



# Texas Department of Transportation

DEWITT C. GREER STATE HIGHWAY BLDG. • 125 E. 11TH STREET • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-2483 • (512) 463-8585

March 2, 2009

The Honorable Jim Dunnam  
Texas House of Representatives  
PO Box 2910  
Austin, Texas 78768

Dear Chairman Dunnam:

This letter is in response to your request to receive the Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT's) screening instrument used to determine projects that may receive stimulus funding. Attached, please find a copy of the department's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Screening Matrix.

Ultimately, I make the final decisions pertaining to this matter. John Barton, the Assistant Executive Director of Engineering Operations of TxDOT has additionally been helpful, working diligently with our transportation partners during this selection process. Also attached for your information is a presentation led by Mr. Barton and provided at our previous commission hearing last week.

In preparing for the ARRA, department staff has performed the following steps:

1. TxDOT's District Engineers were surveyed to determine what projects in their areas could be developed in compliance with the timeframes of the ARRA. This resulted in the identification of more than 1500 potential projects totaling more than \$10 Billion in total construction costs. The project listings can be found on TxDOT's internal Project Development Management System (PDMS) and will soon be uploaded to the external website and linked to the Project Tracker icon.
2. Weekly meetings were and are being held to consult with MPOs, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and TxDOT's District Engineers and their staffs on project readiness, project importance and the associated conformance, environmental, right of way, planning, design and other elements that contribute to a project being developed within timeframes specified in the ARRA. These consultations are done through the use of conference calls.
3. The Texas Transportation Commission (the commission) was briefed by staff on the ARRA to allow staff to receive guidance from the TTC on strategies for identifying, prioritizing and selecting projects.

4. TxDOT's District Engineers were consulted to identify project priorities across the state through a collaborative process. The state's MPOs, tolling authorities and other local leaders were consulted on the development of a list of criteria that should be used to identify and prioritize projects for consideration by the commission for possible funding through the ARRA.
5. Based on the criteria identified through the consensus of the MPOs and TxDOT District Engineers staff has developed a list of projects that meet these criteria, are regional priorities, and can be implemented within the time constraints contained within the ARRA for the consideration of the commission.

Open and transparent discussion among the commission may result in the modification of the staff recommendation. The commission will evaluate projects that are ready to start in the time allotted by the bill and also meet the following set of criteria agreed to by TxDOT staff and local transportation officials:

- Projects that improve the safety of the transportation system.
- Projects on corridors of statewide significance or regional priority.
- Projects that leverage or pool resources.
- Projects that create long term economic benefit to the communities and region they serve.
- Projects in areas that are economically distressed.
- A fair and equitable distribution of projects around the state.

Through this process, the Department has also received from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) implementation guidance regarding the ARRA which is also attached for your review. Key points that may be of interest to you are:

- The FHWA has created a mapping tool for economically distressed areas that can be found at: [http://hepgis.fhwa.dot.gov/hepgis\\_v2/GeneralInfo/Map.aspx](http://hepgis.fhwa.dot.gov/hepgis_v2/GeneralInfo/Map.aspx)
- The following deadlines are contained in the guidance letter:

**March 17th**

States will be required to submit data on projects to be funded completely or partially with ARRA funds. This data will be submitted electronically to FHWA as either a geographic information system (GIS) file, i.e. shapefile, or as a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. This data must be submitted by the States by March 17, 2009.

**March 19th**

The Governor of each State must certify that the State will maintain its effort with regard to State funding for the types of projects that are funded by the ARRA. As part of the certification, the Governor shall submit a statement identifying the amount of funds the State planned to expend as of February 17, 2009, from State sources in the period beginning on February 17, 2009, through September 30, 2010, for the types of projects that are funded by the appropriation. This certification is required no later than March 19, 2009. State funding shall be identified, but funds from local governments or other non-Federal sources are not included in the certification.

**April 3rd**

The Governor must certify by April 3, 2009, that, for funds provided to any State or agency thereof, the State will request and use funds provided by this Act and the funds will be used to create jobs and promote economic health.

**June 17th**

Preference shall be given to projects\activities that can be started and completed expeditiously including a goal of obligating at least 50% of the funds not later than June 17, 2009.

**February 17, 2012**

Priority shall be given to projects\activities that are projected for completion by February 17, 2012.

**September 30, 2015**

Obligated balances are available **for expenses incurred** until September 30, 2015, at which point any remaining balance will be canceled.

**Jobs created**

In the interim, States will need to provide a requirement in their contracts for both contractors and subcontractors to complete monthly reports on the number of newly hired employees and the number of existing employees.

**No later than 10 business days after each letting**, States and FHWA Federal Lands will provide FHWA with summary bid information and specific information on the ARRA projects that were awarded. FHWA is currently developing a system that States can utilize for providing this information, if existing State systems cannot produce the required information.


I will keep you posted on other elements of this guidance or other guidance that may be forthcoming as developments occur.

March 2, 2009

I would also like to bring to your attention that today is the deadline for the governor's certification (Section 1511). The required Section 1511 Certification is the key issue right now to making the ARRA funds available to our state.

TxDOT is always ready to respond when called upon. If you have any questions or wish to discuss further, please contact me and I will give it my prompt attention.

Sincerely,



Amadeo Saenz, Jr., P.E.  
Executive Director

Attachments

cc: Texas Transportation Commission  
John Barton, Assistant Executive Director of Engineering Operations, TxDOT