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The State of Texas House of Representatives District 117

June 22, 2006

The Honorable Richard Perez
Chairman, Transportation Policy Board
San Antonio-Bexar County Metropolitan Planning Organization
1021 San Pedro, Suite 2200
San Antonio, TX 78212

Dear Councilman Perez:

I want to thank the MPO Transportation Policy Board for putting a discussion of the effect of gas prices on toll road projects on the agenda of your June 26 meeting. I strongly urge the board to approve an independent study of the Bexar County toll road plan and include this topic in the study.

Today, gas prices are as high as \$2.79 a gallon here in San Antonio and rose above \$2.90 a gallon earlier this year. I strongly believe the high price of gas, which shows no sign of abating, will significantly lower the potential use of toll roads in Bexar County. During the latest increase in gas prices from October 2005 to March 2006, bus ridership on VIA increased 12.9%. In New Jersey, two toll roads lost millions of dollars in toll collections last year because of rising gas prices and they predict the high cost of gas will continue to affect usage this year.

Last year, I called for an independent study of Bexar County's toll road plan. An independent study is crucial for determining if toll roads are truly necessary to solve our transportation needs. At a minimum, I believe an independent study needs to answer the following questions:

1. How will high gas prices affect the usage and fiscal stability of toll roads?
2. How much would the gas tax have to increase to raise the same amount of revenue as we project to raise from the current toll plan?
3. How much revenue beyond what is necessary for debt service do we project to receive from the tolls in the current toll plan and where will it go?

This study could go a long way in determining whether toll roads are or are not the best solution to our transportation needs. Thank you for your consideration of this important proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David McQuade Leibowitz".

Representative David McQuade Leibowitz

cc: Transportation Policy Board

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