The Texas House will soon take up the 2015 legislative session’s single most important piece of transportation funding legislation.

The House Transportation Committee, chaired by Rep. Joe Pickett, has voted out two identical constitutional amendment resolutions, clearing a path toward the House and Senate reaching a solution to the need for sustainable and long term transportation funding.

The committee approved Pickett’s proposed HJR 13 which would allow voters to constitutionally dedicate $3 billion a year of general sales tax revenues to building non-toll highways and to make payments on previously issued highway project debt. HJR 13 would also dedicate additional 2% of net general sales tax to transportation, generating about $650 million a year (LBB estimate).

The committee also approved a committee substitute for SJR 5 that erased language passed by the Senate and replaced it in total with the text of CSHJR 13. House versions of CSSJR 5 and CSHJR 13 are now the same.

The Senate version, which passed on a 28 to 2 vote, would draw revenue from the state sales tax paid on vehicles with the first $2.5 billion a year going to the General Fund and the next $2.5 billion going to the State Highway Fund. Any additional revenue from the vehicle sales tax would be split with highways getting 50%.

The result of the House Transportation Committee action is CSHJR 13/CSSJR 5 legislation that will potentially allow the naming of a House-Senate conference committee to work out a final version.

Reaching that point will require a two-thirds House vote in favor of either CSHJR 13 or CSSJR 5. At least 100 House members will have to vote in support, recognizing that they will likely have an opportunity to vote on a conference report when it is completed.

Either Approach Serves Texans Well

Members of the Transportation Advocates of Texas believe either the general sales tax approach or the vehicle sales tax approach will address a critical state need and serve Texans well. We urge House members to vote to approve reliable constitutionally dedicated funding that will keep Texas from falling further behind on congestion, safety, interregional connectivity and deteriorating roadways.
Supporters of Constitutionally Dedicated Highway Funding

The following groups and individuals support a new constitutionally dedicated funding source for Texas highways:

Texas Municipal League
Transportation Advocates of Texas
Alliance for I-69 Texas
Texas Conference of Urban Counties
Move Texas Forward
Texas Infrastructure Now
I-14/US 190 Gulf Coast Strategic Highway Coalition
Texas Good Roads Association
Texas Transportation Alliance
Ports-to-Plains Alliance
Dallas Regional Mobility Coalition
Tarrant Regional Transportation Coalition
San Antonio Mobility Coalition
Bay Area Houston Transportation Partnership
Transportation Advocacy Group – Houston
Midland-Odessa Transportation Alliance
Austin Chamber of Commerce
Bay City Chamber of Commerce
Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce
Dallas Regional Chamber
Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce
Frisco Chamber of Commerce
Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce
Greater Houston Partnership
Greater Irving-Las Colinas Chamber of Commerce
Greater New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce
Longview Chamber of Commerce
Lubbock Chamber of Commerce
McAllen Chamber of Commerce
North San Antonio Chamber
San Antonio Chamber of Commerce
South San Antonio Chamber
Houstonians for Responsible Growth
Real Estate Council of Austin
Houston Real Estate Council
Port of Beaumont
City of Corpus Christi
City of Nacogdoches
City of San Antonio
Texas Association of Business
Texas Association of Builders
Texas Association of Manufacturers
Texas Food and Fuel Association
Texas Association of REALTORS
Texas Retailers Association
Texas Trucking Association
Texas Travel Industry Association
Texas Oil & Gas Association
Southwest Movers Association
AGC of Texas Highway, Heavy and Utilities
American Council of Engineering Companies of Texas
Texas Business Leadership Council
Texas Real Estate Councils of Texas
Texas Grain Sorghum Producers
Texas Association of Dairymen

Transportation Advocates of Texas Board of Directors for 2015

Brandon Janes
Jackson Walker LLP - Austin
TAoT Board Chairman

Dennis Kearns
BNSF
TAoT Board Chairman-Elect

Nelda Martinez, Mayor
City of Corpus Christi
President - Texas Municipal League

James Carlow, Bowie County Judge
Alliance for I-69 Texas

Julian Alvarez
Rio Grande Valley Partnership

Jackie Butler
El Paso Chamber of Commerce

Judy Hawley, Commission Chairman
Port of Corpus Christi Authority

Jennifer Newton
AGC of Texas

Drew Campbell
Dallas Regional Mobility Coalition

Jim Jeffers
Nacogdoches City Manager
Alliance for I-69 Texas

John Roby
Port of Beaumont

Vic Boyer
San Antonio Mobility Coalition
TAoT Board Vice Chair - Legislative Relations; Membership & Regional Coordination

Vic Suhm
Tarrant Regional Transportation Coalition
TAoT Board Vice Chair - Financial Management

Jennifer McEwan
Gulf Coast Regional Mobility Partners
TAoT Board Vice Chair - Research & Education

Gary Bushell
Gary Bushell LLP - Austin
TAoT Board Vice Chair - Communications

Lindsay Mullins
BNSF Railway

Michael Reeves
Ports-to-Plains Alliance
TAoT Board Secretary

Doug Pitcock
Williams Brothers Construction Co.

Don Durden
Civil Engineering Consultants

Steve Stagner
American Council of Engineering Companies, Texas

Patrick Rhode
Cintra US

Andrea French
Transportation Advocacy Group - Houston Region

Jim Reed
San Antonio Medical Foundation
TAoT Board - Immediate Past Chair