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From: Judge Bilski [cbilski@austincounty.com]
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To: Mussatti, Daniel
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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

RE: I-69 Trans Texas Corridor

Per the TXDOT public information available January 2008, factors to be considered include Parks and Managed Lands, Wetlands, Archeological and Historical Resources and Socio-economic characteristics. Based on these factors, Austin County Commissioners Court registers opposition to including Austin County in the corridor alternatives and expanded study area

1. PARKS AND MANAGED LANDS

The Stephen F. Austin State Park, designated by the Texas House of Representatives as Colonial Capitol of Texas is located near corridor options presented. The expanded land use would detract from current archeological studies in Austin County in this area. For further information contact Michael Moore, President of the Stephen F. Austin Park Association (281-352-5189) and Marianne Marek, local archeologist working under a Texas Preservation Trust Fund Grant (979-478-7300).

Many tracts of land including the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge (10, 518 acres) would be negatively impacted. Gamma Grass and Coastal Prairie Conservation efforts in place would be devastated.

For further information contact Jim Hluchan at Natural Resource Conservation Service (979-865-3139), Alan Smith, interim coordinator at Sam Houston Resource Conservation and Development Area, Inc. (979-846-0757) or Terry Rossignol at The National Wildlife Refuge (979-234-3021).

2. WETLANDS

Wetlands are prevalent throughout proposed areas. These lands are homes and habitat to many birds and other wildlife.

For further information contact Rosie Zamora at Houston Wilderness (713-524-7330).

The proposed Allens Creek Reservoir (property owned by Brazos River Authority and City of Houston) is a long term water supply solution for the growing population of Southwest Texas.

The acreage located in the Brazos River Watershed in the proposed corridor proximity will also negatively impact flooding in Austin County. Further information is available by contacting Austin County Judge Carolyn Bilski for 1975 and 1999 Natural Resource Conservation Service Studies (USDA).

3. ARCHEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL RESOURCES

The historical value of land in Austin County as part of Texas History is unparalleled in any other Texas County. The original colony of Stephen F. Austin is well known. Other equally important but less discussed historical resources is Sam Houston's campground near the Brazos River, an area very close to the proposed corridor. The numerous Indian relics of a past civilization are widespread through the area near the pristine Brazos River and proposed corridor. The Allens Creek Study by Grant D. Hall, Research Report No. 61 provides extensive detail archeological from 2600 B.C. to A.D. 1530.

For further information contact Michael Moore at Stephen F. Austin State Park Association (281-352-5189) or Marianne Marek, local archeologist (979-478-7300).

4. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Austin County's proximity to Houston has not devalued the place of ranching and agricultural crops in Austin County's Economic Development. Many families farm cotton and maize which are essential to the economy of Texas. In Austin County over 34,000 acres are harvested for hay, 2,100 acres for cotton, 5,600 acres for corn and 1,000 acres for rice. This results in over \$103 million to our local economy. It is this diversity which would be destroyed by the proposed corridor in Austin County. For further information contact the local Texas AgriLife Agent Philip Shackelford at (979-865-5911) or Commissioner Todd Staples with Texas Department of Agriculture.

Rural connectivity is also critical to the safety and prosperity of Austin County citizens.

In conclusion, this Court recognizes the need for a 20 year plus transportation plan. It does not support a total destruction of our Texas land to build a financial empire for campaign contributors or lobbyists. This great State has grown and thrives on the wisdom and prudence of past government leaders. We implore our current State leadership to exercise that same wisdom and selflessness.

Carolyn Bilski
County Judge County