



November 2007

Legislative Directions

North Central Texas Council of Governments • Regional Transportation Council

Legislator Spotlight

TEXAS SENATOR

Florence Shapiro

8th District

Senator Florence Shapiro was first elected to the State Senate in 1993 and represents portions of Collin and Dallas Counties from McKinney to Irving. She is currently the Chair of the Senate Education Committee. Senator Shapiro also serves on the Senate Transportation and Homeland Security Committee and the Senate Finance Committee.

Senator Shapiro first entered elected office as a Plano City Councilmember. Since then she has served as the Mayor of Plano and President of the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

Senator Shapiro holds a bachelor's degree in secondary education from the University of Texas at Austin. She currently resides in Plano and has three children and six grandchildren.

Transportation in the North Central Texas region is impacted by legislative decisions at the State and federal levels. Staff at NCTCOG and local elected officials who serve on the RTC communicate to legislators the region's needs and interests.

Implementing Legislation

HEB Pilot Program Provides Job Access to Those in Need

Several North Texas municipal governments, government agencies, and private organizations have cooperated to complete the first year of the HEB Transit Pilot Program. The program, which receives funds as part of the Job Access/Reverse Commute (JARC) program authorized under SAFETEA-LU, provides rides to low-income individuals who lack transportation to jobs or job training. In its first year the program provided 1,774 rides to approximately 100 individuals. In the month of August alone, 259 rides were given. Vans operated by the American Red Cross provide service between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., Monday through Friday, for trips originating within the Hurst, Euless, and Bedford city limits as well as the Centerport TRE Station. The service recently announced a partnership with DFW Airport to provide HEB Transit passes to its low-income employees.

Funding for the program has come from the cities of Hurst, Euless, and Bedford, the Tarrant County Workforce Board, The United Way, and several private, faith-based charities as well as federal JARC funds distributed by the NCTCOG.

For more information about transportation and legislative affairs, please contact Amanda Wilson at 817.695.9284 or awilson@nctcog.org.



North Central Texas
Council of Governments
Transportation Department

TOPICS OF DEBATE

Red-Light Cameras: Victims of Their Own Success

As many as 20 North Texas cities have approved red-light camera programs and many have already begun to install cameras at select intersections. The goals of these programs are two fold: 1) increase safety by reducing the number of red light violations, especially at the most dangerous intersections, and 2) raise money to fund the programs making them at least revenue neutral.

The City of Garland, which was the first Texas city to install cameras four years ago, has learned that success with one of these goals can lead to problems with the other. Garland's program generated about \$1.3 million in 2004, the program's first full year. Drivers soon became used to the cameras and violations declined. This victory for safety has become a problem for a program that costs the city around half a million dollars per year to operate. In 2006 the program only generated \$546,599. The city is planning to scale back the project just to break even. In the future, the project might be canceled all together if it begins to lose money.

Committee Meetings

U.S. House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee

Highway Bridge Inspections

Tuesday, October 23, 2007

2 p.m. — Washington, DC

<http://transportation.house.gov/hearings/>

U.S. House Budget Committee

Surface Transportation and the Budget

Thursday, October 25, 2007

10 a.m. — Washington, DC

http://budget.house.gov/hearing_marks.htm

Texas Senate Transportation & Homeland Security

Thursday, November 8, 2007

8 a.m. — Austin

<http://www.senate.state.tx.us/bin/live>

Transportation Funding

Stop-Gap Measure for Transportation Financing Approved

The Senate Finance Committee has approved a measure, as part of its work on the FAA finance bill, to keep the federal Highway Trust Fund from running an estimated \$4.3 billion deficit in 2009. The new law would raise approximately \$5.7 billion by 2009 if enacted for the 2008 fiscal year. Most of this money would come from reimbursements from the General Fund for both emergency transportation payments made between 1995 and 2005 and certain motor fuel tax exemptions paid out of the Trust Fund. This General Fund 'bail out' of the Highway Trust Fund would allow a one time infusion of cash without raising taxes but would not provide for any long term solutions for the Trust Fund's continued solvency. These questions are expected to be debated when current transportation authorization legislation expires after 2009.

STATE

No New Roads

Texas Transportation Commission officials recently announced that without new funding there will be no money for new highway projects after 2010. Limits placed on private toll roads, reduced federal support, and rising maintenance costs have all been cited as reasons for the current financial crisis.

FEDERAL

Continuing Resolution Keeps Transportation Funded

The U.S. Congress has passed a joint funding resolution, HJR 52, to provide six weeks of emergency appropriations for the fiscal year that began on October 1. Since 2000, it has taken an average of more than 100 days past the start of the fiscal year for transportation appropriations laws to be enacted.