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RTC expects new transportation funding this summer

Dallas Business Journal by Matt Joyce, Staff Writer

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North Texas could leverage \$500 million in anticipated new transportation revenue this year into \$2.5 billion to push forward projects including interstate highways 35E and 35W and State Highway 183 in Irving, a top regional transportation official said Friday.

[Michael Morris](#), director of transportation for the North Central Texas Council of Governments, presented the latest regional transportation financing information to the Dallas Regional Mobility Coalition.

The Regional Transportation Council of the COG directs the allocation of federal, state and regional transportation funds.

Morris said the Texas Transportation Commission is expected to decide on the new one-time funding – which includes federal and state funds – this summer.

“I think one of the items that’s becoming clear is TxDOT is creating additional partnerships with the Legislature and, as a result, they’ve looked at innovative ways to redo some of their financing in order to come up with additional revenue,” he said.

Morris said that the region should leverage the funding through tools such as public-private partnerships, design build contracts and transportation reinvestment zones.

“If we spend it wisely, we leverage funds and use all the tools the Legislature gives us, it

creates a greater opportunity, in our opinion and in TxDOT's opinion, that the Legislature could come back and fund TxDOT in a more traditional fashion," Morris said.

At least two proposals to raise transportation funds are being discussed across the state that may make their way into the next legislative session.

Those include increasing the vehicle registration fee to \$50 and putting part of the vehicle sales tax into transportation funding, rather than the general fund, Morris said. The Regional Transportation Council projects that those two measures could raise \$7.5 billion and \$1.9 billion, respectively, for transportation projects in the North Texas region between 2013 and 2035.

Matt covers transportation, energy, government and economic development.