



The Senate of The State of Texas

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SENATOR WENDY R DAVIS
District 10

August 4, 2010

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Secretary LaHood,

As a State Senator who represents more than 700,000 constituents in North Texas, I want to express my full support for consideration of the Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT) grant application for the Tower 55 At-Grade Rail Improvement Project in Fort Worth, Texas through two strategic discretionary grant programs being led by the U.S. Department of Transportation: the High Speed Intercity Passenger Rail (HSR) Track 1A Grant Program; and the TIGER Discretionary Grant Program.

TxDOT's application for funding of this vital transportation hub is critical in the movement of goods, improving air quality in our region and to the region's overall transportation plan. Additionally, the alignment of the current Tower 55 rail poses a serious public safety risk to residents of a Fort Worth neighborhood who are often isolated for hours by stopped rail cars (the adjacent neighborhood has one access point at a railroad crossing).

The Tower 55 rail interlocker is one of the busiest and most congested rail intersections in the entire nation. During peak periods, it commonly handles more than 100 trains per day. This project would install new signaling, bridge upgrades, a third north/south mainline, and improved street and pedestrian crossings; furthermore, it can be completed by February 2012 with ARRA stimulus assistance. The project will deliver an immediate and lasting improvement to the efficiency of rail – the most cost-effective, fuel-efficient, and environmentally-sound land transportation mode for moving the nation's freight.

During my tenure as a State Senator, Fort Worth City Councilmember and as chair on the Regional Transportation Council in North Texas, I became acutely aware of the problems associated with Tower 55. Due to its regional and national significance, the Tower 55 project was rated by a TxDOT organized screening panel as the highest-priority TIGER Competitive Grant Program project in the state, compared with more than 90 other proposals.

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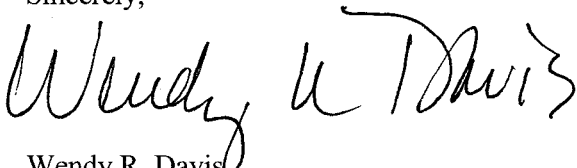
Direct benefits of the project include:

- The ability for the Tower 55 crossing to accommodate at least 40 percent more volume than in 2009 - and to do so with less congestion and delay than the region has experienced in recent years.
- The potential to achieve a double-digit improvement in overall on-time performance for two Amtrak trains that link North Texas with other communities in the region and the nation – The Texas Eagle and The Heartland Flyer.
- Eliminates the need to divert freight to trucks and circuitous rail routes, which without the project, will be required in the near future to avoid Tower 55 gridlock.
- Improved air quality in a non-attainment area by reducing train delay and improving rail's potential to move more freight to relieve overburdened highways.
- Greater safety through improvements to several existing vehicular/pedestrian crossings, reduced vehicle crossing dwell time, and almost 10 percent less life-of-project vehicular emissions at affected crossing locations, compared with the no-build alternative.
- Improved goods movement to and from Texas ports, distribution centers and logistics parks in North Texas, as well as the border gateways of Mexico, to the consumers of the southeast U.S. and U.S. manufacturers along the Gulf Coast – assuring a competitive supply chain that will support regional and national businesses' ability to grow and add sustainable jobs in the future.

With its broad and long-term benefits, I believe the Tower 55 At-Grade Rail Improvement Project is a very strong candidate for both the HSR Track 1A Grant Program and the TIGER Discretionary Grant Program. It achieves -- and in many categories exceeds -- the goals of both programs and would stimulate and sustain both short- and long-term economic recovery.

I appreciate this opportunity to express my support for this project. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



Wendy R. Davis
Texas Senator - District 10