

MEDIA RELEASE

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TEXAS BIG CITY MAYORS AND TEXAS CLEAN AIR CITIES COALITION CONVENE IN DALLAS

Dallas, TX—The Texas Clean Air Cities Coalition (TCACC) and the Texas Big Cities Mayors met today in Dallas to discuss an array of issues including clean air, transportation and homelessness.

“The interesting thing about the Texas Clean Air Cities Coalition is that its formation marks the first time that Texas cities and counties have been organized statewide on environmental issues. That’s significant,” said **Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert**. “It’s important for us to coalesce on issues like these.”

Houston Mayor Bill White added “The mayors are committed to help our regions have an energy and transportation future which is more affordable, more secure, and more sustainable.”

The TCACC discussed the many facets of clean air as not simply environmental issues, but economic and health issues as well. The Coalition discussed its legislative priorities (*attached*) which include:

- Encourage Assessment and Reduction of Greenhouse Gases
- Increase Availability of Renewable Power
- Reduce Energy Consumption
- Improve Ambient Air Quality

Mayor Will Wynn of Austin said “Austin has been able to meet air quality standards by voluntarily imposing stringent emission reduction measures on ourselves, but without responsible measures from the state we’ll ultimately lose this battle. I’m optimistic that this coalition of cities will be able to help convince state leaders to finally make protecting public health and the environment a top priority.”

After a luncheon featuring Mayor Leppert and Mayor White as keynote speakers, the mayors of Texas’ largest cities, the so-called “T8,” met to share best practices and to discuss a short list of critical legislative initiatives. The mayors in attendance signed a letter to Governor Perry indicating their support for three homelessness initiatives they hope to have passed in the current session of the Texas Legislature. (*letter attached*)

First, the Mayors request that the state provide \$25 million annually in funding for supportive services, work and housing retention services that help the most vulnerable homeless individuals and families in Texas access and retain housing.

Second, the Mayors agree that assisting with the re-entry of individuals back into the community will help to address homelessness among the mental health mental retardation (MHMR) priority population. The Mayors seek to create strategic partnerships with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to better link the re-entry population from our prisons, and the operational and service subsidies that come with them, to supportive services.

Third, the Mayors are requesting that the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and the Department of Public Safety collaborate to issue an official Texas ID Certificate for everyone discharged from a Texas jail or prison prior to their release date.

“Homelessness is an issue that affects every city in our region and state. Local governments have taken the responsibility of funding solutions and we are now asking the state to assist us with that funding,” said **Mayor Leppert**.

Five of the eight mayors were in attendance and signed the letter; the remaining three mayors have stated their intent to sign the letter.

Transportation was also on the agenda. Elected officials from North Texas took the opportunity to brief their counterparts from the state's other metropolitan regions on the Metroplex-originated plan for construction and maintenance of rail and transit projects. The legislation would allow voters to decide whether they want to have certain fees raised to fund transit projects targeting traffic congestion and clean air targets.

“Transportation and mobility, namely the Rail/Roads North Texas Initiative and the homeless issue are both critical to large cities in Texas,” said **Fort Worth Mayor Mike Moncrief**. “I’m delighted my colleagues in the other large cities share my same concerns about how we address these growing problems. I’m confident we will make progress with our strong united voices in Austin.”

El Paso Mayor John Cook summed up the day by saying “It’s always good to compare notes with other mayors and address the challenges that all big cities face. We find out what the best practices are and we take those home to our own cities.”

Background:

Texas Clean Air Cities Coalition:

The Texas Clean Air Cities Coalition is currently comprised of 36 cities, counties and school districts. The Coalition was formed in 2006 as a unified voice to combat issues affecting Texas air quality and its resulting health impacts.

Texas Big City Mayors “T8”:

The mayors of Texas’ eight most populous cities, at the request of Houston Mayor Bill White, have recently started gathering several times a year to share best practices and discuss common issues and challenges facing their cities. The eight cities are: Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, Austin, Fort Worth, El Paso, Corpus Christi and Arlington.

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