

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

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March 18, 2004

The Honorable Ernest Istook
Chairman, Subcommittee on Transportation -- Treasury Appropriations
B-307 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Olver
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Transportation -- Treasury Appropriations
B-307 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Istook and Ranking Member Olver:

My highest priority for the FY05 Transportation -- Treasury Appropriations bill is securing the final installment of funding for a new Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON) facility at Bush Intercontinental Airport in Houston. The current TRACON is over 30 years old and in desperate need of repair. Temporary sandbags have become a permanent fixture around the TRACON, and every time there is a significant rainfall, controllers have to use buckets to remove the standing water. The President's FY05 Budget request for the Houston Area Air Traffic System (HAATS) line item is \$12 million, and I am supporting that request.

My second highest priority is the construction of a new "Trauma Access Corridor" into the Texas Medical Center. In 2001, Tropical Storm Allison completely isolated the Medical Center, which includes the only two Level 1 trauma centers in Houston. For nearly ten hours, no land vehicle could get in or out of the Medical Center. The City of Houston and Harris County have recognized the need to build a new access road to these two trauma centers (which service a thirteen county area) and have pledged \$7.5 million to start the local street improvement process. I am requesting \$4 million for improvements on the two freeways that would connect to this new access corridor, Interstate 610 and State Highway 288.

My third highest priority is developing a transportation operations center at the Texas Medical Center. The Medical Center is the world's largest medical complex. It is home to over 40 health care and research institutions, and employs 65,000 people in the greater Houston region. The area in and around the Medical Center is heavily trafficked by employees who commute by car, and by the 75-80 percent of patients who arrive by car. The number of employees at the Medical Center is projected to increase from 65,000 to 90,000 within the next decade. The transportation system at the Medical Center needs to be redesigned and improved to meet this excess capacity,

and I am requesting \$2.5 million to start this process by designing and building a transportation operations center.

My fourth highest priority is widening US Highway 385 from two lanes to four lanes between Crane, Texas and McCarney, Texas. The highway is part of the La Entrada al Pacifico Corridor, which is a vital trade route for the United States and Mexico. I am requesting \$2 million to continue the widening process.

My fifth highest priority is widening State Highway 21 from two lanes to four lanes between Bryan – College Station, Texas and Interstate 45. Bryan – College Station is the largest metropolitan area in the United States that is not served by an Interstate freeway, which causes significant damage to the local economy. I am requesting \$2 million to continue the widening process.

My sixth highest priority is building a ramp to connect Houston METRO's Addicks Park & Ride lot to the newly reconstructed Interstate 10 high occupancy toll (HOT) lanes. The current HOV lane ramp needs to be removed and replaced with this new ramp connecting buses, carpoolers, and toll road users directly to the toll lanes.

In addition to these six priority requests, I want to lend my overwhelming support to two Texas highway projects that have been submitted by my friends Rep. Pete Sessions, and Rep. Randy Neugebauer. The first project is the reconstruction of the Interstate 35 East/Interstate 635 interchange. Rep. Sessions has requested \$4 million for this important project, and I am pleased to support his request. The second project is for construction of the US 87 bypass around Big Spring, Texas. Big Spring is within the path of the federally designated Ports-to-Plains Trade Corridor, and this project is critical to the region. Rep. Neugebauer has requested \$2 million for this project, and I am pleased to support his request.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my requests.

Sincerely,

John Culberson
Member of Congress

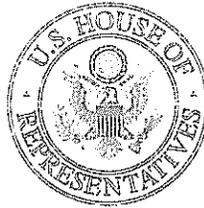
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION AND TREASURY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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June 7, 2004

The Honorable Ernest Istook, Jr.
Chairman, Subcommittee on Transportation and Treasury, and Independent Agencies Appropriations
2358 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Olver
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Transportation and Treasury, and Independent Agencies
Appropriations
2358 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Istook and Ranking Member Olver,

I am writing to request your support for a pilot project to recover lost gas tax revenue in the FY2005 Transportation and Treasury, and Independent Agencies Appropriations bill.

I am requesting \$5 million for a pilot program that will be administered by the IRS to recover revenue lost due to diesel excise fuel tax evasion. The pilot program will involve the addition of a molecular marker to non-taxable fuel at the same time it is marked with visible red dye per IRS requirements. Enforcement efforts will be conducted on a random basis, utilizing advanced sensing technology to detect the presence of the non-taxable fuel in the taxable fuel stream. Enforcement will be conducted on highways, at weigh stations, fueling stations, and any other areas determined as appropriate. All positive samples (revealing the presence of the marker or red dye) will be further analyzed with appropriate technology and results retained for forensic purposes assisting with enforcement.

It is projected that one billion dollars of revenue is lost every year due to evasion of diesel fuel taxes. This pilot program will enforce current law and recover revenue that will go directly into the Highway Trust Fund. As precious dollars in the Highway Trust Fund continue to be stretched and siphoned off by other programs, it is urgent that we do everything possible to enforce current law and bring criminal elements that attempt to skirt the system to justice. This program has the potential to recover a significant amount of revenue at very little cost, help alleviate increased pressures on the Highway Trust Fund and ultimately provide the necessary resources to enhance our infrastructure system.

Thank for you consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Culberson".

John Culberson
Member of Congress