

FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**STATE REPRESENTATIVE RUTH JONES MCCLENDON**

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**McClendon Secures \$182 Million  
for Rail Relocation in  
Appropriations Budget**

(Austin) -- Representative Ruth Jones McClendon (D-San Antonio, House District 120) has gained approval by the House of Representatives to appropriate \$182 million for the rail relocation and improvement fund, in floor action amending the state budget late Friday evening. Texas voters approved the creation of the Rail Relocation and Improvement Fund in a constitutional amendment election in 2005, following a previous enactment of legislation authored by McClendon to create the fund, subject to voter approval.

"Other than the first time I was sworn in as a Representative, this is quite possibly the single most thrilling moment I have experienced as a legislator and a member of the House Appropriations Committee. Even though the voters approved the establishment of this fund, obtaining legislative approval for the appropriations has been anything but easy. We will be working extremely hard to keep this funding in the final budget that will be voted out of the Legislature."

This \$182 million appropriation for 2010-2011 will support the bonding of about \$1.8 billion in rail projects. In 2007, a tentative rail relocation plan developed by the Department of Transportation projected the needs for Texas as being upwards of \$17 billion. Supporters of rail relocation and improvement efforts emphasize that Texas needs a comprehensive transportation plan which includes rail relocation and improvement as good and sound public policy. Advocates promote relocating of heavy rail lines to increase community safety, decrease traffic congestion, reduce emissions affecting air quality, and help the economy by creating a more efficient flow of goods throughout Texas and across the U.S. "Because of increasing population needs, the transportation of passengers and cargo between the east and west coasts, and within Texas, will be increasingly necessary no matter how many roads or traffic lanes we build," McClendon said. "This is a great start toward meeting our future transportation needs."

Approval of this funding will allow the Department of Transportation to utilize funding from the State Highway Fund that is not dedicated to other constitutional fund usage, and requires finding by the comptroller that there exists at least \$182 million more dollars in the Highway Fund in 2010-2011 than it held in 2008-2009. This assures that funding for highway projects will not suffer any reduction in funds to support the \$182 million rail relocation appropriation. "This appropriation means that Texas will be putting some 'skin in the game' to obtain matching funds, so we can maximize our chances for obtaining rail transportation funds from the federal stimulus package."

During the 81st Session, Representative McClendon serves on the House Committee on Appropriations and the House Committee on Transportation. She also serves as Chair of the House Committee on Rules & Resolutions. In addition, she serves on the Sunset Advisory Commission, which oversees regular review of all agencies under the auspices of the State of Texas. The 2009 Legislative Session is her seventh term serving District 120 in the Texas House; prior to that, she served as a City Council Member in San Antonio and as a juvenile probation office officer and administrator. ~30~