



## Vote set on I-35E project

By Bj Lewis / Staff Writer

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Denton County and area transportation officials are coming together for what could be the last time regarding the Interstate 35E expansion project.

The Senate Bill 1420 Committee — a requirement of the bill that authorizes the use of public-private partnerships to fund the expansion of a 28-mile stretch of I-35E between Denton and Dallas — will meet in the Lewisville City Council chambers at 2 p.m. Monday to vote on the latest proposal on how to fund and construct the project.

"I would say, currently, the plan from what I understand from TxDOT and Michael Morris, they would like Monday's meeting to be the last meeting, and we vote," said John Polster, Denton County transportation consultant.

There are six items on the agenda. One action item would see the committee requesting the Regional Transportation Council to put modified language in an RTC resolution to protect the revenue made in the corridor, so it will stay in the corridor until the expansion project is completed.

Back in January, Dallas County officials requested the revenue protection language be taken out of the resolution.

The committee granted this to give Dallas County officials time to work with the Texas Department of Transportation in Austin to identify funds for the expansion project.

Denton County Commissioner Andy Eads said, at the time, that officials were open to having the protection put back in the resolution down the line.

That may happen Monday.

Another action item will be the language of the expansion proposal.

Polster said the conversation will be on whether or not the committee likes the language in the draft. That draft will touch on three points: the toll rate, which is set by the RTC; who is taking the funding risk on the project, in this case the state; and the expansion being done as a design build project.

In a design build project, a project's design is tailored to a given budget, and firms can compete to see which can do the best work under design and budget considerations.

If committee members vote Monday to approve the proposal, the state will then lay out the procurement schedule and what time frame to expect for the various parts of the construction process.

Polster anticipates Monday's meeting will indeed be the last one, but he is open to more if they are necessary.

"If there are some issues that come up that [cause] concerns, I am sure we'll have future meetings," he said. "I am assuming, if they followed the directions from the last meeting, everything should be all right."

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