



State Representative
Jeff Leach
Dist. 67
Rotunda Report

June 26, 2014

Transportation

For those of you who have been receiving my e-newsletter for some time, you know that common-sense transportation and infrastructure improvements are, and have been, among my highest legislative priorities in the Texas House.

As you may know, over the past 18 months the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) has been undergoing a schematic and environmental study of Highway 75 in an effort to reconstruct and widen the corridor from I-635 to SH 121. One of the proposals on the table is to convert the existing Higher Occupancy Vehicles (HOV) lane into a managed toll lane for Single Occupancy Vehicles (SOV).

Let me make absolutely clear - I know that my constituents do not want more toll roads, and I will do everything in my capacity as your State Representative to advocate against this proposal.

In that regard, be advised that TXDOT will be hosting a public forum on the SOV managed-toll proposal on Tuesday, July 1st from 5:00 - 7:00 PM in the Grand Hall at the Richardson Civic Center, located at 411 W. Arapaho Road, Richardson, TX 75080. I strongly encourage you to join me in attending this public meeting to share your thoughts and concerns. Following Tuesday's meeting there will be a 10-day window for public comments to be submitted in writing. Written comments may be submitted either in person or by mail to Mr. Stephen Endres at the TXDOT Dallas District Office, located at 4777 E. Highway 80, Mesquite, TX 75150-6643. Please note that written comments must be postmarked by Friday, July 11, 2014 in order to be included in the Public Meeting Summary.

There is no question that Highway 75 improvements are critical to the continued success and quality of life of our growing region. Having said that, rather than adding another onerous toll to commuters (as if taxpayers are not already burdened enough with current gas taxes, registration fees, motor vehicle taxes and three toll roads in Collin County alone) I am calling on the Texas Department of Transportation to cease any and all talks of additional toll roads in Collin County. Furthermore, I strongly support doing away with our current HOV lane altogether. While only a Band-Aid to our long term infrastructure needs, freeing up a lightly utilized lane would provide instant relief to our traffic conditions and is a responsible and substantial step in the right direction.

I hope to see you on Tuesday evening.

Border Security

As I reported last week, in recent months our southern border in the Rio Grande Valley has seen an unprecedented influx of over 35,000 illegal crossings per month. Worse, it is estimated that over 90,000 unaccompanied minors will cross into our southern U.S. border by the end of September of 2014.

Since the federal government has failed in its job to secure our border, I and several of my colleagues in the Texas Legislature called on our state leadership last week to devote emergency funding to the Texas Department of Public Safety, thus providing our state and local law enforcement agencies the resources they need to secure the border and crack down on the drug cartels. Since then, Governor Perry, Lieutenant Governor Dewhurst and Speaker Straus have granted the DPS the necessary resources to begin an immediate surge of manpower and equipment.

This past weekend, I traveled to the border to meet with Steve McCraw, the Director of the Texas Department of Public Safety, as well as other federal, state and local law enforcement officers to assess the current situation on the border in the Rio Grande Valley and receive in-depth briefings on the surge. While the Obama Administration has failed in its responsibility to ensure the security of our border, make no mistake that the men and women on the ground are doing a remarkable job with the very difficult and dangerous task to which they have been assigned. Under the leadership of Director McCraw, the brave men and women serving on our border are putting their lives on the line each day to protect us and we owe each of them a debt of gratitude for their service and sacrifice.

I am committed to continue monitoring the situation on our southern border, as this directly impacts our state's public safety, public health, public education and criminal justice system, to name a few. For these reasons, there is no question that border security will be one of the most critical issues to address during the next legislative session, which begins in January of 2015.



Pictured above: Rep. Leach receiving a briefing from a DPS agent



Pictured above: Rep. Leach with various local, state and federal officials receiving a briefing on the latest surge efforts from a DPS Border Patrol Agent



Pictured above: a transport being pulled with a rope across the Rio Grande River illegally hauling vehicles to the U.S. from Mexico



For Texas,



Jeff Leach

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