

## Editorial: Rawlings' pause for Trinity data

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This newspaper has supported development of a major new roadway and downtown park between the Trinity River levees for more than 14 years, through two citywide elections and tedious debate over changing iterations of the plan.

When first-year Mayor Mike Rawlings ended his silence on the roadway project last month with a strong endorsement, it might have been an occasion to join with him in advancing a defining improvement for the city's center. At the same time, however, some underlying assumptions were challenged anew, and Rawlings soon hit the pause button in favor of fresh analysis.

If it adds clarity to the ongoing debate, the pause for information will be a useful one. But the analysis has to be done right, be accessible to the public and delivered with utmost transparency. The Texas Department of Transportation has the central role in addressing the mayor's questions, and it now must prove to be an impartial broker of information.

The questions on the table have been posed by the three Dallas City Council opponents of a Trinity toll road. They maintain TxDOT's data shows that the long-planned, but now-shelved, Project Pegasus could be revived at less cost than a Trinity toll road and move far more traffic through the center of Dallas. Further, and contrary to long-held beliefs, they say, the Pegasus could indeed be built without first completing the Trinity as a reliever road. Again, they cite TxDOT as their source.

Getting to the bottom of this is important not only to the mayor but also to any other party in Dallas — this newspaper included — that believes fair questions about a project of the Trinity's magnitude deserve careful responses. We're frustrated that TxDOT brass in Austin clamped down on media interviews while the agency takes the lead in addressing the mayor's "matrix" of questions, with input from the North Texas Tollway Authority and Regional Transportation Council. We share the mayor's expectation that TxDOT take pains to verify the information supplied by its sister agencies, both of which have advocacy positions on a toll road project.

It's also important to keep in mind that this is not necessarily an either-or world. City Council members Angela Hunt, Scott Griggs and Sandy Greyson, longtime tollway opponents, cast the question as this road project vs. that one, hence the mayor's side-by-side comparison. Their assumption is that there will be enough scarce highway dollars to build just one, which is a fair assessment in the near term. We trust the mayor calibrates his assessment on the city's long-term needs, too.

The bottom line should be modernizing and adding badly needed capacity to a center city highway system that was designed during the Eisenhower administration. Any project must be compatible with the vision endorsed by voters in 1998 to develop a grand urban park in the city's largely ignored floodway.

### **MAYOR'S HIGHWAY 'MATRIX'**

Mayor Mike Rawlings has asked TxDOT to provide data in these categories for two downtown highway projects — the proposed Trinity toll road and portions of the now-shelved Project Pegasus:

Average daily traffic

Project traffic capacity

Added capacity

Cost of roadway construction

Cost of reliever project

Total cost, including right of way

Lanes added to downtown system

Number of managed lanes