



# Readers offer alternative ideas to a Dallas toll road along the Trinity River

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The [Federal Highway Administration](#) is spending the summer considering where — and whether — Dallas should build a toll road along the Trinity River. A decision could come by January.

City officials have said the toll road should be built within the Trinity River floodway and will relieve up to 30 percent of the traffic in critical downtown corridors. Opponents worry it could weaken the river levees and damage plans to build a park around the riverfront.

The two sides agree that jammed-up traffic needs a fix. But, if not the toll road, then what?

Last week, after the [North Texas Tollway Authority](#) held a public hearing on the issue, we invited folks on both sides to go beyond the grousing and offer some ideas. Following is a small sample of the responses, offered without endorsement or criticism but just to get you thinking — and talking.

Join the conversation on Twitter by using the hashtag [#trinityideas](#), or share ideas at [transportationblog.dallasnews.com](http://transportationblog.dallasnews.com).

## Toll the freeways

We need to toll the freeways. Putting a 50-cent toll on every mile of our major highways would burst the myth that our freeways are free — and it would force people to make decisions on their transportation.

How would it work? If you live in Plano close enough to [Dallas Area Rapid Transit](#) service, you have two options to get to downtown Dallas for work: Take the Red Line or drive Central. Most commuters drive, because it's free. Add the tolls and it would cost nearly \$20 to drive to and from work. DART could raise its day passes to \$8 or more and still lure many drivers off of Central and onto its trains. That would reduce traffic.

Or take my case. I live in Dallas in the Lower Greenville area. I take our [freeway](#) into downtown because I'm lazy and cheap, but I shouldn't. I should take local streets, since I am so close. I usually save myself five minutes instead. If there were tolls to pay, however, my cheapness would overcome my laziness. I'd take the surface streets — and that, too, would reduce traffic on the freeways. It would also put me closer to smaller, local businesses, and maybe I'd do more of my shopping there.

We could toll truck drivers, too, and perhaps more of them would go around the city. That would reduce traffic too. If we really want to run Dallas like a business, we should start charging for our most valuable assets, including highways.

*Dallas May, Dallas*

## Carpools

The development of a better network (or any network for that matter) of carpool lanes would reduce the overall number of cars on the road creating gridlock. The number of single-passenger vehicles in this city is enough to clog any roadway.

Additionally, if you toll the main lanes and create another incentive to carpooling (besides a dedicated lane that has less traffic and is faster) it would further reduce the amount of single-passenger cars clogging these roads and bring in money instead of pouring it down the Trinity.

Bottom line: Reduce demand, rather than expand supply.

*Nate Sis, Dallas*

## Boost basic pedestrian and bicycling options

The toll road backers all mean well, but they never seem to miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity. The Trinity toll road is the latest example of a terrible idea being pushed forward against all logic, but it's certainly not the only one.

Just a few years ago, there was an opportunity to build a light rail station at [Love Field](#). That was a great idea. But the city of Dallas and DART couldn't find a way to get the station built, and instead the airport is "served" by a station that is just outside the airport, but far enough that it will never attract a significant number of air travelers.

That's a good antecedent for what's happening with the toll road.

In this region, "easy wins" are dismissed in favor of huge iconic projects with very questionable benefits. In the case of the iconic toll road, the easy win alternatives would be to focus on providing basic pedestrian (and bicycle) infrastructure throughout the city, or at the very least in parts of the city where these small fixes could go a long way toward reducing automobile trips.

I lived for many years at the corner of Travis and Fitzhugh before relocating to Boston at the end of 2010. The intersection is in the heart of one of the densest, most pedestrian-active neighborhoods in the entire city — yet there are no crosswalks or any other markings that would suggest that pedestrians are even remotely welcome to enter the intersection. This intersection is also about a block away from the Katy Trail — making bike lanes a no-brainer, except of course that there were none.

Now I live in Brookline, Mass. Culturally and demographically, the neighborhoods aren't all that different, if you were here you'd see crosswalks, bike racks, benches, street trees, and even awnings on buildings — all part of the streetscape. These are all small but significant signs that tell people that they belong in the environment.

People respond to their environment, and if you provide them with nothing but highways and parking lots you will get nothing but drivers in return. Give people a fighting chance to walk, bike or use transit with dignity, and they will.

*Boris Palchik, Brookline, Mass.*

