the changes we make as an agency, we can't fill that \$332 billion delta alone.

We can't develop the transportation policy we need to improve our infrastructure.



No, the answer to those problems is wherever Texans who care about this state gather. It's in chambers of commerce in East Texas; it's in city council meetings in the Valley; it's in this room today.

## **Conclusion**

We began our forum this morning by asking some rather straightforward questions about the future of transportation in this state.

And we've gathered some of the best and brightest minds from around the country to share their ideas about where we go from here.

Over the next day and a half, you'll hear from futurists and chiefs in finance, lawmakers and money makers.

You'll hear from the leaders who plan our transportation systems to the consumers who use them.

We'll hear some more about the Nissan LEAF from one of the men responsible for its debut.

And we'll make the transition from electric cars to passenger rail.

Karen Rae with the Federal Railroad Administration will be with us to talk about F-R-A's plans to implement the president's high-speed rail initiative.



We've assembled an impressive line-up.

Former Department of Transportation Secretary Mary Peters and current Federal Highway Administrator Victor Mendez will be joining us.

Several members of our Texas Congressional delegation – Congressmen John Carter, Ciro Rodriguez, and Pete Olson – will headline a panel discussion tomorrow morning on federal transportation priorities.

Senator Robert Nichols from Jacksonville and Representative Joe Pickett from El Paso will follow with their own discussion about state funding for transportation.

And during Friday's closing luncheon, Sen. John Cornyn will give us his take on the federal funding picture.

This forum is a great opportunity for us to chart our future path.

So here is my request: for the rest of the conference, don't be content to just take notes. Take action. Listen for the next big idea and get together with your colleagues to discuss it.

Talk with as many Texans as you can about how we should prepare for our future.



To turn a phrase from novelist Robertson Davies, our future can not be a return to our past.

To do so, would be a disservice to the millions of future Texans who are depending on us to chart it.

Today's a good day to get started.

Thank you again for spending the next couple of days with us. And enjoy the forum.

