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Texas transpo funding tidbits from Irving summit

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By [Rodger Jones](#)/Editorial Writer
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 4:52 pm on August 14, 2012 | [Permalink](#)

This week's [Transportation and Infrastructure Summit in Irving](#) offers a critical mass of rich gossip on the things that matter in that world, like money, money and money.

Here are three big funding ideas being kicked around in Austin for next year's legislative session, according to transportation officials and lobbyists I talked to today:

- Taking \$3 billion out of the rainy day fund and using it to start a new revolving fund to borrow against. It would function similar to the Texas Mobility Fund, which draws on a variety of taxes and fees to back the debt. The \$3 billion would have a ten-fold multiplier effect.
- Tacking an extra penny a year onto the 20-cent gas tax over five years and using the revenue to retire transportation debt incurred in the Legislature's borrowing programs, Prop 12 and Prop 14. Approved by voters in 2003, Prop 14 ultimately authorized borrowing of up to \$6 billion, with debt payments coming from fuel taxes. [Prop 12, approved in 2007](#), authorizes \$5 billion for transportation, with the debt retired through general revenue. The programs are maxed out, and debt payments amount to hundreds of millions a year.
- Increasing motor vehicle registration fees. This was something that Sen. Tommy Williams, Senate transportation chair, was beating the drums for in the fall of 2010, leading up to the last session. But then the drums stopped, and everyone forgot about the argument that this state's vehicle registration fees are relatively low. Well, the arguments might rev up again.

Speaking of Tommy Williams, one person told me he may not be long for Senate transportation. September, according to the scenario, and Williams may end up chairing Senate Finance to rep

Who, then, would end up with transportation? I don't have any names to offer from the grapevine.

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Oscar Slotboom · Sharpstown High School

I think taking money from the rainy day fund is the option with the highest probability of happening. I would rate it a 50% probability.

Increasing license fees is unlikely but possible. The license fee for my car is ridiculously low - around \$50 per year. But I think Perry will oppose this, likely killing it. If it does go through, it will be small, like \$10-20 dollars per year and not the \$40-50 per year which is needed. I rate a small increase as a 20% probability.

As always, the most efficient, logical and fairest way to raise revenue is an increase in the fuel tax. The probability of a gasoline tax increase is zero.

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These are all good suggestions. As for the motor fuels tax, it ought to be cents per dollar rather than per gallon. At a time when fuel prices have sextupled, the tax per gallon has remained the same. This makes no sense at all.

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