

Construction and Maintenance of TxDOT Facilities in the Houston Area

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When we discuss future projects in the Houston area, we also discuss how projects are completed here. I want to talk about two things really, and only two things — the way we've done things in the past and the way we're gonna do things. It is not exaggeration to say that Houston is the most dynamic economy in Texas. It is the largest, it is the most diversified, it is the most envied. The transportation system you see in place has been purchased at a considerable amount of money. In no other area of the state is there such a concentration of funds spent to increase mobility. This includes not only state and federal funds administered by TxDOT, but also local funds — cities, counties, and Metro.

The future is going to be a different kind of place and I will give you two very good examples — the Pierce Elevated and Beltway 8. When the Pierce Elevated was completed, the contractor had won the largest incentive awarded ever earned in the state of Texas. The project was a model of innovation and future development. The success of this project has already been recognized by the Houston Branch of the American Society of Civil Engineers and the public information component won the Texas Public Relations Association Silver Spur Award for Non-Profit Organizations.

Beltway 8 was conceived in the early years after World War II, but in the early 70's the county asked the state to take on this project. When the state ran out of money, it fell to Harris County to establish a toll authority to see the work completed. In the 90's, TxDOT and Harris County Toll Road Authority (HCTRA) completed the long-awaited southern portion of the beltway. Beltway 8 is still incomplete but we are going to have to work in partnership to achieve the kinds of success that we have seen in our past. As more agencies participate in road buildings, as more agencies build different kinds of roadways, the need for a coordinated system will be greater. We do have TranStar in place, and it will certainly help to coordinate mobility.

For our agency, there are challenges ahead: NASA Road 1, rebuilding the Galveston Causeway, the widening of IH 10 and the complete restructuring of the West Loop.

The future suggests that partnerships such as the one that built the South Belt will be the most effective means of achieving our purposes. While there are multiple layers of government responsible for the creation and maintenance of roadways, there are also transportation corporations, such as the Grand Parkway Association, and jointly sponsored public organizations such as TranStar, the four-agency traffic management partnership. There are obvious partners — the City of Houston and Harris County, for example. We have a continuing partnership with METRO and the Harris County Toll Road Authority. Working together we will determine the best use of the Katy Corridor or the Westpark Corridor.

That is why I am here today. Take nothing for granted. Do not believe that because this agency has performed in an historical, traditional fashion that we cannot change, that we do not desire to demonstrate a meaningful change.