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**SIB:** On June 20, 1997, Governor George Bush signed into law legislation authorizing TxDOT to establish a SIB. Before this legislation, TxDOT was only authorized to make loans to the Texas Turnpike Authority. TxDOT may use money deposited to the credit of the bank to provide financial assistance to a public or private entity for a qualified project to: (1) extend credit by direct loan; (2) provide credit enhancements; (3) serve as a capital reserve for bond or debt instrument financing; (4) subsidize interest rates; (5) insure the issuance of a letter of credit or a credit instrument; (6) finance a purchase or lease agreement in connection with a transit project; (7) provide security for bonds and other debt; or (8) provide methods of leveraging money that have been approved by the Secretary of Transportation and relate to the project for which the assistance is provided.

Currently, repayments of initial SIB assistance provided from the capitalizing accounts are considered State funds. Federal requirements do not apply to second-generation assistance provided to projects from the repayment account. The TxDOT is adamantly apposed to changes being considered as a part of the reauthorization of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 that would impose Federal requirements on all future loans from the repayment account.

**NEXTEA:** TxDOT supports the elimination of suballocation and set-asides, because their elimination would streamline the Surface Transportation program (STP), making it easier for States and localities, working together through the planning process, to meet their transportation needs quicker and more efficiently. TxDOT does not suggest that the purposes of these set-asides and suballocation are inappropriate, but prefers to accomplish the same goals through public participation and the metropolitan and statewide planning processes.

TxDOT advocates reducing the number of categories of Federal funds and ending the earmarking of funds for specific projects, including demonstration projects. TxDOT also supports amending Title 23 to allow states to transfer a greater percentage of NHS funds to the STP without the approval of the Secretary and to allow states to transfer up to 50 percent of their Interstate Maintenance funds to the STP without the approval of the Secretary.



TxDOT recommends revising Title 23 to allow states to streamline the project agreement process by including multiple projects under a single project agreement.

**North America's Superhighway Coalition:** The organization formerly known as the I-35 Corridor Coalition is now known as the North American Super Highway Coalition (NASCO). The membership is composed of states, cities and provinces from Mexico, Canada and the United States. New members of the coalition are the State of Iowa and the Mexican city and state of San Luis Potosi. The coalition's goals are to persuade Canada, Mexico and the United States to create a continental transportation policy that mirrors the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) trade policies, and persuade Congress to establish a separate fund to maintain and improve I-35 and its feeder highways. This will result in a reduction in travel time for people and goods along the I-35 corridor that links members of the NAFTA.

I-35 runs through downtown Austin.

**I-35 Alternative ( SH 130 ):** SH 130 is a 86-mile planned facility which will serve as an alternative to I-35 from Georgetown to I-10 near Seguin. The proposed facility will be constructed as a four to six-lane, limited access freeway. TxDOT is conducting a Major Investment Study (MIS) for the corridor. The results of the MIS will determine which, if any, other modes of transportation can be accommodated in the corridor.

Some local officials are concerned with the corridor's alignment where it intersects U.S. 290. (Highway 290 is the route to be used to go to the dedication with Mrs. Johnson and to return to the school). They want the State to consider moving the alignment to the east of Lake Walter E. Long because they feel that the road may segregate the neighborhood from Austin. The state modified their consultant contract to include the study of this alternative.

**I-35 - Downtown Austin:** This project will provide additional capacity through downtown Austin. TxDOT has contracted an engineering firm to assist them in the development of a Major Investment Study (MIS) for this project. Depending on the scope of the alternate to be chosen, this project has the potential to be very controversial for political and social issues.

**Austin East-West Freeway:** An East-West freeway through the central area of the City of Austin has been proposed for over 40 years. Attempts to construct an east-west freeway have been successfully opposed by neighborhood groups and local politicians. Traffic demands warrant the construction of such a facility, with FM 2222 (Koenig Lane) being a very likely candidate for the alignment. The City and State are currently actively pursuing a project, however, there is no freeway option being proposed. The recommended typical sections presented by the neighborhood representatives generally meet the minimum design criteria in the TxDOT design Manual.



**Austin Outer Parkway (SH 45):** This is a proposed 82-mile freeway loop encircling the City of Austin. The loop has been broken into a series of five segments for the purpose of project development and environmental processing. The southern, western, and northwestern segments of this loop are the source of considerable controversy, particularly among the local environmental interest groups. It is not presently known what portions of the loop will use federal-aid funds. Most of the eastern segment of the loop will be eliminated because of the proposed SH 130 (MOKAN) that will be parallel to this facility.

**Motorcycle Helmet Repeal Legislation:** Well organized and financed biker groups have been successful in repealing the State's universal motorcycle helmet law. The bill exempts riders ages 21 and above from wearing helmets and is expected to be signed by the Governor. When the universal helmet law was enacted in 1989, motorcycle fatalities and injuries decreased by 56%. NHTSA provided testimony stressing the safety concerns with a repeal.

#### **Safety News:**

In 1996 Texas traffic fatalities increased 18% and the mileage death rate increased to 2.0, up from 1.7 in 1995.

Speed limits were raised on many highways and two-lane roads to 70MPH in 1996.

Texas leads the nation in the number of alcohol-related traffic crash fatalities.

Alcohol-related traffic crash fatalities are 53%, far above the national average of 41%.

The State's universal motorcycle helmet law repeal was repealed in 1997

**Port Concerns:** Texas port officials in attendance at the transportation forum at the LBJ Library on August 27, will be interested in the Secretary's position regarding "specifically fencing federal funding" for port intermodal access in the ISTEA reauthorization legislation. The current ISTEA process is identified as lacking emphasis and concern for sufficient port infrastructure.

#### **Transit/Austin:**

FTA has provided approximately \$37 million of funding from 1993 to the present to the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Capital Metro) to support mass transportation in the Austin urbanized area. Funding was provided for: acquisition of buses and vans, sedans/station wagons, support vehicles, associated capital maintenance items, maintenance and administration facility modifications, acquisition of miscellaneous shop and support Equipment, Acquisition of Communications System and Miscellaneous Equipment, acquisition of Computer Hardware and Software, Acquisition of Security Equipment, Acquisition of Passenger Amenities, and Construction of Park & Ride lots, and Transfer Facilities, Transportation Planning Funds, and Operating Assistance for 1993, 1994, 1995. They received no operating assistance in 1996.



Capital Metro received no discretionary funds during those years, and has not yet received any grants during the current fiscal year. They currently have an application pending for \$15,688,158 in Section 9 funds, \$1,362,559 for operating assistance and \$14 million for replacement vehicles. Capital Metro plans a \$41 million major bus replacement initiative over the next several years.

Capital Metro also has submitted a Section 5309 Livable Communities Initiative grant application for \$1,000,000 to fund the East 11th Street Corridor Project. The project will provide street, transit, and pedestrian enhancements to a predominately African-American neighborhood in East Austin, once regarded as the core of a thriving African-American community from the late 1800's through the 1970's. Known as Capitol Hill, this area is located near downtown just east of the Capitol.

FTA has two Letters of No Prejudice (LONP) pending from Capital Metro in connection with light rail transit proposals. The first would cover the costs of the Major Investment Study (MIS) for the Southeast Corridor (the "Orange Line"). The second LONP would cover Preliminary Engineering (PE)/ Environmental Impact Study of the "Red Line," a 30-mile segment from downtown Austin northwest to Leander. Capital Metro has submitted a request to enter into PE on the Red Line.

**Transit/Statewide:** FTA has provided approximately \$73 million of funding from 1993 to the present to the TxDOT to support mass transportation in the State's rural areas and for the State's elderly and disabled rural and urban community. Funding was provided to TxDOT through the following FTA grant programs: Section 5309 Discretionary program, Section 5310 Elderly and Persons with Disabilities, Section 5311 Nonurbanized Area Formula, and Section 5313/5314 State/National Planning and Research. Funding was provided for acquisition of buses, vans, passenger amenities, computer hardware and software, security equipment, shop equipment, construction of park and ride facilities, bus terminals and intermodal transit centers, maintenance and administrative facilities, Americans With Disabilities modifications to facilities, and operating and technical assistance.

**Commuter Rail:** A State bill recently signed into law by Governor Bush enables the creation of "Intermunicipal Commuter Rail Districts." Austin and San Antonio are expected to be part of one such district, but the parties that would have to be involved (cities, counties, and transit authorities) have not yet signed an agreement creating the district, nor have funding ratios been established.

Nonetheless, the Austin-San Antonio Corridor Council, whose members include various public agencies and private parties within the Interstate 35 corridor, has been meeting regularly to assess the feasibility, and to promote the development, of a commuter rail system. Funding for the council is provided by the members.

A request for proposals will be issued shortly, seeking consulting services to conduct a major investment study of the commuter rail system. Funding will come from Texas DOT, as well



as transit authorities and the Metropolitan Planning Organizations of Austin and San Antonio.

**Non-Electric Locomotive Technology Development:** FRA, in cooperation with the Department of Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency is providing funding to the University of Texas in Austin to develop a flywheel and gas turbine powered locomotive -known as Advanced Locomotive Propulsion System (ALPS) -to provide acceleration equivalent to that of an electric locomotive without the need for catenary. The construction of the full-scale flywheel rotor has begun. The project is now proceeding to integrate the ALPS into a locomotive shell to conduct a rolling demonstration.

**Train Incident:** On August 20 at about 11:30PM (CDT), a collision occurred between two Union Pacific Trains in Ft. Worth. The engineer and pilot were killed in the collision. The conductor and an electrician were also on board the westward train. The conductor sustained a broken arm and minor burns. The electrician was not injured.

As a result of the collision, the locomotives caught fire. There are no hazardous materials involved. Two locomotives on the westward train and four locomotives on the eastward consist were derailed

Preliminary reports indicate the eastward light locomotives were unoccupied and had traveled approximately 11 miles in eight minutes when the collision occurred. UP Train Symbolized MFWEP-20 was given permission past a red signal as it was departing Centennial Yard by the local control operator prior to the collision.

The eastward light locomotive consist passed through a motion detector circuit at a highway-rail grade crossing 1.25 miles from the point of impact at 60-61 mph. The lead two locomotives on each consist were destroyed.

Interviews have been conducted with the engineer and conductor of the light locomotive consist, the electrician from the westward train, the operator at Fort Worth

The engineer of the light locomotives stated during his interview that he applied the handbrake on the lead locomotive and opened the battery knife switch. The third locomotive is the only one with the engine running; the other three were out of fuel. The conductor opened the battery knife switches on the trailing three units and shut down the engine on the third unit. The battery knife switch disconnects the power supply for electrically operated controls on each locomotive, including the event recorders. The engineer checked each unit prior to departing the location.

A re-creation of the collision is scheduled for August 22.

**Airport Improvements:** Robert Mueller Municipal Airport has served as the city of Austin's commercial service air carrier airport since 1930. In January, 1991, upon the closing of the Bergstrom Airforce Base, the city of Austin opted to utilize the base as a replacement for their current airport. Since 1991 passenger activity has grown at record



breaking levels; growth is about 6/5% although 4/5% was projected in the Master Plan. Cargo tonnage was forecast in the Airport Master Plan to grow at 5 percent annually. From 1992 through 1996, air cargo tonnage has increased by 30 to 40 percent annually.

By the year 2012 new jobs associated with the airport are expected to exceed 16,000, including direct and indirect employment. Airport operation jobs will account for over 70 percent of the total jobs. In addition, over 725,000 square feet of new development is expected to be drawn to the new airport and the surrounding area. Included in this development will be industrial, office, hotel/motel and retail business.

Austin-Bergstrom opened for air cargo operation on June 28, 1997. On June 16, 1997, the FAA issued a limited operating certificate for the new Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. The Federal Aviation Regulation Part 139 certificate permits commercial cargo operations on the existing 12, 250 foot runway while remainder of the airport construction is completed.

The city of Austin has requested \$5 million in Military Airport Program (MAP) assistance to support the construction of the air terminal parking lot. The FAA is processing a tentative allocation of \$2 million for this project. **In accordance with FAA policy, the city of Austin has not been briefed on the status of their MAP application as of this date.**

The city of Austin and the FAA are evaluating the status of a proposed Class IV landfill that would be located south of the new Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. The landowners have a permit to operate the landfill as a disposal site for construction materials. The operation of the landfill is being reviewed for compliance with FAA Order 5200.5A, "Waste Disposal Sites On or Near Airport." If the landfill is not permitted under provisions of the order, the city of Austin will most likely be required to acquire the property at a substantial cost.

The State of Texas and the city of Austin are finalizing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) outlining the relocation of the Texas State Aircraft Pooling Board and the Texas National Guard operations from Robert Mueller Municipal Airport to Austin-Bergstrom International Airport subject to the approval of the Department and/or the FAA.

**Airport Security:** Local news media recently aired items about airport security and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) passenger screening checkpoint tests conducted at Robert Mueller Municipal Airport. Due to what the airport perceives as "negative press" regarding airport security, the Director of Aviation for the city of Austin has requested the FAA investigate the training of passenger screeners contracted to the air carriers.

The regional FAA Security Division is investigating the matter.