

Testimony of 2-1-10
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I'm Mel Borel and I reside in San Antonio.

Three minutes are insufficient to present detail facts and figures to support my position, so I'll provide an emotional plea for a change in our policies, procedures, and governance.

Let me just say up front that I'm fed up, along with many others in San Antonio, in Texas, and throughout the USA with the state of our economy and the governance we see being practiced. Citizens are **FED UP** with the arrogant elitist attitude of our elected officials and those appointed by them to merely advance their positions in the face of public opposition. In effect, the public is told – come hell or high water – toll roads will be used as the only approach to transportation whether the public likes it or not - because we know better! In general, “our leaders” tell us other options are NOT viable because TxDOT and the RMA say there is NO money. Furthermore, “they” refuse to either consider alternatives or work to find other ways to fund road projects.

The public is fed up with politicians and agencies that continue to disregard our opinion and who merely increase cost to us by either misuse of our taxes and using tolling to offset mismanagement.

Road construction projects in most cases just don't pass the “smell test” of economic justification, environmental considerations, and non discrimination. For example:

- Is the construction cost of the project the same or less than a non toll option (this includes debt service)? A toll project is usually greater.
- Can it be shown that use of the roadway by the public is the same if the road is built by either the traditional gas tax or use tax or toll? An issue of double taxation.
- Can it be shown that NOT ONE CENT OF OTHER TAX DOLLARS, such as gas tax funds, will be used to subsidize or fund a toll project? If it does, this is clearly double taxation and inappropriate use of gas tax funds.
- Is the foot print the same or less than a non toll option, that is, does a toll project have more lanes – which it usually does – merely to provide free lanes to satisfy public opinion or phony legal considerations?
- Can it be shown that use of a toll road does not discriminate against some portion of society? What about those of us who have paid into the gas tax fund for years, are now retired and on a

fixed income, who are now required to pay for driving on what was once a “free” road? What about those who just can’t afford to pay tolls when commuting to jobs to earn a living? Are we creating a class society?

The debacle we have been exposed to in San Antonio with US 281 is a shameful example of how TxDOT, the RMA, local politicians, and lobbyist promote their toll road solution even in the face of fierce opposition by the public. Millions of dollars have been wasted because they only wanted to promote THEIR toll road solution. They refused to implement a solution that uses overpasses and expansion of 281 that could have been started years ago; would have solved the congestion problem; and, would have cost significantly less than the toll road proposed by TxDOT and their minions at the RMA.

The RMA stated publically that if money became available, it would be applied to 281 improvements. Well ... stimulus money became available and they are being applying to an interchange that doesn’t solve any 281 congestion and avoids any conflict with a toll road solution. The public is helpless because of the way in which TxDOT and the RMA can operate. This MUST be changed!

Well if you haven’t figured it out, the grass root organizations are being heard all over the country and the EMPTY change which we were sold is now being shaped by public action. The corrupt action of agencies such as TxDOT and local RMAs need to be corrected. The public is willing to accept a gas tax increase to fund our road construction only if the current misuse of the gas tax is corrected and only if the organization and operation of TxDOT is changed following recommendations of the Sunset Commission. I might add that this includes elimination of RMAs, which essentially are another arm of TxDOT used to manipulate local control.