

Putting Texas Transportation Back On The Road To Success

Kay Bailey Hutchison's Proposal For Putting Texas Transportation Back On The Road. As Governor, Kay Bailey Hutchison will restore trust in the Texas Department of Transportation and increase the agency's commitment to bottom-up transportation planning as a matter of first priority. She will protect the taxpayers of Texas by reforming TxDOT's broken financing. She will end the Trans-Texas Corridor once and for all. Hutchison's plan will put Texas back on the road to another century of success through a new long-term vision of a multimodal, efficient, and modern transportation system.

- **Hutchison Believes That Maintaining Our Transportation Infrastructure Is An Investment We Must Make To Preserve Our Quality Of Life And Keep Our Economy Competitive In The 21st Century.** She believes that our state transportation planning should focus on reducing congestion and improving connectivity, and focusing on our long-term needs in a multimodal strategy. Just trying to fix the potholes and add major toll roads, as has been the practice of the present governor, is not a long-term strategy.

Hutchison's Plan To Put Texas Transportation Back On The Road To Success: Protect Texans' Property Rights And Quality Of Life. Hutchison will defend the rights that Texans hold dear. She will kill the Trans-Texas Corridor once and for all, and protect both private property from eminent domain, and state property from falling into the hands of unaccountable private parties.

- **Kill The Trans–Texas Corridor Once–And–For–All.** The \$175 billion Trans–Texas Corridor project would have consumed nearly 600,000 acres of our land. Texans rightly rejected the plan, but the authority to continue development remains in the Texas Transportation Code. Kay Bailey Hutchison will work with the legislature to repeal the relevant provisions in the Transportation Code and kill the Trans–Texas Corridor once and for all. The Trans–Texas Corridor will not be dead until we have a new governor.
- **Protect Public Land From Private Developers.** Public–private partnerships are an important part of a modern transportation system, and can often build roads faster and cheaper than the government could do it working alone. But too often, those partnerships have given unfair advantages to private parties at public expense. Some Comprehensive Development Agreements in Texas contain obscure clauses that limit public rights without the public fully realizing it. Some clauses would prohibit the state from building public roads within a certain distance of the toll road. Others could steer traffic onto toll roads by lowering the speed limit on the public road and raising the speed limit on the toll road.

As Governor, Hutchison will reform private highway financing to ensure that public–private partnerships truly benefit the public. She believes that:

- No state contracts should reduce the speed limit on public roads in order to increase traffic volume on toll roads.
- No existing free road should be tolled, except to add capacity through new tolled lanes within existing rights of way.
- Existing rights–of–way should be used for necessary capacity expansion to the maximum extent possible.
- Private contractors should not be awarded exclusive concessionary rights along frontage roads.
- Local communities should have the right to determine whether

new roads should be tolled or publicly constructed.

- The ability to restrict construction or expansion of public roads under a Comprehensive Development Agreement should be reformed, including preservation of the right to assume public ownership and operation of the toll project in the future.

Restore Trust In The Leadership Of The Texas Department Of Transportation.

Rank-and-file TxDOT personnel have been working hard to maintain the public trust. For too long, their efforts have been undermined by the leadership, which has justly earned a reputation of being “unaccountable” and “out of control.” That is why a key element of the Hutchison administration’s transportation plan will be to restore the people’s trust and confidence in TxDOT leadership.

- **Restructure The Texas Transportation Commission.** Like more than 10,000 of our Texas bridges, the Texas Transportation Commission is “structurally deficient” and “functionally obsolete.” As Governor, Kay Bailey Hutchison will propose expanding the Commission to nine members and give the agency a more rational corporate structure. She will seek a statutory change to give the Texas Transportation Commission the role of a “board of directors,” focused on representing the “shareholders” – the citizens of Texas – in long-range planning, oversight of TxDOT management, and outreach to the people and communities of Texas, but staying out of day-to-day decision-making. “Policy direction, not project selection” will be the cornerstone of the TxDOT management philosophy under the Hutchison administration. Appointments to TxDOT will be made by balancing regional interests on a statewide basis, and in a timely manner – not held over for months or years at a time. Commissioners will have meaningful transportation planning expertise – not simply benefit from political cronyism.

- **Hire A CEO Of Transportation.** Hutchison will propose making the executive director of TxDOT a true “CEO,” focused on management decisions, and on balancing the operations, resources, and competing interests of the various parts of TxDOT. That person would have broad expertise in transportation planning and managerial experience overseeing large complex operations. Under current law, the chairman of the Commission has more than twice as many statutorily listed responsibilities as the Executive Director – despite being a part-time political appointee. This is backwards. The agency should cast a wide net, recruit a person with transportation and management expertise, and put that expertise to work to get this state moving again.
- **Give Transportation Planning Back To The People.** Hutchison’s plan will mirror the Texas water planning model passed in Senate Bill 1 of the 75th Legislature by implementing a bottom-up, grass roots approach that will put the local communities and citizens of Texas first. TxDOT will rely to a greater degree on the local planning expertise developed in the state’s Metropolitan Planning Organizations. These planning groups should use common criteria for the make-up of their boards, and there must be meaningful regional participation in the MPOs by surrounding communities.

Increase Transparency And Accountability. In 2008, state legislators were informed that TxDOT had uncovered a \$1.1 billion over-budgeting error, which led to budget cuts in excess of fifty percent, in some areas. Worse, TxDOT leadership failed to disclose the blunder to lawmakers for more than four months. In the aftermath, over a billion dollars in planned transportation projects were cancelled or postponed. We must restore our taxpayers’ trust that their transportation dollars are being efficiently and properly spent. Until we restore that trust, planning will suffer, efficiency will suffer,

and confidence in TxDOT will continue to erode.

- **Demand Transparency In Transportation Project Planning.**

Local planning efforts require truly collaborative efforts on the part of our state transportation agency – not just lip service. TxDOT and MPOs often use independent data and information to develop their transportation plans, leading to inconsistencies from region to region. Long-range plans are not ranked or scored on a statewide basis, and the state’s comprehensive transportation goals are incomplete, at best. Little transparency exists in the current process, and local planning organizations often do not have a clear understanding of state transportation priorities, partly because TxDOT has not updated the Texas Transportation Plan with sufficient frequency. As Governor, Hutchison will call for greater consistency in the planning stages by developing commonly understood forecasts for revenues, population growth, and other factors, so that regional planning organizations can rely on uniform assumptions when developing long term plans. The current apples-and-oranges approach at the local and regional level hamstring TxDOT’s ability to integrate local priorities into a seamless statewide plan. TxDOT should be required to prepare a comprehensive planning framework, using criteria developed with stakeholder input. Factors such as importance to the state as a whole, availability of federal and local funding, and minimization of right-of-way acquisition via condemnation should be considered. Overall, the plan should offer a decades-long perspective, but provide sufficient flexibility in the near term to allow for adjustments as need arises.

- **Require Additional Accountability In Measuring Results.** A frequent criticism of TxDOT is that the agency does not effectively measure and report outcomes of transportation planning efforts and does not track project progress or

completion. The Texas Sunset Commission pointed out that documents for transportation projects are developed “with no detailed guidance from state law or rule,” and that the Agency lacks “a statewide system for measuring and reporting on progress” toward milestones in a project’s development. In the Hutchison administration, TxDOT will develop outcome-based accountability measures for project completion at the district and statewide levels. Relieving urban congestion will be the top priority, which will in turn enhance the suburbs and rural areas. She will direct TxDOT to develop tools that calculate each project’s expected impact on congestion relief, and will review the outcome of the completed project against that goal. Milestones will be developed at the front end, and adhered to over time. TxDOT districts will be held accountable for number of projects completed, successful completion of individual projects within defined timelines, and adherence to prescribed budgets. Districts will be ranked annually by performance criteria, and answerable to state leadership for failing to produce results. The TxDOT internet portal needs updating. Data related to ongoing projects is clustered together in an overwhelming and uninformative fashion. Many projects do not appear to be updated regularly enough, and the site provides the public little meaningful opportunity to review what progress is being made on improving the state’s transportation infrastructure. Hutchison will work with TxDOT to more effectively use their web portal to communicate the state’s efforts to solve our transportation problems.

- **Get Smarter.** Under the Hutchison administration, TxDOT will make smarter use of taxpayer funds, by being more creative with existing resources. By partnering with cities and urban counties to tackle highway overcrowding, the agency could become a “center of innovation,” principally focusing on ways to marry technology with innovative approaches to relieving

congestion, even on arterial roadways. Texas needs to make more extensive use of creative means to manage traffic flow – such as increased reliance on bi-directional lanes, using GPS technology to design signage for motorists, greater coordination of traffic signals, and bus turnouts on crowded arteries.

- **Stop Highway Fund Diversions.** Over the last several years, the state has diverted billions from Fund 6 into the General Revenue budget, mostly through allocations to the Department of Public Safety. In the 2010–2011 state budget, nearly \$1.2 billion of the \$7.5 billion available in Fund 6 is diverted to other purposes. There must be significantly more truth in taxation when it comes to financing our highway infrastructure. The current governor acknowledges the problem, but has shown little willingness to work with the legislature to curb the practice. As Governor, Hutchison will restore transparency and fairness to the state primary resource for building transportation infrastructure. She will work with the legislature to end the diversions of Fund 6 and to pass a constitutional amendment limiting the purposes for which the revenue sources dedicated to Fund 6 can be used, so that road construction and maintenance again becomes the purpose for collecting these taxes. The constitutional dedication to education should not be affected.
- **Appoint A Select Committee On Transportation Funding And Waste Reduction.** Texans don't trust TxDOT. Nor does the legislature. For the Hutchison administration, fixing this problem and restoring the trust of taxpayers and lawmakers is job one. Over the long term, there are transportation funding hurdles that must be overcome. Texas will need a reliable revenue stream for transportation infrastructure. As Governor, Kay Bailey Hutchison will appoint a Select Committee on Transportation Funding and Waste Reduction, representing diverse business interests, economists, public

finance experts, and community interests. Their first objective will be to target and identify areas of current operation that could be curtailed or eliminated, to stop waste and free up needed revenue. Unlike the current governor, whose first order of business would be to increase motor fuels taxes, Kay Bailey Hutchison believes that taxpayers should not be asked to shoulder increased tax burdens while TxDOT leadership is mismanaging the money they have. If additional revenue resources are recommended by the Select Committee and passed by the legislature, she would not support them unless the people in the affected area agree through an election. Furthermore, the Select Committee will be charged with making recommendations as to the methods that should be employed to fund highway and rail facilities for the next 25 years. The Select Committee will offer the governor and the legislature new strategies for the long-term financing of road construction and maintenance, as well as funding a greater reliance on multi-modal transportation initiatives for moving people and cargo around the state more efficiently. Their recommendations will be part of the Sunset review process for 2011, and Hutchison will call for a six-year sunset for the agency, rather than the usual twelve years, so that any deficiencies in agency funding or operations will not be allowed to languish.

Long-Term Outlook: A Multimodal Transportation

Network. The Texas economy has long been among the world's strongest and most successful, in large part because Texas had one of the world's premier transportation systems. But over the last ten years, our transportation system has languished in neglect while the needs of our population and economy continue to accelerate. TxDOT predicts that over the next 25 years, the population of the state will increase by 64 percent, and road use by 214 percent, but current plans only

call for a six percent increase in road capacity. Many transportation corridors and hubs are headed for 100 percent capacity with no expansion plans in the works. The added costs of congestion will drive businesses away from Texas, while our residents spend dramatically increasing amounts of time just sitting in traffic. The challenge will be particularly acute in the “Texas Triangle” formed by Houston, Dallas–Ft. Worth, and San Antonio. Soon, 75 percent of the population of Texas will live in this region, with 50 percent living on the I–35 corridor alone. The Texas Triangle is the heart of the state’s economy, which is why congestion in the triangle represents Texas’s foremost transportation challenge, and affects the rest of the state’s future as well. What’s more, NAFTA and globalization are dramatically increasing the volume of freight traffic, particularly on the I–35 corridor. Our economy is diversifying, to include more high–tech and service industries, in addition to our traditional fossil fuels, manufacturing, and agricultural interests. These trends dictate a need for greater capacity along existing highways, but also for alternate types of transportation integrated into a statewide network, to include airports, waterways & ports, high–speed rail, freight corridors, and the intermodal connectors to link them all together.

- **Develop An Integrated Multi–Modal Vision Under A Director Of Mobility.** Under Hutchison’s leadership, TxDOT long–term planning will embrace multimodal approach to planning that will ultimately marry our state’s highways, airways, railways and waterways. The state should explore ways for traditional hubs such as airports and rail stations to link through intermodal connectors, so that people and freight can quickly

travel throughout the state, seamlessly moving from one mode of transportation to another. Under this concept, TxDOT's long term focus should not be limited to merely building highway capacity. Instead, transportation resources should be used to improve connectivity among modes, with a goal of reducing bottlenecks and urban congestion, and improving travel time reliability, and increasing options for rural residents. Kay Bailey Hutchison believes this 21st century transportation planning effort should take place under the direction of a new TxDOT "Director of Mobility." The current office of the Assistant Executive Director for Engineering Operations should be reorganized and elevated to assume a principal role in long-range multi-modal planning – developed from the "grass roots up" in consultation with people and stakeholders across Texas.

- **A "Strategic Freight Initiative."** The Hutchison administration will work with TxDOT to develop a long-term freight plan to alleviate roadway congestion and develop the transportation infrastructure necessary to handle increased freight traffic from the growth in our economy. The Strategic Freight Initiative will focus on integrating our most important transportation facilities, including airports, seaports, freight rail terminals, and rail corridors. Development of a system of intermodal transfer facilities to smooth freight movement from ship to rail to highway will be the priority. TxDOT should assist in relocating urban freight rail networks to relieve metropolitan roadway congestion and increase safety, as well as accommodate future growth in freight transportation. Often the bottle neck is in the intermodal connector, the links between corridors and hubs which makes a transportation system truly multimodal. Texas must prioritize the development of those connectors – particularly short-distance freight movement facilities. As Governor, Kay Bailey Hutchison will work with legislators to truly fund the Rail

Relocation and Improvement Fund, which was created by the voters in 2005 but has yet to receive state appropriations. Priority should be given to leveraging state dollars with private and federal funds.

- **Renew Emphasis On High-Speed And Commuter Rail.** Because of the distances and population densities involved, the area within the “Texas Triangle” of Dallas–Ft. Worth, Houston and San Antonio is ideal for a system of high-speed and commuter rail. Over the long term, such a system could significantly improve mobility throughout the state, allowing people to have more options for where they live and work. This kind of investment is more economically viable than ever before. A Hutchison administration will work with airlines, railroads, local landowners, and other stakeholders to develop such a system. Using existing rights of way, and where possible existing rail infrastructure and existing facilities, should be the priority – and protection of private property rights must be a paramount consideration. Until Texas has a fast, reliable, cost-effective alternative to sitting in freeway traffic, our long-term intrastate travel needs will continue to go unmet.