

Lowder

April 9, 2008

To Members of the Senate State, Veterans & Military Affairs Committee;

As the El Paso County Commissioner representing District 2, I would like to submit a brief statement to all of you regarding HB1007. Let me first apologize for not being able to be there in person with you today and I thank you for your patience in allowing this statement to be read into the record. Please allow me to also thank you for your time and discernment in this matter and all the weighty issues you face on our behalf each and every day. I will be brief.

I ask you to vote yes today on HB1007. You are hearing from people on both sides of this argument and I understand the passion and positions of both sides. HB1007 does not remove the corridor designation. Removal of the corridor designation is my ultimate goal and I believe, the ultimate goal of most people before you today. However, in the absence of acceptable legislation removing the designation altogether, HB1007 takes a step in the right direction to relieve the burden placed on private property owners by a project which does not even exist in reality and should never have been allowed to be implemented in the first place.

Encumbering titles with this designation was an assault on private property rights and has severely limited the ability of property owners to use the value of their properties as financial tools, assets and leverage devices. People have been unable to sell their properties because of this designation and have lost value without any reasonable or compelling reason. This designation should never have been put in place and I will do whatever I can in the future to fight for the removal of the toll road corridor. I am confident that we will achieve this goal but in the meantime, I appreciate the efforts of the sponsors of this legislation before you today to clear the titles of these property owners and provide advocacy and relief to them in an effort to right this wrong. Again, I understand that this House Bill does not give us the whole solution in terms of removal of the corridor, but it will provide relief to property owners as we continue to fight for removal all together.

Additionally, our County Assessor will testify to you regarding the economic obsolescence caused by these title designations, which will hurt El Paso County at a time when this county just does not have the margins to handle reductions in property values. The strains on constitutionally mandated public safety services here in El Paso County are strong and allowing property value reductions - thereby reducing revenue to this county - for a project that is solely conceptual, is irresponsible and unacceptable.

Please vote yes on HB1007 and thank you for allowing my input to be heard.

Very Respectfully,
Amy Lathen
El Paso County Commissioner, District 2