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NEWS RELEASE

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Attention Editors, Publishers, and Broadcasters:

TxDOT offers possible 60-day moratorium on gravel road conversions

(SAN ANTONIO) — The Texas Department of Transportation on Tuesday agreed to a conditional 60-day moratorium on converting paved roads to gravel in West and South Texas, following discussions with state Sen. Carlos Uresti and several other state legislators and county officials.

"I appreciate TxDOT's willingness to work with the Legislature and local communities on this important issue," Uresti said. "It is critically important that counties be given an opportunity to find alternatives to tearing up paved roads."

TxDOT recently announced that it would begin converting some 83 miles of paved highways in West and South Texas into gravel roads, beginning with Dimmit, one of the Eagle Ford Shale counties in Senate District 19. The plan prompted Uresti and Sen. Glenn Hegar to seek a meeting with TxDOT Executive Director Phil Wilson to discuss the agency's plan.

Under the agreement with Wilson, a county must submit a letter requesting the 60-day moratorium, which TxDOT would then review. The agency could then approve the moratorium, giving the county an opportunity to find alternatives. However, roads that are in dire need or disrepair could still be converted.

"TxDOT was hasty in its decision to proceed with this plan without any input from the Legislature or local officials," Uresti said. "Today's meeting was very positive because now everyone is at the table. It is crucial that we keep the lines of communication open and work together."

Along with Uresti, Wilson and other TxDOT representatives, the meeting was attended by state Sen. Judith Zaffirini and Rep. Tracy King, representatives of other legislators, and officials from Atascosa, Dimmit, La Salle, Live Oak, McMullen, and Wilson counties.

Uresti said the next step is getting legislative leaders more involved, holding town hall meetings in affected counties to get more local input, and widen the number of stakeholders.

"The oil and gas industry must get involved as well," Uresti said. "It must be part of the solution."

Sen. Uresti represents Senate District 19, which covers more than 35,000 square miles and contains all or part of 17 counties, two international ports of entry, ten state parks, 51 school districts, almost 9,000 miles of highways and county roads, and more than 29,000 producing oil and gas wells. The district is larger than 11 states and 124 Nations, and contains almost 400 miles of the Texas-Mexico border.