

# HEARING OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION & HOMELAND SECURITY

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## Introduction

- Good morning, Chairman Carona and members of the Committee.
- I am Elizabeth Mow, Director of Project Delivery at the North Texas Tollway Authority.
- Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the committee.

## Testimony

- The NTTA was created in 1997 through Texas Transportation Code Chapter 366 and is comprised of nine Board members, with two appointees from each of our four member counties – Collin, Dallas, Denton and Tarrant counties – and one Governor's appointee.
- The NTTA has more than 700 lane miles we operate and maintain; another 250 in planning, design or under construction. We have approximately 750 employees with all the usual departments to run a transportation agency.
- Over the last few years, the NTTA has worked closely with TxDOT on the environmental review process for several projects in the North Texas region.
- While working with TxDOT, the NTTA has observed challenges that seem to be related to shortage of resources within TxDOT and the review/comment process that could be improved through the flow of communication and clear documentation of the actual environmental review process.
- Let me say first that I have a great working relationship with my counterparts at TxDOT. They are qualified, capable Staff that

E. Mow – Senate Committee on Transportation & Homeland Security

June 8, 2010

Page 1 of 3

often times are trying to work within the means provided to them.

- But I would like to offer a few observations...
- There does not seem to be adequate Staff resources to move through the environmental process quickly or consistently.
- If dedicated Staff could be allocated to specific entities like NTTA, HECTRA, and other RMA's a more efficient and specialized review could be performed for toll projects.
- Currently NTTA is in two different Districts (Fort Worth and Dallas) so we get two separate teams reviewing our documents with different styles. This makes it difficult to produce a consistent, quality document.
- A comment resolution meeting may be beneficial to resolve comments/ issues instead of the constant back-and-forth of comments without resolution.
- TxDOT review processes appear to be ad-hoc or loosely-defined.
- A more defined process of who reviews what document at what stage of the process would make the process easier to understand and manage.
- For example, the Project Management Plan and Financial Plan documents, which are required from the Federal Highway Administration on all major projects, are being processed slowly or incorrectly due to the loosely defined process **(NTTA → TxDOT District → TxDOT DES → TxDOT FIN → FHWA)**.
- We have experienced delays in several documents due to the lack of clearly defined processes to internal TxDOT.
- A suggestion would be for the TxDOT Districts and Divisions to have a set review process to insure all comments are made at the appropriate time by all involved Districts/ Divisions with identified points of contact. **(NTTA → TxDOT District → TxDOT DES/ ENV/ FIN → FHWA)**.
- Prioritization of projects from TxDOT Districts through Division, all the way to FHWA seems to be dynamic. A process needs to be defined that does not change the priority of the projects being reviewed on a weekly basis.

- A bi-monthly Interagency Technical Coordination Meeting has been ongoing for over a year and has provided a positive impact for our current projects. It provides a venue for open communications and expectations by NTTA, TxDOT and FHWA.
- Like the NTTA, TxDOT is in the business of delivering mobility solutions to its citizens in a timely manner.
- We believe that the overall delivery of projects across the state can be expedited with several improvements to TxDOT's environmental review process.
- The NTTA realizes the importance of partnership and we hope that you find our testimony beneficial as you look for solutions to improve the existing environment review process.
- Thank you for your time today. I'm pleased to answer any questions the committee may have.