The Honorable J. Bruce Bugg, Jr.
Chairman, Texas Transportation Commission
125 E. 11th Street
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Chairman Bugg,

Thank you for your steadfast leadership on the Texas Transportation Commission. We are writing to request that the Commission delay adoption of revisions and updates to the Unified Transportation Plan (UTP) at its April meeting.

While the UTP is within the authority of the Commission, we respectfully suggest postponing adoption of the 2020 UTP revisions and updates, and instead, continue developing the 2021 UTP several months later. In light of recent events, we believe this focus would better serve all Texans.

The state’s 10-year program to guide transportation project development has served us well. It has allowed for robust debate among the Commissioners and encouraged vigorous public input. It has also proved to be fiscally prudent, given the challenge of not knowing with certainty how much revenue will be available for projects. It is of course important that the UTP be fiscally constrained based on estimated revenues over a 10-year period.

As you know, there has been immense volatility in global financial markets, a near collapse in the oil market, and a threat of a potential recession—just in the last couple weeks. Additionally, Proposition 1 deposits to the State Highway Fund are directly related to the price of oil, and this volatility has contributed to annual deposits ranging from $440 million to $1.74 billion. Similarly, Proposition 7 revenues are dependent on the State’s overall sales tax revenues and motor-vehicle sales, which may also be affected by volatility in our current climate. Combined with limited public participation in normal government activities due to COVID-19, we are prompted to make this request.

Simply put, the 10-year UTP is based on estimated revenues over a 10-year time period, and since these estimates were last made, there have been substantial changes that have not yet stabilized.

We believe it is in the interest of all Texans to postpone adoption until more financial certainty is available and the public is able to fully participate in the comment period. This will not delay project delivery nor will it adversely affect the driving public. The very nature of the UTP lends itself to a long-term view of the state’s transportation needs, and we encourage you and the Commissioners to keep this long-term perspective at the forefront of your decision-making.
Texas Legislature

Thank you for your favorable consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,

[Signatures]

Robert L. Nichols
Chair, Senate Committee on Transportation

Terry Canales
Chair, House Committee on Transportation

cc: Commissioner Alvin New
Commissioner Laura Ryan
Commissioner Robert C. Vaughn
Executive Director James Bass