



Is something troubling you? *We can help...*

The Women's Behavioral Unit at St. Joseph Medical Center

For more information please call 713-757-7512



Register
Login

TEXAS WEEKLY

AN EXCLUSIVE PUBLICATION OF

THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

Current Issue
News Clips
Inside Intelligence
The Texas Tribune

Subscribe Print This Issue Past Issues

Texas Conference Draws Transportation Heavy-Hitters

by [Aman Batheja](#) | July 13, 2012 (June 28, 2012 for [Subscribers](#))

A who's who of transportation policy wonks, lawmakers and engineers will descend on Irving in August for the 15th Annual Transportation & Infrastructure Summit. The event, which is always held in Irving, has evolved from humble origins into one of the most respected gatherings in the country focused on transportation policy. Keynote guests this year include former Pennsylvania Governor **Ed Rendell** and Federal Highway Administrator **Victor Mendez**.

Plenty of Texas officials will also attend including Texas Department of Transportation Executive Director **Phil Wilson** and U.S. Sen. **Kay Bailey Hutchison**.

State Rep. **Larry Phillips**, R-Sherman, chair of the House Transportation Committee, plans to convene a meeting of a recently created subcommittee on transit to take place at the Summit, his office confirmed.

David Dean, a Summit organizer and former Texas Secretary of State, said the first conference in 1997 was originally called the Texas Transportation Summit and lasted only four hours. It was put together at the request of U.S. Rep. **Eddie Bernice Johnson**, D-Dallas, the highest-ranking Texan on the House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure, as a way to bring together federal and local officials to talk transportation policy.



[Enlarge](#)

photo by: Marjorie Kamys Cotera

Workers along stretch of highway at US290/US 183 April 2011



"It wasn't designed to be an annual anything," Dean said. "We focused on policy as opposed to engineering and technical. The primary focus was highways."

The feedback to that first meeting was so positive that organizers planned another get-together the next year. It soon expanded from four hours to a full day, then to a day and a half. The event is now a tightly-packed four-day conference. It regularly draws more than 1,000 attendees. Dean said organizers eventually dropped the word "Texas" from the name because attendees from other states told them it would be easier to expense the trip to employers if it sounded like a wide-reaching event tackling national transportation issues, which is what it what it has become.

"It's become perhaps the most robust and most broad-covered policy summit in the country," Dean said. "We're lucky it's in Texas and Irving has been a very faithful and committed primary host to it."

Given the recent drama in Congress over passing a long-term transportation funding bill, the future of paying for new roads and transit systems will be a major focus of the event. The change in the mentality of attendees regarding transportation funding since that first summit has been striking, Dean said.

"Back in the salad days, when money was flowing, you'd kind of take a number and get in line and you'd assume at some point your project would be funded," Dean said. "Fifteen years ago, people were still thinking you could raise gas taxes."

Now public-private partnerships and toll roads draw more serious interest and few see a gas tax increase as politically possible, he said.

Other hot issues this year are likely to include the impact of the upcoming Panama Canal expansion on the country's ports and the future of high-speed rail.



In This Issue

[With Health Reform Constitutional, What Happens in TX?](#)
[Risks For Perry In Senate Race](#)
[Texas Conference Draws Transportation Heavy-Hitters](#)
[Interactive Map: Texas House Committees in 82nd Session](#)
[Texas Weekly Newsreel: Senate Debate Recap](#)
[Inside Intelligence: About Those House Incumbents...](#)
[The Calendar](#)
[The Week in the Rearview Mirror](#)
[Political People and their Moves](#)
[Quotes of the Week](#)



Volume 29, Issue 26
02 July 2012

Contributors: Ross Ramsey, David Muto,
Shefali Luthra, Emily Ramshaw, Ryan
Murphy, Aman Batheja, Jay Root, Justin Dehn
and Ceryta Lockett

Ross Ramsey, Editor
Phone: 512-716-8611
Email: rramsey@texastribune.org

© Copyright 2012 The Texas Tribune
[Terms of Use](#)
[Privacy Policy](#)
[About Us](#)

Offsite Outlets
[Twitter](#)
[RSS](#)
[The Texas Tribune](#)

Recent Issues
[09 July 2012](#)
[02 July 2012](#)
[25 June 2012](#)
[18 June 2012](#)
[11 June 2012](#)
[04 June 2012](#)

[Archive](#)

Recent News Clips

[Monday](#)
[Tuesday](#)
[Wednesday](#)
[Thursday](#)
[Friday](#)
[Archive](#)

Contact Us
823 Congress Ave STE 210
Austin, TX 78701

Phone: 512-716-8611
Fax 512-716-8601
[Contact us by email](#)
Subscriptions

One-year online \$250

For more information about your
subscription:

Phone: 512-716-8606
Email: texasweekly@texastribune.org