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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DRMC LEADERS TESTIFY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILLS TO ACCELERATE CRITICAL EXPANSIONS OF I-35E, SH 183

Use of Innovative Financing Approach Would Break Funding Impasse

DALLAS – March 31, 2011 – Dallas Regional Mobility Coalition (DRMC) leaders testified yesterday in Austin before the House Committee on Transportation, in favor of two critical bills that would facilitate expansions of I-35E from I-635 in Dallas to SH 380 in Denton, and SH 183 from I-35E in Dallas to SH 161 in Irving. DRMC Chair and Cedar Hill Mayor Rob Franke, Denton County Judge Mary Horn, Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA) Board Chair Charles Emery and Irving Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Rick Stopfer, all DRMC members, noted that these House bills are a significant part of the DRMC’s 2011 legislative platform, which focuses on innovative approaches to fund and build regionally significant transportation projects including enhancements to I-35E and SH 183.

Along with their companion bills in the Senate, which were voted out of committee last week, **HB 2985** by Rep. Tan Parker (R – Flower Mound) and **HB 2186** by Rep. Linda Harper-Brown (R – Irving) provide a critical first step in the badly needed expansion and improvement of these vital thoroughfares.

Under current state law, public-private partnerships that bring private equity to pay for and build major, regional roads cannot be used without legislative approval. HB 2985 and HB 2186 would authorize public-private partnerships to expand a 28-mile stretch of the I-35E corridor from Dallas to Denton and a 9.1-mile segment of the SH 183 corridor from Dallas through Irving, just as has been previously used for other major projects across the state, including the LBJ Express and North Tarrant Express.

“We are deeply appreciative of the support for these bills offered by Committee Chair Rep. Larry Phillips and his colleagues,” said Franke. “They have recognized the urgency of the mobility crisis in North Texas, and the need to fund the most critical transportation projects now in order to address increasing congestion, worsening air quality and deteriorating quality of life for residents of the region.”

DRMC leaders point out that support for the bills is broad and that momentum is growing. The organization has received supportive resolutions from the cities and counties adjacent to these highways and letters from dozens of businesses that stress the need to keep people and goods moving on the corridors.

DRMC Leaders Testify in Support of Public-Private Partnership Bills Continued

“We’ve said it before, and we’ll keep saying it – our constituents want solutions *now*, not decades in the future,” said Horn, who is spearheading the I-35E Coalition, a DRMC-initiated effort to unite the public and private sectors behind corridor improvements.

Emery said, “We know that the I-35E corridor will continue to be a major regional, national and international pipeline for the movement of people and goods. Thankfully, Texas legislators are embracing the idea that leveraging private equity through a public-private partnership is the best solution available today to keep that pipeline moving.”

“We applaud the key legislators, both in the Senate and in the House, who helped to author and advance these bills,” said Stopfer, who is helping to lead the SH 183 Stakeholders Coalition, another DRMC-initiated effort to unite the public and private sectors behind roadway improvements. “Their actions show that they recognize the importance of critical corridors such as SH 183 to keep traffic flowing across North Texas and to support the region’s continued success. We eagerly look forward to approval of these bills by the entire Legislature, so we can get these projects underway soon.”

The DRMC, the leading advocate for transportation policies, funding and solutions for the Dallas area, is working to address the challenges posed by the region’s continued, rapid growth, as evidenced by the recent release of the latest U.S. Census data for Texas. To view the full 2011 DRMC legislative agenda, which seeks to preserve existing transportation funding sources while also supporting innovative approaches to new transportation project financing, visit the DRMC website:

http://www.dallasmobility.org/legislative_agenda.asp.

About the DRMC

The Dallas Regional Mobility Coalition (DRMC) is an organization of cities, counties and public transportation agencies in a five-county region on the eastern side of the DFW Metroplex that advocates for transportation policy, funding and solutions on a local, state and federal level. The DRMC has four critical objectives:

1. Improve mobility and safety;
2. Improve air quality;
3. Enhance quality of life through reduced commuting and travel times; and
4. Support economic vitality.

The DRMC meets on the first Friday of every month at the headquarters of the North Texas Tollway Authority, 5900 Plano Parkway, Plano. For more information about the DRMC and a full calendar of upcoming transportation events in North Texas, visit www.dallasmobility.org.

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