



## S.A.'s Castro in group meeting with Obama

[By Gary Martin](#) - Express-News

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WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama met with several governors and mayors, including Julián Castro of San Antonio, on Monday as he sought Republican support for a six-year, \$50 billion bill to revamp the nation's roads, rails and runways with an effort that would create jobs.

"This is work that needs to be done. All we need is the political will," Obama said in a Rose Garden ceremony after his meeting with mayors, governors and transportation officials.

Obama said Democrats and Republicans have supported infrastructure projects in the past. He called for similar bipartisan support for a transportation and infrastructure bill when Congress returns after the Nov. 2 election.

"It should not take another collapsing bridge or failing levee to shock us into action," Obama said.

The president was flanked by Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, as well as past secretaries Sam Skinner, who served under President George H.W. Bush, and Norm Mineta, who served under Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

Also attending the event were current and former mayors from Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Denver, Atlanta, Baltimore, Oklahoma City, Charleston, S.C., and Columbus, Ohio.

Castro said San Antonio has many eligible projects that could use federal funding immediately, including improvements along the U.S. 281 corridor and its interchange with North Loop 1604.

"When it comes to fixing the 281 corridor, it doesn't matter if you are Republican or Democrat," Castro told reporters after the White House event.

He said traffic congestion has become a problem.

"I want to work with the governor, I want to work with the administration and do whatever it is we need to do to get the money to fix that problem. That is my top priority," Castro said.

Other San Antonio projects on Castro's list include improved roads around Fort Sam Houston, which is undergoing a military medical expansion, and the city's initiative to provide light rail service in downtown.

Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell said states and cities across the country would welcome federal funds for infrastructure projects.

“We think the president’s vision is right on target,” Rendell said. “It’s the single best job creator.”

Obama first announced the transportation bill on Labor Day.

Since then, the administration has been stung by a dismal national jobs report and polls that show erosion of the public’s confidence in the president’s handling of the economy.

Monday’s meeting came just weeks before the midterm elections, in which Republicans are expected to gain seats in both the House and Senate.

Republicans have been critical of an earlier stimulus bill championed by the president, calling it wasteful spending that has driven up the deficit.

But LaHood said the \$48 billion in stimulus funds that went to the Transportation Department has created thousands of jobs with 14,000 ongoing projects.

The bill being touted by Obama would upgrade 150,000 miles of roads and 4,000 miles of rails and would restore 150 miles of runways over a six-year period.

Obama said the transportation plan would be fully paid for and would not “add to our deficit over time.”

Castro and other mayors were hopeful that Congress would act on the bill after the election, when the partisan climate calms and lawmakers return for a lame-duck legislative session.

“Over the next couple of months, the hope is that there would be some action on it,” Castro said.

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