

**Joint hearing of
the Senate Committee on Transportation & Homeland
Security and
the House Committee on Transportation
Public Hearing 8 a.m. Monday, February 1, 2010
Capitol Extension E1.030**

**Testimony
Mayor Susan Narvaiz
San Marcos, Texas**

Senator Carona, Representative Pickett and Committee Members, good morning. I am Susan Narvaiz, Mayor of the City of San Marcos.

Thank you for allowing me to speak in favor of legislation to allow local governments to propose new transportation funding methods for approval by local voters.

In the last session, the San Marcos City Council supported SB 855, a bill to enable counties to call an election to create new financing mechanisms to pay for passenger rail, transit, roadway and freight rail projects.

Transportation is one of the most urgent issues facing our community.

**Partnering and
Leveraging Our
Resources**

“Enhancing the Region’s Transportation Grid” has been adopted as one of the top 5 goals by our City Council.

We are addressing this goal through specific priorities and local investments, including:

- Improving the regional transportation system in collaboration with the TxDOT and Hays County
- Land development plans to support commuter rail, including a Transportation Oriented District (TOD), and
- Partnering with Texas State University and Capital Area Rural Transportation (CARTS) to create a unified mass transit system in San Marcos

Local Needs

San Marcos has significant and unusual circumstances related to our transportation and road system:

- 49 percent of the roads –or 192 lane miles in San Marcos-- are state-owned facilities
- \$1.4 BILLION dollars in transportation improvements have been identified as being needed over the next 25 years
- \$1.3 BILLION of this sum represent improvements needed on state highways in San Marcos
- Of the top 20 most congested intersections in Travis, Williamson and Hays County, three are in San Marcos.

(Loop 82 at I-35; SH 80 at I-35 and Hopkins at RM 12)

- We have urgent, high priority projects that we have sought state and federal collaboration to construct:
 - A railroad overpass on Loop 82 –the primary entryway for Texas State University
 - Access and interchange improvements at I-35 and River Ridge, Highways 82, 80 and 123

**Local Investments in
Transportation**

In the past five years, the City of San Marcos has financed and invested \$87 million for our road and highway system.

- This includes City financing of \$43 million for the Wonder World Drive extension, a state-owned road that will link Ranch Road 12 to I-35. Over the next 20 years, the state will repay a portion of the debt in a pass-through financing agreement.
- We have invested \$1 million to assume maintenance of 53 traffic signals throughout San Marcos—and 50 of those are on state highways.
- We have issued \$23 million in the last five years through Financing through GO bonds and Certificates of obligation to support street and highway projects.

- 62% of our local property tax is dedicated to debt retirement to pay for voter approved capital projects and other tax supported debt

While sales tax revenues provide some 47% of our General Fund revenues, we have exhausted our capacity to use sales taxes through voter-approved initiatives. In 1988, San Marcos voters approved a proposition to dedicate a half-cent sales tax to property tax reduction.

I want again to express our support for the legislature developing additional means to finance highway projects—especially at a time when funding resources have been so severely challenged at the state level.

San Marcos has demonstrated our commitment to be a partner with the State of Texas and other entities on highway and transportation projects.

By authorizing such legislation, the Legislature would allow local governments to propose local plans and for voters to make the final decision on how we can pay for urgently needed transportation projects in our communities.

We believe that offering local tax options—that could only be adopted by approval by the people at the ballot box—will offer an option/opportunity to create badly needed resources for many Texas counties, including our own.

Thank you.