

Statement from Edinburg Mayor Ramiro Garza Jr. on TxDOT's Proposed SH 68 Realignment

Edinburg, TX – As Mayor of Edinburg, I strongly support the original alignment of State Highway 68 (SH 68), established in 2014, which was designed to connect the International Bridge Trade Corridor to Interstate 69C, passing by the South Texas International Airport along FM 490. This alignment is vital for advancing our region's transportation infrastructure and positioning the airport as a key hub for freight and trade. However, I am deeply concerned about the Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT) recent proposals to realign SH 68, which deviate significantly from this carefully considered plan. These proposed changes threaten to disrupt not only Edinburg's economic trajectory but the entire region's future growth.

Since the project's inception, TxDOT has held multiple public hearings and, in 2018, released a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that endorsed the original alignment. Yet, Edinburg officials were not involved in discussions about the proposed realignment until recently, when it was revealed that TxDOT is considering shifting SH 68 east of the airport and connecting it to I-69C north of FM 490—marking a major departure from the initial route.

This realignment could undermine our efforts to turn the airport into a major freight and logistics center, potentially leading to significant economic losses. The entire region, including surrounding cities, stands to gain from the increased trade and transportation activity linked to the airport, and this shift jeopardizes those opportunities.

Texas State Representative, House District 40 Transportation Committee Chair Terry Canales has played a pivotal role in securing funding to prepare the airport for its expected growth, a vision that has been in place for over a decade. It is imperative that we stay true to this vision by maintaining the original SH 68 alignment, which not only serves Edinburg's interests but also promotes the long-term economic success of the entire Rio Grande Valley.

Moving forward, our goal is to work with TxDOT to find a solution that benefits all parties. While we share Chairman Canales's concerns about ensuring efficient traffic flow without stoplights, we must also prioritize a design that balances the needs of the city, the region, and the future of SH 68.

The South Texas International Airport at Edinburg is essential for border security, regional safety, and economic development. The state's ongoing investment in this facility highlights its importance. Ensuring that SH 68 aligns with this strategic vision is crucial for maximizing the airport's potential as a cornerstone for trade and growth.

I remain committed to collaborating with TxDOT, regional leaders, and stakeholders to find a solution that safeguards our region's economic future, supports the growth of the airport, and strengthens Edinburg's role as a key player in international trade.