



**SAN ANTONIO MOBILITY COALITION, INC.
(SAMCo)**

FEDERAL ISSUES AGENDA

**Transportation Funding and San Antonio
Priority Projects**

2008 and 2009 Appropriations

**Adopted by the SAMCo Board of Directors
on February 19, 2007**

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**SA TO DC XXVIII
ISSUE PAPER**

FEDERAL HIGHWAY TRUST FUND AND 2008 APPROPRIATIONS

TITLE: Support action by the federal government to prevent the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) from going into deficit by 2009. Indexing the federal motor fuels taxes would have the most immediate and substantial impact. Closing the remaining exemptions to the HTF, recrediting interest to the HTF, and dedicating 10% of U.S. Customs revenues to transportation would help close the revenue gap and help keep the HTF solvent. The federal government should also give state and local governments more revenue and investment options by authorizing expanded use of tolling, stimulating greater use of innovative financing tools, and encouraging states to index their motor fuel taxes to keep pace with inflation. These short-term strategies must be implemented while longer-term solutions are being developed. In addition, we would urge Congress to restore transportation earmarks in the 2008 appropriations bills with appropriate safeguards to ensure a transparent and accountable process.

BACKGROUND: A recent analysis by the National Chamber Foundation (NCF) indicates that by 2015, annual Highway Trust Fund (HTF) revenues will fall \$23 billion short of the federal share needed to maintain highway and transit systems (\$64 billion total) and \$48 billion short of the federal share needed to improve the systems to a level that benefits the nation's economic productivity (\$89 billion total). The current average annual federal revenue is \$41 billion. The major reason for the shortfall in federal revenues is that federal motor fuel taxes are not indexed to inflation and have not been adjusted recently. Congress has periodically increased motor fuel taxes to keep pace with the nation's transportation needs, but the last increase was in 1993. Federal motor fuel taxes have lost about one-third of their purchasing power to inflation since then.

The recently enacted Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU) legislation provides guaranteed federal funding for highway and transit capital improvements to a cumulative total of \$286.4 billion for the 2004 to 2009 period. However, the estimated revenues coming into the HTF during this period total only about \$231 billion. Together, the projected expenditure and revenue patterns result in a complete drawdown of the Highway Account of the HTF to zero cash balance in 2008 – well ahead of the end of the SAFETEA-LU authorization period.

The federal government should take action now to narrow the revenue gap and to prevent the HTF from going into deficit. The short-term proposals outlined above - including indexing the federal motor fuels tax - are detailed in the *2005 Future Highway and Public Transportation Financing* document prepared by the NCF. These actions could significantly narrow the revenue gap in the period 2006 to 2015 while longer-term strategies are developed for future years. Failure to act will likely result in additional rescissions of funding to the states, which have already started to erode the amount of funding originally promised in SAFETEA-LU.

With regard to transportation earmarks which have been essentially eliminated for 2007, we encourage the Congress to restore the earmark process for 2008 and beyond with appropriate safeguards to prevent abuses, provide a more transparent process, and ensure that funding is provided only for high priority transportation projects.

CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT: Seeking support from the San Antonio area delegation.

OBJECTIVES:

- Support action by the federal government to prevent the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) from going into deficit.
- Implement short-term solutions including indexing the federal motor fuels tax.
- Restore earmarks for 2008 transportation appropriations process with appropriate safeguards to ensure a transparent and accountable process.

BENEFITS: Maintaining a positive balance in the Highway Trust Fund will enable the federal government to meet its transportation funding commitments under SAFETEA-LU and prevent further recessions of highway funding to the states. Restoring transportation earmarks with appropriate safeguards will allow members of Congress to target transportation funding to priority projects in each of their districts. This funding typically fills gaps in existing local, state, and federal funding for high priority projects.

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RAIL SAFETY AND RELOCATION

TITLE: Secure adequate short and long-range federal funding for proposed freight rail relocation projects in Bexar County and along the Austin-San Antonio I-35 corridor and to support development of a commuter rail system between Austin and San Antonio. Specifically:

Communicate to the Bexar County federal delegation the importance of maintaining federal rail funding and increasing its flexibility by allowing federal highway dollars to be used for rail projects that will improve highway safety and decrease congestion.

Communicate to Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) officials our region's interest in accessing Railroad Rehabilitation and Infrastructure Financing (RRIF) funds for rail relocation purposes.

Secure a matching grant of \$1.61 million in federal funding to construct two rail lead tracks and two switches from the Union Pacific line to facilities at East Kelly.

San Antonio supports increased funding for the Federal Railroad Administration's Safety Improvement and Development Team (SIDT).

BACKGROUND: Efficient transportation is the backbone of free trade and our region's economic development efforts. Bexar County is an important nexus of east-west and north-south rail and truck traffic. Local corridors bear traffic generated by three primary trading partners: the United States, Mexico, and now China. Transshipment of cargo from China through the Port of Lazaro Cardenas in Mexico and on to the Port of San Antonio trims days from the processing time required by California's more distant ports.

Local traffic has increased dramatically post-NAFTA and will likely continue to grow at its current pace. Nationally, shipments by truck are increasing 2 percent per year; regionally this figure is 6 percent; and locally it is 15 percent. A 1999 federal report recommended that 50 percent of freight moving between Dallas and Laredo be carried on rail. This is not currently feasible as the Union Pacific freight line running through the San Antonio-Austin corridor has nearly 200 at-grade crossings and is at or near maximum capacity. At the same time, 80 percent of Mexico's trade with the US and Canada passes through Texas, 75 percent via truck on I-35.

Rail relocation is also an essential public safety issue. Bexar County suffered four major derailments and five other serious rail incidents in 2004 alone, resulting in four deaths. Increased traffic in urban areas leads to special problems involving the transport of toxic materials. However, industries rely on these products and rail is in fact a safer transportation mode than trucking. Both short and long-range plans must take into consideration public safety concerns, enhancement to regional vitality, and environmental issues. Rail relocation can help our region address air quality concerns. Bexar County and other regional Council of Governments partners have developed an Early Action Compact with the EPA that will delay or avoid non-attainment penalties for air quality violations. Reducing vehicle emissions will help the region stay on target and meet the Compact's goals. Rail relocation can assist by reducing idling and congestion through elimination of at-grade crossings, and by facilitating the transfer of shipments from road to rail.

Currently, Bexar County is participating in a TxDOT freight rail study to determine the most cost-effective investments in rail relocation. Preliminary findings show that a bypass skirting San Antonio's southern boundary could connect with a rail line to be built within the alignment of the State Highway 130/Trans-Texas Corridor-35 (TTC-35) alignment. The new corridor has the potential to handle more traffic than the existing I-35 alignment, which would then become available for commuter rail between Austin and San Antonio once freight rail is relocated. The TxDOT can be used as a basis for prioritizing specific improvement projects in the existing system as well as estimating needs for the new bypass.

The total cost for the new rail line is estimated to be more than \$2 billion. Short-term safety improvements to existing urban tracks total more than \$100 million. Allowing federal highway funds to be "flexed" and used for rail relocation that will reduce highway congestion is an important step in funding these improvements.

Another potential source of funding is the Railroad Rehabilitation and Infrastructure Financing (RRIF) program administered by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), a program that the White House has proposed eliminating in 2007. The RRIF program provides loans rather than grants at low interest rates with a six-year deferred payback.

Short-term improvements are also necessary to address the growth in trade and will require additional federal funding to match local dollars. At the Port of San Antonio, proposed rail infrastructure improvements will provide support to facilities currently in design. The two lead tracks will provide switching and train car logistical support capabilities to a 360,000 square foot cross-dock distribution warehouse and a 100,000 square foot transload warehouse and staging area for tenants specializing in manufacturing and logistics that support rapidly-increasing trade/cargo requirements. The potential for the Port Authority to develop KellyUSA as a multi-modal logistics hub creating an additional 6,000 jobs and servicing the movement of cargo between China, Mexico, and Canada, and between Long Beach, CA, and Jacksonville, FL cannot be achieved without the construction of this project to support the rail component of the multi-modal development plan. This rail project is a necessary infrastructure improvement to provide a platform for significant private investment into the development of the Rail Port at KellyUSA.

The total project cost will be approximately \$23.32 million. The current year minimum objective is to secure a matching grant of \$1.61 million to add to local funding of \$1.61 million for the \$3.22 million rail infrastructure portion of the project requirements.

In order to provide for greater rail safety, we also urge increased funding for the Federal Railroad Administration's Safety Improvement and Development Team (SIDT). The primary mission of the SIDT is to manage the Office of Safety's Technical Training Program for the 600 Federal and participating State railroad safety inspectors and specialists of the five technical disciplines (Hazardous Materials, Motive Power and Equipment, Operating Practices, Signal and Train Control, and Track). To accomplish this mission, the team designs, develops, and delivers specialized internal courses, and administers contract training from external sources as necessary.

CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT: Requesting support from U.S. Senators Kay Bailey Hutchison and John Cornyn and all members of the Bexar County Congressional Delegation.

OBJECTIVES:

- Communicate to the Bexar County federal delegation the importance of maintaining federal rail funding and increasing its flexibility by allowing federal highway dollars to be used for rail projects that will improve highway safety and decrease congestion.
- Communicate to Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) officials our region's interest in accessing Railroad Rehabilitation and Infrastructure Financing (RRIF) funds for rail relocation purposes.
- Secure a matching grant of \$1.61 million in federal funding to construct two rail lead tracks and two switches from the Union Pacific line to facilities at East Kelly.
- Support increased funding for the Federal Railroad Administration's Safety Improvement and Development Team (SIDT)

BENEFITS: Rail relocation and safety improvements will enhance our region's trade and economic development opportunities, reduce congestion, enhance air quality, reduce exposure to toxic spills, and provide capacity for future development of a commuter rail system.

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BUS RAPID TRANSIT (BRT)

TITLE: The Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project consists of enhanced bus service along Fredericksburg Road extending from the San Antonio Central Business District to the South Texas Medical Center for a distance of approximately 8.7 miles.

BACKGROUND: The Fredericksburg Road corridor connects two of San Antonio's major employment centers including the central business district and the medical center. Located on this corridor, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) would include the following concepts: exclusive right of way (where feasible), enhanced stations, ITS applications (real-time bus arrival information), signal priority, queue jumps, and very frequent service (headways of every 10 minutes or better) creating a more attractive transit service. The overall objective of the BRT system is to reduce travel time and delays, increase schedule adherence, expand market share, and ultimately increase ridership of the transit system

The BRT project on Fredericksburg Road is an element of VIA Metropolitan Transit's Comprehensive Service Plan, which calls for a redesign of fixed route services system-wide. Moreover, it specifies a number of new passenger facilities, including one at the Medical Center to serve as terminal point. *This project is authorized in SAFETEA-LU, and we are providing a 20% local match.*

OBJECTIVE: Obtain an appropriations earmark of \$15 million for costs associated with first year of developing and constructing the project.

BENEFITS:

Efficient Mobility – BRT offers an efficient mode of transportation that is affordable and fits the San Antonio landscape.

Economic - BRT offers a significant improvement in accessibility by linking the two largest employment centers in the region (Central Business District to the Medical Center).

Energy Efficiency - BRT offers efficiency through the use of dedicated rights-of-way and signal priority, whereby transit vehicles will experience shortened lag times.

Air Quality - BRT offers congestion mitigation benefits by potentially attracting auto users to transit.

Safety - BRT offers clearly delineated transit corridors and exclusive rights-of-way, therefore creating defined operating conditions.

Traffic Flow - BRT offers signal optimization for transit, further mitigating congestion and, therefore, benefiting overall traffic flow and aiding energy efficiency.

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MODERNIZATION OF VIA'S BUS FLEET AND BUS FACILITY

TITLE: The requested transit funding would provide for the upgrading and replacement of VIA's bus fleet with environmentally friendly and accessible vehicles to better serve riders, while helping improve air quality. Additionally, this request supports improvements to VIA's maintenance facility, built in 1948, that will allow for modernization of the facility. With plans to grow the system, one maintenance facility will no longer be sufficient and a satellite facility will be necessary. A portion of this funding will also be used to upgrade the farebox and fare collection system.

BACKGROUND: VIA's FY08 Appropriations request includes support to repair VIA's aging bus maintenance facility, and upgrades to the farebox system to increase efficient operations and provide technology for a secure fare collection method. VIA's bus maintenance facility was built in 1948 and needs refurbishing and modernization, providing an opportunity to enhance VIA's efficiencies through the addition of up-to-date technology and improved facilities. As our community shifts its dependence from the automobile to public transportation, federal funding is needed to enable VIA to introduce technologies that provide the necessary service in an efficient and cost effective manner, and to properly maintain the fleet. By upgrading and replacing the transit farebox and fare collection system, VIA is able to offer seamless payment for all regional transit assets, commuter rail, and tolls. This project is authorized in SAFETEA-LU, and VIA is committed to providing a 20% local funding match.

OBJECTIVE: Obtain \$10.8 million in appropriations funding for maintenance facility and farebox system upgrades.

BENEFITS:

The upgrade and replacement of new buses will complete the replacement of the current fleet with new, environmentally friendly buses.

The new buses will also complete the transition of VIA's entire bus fleet to ADA accessible buses, providing more independence for the mobility impaired and growing senior population.

The addition of the new farebox system will allow VIA to introduce a seamless payment system for transit, commuter rail, and tollways, using new technologies that are now available in the transportation industry. The addition of this new farebox system will allow for improved customer service and efficiencies.

VIA is the largest transit system to still operate out of one facility. With the introduction of the Advanced Transportation District, additional services will be introduced prompting the need for a satellite maintenance facility. Additional funding will be necessary to bring this project to fruition.

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36TH STREET EXTENSION

TITLE: The 36th Street Extension Project (the Project) is a major arterial improvement through the Port of San Antonio that will provide enhanced truck access to the Port's industrial areas that will enhance the Port's potential as an aviation and multi-modal logistics hub servicing the movement of cargo between Mexico and Canada, and between Long Beach, CA, and Jacksonville FL.

BACKGROUND: The 36th Street Extension is a major arterial improvement project with five major Phases. The Project expands the airfield development opportunities at Kelly Field, and it provides truck access to the Port's industrial areas, links the Port to the community, and addresses storm drainage problems. The total cost of the Project from US 90 to the connecting arterial in the Port's industrial area is \$52.1M (Phases I, II, and III). TXDOT and the City have contributed \$18.2M to date (Phases I and II). The Port Authority obtained \$3.68M in the legislation that reauthorized the Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU) for the 21st Century to connect the already funded 36th street interchange on the north side of the Port (Phases I and II) with the Port's industrial area (Phase III). The City and the Port Authority are prepared to provide the 20 percent matching requirement for this Phase (\$2M based on federally eligible roadway construction costs of \$9.9M). Total Phase III costs are \$30.7M and, of this, costs paid for or contributed by the City and other local entities will be \$20.8M, a major local commitment.

In addition to the SAFETEA-LU funding, cumulative federal earmarks of \$1.3M have been obtained. Additional federal support of \$4.7M is needed to complete Phase III. Planning has been completed and design is underway to begin this construction in 2008. The Environmental Assessment for the project is scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2006.

OBJECTIVE: Secure federal funding to construct the 36th Street Extension (the Project) through the property of the Port Authority of San Antonio. The total Project cost for all five phases of the Project is \$81.9M. The minimum objective is to secure the unfunded federal requirement of \$4.7M to complete in-progress Phases I through III.

CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT: U.S. Senators Kay Bailey Hutchison and Rep. Charles Gonzalez have previously supported earmarks in SAFETEA-LU for this project.

BENEFITS: The Port's potential as an aviation and multi-modal logistics hub creating an additional 6,000 jobs and servicing the movement of cargo between Mexico and Canada, and between Long Beach, CA, and Jacksonville FL can not be achieved without the construction of this project. This project is critical to the \$364M Development Plan for the Port. The roadway extension identifies a new, expanded airfield development zone and defines associated properties for large office, warehouse, and mixed-use developments to meet market demands. This roadway project is the major infrastructure improvement that will invite significant private investment into the development of the Port and will link existing City of San Antonio arterials and the National Highway System with developed air cargo and rail operations at the Port.

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MEDICAL PARKWAY/FREDERICKSBURG ROAD GRADE SEPARATION

TITLE: The project provides for reconstruction of Medical Parkway as a grade-separated underpass at Fredericksburg Road carrying traffic entering and exiting the South Texas Medical Center from IH 10 using Medical Parkway, as well as reconstruction of Medical Parkway and Fredericksburg Road in the vicinity of the intersection.

BACKGROUND: The San Antonio South Texas Medical Center (STMC) continues to be a growing economic center of the City of San Antonio serving 4.4 million patients annually. Additionally, the STMC is a key contributor to the bio-medical industry, which in 2005 generated over \$14 billion for the San Antonio and South Texas economy. It is anticipated that over the next five years, Medical Center institutions will invest over \$500 million in new facilities and equipment that will produce approximately 27,000 high-wage, professional jobs.

The STMC has also experienced significant traffic congestion with the advent of the continued growth, which has been validated by the results of the recent Traffic Modeling Study and Parking Demand Study of the STMC. In 1999, the Average Daily Traffic (ADT) for Fredericksburg Road was 27,500 and is projected to grow to 49,680 by 2019. Conversely, the ATD for Medical Drive in 1999 was 21,000 and is expected to increase to 35,554 by 2019.

A grade separation at Medical Drive with Fredericksburg Road has been identified as a critical element of effective traffic flow in the region. The objective of the project is to significantly enhance the progression of traffic from Interstate 10 (IH 10) through the Ewing Halsell intersection and into the heart of the STMC. This project will facilitate faster ambulance service from our freeway network to the STMC and connect our citizens to essential care provided at the center. The project will also relieve congestion on existing adjacent arterial roadways in the Medical Center area such as Wurzbach Road and Callaghan Road.

The project entails constructing an underpass at Fredericksburg Road on Medical Drive. Existing Medical Drive consists of an undivided four (4) lane section with left turn bays at the intersection with Fredericksburg Road. The proposed Medical Drive roadway will consist of a four (4) lane divided section east of Fredericksburg Road and a six (6) lane divided section west of Fredericksburg Road.

Partnerships are an essential component of keeping this renowned world class service institution viable. This has been demonstrated through VIA Metropolitan Transit's work to improve circulation in and around the STMC, the City of San Antonio's Signal Preemption System for emergency vehicles, the Medical Center Alliance's involvement and financial contributions, the Texas Department of Transportation's construction of an exit ramp and fly-over from Interstate 10, and other important partners support. However, more must be done and continued support is essential.

The total estimated project cost is \$20,000,000 of which \$7,840,000 has been committed from various local funding sources and federal earmarks. This results in an estimated funding shortfall of \$12,160,000 for the project.

CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT: The Honorable Charles Gonzalez submitted a request for \$12.6 million for 2007 appropriations.

OBJECTIVE: Obtain funding to address the \$12,160,000 funding shortfall:

FY '07 - \$1,000,000 for preliminary engineering and design fees (already available)

FY '08 - \$3,000,000 for ROW acquisition (already available)

FY '09 - \$3,000,000 for ROW acquisition (already available)

FY '09 - \$3,000,000 for construction

FY '10 - \$5,000,000 for construction

FY '11 - \$5,000,000 for construction

BENEFITS: Construction of the grade separation between Medical Drive and Fredericksburg Road will provide the following benefits to the community:

Safety – approximately 63% of the average daily traffic (1999 data) using Medical Drive will travel under Fredericksburg Road thereby eliminating the potential for 13,230 vehicular conflicts daily. The grade separation will also improve access for medical emergency vehicles accessing the hospital facilities.

Energy Efficiency and Environmental – estimated annual savings of 20,300 gallons of fuel (1999 data) and a corresponding reduction in VOC's, carbon monoxide, NOX emissions would be realized by eliminating the at grade intersection delays.

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