

SmartMove...

SUCCESS STORIES FROM THE TOLLING INDUSTRY

Agency

Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA)

Project

Earning Public Support by Getting the Job Done

Purpose

To deliver reliable mobility and reduce congestion in a fast-growing urban corridor.

Vital Stats

- The MoPac Improvement Project, an 11-mile Express Lane that will feature dynamic, congestion-priced tolling, aesthetic enhancements, bicycle and pedestrian improvements and sound walls after construction is complete in 2015;
- 183A, an 11.6-mile toll road from northwest Austin through Cedar Park and Leander, in northwest Williamson County, opened in two phases, between March 2007 and April 2012;
- Manor Expressway, a 6.2-mile limited access toll road on an expanded median of US 290, still under construction, with the first phase open to traffic in December 2012;
- Several additional projects aimed at boosting mobility across the region.

History

Since its formation in 2002, the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority has established itself as a smart, lean and innovative agency with the ability to deliver results in a metropolitan area that faces serious traffic congestion, after seeing its population more than quintuple since 1970. Austin is consistently ranked as one of the most congested cities of its size in the country.

When the Mobility Authority was formed, the Austin area had had several major transportation projects on the books for 20 years, with no realistic prospect that

they would be completed.

Consumers were dissatisfied, and some of the region's major employers had made it clear that they would locate future production elsewhere if state and local governments couldn't improve mobility for passenger and freight traffic. One of them made good on the threat by moving to a new facility in Nashville.

Two of the fastest-growing counties, Travis and Williamson, realized they could only solve their shared problems with highway congestion by working together. They were both approaching the limit of their borrowing authority, and local per capita tax burdens were fairly high by Texas standards. The design of the Mobility Authority reflected the scope of the funding challenge, and its first project took shape as an integrated, regional solution, with financing from bonds and state government grants as well as credit assistance under the federal *Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA)*.

Subsequent projects were based on the same flexible approach, drawing support from all available sources and adapting to unexpected financing opportunities when they presented themselves. Once the Mobility Authority began to demonstrate its success, it quickly emerged as a premier regional entity, with a major role in delivering seamless, enjoyable, safe, green and reliable mobility for the Central Texas area.



CENTRAL TEXAS
Regional Mobility Authority

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Results

The Mobility Authority was deliberately developed as a small, lean agency, with a strong entrepreneurial spirit and a deep commitment to effective community relations.

The Authority encountered its share of public opposition when it first opened its doors. Mobility Authority staff, many of them native-born or long-term Austin residents, responded with patience, openness and transparency.

From the beginning, they understood that successful projects depended on community acceptance, since the ability to finance a toll road would hinge on customers' willingness to use it. The Mobility Authority built a positive public profile by:

- Delivering successful projects that reduced regional congestion;
- Working with the Texas Department of Transportation to encourage wider use of toll tags;
- Introducing all-electronic tolling technology that made tolling an efficient, streamlined customer experience.

Key Success Factors

“From the beginning, we focused on delivering our projects on time and on budget, engaging the community, and making sure we delivered value in return for the investment we had from the community and the greater region,” said CTRMA Executive Director Mike Heiligenstein. “People saw value as soon as we opened our first project, and it was almost like a light switch going on...By getting regional buy-in and commitment, we were able to show the State that we could get these jobs done and address a real need.”

The SmartMove series highlights innovative and proven solutions to funding and maintaining transportation infrastructure. Visit www.IBTTA.org/MAF for more IBTTA member SmartMoves.

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