

Legislative Update

February 14, 2025

FROM WASHINGTON, D.C.

Secretary Duffy's Priorities

Secretary Duffy spoke about his transportation priorities recently at the conference of American Association on State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO). His emphasis on streamlining environmental permitting to expedite infrastructure projects are in line with congressional efforts to reduce regulatory delays and promote efficient project delivery. Additionally, Secretary Duffy's focus on enhancing state autonomy in transportation decision making reflects legislative initiatives aimed at empowering states to address their unique infrastructure needs. These shared priorities underscore a collaborative approach between the Department of Transportation and Congress to modernize and improve the nation's transportation systems.

FROM AUSTIN

House Committee Assignments were announced on Thursday, February 13, 2025. Because of House Resolution (HR) 4, the committee composition reflects the Republican majority in the chamber, with all committees led by Republicans and every standing committee and subcommittee comprised of a GOP majority. Rep. Tom Craddick (R-82) is the new Chair of the House Committee on Transportation. Representatives from the North Texas region serving on the Transportation Committee include Rep. Jared Patterson and Mitch Little. HR 4 also created House Subcommittees, including a Permanent Standing Subcommittee on Transportation Funding. The new subcommittee will be chaired by Rep. Terry Canales (D-40), with Rep. Patterson also serving on it.

A Senate Finance Committee hearing was held on Wednesday, February 12 on TxDOT and DMV proposed budgets. The Legislative Budget Board testified on TxDOT's budget first. Recommendations included \$40.4 billion in all funds - an increase of \$55.2 million. The LBB said recommendations included \$36.2 billion for highway project planning and design and a biennium increase of \$721.9 million from all federal program sources. The LBB said recommendations provided \$7.9 billion from Proposition 1 and \$8 billion from Proposition 7.

Marc Williams, Executive Director for the TxDOT, also testified. Senator Carol Alvarado asked him if TxDOT had created any guidelines for the rider that would create a grant program to fund local rail grade crossing separation. Mr. Williams said TxDOT has some guidelines in mind, like project readiness, coordination with railroads, and private and public contributions, but that the Department does not want to overstep the legislature.

UPCOMING COMMITTEE HEARINGS

TEXAS SENATE

- None at this time.

TEXAS HOUSE

- House Appropriations will meet on Wednesday, February 19, to hear testimony on Transportation Funding and other funding programs.

RECENT COMMITTEE HEARINGS

TEXAS SENATE

- Senate Finance met on Tuesday, February 11, 2025, to consider SB 1, General Appropriations Bill - Article VI - Natural Resources. Legislative Budget Board staff testified on the budget for TCEQ. Recommendations included \$849.3 million in all funds, a \$55.5 million increase, primarily due to various federally funded program increases and offset by decreases due to the removal of one-time costs. The Committee also heard testimony from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. Much of the discussion was related to TCEQ's public input efforts and permit applications.
- Senate Finance met on Wednesday, February 13, 2025, to consider SB 1, General Appropriations Bill - Article VII - Business and Economic Development. This included TxDOT and TxDMV. The summary is discussed above.

US HOUSE

- **The Subcommittee on Highways and Transit - America Builds: A Review of Programs to Address Roadway Safety:** The Subcommittee met on February 12 to evaluate the effectiveness of the roadway safety programs under the current surface authorization bill and discussed necessary actions in this Congress to enhance roadway safety in the next authorization bill.