

Letters of Support

- Senator Royce West, Texas Senate District 23
- Mayor Tom Leppert, City of Dallas
- Amadeo Saenz, Executive Director, Texas Department of Transportation

Editorials

- August 14, 2009, *Dallas Morning News*



The Senate of The State of Texas

SENATE COMMITTEES:

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Finance
Health and Human Services
Higher Education

Senator Royce West
District 23

President Pro Tempore
2006

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September 11, 2009

TIGER Discretionary Grant Application
US 175/IH 45 Connection
Dallas, Dallas County, Texas

Mr. Ray LaHood
Secretary of Transportation
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

This letter is indicative of my support of efforts by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) to secure funding through the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Discretionary Grant for the US 175/IH 45 Connection in Dallas, Texas. Implementation of this project will enable the state and the city to address a critical safety issue and improve the quality of life within this South Dallas community.

Specifically, this project will remove the unsafe and sharp roadway curve located at US 175 (CF Hawn Freeway) and SH 310 (SM Wright Freeway). In 2008, a fuel tanker traveling southbound on SH 310 overturned at US 175, burned the overhead SH 310 bridge, and rendered the roadway system unusable until the bridge could be replaced. Between 2000 through 2008, some 360 total crashes were reported along SH 310 and US 175, including nine that involved fatalities. Reports also show that 245 of the 360 crashes (68 percent) occurred within one-mile of this infamously well-known road segment that is to be eliminated by this improvement project.

In addition to improving safety, this project will create a more efficient route for residents traveling to and from communities in South Dallas and southern Dallas County and provide better access to major employment centers such as downtown Dallas and the Medical/Market Center. And extending US 175 to provide a direct connection to IH 45, will allow SH 310 to be

Secretary LaHood
U.S. Dept. of Transportation
September 11, 2009
page 2

converted from a controlled-access facility to an arterial roadway. This project will eliminate a major barrier in the community and improve the quality of life for South Dallas communities.

If I may be of further assistance with this TIGER grant application, please contact me through my office at 214-467-0123.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Royce West". The signature is stylized with a large, looped "R" and a "W" that extends to the right.

Royce West
State Senator
District 23

RW/kb



THOMAS C. LEPPERT
MAYOR

September 11, 2009

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary of Transportation
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Re: TIGER Discretionary Grant Application - US 175/IH 45 Connection

Dear Secretary LaHood:

I am pleased to support the Texas Department of Transportation and the North Central Texas Council of Governments efforts to secure funding through the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Discretionary Grant for the US 175/IH 45 Connection in Dallas, Texas. Implementation of this project will enable the state and the city to address a critical safety issue and improve quality of life in South Dallas.

Specifically, this project will remove the unsafe and sharp roadway curve located at US 175 (CF Hawn Freeway) and SH 310 (SM Wright Freeway). In 2008, a fuel tanker travelling southbound on SH 310 overturned at US 175, burned the overhead SH 310 bridge, and rendered the roadway system unusable until the bridge could be replaced. Between 2000 through 2008, 360 total crashes were reported along SH 310 and US 175, including nine of which were fatal. Data also shows that 245 of the 360 crashes (68 percent) occurred within one-mile of the sharp roadway curve this project will eliminate.

In addition to improving safety, this project will create a more efficient route for residents traveling to and from communities in South Dallas and southern Dallas County and provide better access to major employment centers such as downtown Dallas and the Medical/Market Center. Additionally, by extending US 175 to directly connect to IH 45, this will allow SH 310 to be converted from a controlled-access facility to an arterial roadway. This will eliminate a major barrier in the community and improve the quality of life for South Dallas communities.

On behalf of the City of Dallas, I respectfully request and thank you in advance for considering the application to the 2009 ARRA TIGER Call for Projects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Leppert", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Tom Leppert
Mayor



Texas Department of Transportation

DEWITT C. GREER STATE HIGHWAY BLDG. • 125 E. 11TH STREET • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-2483 • (512) 463-8585

August 31, 2009

Ms. Christie Jestis
Program Manager
Transportation Project Programming Area
North Central Texas Council of Governments
616 Six Flags Drive, Centerpoint Two
Arlington, Texas 76011

Dear Ms. Jestis:

The Texas Department of Transportation is pleased to support your application for funds under the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) discretionary grant program for the I-45 and US 175 direct connectors project in Dallas. Should you receive funding under this program, our agency will work with you closely to expedite the project.

We appreciate the importance of the I-45 and US 175 direct connectors project for your region and assure you that it holds statewide priority as well because it provides an improved connectivity link of Southeast Dallas County to Downtown Dallas and will support and stimulate the economy of an economically distressed part of the city.

As you may know, each state is eligible to receive a maximum of \$300 million in total funding through this program. After reviewing your request, our agency has concluded that this project could compete favorably for these limited resources and have confirmed that your proposal meets the following criteria of the program:

- long-term outcomes: economic competitiveness, livability, sustainability, safety
- jobs creation/economic stimulus
- partnership

We appreciate your ongoing involvement in Texas transportation. Our staff is prepared to assist you if you need help in finalizing your application. If you have additional questions or need more information, please contact me at (512) 305-9501, or your staff may contact Robin Ayers, Congressional Liaison in our Government and Public Affairs Division, at (512) 463-8345.

Sincerely,

Amadeo Saenz, Jr., P.E.
Executive Director

cc: Texas Transportation Commission
Robin Ayers, Government and Public Affairs Division, TxDOT

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Editorial: Progress toward S.M. Wright makeover

12:30 PM CDT on Friday, August 14, 2009

They could have ignored it, spiked it or found more economic excuses to keep kicking it down the road. Instead, Dallas-area officials are showing commendable energy toward fixing a decades-old problem with an ugly and deadly stretch of highway in South Dallas.

The problematic stretch currently links U.S. Highway 175 to the S.M. Wright freeway and State Highway 310, which converge at a sharp, dangerous turn known as "dead-man's curve." The curve has played a role in at least one traffic death this year and countless accidents over five decades. A fuel tanker truck lost control there last year, exploded and destroyed the 310 overpass. The curve has got to go.

For many residents, the bigger issue is the fate of S.M. Wright, built in the early 1960s to give southeast Dallas commuters easier access to downtown and Interstate 45. The freeway sliced through the heart of historic South Dallas, leaving the neighborhood divided and hastening its steady abandonment by the wealthy families whose mansions lined South Boulevard and Park Row. The once scenic drive that led visitors to Fair Park along Forest Avenue (renamed Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard) is now a hodgepodge of crumbling structures and struggling retail shops.

Residents rightly insist that South Dallas' economic revival will be severely limited as long as S.M. Wright exists. Various designs would turn it into a 35 mph, tree-lined boulevard – a much more appealing option for retailers, pedestrians and cyclists.

Dallas officials, eager to get work started, incorporated the redesign into plans for the Trinity River Corridor project. But with that project stalled indefinitely over engineering problems with the river's levee system, the prospects looked dim for a quick solution to S.M. Wright and dead-man's curve. Their fates seemed inextricably linked to the Trinity project.

Now, City Hall is working with regional, state and federal officials to de-link the two projects. Assistant City Manager Jill Jordan told us last week that work continues apace to purchase rights-of-way so U.S. 175 can be connected directly to I-45, bypassing S.M. Wright. Federal approval could be tricky, because S.M. Wright handles a hefty 100,000 vehicles a day.

The first priority is to start the dead-man's curve makeover. "The quicker we get that built, then the quicker we can begin the S.M. Wright reconstruction," Jordan says. The Regional Transportation Council voted Thursday to seek federal stimulus money for work on the curve.

Just as the original construction of S.M. Wright helped create a domino effect leading to the neighborhood's economic decline, we're confident that persistent efforts like these can start pushing the dominoes in the opposite direction. An attractive boulevard, minus a freeway and deadly curve, would have far better prospects of bolstering business investment and creating jobs. The improved approach to Fair Park would, in turn, vastly improve the chances of reviving it as a year-round attraction.

If officials are successful, their work will mark a major step toward bridging Dallas' north-south gap.