

TEXAS TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING (excerpt)

Dewitt Greer Building
125 East 11th Street
Austin, Texas

7:30 a.m. Thursday, May 25, 2000 Staff Briefing

9:00 a.m. Thursday, May 25, 2000 Regular Meeting

And we have one set of rules for final adoption, that being Agenda Item 7(b)(1), Carlos.

MR. LOPEZ: Good morning, commissioners. My name is Carlos Lopez, director of the Traffic Operations Division.

The minute order before you proposes final adoption of rules pertaining to environmental speed limits. These rules will allow TxDOT to lower speed limits up to 15 miles per hour for environmental considerations based on requests from the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission. Any proposed reduction must be a control measure within an area's air quality plan or be a part of the area's transportation conformity demonstration.

During the public comment period, we got comments from TNRCC and the North Central Texas Council of Governments. TNRCC appreciated the department's approach on this issue and indicated they intend to work to coordinate the development of environmental speed limits with MPOs.

The North Central COG had three comments. First, they were concerned about the impacts that the implementation of environmental speed limits may have on area's overall emissions budget. We responded that we're not the ultimate authority on strategies used in nonattainment areas and cannot offer the assurances that they were looking for. We forwarded this comment to TNRCC, and they have indicated their intent to work closely with the MPOs during the air quality development process.

The COG also expressed a concern that an environmental speed limit could be lower than that considered reasonable by a local area. In response, we noted that the safety of the traveling public is always our top priority and TxDOT will continually monitor all environmental speed limits and make any adjustments necessary to ensure safety.

The COG'S final comment involved the procedure by which a proposed speed limit reduction would be made by the TNRCC. They asked that the procedures be modified to allow MPOs to comment on such requests before they were submitted to TxDOT. We chose not to modify the rules since MPOs are already extensively involved in the transportation conformity process.

We recommend approval of this minute order for final adoption.

MR. JOHNSON: Any questions?

MR. NICHOLS: So move.

MR. LANEY: Second.

MR. JOHNSON: All in favor, signify by saying aye.

(A chorus of ayes.)

MR. JOHNSON: Motion carries.

MR. HEALD: Thank you, Carlos.