



**Meeting Notes**  
**CAMPO State Highway 45 Southwest Committee**  
**May 11, 2009, 11:30 am – 1:30 pm**  
**Ned Granger County Administration Building, 314 W. 11th Street**  
**Commissioners Courtroom on the First Floor**

1. **Discussion of background data and critical facts, including**

- **Traffic count, projected volume and population and employment data** - Joe Cantalupo referred to the traffic count maps contained in the handouts. He clarified that the dots on the maps represented off-system counts (done every 5 years) rather than the on-system counts that were done annually. Commissioner Huber asked about the traffic counts at the Brodie/Slaughter intersection and whether the count shown was on Slaughter. She asked whether there were more updated counts than the ones shown. Ed Collins, TxDOT, answered that the 2008 counts were due out in August.

Dick Kallerman mentioned that there was a 40% increase in traffic from Brodie/Frate Barker to Brodie/Slaughter.

Jim Mann mentioned that there seems to be an ever-increasing influx of traffic from Hays County; there aren't that many portals into Travis County and yet the development in northern Hays County is continuing. This results in added traffic on all of the avenues (e.g., Camp Ben McCulloch Road, Brodie, Manchaca, South 1<sup>st</sup>) into Travis County -- especially leading to MoPAC.

Mr. Cantalupo explained that traffic counts are used in the travel demand modeling process to calibrate the model to replicate existing conditions. He mentioned that the traffic volumes are projections based on the regional model and should not be used to determine the appropriateness of improvements to a particular roadway (that should be done in a corridor analysis process).

Janet Marsh noticed that some of the 2015 traffic volumes were lower than the traffic counts. Commissioner Barton responded that it was because the 2015 network showed the existence of SH 45 which would have pulled some traffic off of the existing roadway system.

Commissioner Huber questioned whether building SH 45 would solve the problems on Brodie Lane. Mr. Mann responded by saying that it would not solve all the problems but it would help. He continued by saying that what was needed was another portal into Travis County from Hays County because of the continuing development in Hays County.

Mr. Cantalupo reminded the Committee members that the information presented was from the 2030 Plan work and that when the modeling results are ready for the 2035 Plan, things might look considerably different.

Judge Biscoe said that the decision made by the Committee needed to be based on critical facts. They needed updated traffic counts and traffic volumes. Mr. Cantalupo said that the 2035 modeling results wouldn't be ready until the fall and the 2008 counts wouldn't be released until August. Judge Biscoe asked whether the current numbers are reliable. Mr.

Cantalupo responded that the numbers are reliable for regional purposes but cautioned against using them for project level analyses.

Commissioner Barton offered that Hays County could possibly put down some traffic counters. Mr. Cantalupo questioned what the value of that effort would be. Commissioner Barton said that was exactly his question -- and that perhaps the value it could offer would be to show a trend. Mr. Cantalupo said that overall VMT (vehicle miles traveled) is actually increasing; VMT per capita could be decreasing but overall there is a growth in VMT.

Judge Biscoe asked to be reminded of why traffic counts are necessary. Mr. Cantalupo responded that the counts are used to calibrate the travel demand model. He went on to say that the traffic volumes are interesting a macro-indicators. Mr. Cantalupo reiterated that this regional information should not be used to focus on whether a particular link is justified.

It was further discussed that the information provided on VMT growth was county-wide data and that some portions of counties were experiencing higher growth rates than others. Mr. Cantalupo stated that staff could pull out sub-regional information but that it would likely take longer than a week to complete.

Mr. Mann cautioned that projects have never proven to be true. He questioned whether these projections are accurate.

Commissioner Huber stated that the committee is charged with coming up with a recommendation and questioned whether they had the information required to do so. Mr. Cantalupo offered that the provided traffic volumes are what the staff could provide.

Commissioner Huber asked for a presentation on the carrying capacity of a lane of traffic. Mr. Stuard suggested that TxDOT could make such a presentation at a future meeting. Bubba Needham suggested that a roadway could be designed to meet a variety of level of service (LOS) goals.

- **Project development process** - Bubba Needham presented slides covering TxDOT's project development process. There were questions from Committee members about where the project is in the process. Mr. Needham said that TxDOT completed an environmental document but could not simply update it because the document didn't address new requirements including environmental justice and cumulative and secondary impacts. They do have a set of 90% completed plans; however, if the alignment were to change, the design process would be required to start over. Mr. Needham continued by saying that there is a point where state funding would have to be identified but, at this point, it would be hard to identify. Mr. Mann asked if the Committee would be requested to make a recommendation without knowing the funding. Mr. Needham said that was the case. Mr. Mann asked if public funding is a possibility; whether there is even a remote likelihood that public financing is an option. Judge Biscoe said that it might take trips to CAMPO and the Transportation Commission if the region wants public funding. Mr. Mann asked if there is no chance of public financing, when will this process happen again? Mr. Cantalupo said that TxDOT is waiting until after the current legislative session to issue their next Unified Transportation Program (i.e., TxDOT's 10-year project programming document).

Mr. Larson asked whether the LCRA easement is outside the roadway's right-of-way. Mr. Needham said that it was.

Ms. Marsh questioned whether if the roadway was built and the tolls repaid the debt, would TxDOT accept the roadway and the lanes could be free. Mr. Stuard said that would need an agreement between TxDOT and the CTRMA but that it is a possibility.

Commissioner Huber said that it might be appropriate to develop a tiered recommendation to the CAMPO Board.

Mr. Kallerman stated that it might be appropriate, if it was going to be a long time before the funds were available, to have the committee identify less expensive, shorter-term fixes for the area.

- **Role of CAMPO and CAMPO long-range transportation plan** - Joe Cantalupo stated that a project of this size is required to be in the long-range plan for the region. If modifications are made to the project, an amendment to the plan would likely be necessary. Janet Marsh asked about whether two free lanes could be constructed now and toll lanes could be added in the future. Commissioner Barton mentioned that in the current bond market, it is probably not feasible to have the non-tolled lanes competing with tolled lanes. Mr. Cantalupo continued by saying that the 2035 Plan must be approved by June 2010. Commissioner Huber questioned whether free HOV lanes would be in compliance with the current plan. Mr. Cantalupo said that in his opinion they would but it would be prudent to check with the FHWA. Mr. Mann asked that if CAMPO doesn't act until June 2010, what would TxDOT be doing on the design. Mr. Stuard stated that if there were a resolution by the CAMPO Policy Board, TxDOT would proceed based on that action.

## 2. **Discussion of design options matrix**

Joe Cantalupo presented the three-page Matrix of Lane Configuration Options. Mr. Mann asked which option would be the most practical, probable one to be funded. Judge Biscoe suggested that the option list be pared down to three of the most viable options. Mr. Mann continued by stating that he would be interested in hearing from the CTRMA about what options they could secure financing for since the possibility of obtaining public financing appears to be quite slim. Commissioner Huber requested that a HOT lane proposal be added to the matrix.

Judge Biscoe noted that local governments can creatively generate \$100 million if that is the decision, mentioning TxDOT's pass-through financing program as an example of financing. Judge Biscoe recounted the success that both Williamson and Hays Counties have had in securing pass-through financing from TxDOT. He continued by saying this is one way to finance a road without imposing tolling on it.

Commissioner Barton said that although tolls aren't popular, he believed that congestion and transportation are such issues in Hays County that some would support tolling as a way to improve the existing and future likely conditions.

Mr. Mann asked whether there was a method that one could weight the possibilities.

Mr. Cantalupo said that because the CTRMA hadn't done detailed traffic and revenue studies, the focus should be on what obstacles could be removed to get the project done.

Wes Burford of the CTRMA said that the toll viability of any of the roads approved as toll roads in 2004 was never 100%. He mentioned that very few, if any, toll roads are 100% toll viable and need some amount of equity contribution by others. He commented that the work the CTRMA has done so far has been very preliminary but if there is a free alternative listed, it is a non-starter for the CTRMA.

Janet Marsh asked whether TxDOT would allow the counties to finance and build two free lanes on this stretch of a state highway.

Mr. Mann asked about the requirements for funding the improvements via pass-through financing. Judge Biscoe answered that, just like bonds, they would go to the voters. If the voters rejected the bonds, there would have to be another approach.

Judge Biscoe said there might be a way to approach the situation using other options. He said that he didn't believe that TxDOT should be let off the hook because of earlier commitments to the improvements on SH 45. He mentioned that it might take multiple visits to the Transportation Commission but TxDOT needed to be reminded of the commitments that they had made to the county. He said that the county wouldn't have purchased the right-of-way without that

commitment by the Transportation Commission. A question that Judge Biscoe posed was whether the entire approach should be abandoned and the region should pursue other options.

3. **Discussion of TxDOT's Microsoft Project summary of environmental approval process - postponed**
4. **Discussion of whether federal approval is necessary for any portion of the project - postponed**
5. **Citizen comments.** Citizen comments will be taken as the last agenda item before adjournment. Comments will be limited to a total of 15 minutes, with individuals limited to no more than 3 minutes each - **postponed**
6. **Adjourn - 1:37 p.m.**