



Capital Area Planning Council

2512 IH 35 South, Suite 200
Austin, TX 78704
512.916.6000 (fax) 512.916.6001

January 24, 2002

Mr. James Randall, P.E.
Texas Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 149217
Austin, Texas 78714-9217

Re: Comments on Proposed Changes to the Unified Transportation Program

Dear Mr. Randall:

The Capital Area Regional Transportation Planning Organization (CARTPO) was created two years ago to address regional transportation issues in the ten-county Capital Area Planning Council (CAPCO) region. The organization is made up largely of local elected and appointed officials representing the ten counties and their respective cities. CARTPO members have collectively developed an official response to the changes being proposed for the Unified Transportation Program, and we hope that TxDOT will consider this response when making future UTP decisions.

CARTPO generally supports TxDOT's proposed changes, with the following recommendations:

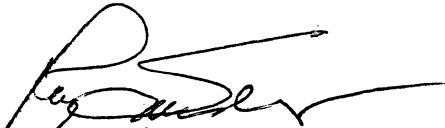
- Ensure that local and regional transportation organizations are given the opportunity to provide input about corridor funding selection criteria;
 - CARTPO would like to participate in developing the criteria that is used to decide which non-MPO corridors are selected for funding, with emphasis on the importance of Farm-to-Market roads as Statewide Connectivity Corridors.
- Increased discretion for the District Engineer is a positive change; however, there should also be an increase in communication between TxDOT and localities on transportation planning and projects to ensure that both rural and urban needs are addressed;
 - CARTPO would like to ensure that local communities do not lose autonomy under greater District discretion. Rather, it hopes that the proposed changes will encourage a continuous dialogue between TxDOT and local entities and

that cities and counties will have a greater ability to make and influence traffic safety decisions.

- Under Category 1, Preventive Maintenance & Rehabilitation, ensure adequate funding for Farm-to-Market rehabilitation;
 - CARTPO is concerned about the recent decline in funding for the Farm-to-Market system, especially because many of these roads have become inundated with traffic due to extensive regional growth. It wishes to emphasize the importance of continued rehabilitation funding for FM roads, and would like to examine the possibility of upgrading or redefining some FM roads to accommodate increases in traffic.
- Under Category 4, Statewide Connectivity Corridor Projects, ensure that Farm-to-Market roads receive equal consideration for funding along with the Texas Trunk System and the Interstate Highway System;
 - CARTPO is concerned that the Farm-to-Market system will not be able to compete with Interstate Highway expansion and Texas Trunk System projects under the Statewide Connectivity Corridor funding category. It would like to stress that FM roads should be given the same consideration as other corridors in this category because of their equally important function in rural/urban connectivity.
- Under Category 11, District Discretionary, increase discretionary funding from the proposed \$2.5 million level, and place any leftover funds available from other fund consolidations into this category.

Thank you for providing an opportunity for organizations such as CARTPO to participate in this important process. We hope that TxDOT will continue to promote local and regional involvement in future Unified Transportation Program decisions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ray Sanders', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ray Sanders
Mayor, City of Lockhart
CARTPO Chairman

elt