

Meeting notes from March 5, 2008 meeting with TxDOT and SLP Sponsor groups.

The meeting was attended by ten people representing five specialty license plates. TxDOT had three representatives, DSHS had one, Texans Conquer Cancer had two, Share the Road had two, Texas Music Office had one, the Real Estate Board had one.

These notes are not complete and are subject to recollection. Other attendees may recall additional items.

Concerns and requests of the specialty plates charities:

1. Can TxDOT ensure that a banner is placed on (near the top?) of the My Plates website that features the charitable plates and gives people a choice whether or not they want a \$30 (less expensive) plate to support a charity? Under the current My Plates contract TxDOT there is no requirement for My Plates to promote the charity/agency plates.
2. Can a direct link be created for all of the individual charitable groups that they would place on their page? This hyperlink would go straight to a page of the group's license plate. For example: http://www.myplates.com/texas_music_office.
3. Can each charity sell plates on their own website and link to Texas Online just like My Plates? There was much discussion but no resolution.
4. A request was made to create either an ad-hoc or an official advisory committee to review and discuss problems and concerns with the new specialty plate private vendor program.
5. Rebecca Davio asked if the charitable groups would like a separate website to promote all charitable plates aside from the My Plates website? There was much discussion and concern around web sales. The current TxDOT/My Plates contract would have one website owned by My Plates for all online sales. There was concern expressed that My Plates could redirect sales from charity plates to their own for-profit plates if they had the only website.
6. The question was posed whether or not MyPlates could use a Texas musician on a plate?

TxDOT answer: Yes. But, because their plates can not compete with already existing plates, they will present their new plates to TxDOT and to all of the charitable groups - possibly through an e-mail - and then the group has a chance to object, or give the go-ahead.

For example, MyPlates may want to create a Willie Nelson or Stevie Ray Vaughan plate, but the music office should have the opportunity to decide whether or not that plate competes with the Music Office license plate. It was noted that this decision is subjective, but that the charitable group or agency should have the final say in the decision whether the new plate is competition or not. This "veto" option is not currently in the contract that TxDOT has with My Plates. The legislation (HB 2894) does require an affected charities/agency and TxDOT to agree to new plates that may compete.

Also, a sponsor group can negotiate a deal directly with MyPlates to create a new plate and pay the set up fees. For example, if the Music Office wanted to create a Stevie Ray Vaughan plate, MyPlates could do that and then the profits could be split. These agreements are not bound by any rules, meaning that the split could be 50-50 or 99-1.

TxDOT also said that current SLP sponsors could create a new plate by working directly through TxDOT and not co-marketing with My Plates.

7. My Plates has provided a \$40 million guarantee over a 5 year period to TxDOT. Robin Stallings asked if My Plates could also guarantee that existing charity/agency SLP sales would increase at the same percentage of growth as the overall growth of specialty plates. Robin suggested that would provide an incentive for My Plates to include current SLPs in their marketing plans and visibility on the My Plates website.

--Nothing was decided at this meeting. The list above was created so that TxDOT can work out a satisfactory plan and contract amendments before the next Transportation Commission meeting March 27, 2008.