



Gulf Coast Strategic Highway Coalition

Connecting U.S. Army Facilities and Texas Strategic Ports

Coalition Celebrates First Sign on New Interstate 14

April 25, 2017

KILLEEN, TEXAS – Community representatives from along the Interstate 14 route across Texas gathered in Killeen on April 22 to celebrate the unveiling of the first signs on the nation's newest interstate highway.

The first 25-mile segment of US 190 is now part of the Interstate Highway System. It runs from Interstate 35 in Belton to Copperas Cove and provides direct access to the main gate at Fort Hood in Killeen.

John Thompson, former county judge of Polk County and chairman of the Gulf Coast Strategic Highway Coalition, said the celebration marked a momentous occasion for Texas, for Fort Hood and for Bell County. He noted that it was appropriate for the first I-14 section to be in Killeen because Killeen is a charter member of the Coalition along with several East Texas communities and the Port of Corpus Christi Authority.

"There are challenges to getting across Texas between I-10 and I-20 and we have brought a solution to the table," Thompson said. He explained that a key moment came in 2002 when the Coalition developed the "Forts-to-Ports" concept of an improved strategic highway system.

"It was at that point that we realized how important this highway was, not just to economic purposes, but to our country, to the world and certainly to those folks along that route. The strategic highway as now envisioned will link Fort Bliss, Fort Hood and Fort Polk with their deployment ports. And as I talk to the various folks at the forts around the country I hear that one of the big factors, the heavily weighted factor is how quickly they can deploy. And this interstate system will take movements from our forts to either Corpus Christi or Beaumont, both strategic military deployment ports. It is so important. Plus, the extra benefit is what we gain from the economic value along the route," Thompson said.

Col. Todd Fox, Fort Hood garrison commander, speaking during the ceremony said, "The designation of US 190 as Interstate Highway 14 is a tremendous achievement and would not have been possible without incredible teamwork and support from our local communities." He said that the transportation flexibility provided by the improving highway system adds significant military value to the sprawling Fort Hood complex.

U.S. Senators John Cornyn and Ted Cruz spoke to the celebration participants via video.

"The I-14 corridor is an example for the rest of the country and I am proud that Texas is leading the way," Sen. Cornyn said. "Not only will this designation help our military transfer essential good, but it will also help families and economies across America. This 25-mile stretch is only the beginning. Keep up the great work."

Sen. Cruz thanked Gulf Coast Strategic Highway Coalition members for their tireless dedication to making I-14 a reality. He called the signing of the first section an exciting and important development for Central Texas communities. “It not only offers residents an easier commute but enhances the power projection capability of Fort Hood as the Army works to move their ground assets to the ports for movement to a theater for deterrence and, if needed, combat operations. This is an exciting time for the state of Texas,” he said.

In 2015, the Congress created the Central Texas Corridor generally along the US 190 route and designated it as future I-14. The Coalition and members of Congress are currently supporting additional legislation to adjust the corridor in West Texas so that it will serve San Angelo and Midland-Odessa. Thompson noted that Congressman Brian Babin of Woodville and Sen. Cornyn were the authors of the 2015 legislation and that Babin is leading the effort in Congress to expand the I-14 corridor.

Also speaking at the celebration were Congressman John Carter who represents Killeen and the Fort Hood headquarters and Congressman Roger Williams who represents Coryell County and much of the northern portion of Fort Hood.

Carter called the Forts-to-Ports concept behind I-14 and the associated strategic highways “critical to freedom around the world.” He encouraged supporters to keep dreaming and making their dreams happen.

Williams, who first proposed the I-14 designation when he served on the U.S. House Transportation Committee, said the addition of the 25 miles of freeway to the interstate system shows the nation’s commitment to our military and to their families.

Marc Williams, deputy executive director of the Texas Department of Transportation, pointed out that I-14 now connects Fort Hood to the 50-year-old Eisenhower System of Interstate and Defense Highways. “We are about 25 years overdue in making this connection,” he said. He noted that it had been a team effort involving many stakeholders and political leaders with the final approval action to designate it as an interstate being approved earlier this year by the five members of the Texas Transportation Commission.

The Central Texas Corridor begins in West Texas and runs through Killeen, Bryan/College Station, Huntsville, Livingston, the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe Reservation, Woodville and Jasper before crossing into Louisiana at the Sabine River near Fort Polk. Thompson said upgrading this corridor to interstate standard will mean improved safety and traffic mobility.

About the Coalition - The Gulf Coast Strategic Highway Coalition is made up of cities, counties, local authorities and economic development organizations in Texas and Louisiana. The organization has been working for more than a decade in support of highway upgrades that will improve access between major U.S. Army installations at Fort Bliss, Fort Hood and Fort Polk and the Texas strategic deployment seaports that support them – the Port of Corpus Christi and the Port of Beaumont.

Contact: John Thompson, Former County Judge, Polk County
Board Chairman, Gulf Coast Strategic Highway Coalition
(936) 328-6444; email: zimmercreekconsultantsllc@gmail.com

Gary Bushell, Executive Director, Gulf Coast Strategic Highway Coalition
(512) 478-6661; email: gebushell@aol.com



Celebration participants (l-r) Bobby Littlefield, retired TxDOT Waco District Engineer; Marc Williams, TxDOT Deputy Executive Director; State Representative Hugh Shine of Temple; State Senator Dawn Buckingham; Congressman John Carter; Congressman Roger Williams; State Representative Scott Cosper of Killeen; Army Col. Todd Fox of Fort Hood; and Judge John Thompson, chairman of the Gulf Coast Strategic Highway Coalition.

