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State Installs Quieter Highway in Bellevue

Seattle Post-Intelligencer – August 16, 2009

BELLEVUE, Wash. – Engineers in Washington are in the process of installing quieter asphalt on I-405, the third section of highway in the region testing the pavement to reduce road noise. The other two sections to try the less-noisy pavement are southbound I-5 through Lynnwood and State Route 520 between Bellevue and Medina, neither of which has had good results.

Tom Baker, a Washington Department of Transportation materials engineer, said the quiet asphalt lost any noise reduction within six months of paving. Those sections of highway are just as noisy now as the lower-cost standard asphalt laid at the same time. WSDOT said the methods and pavement mix have been altered for the newest test section on northbound I-405.

NY Gov. Implements California-Style Emission Cuts

Land Line Magazine – August 18, 2009

The governor of New York has approved an agreement for the state to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 80 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2050. In an executive order signed on Aug. 6, Gov. David Paterson created a climate Action Council that will prepare a draft Climate Action Plan by Sept. 30, 2010.

"Climate change is the most pressing environmental issue of our time," Paterson said in a statement. "By taking action, we send a signal that New Yorkers will do our share to address the

climate crisis, and we will do it in a way that creates opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship to flourish.”

The council will also inventory emissions sources and develop short- and long-term plans for all economic sectors, including transportation, to cut emissions.



I spoke to a group the other day and told them that virtually every policy issue or discussion we will have in the future will happen against the backdrop of climate change. Whether or not you believe in Al Gore’s inconvenient truth, climate change is part of our transportation future. TW

Toll Payers Lose Injunction Bid against Turnpike

Boston Globe – August 18, 2009

BOSTON – A toll payer group, which filed suit against the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, has lost an initial request to halt the authority using revenue from turnpike and tunnel tolls to pay off costs associated with the Big Dig project. Middlesex Superior Court Judge H.J. Smith Jr. rejected the plaintiffs’ bid for a preliminary injunction, because he said the plaintiffs had failed to show they were likely to succeed on the merits.

“At this juncture, the court finds that the plaintiffs have not demonstrated that they are likely to prevail on the merits of their contention that the [Turnpike’s] tolls are unconstitutional taxes,” Smith wrote, adding that he did not believe issuing the injunction would be in the public’s best interest.

The judge also noted the Turnpike’s argument that if it could not use toll revenues to pay for the Big Dig, it would be “unable to meet its financial obligations and could be forced to withhold essential services or even shut down entire segments of essential roadways.”

In the opinion, issued Monday, Smith wrote, “In view of the logistical problems that cutting highway services and/or diverting motor vehicle traffic would cause for an overwhelming segment of the general public, the court cannot say that the requested relief either promotes the public interest or would not adversely affect the public.”

An attorney for the 2,300 toll payers filing suit said they planned to immediately appeal.

Virginia HOT Lanes Project put on Hold

Washington Business Journal – August 18, 2009

SPRINGFIELD, Va. – Officials in Virginia have halted plans to construct new high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes along I-95 and I-395, citing financial woes and economic downturn. The project, intended to ease congestion along a 56-mile stretch of the corridor, was scheduled to break ground early next year.

A failed public-private partnership resulted in the state missing the August deadline to secure a deal on financing, and, according to a letter by Transportation Secretary Pierce Homer to the two contracting companies, the state would not be able to borrow enough money for the project.

Texas-based Fluor Corp. and Australia's Transurban were the two private companies planning to build the project. Homer said the project is still a priority and will eventually move forward, although a time frame has not been specified.

Va. to Cut \$900M in Transportation Funds

WTOP - August 19, 2009

RICHMOND, Va. - A top transportation official in Virginia announced this week that an additional \$900 million must be slashed from the transportation fund, on top of the \$2.6 billion cut in February and the \$1.1 billion reduction in the spring of 2008.

"We are in a very rapid contraction mode," Transportation Secretary Pierce Homer said after Tuesday's announcement. "Just to remind you where we are, we are in the process of laying off 1,000 employees at VDOT. We are closing a third of our facilities around the state, including the highly visible rest areas. We are eliminating half of our garage facilities."

The new budget cuts make the future of highways in the state look especially gloomy. In the fiscal year 2008 six-year improvement plan, \$8.6 billion was available. In the fiscal year 2010 plan, \$5.5 billion is available. "Let's just say the cuts are not optimistic," Homer said.

ASU Students Pay to Ride Light Rail

KTAR - August 18, 2009

PHOENIX - There will be no more free rides for Arizona State University students returning to school this fall. Light rail rides were free for students last spring, but will now cost \$40 per semester for a pass.

The passes are still discounted from the regular fares, and students get transit access for less, about \$10 per month. The light rail route includes service from the university's main campus in Tempe to ASU's downtown Phoenix campus.



At \$10 per month, this is a deal for ASU students. TW

First GDOT Director of Planning Confirmed

Rome News Tribune - August 19, 2009

Georgia - The House Transportation Committee unanimously confirmed the state's first director of planning for the Georgia Department of Transportation. Appointed by Gov. Sonny Perdue, Todd

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Long worked for GDOT in various positions for 18 years, and is currently the director of information technology, engineering and business-related projects at the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority.

Following the confirmation, House lawmakers said Long indicated support for their push for an increased focus on alternative methods of transportation, including carpooling, mass transit and telecommuting as key elements in the state's transportation planning.

Long's position, created by the General Assembly this spring under Senate Bill 200, will be responsible for developing an annual budget for projects and a statewide strategic transportation plan. The GDOT commissioner and State Transportation Board will still technically run the department, though projects previously approved by the governor and legislature will be subject to the director's plan.

FTA Approves Two Light Rail Lines for Houston

ProgressiveRailroading.com – August 19, 2009

Texas - Two Houston light rail lines have received approval from the Federal Transit Administration allowing the Metropolitan Transit Authority (Metro) to begin final design on both projects. The North and Southeast Corridor light rail lines are now authorized for pre-construction activities, as the FTA said Metro demonstrated the technical capacity and capability to build and implement the projects, along with sufficient technical and management resources to start the final design phase.

The FTA said the transit agency has "adequately defined the North and Southeast Corridor's project scope, cost estimate, schedule and potential risk areas," according to a statement by Metro.

A \$121 million contract was awarded to the Houston Rapid Transit Joint Venture, comprised of Parsons Transportation Group Inc., Granite Construction Co., Kiewit Texas Construction L.P., and Stacy and Witbeck for the North and southeast lines, including preliminary utility relocation work. The contract is part of a \$632 million contract for initial costs on the North, Southeast and East End light rail lines. Metro plans to construct four new light rail lines in the Houston area covering about 20 miles.