

Star-Telegram

TxDOT director: At least \$1B a year more needed

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The Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — The Texas Department of Transportation needs an additional \$1 billion a year to keep up with maintenance on 80,000 miles of roads in the state, the agency's executive director said Thursday.

Phil Wilson told a group of officials Thursday that TxDOT also is likely to need an additional \$3 billion a year to deal with growing congestion on interstates and other roads.

Lawmakers, who started their biennial legislative session this week, have already said Texas will need to tackle road financing as the state's population grows.

TxDOT, which currently has a \$10 billion annual budget, relies on a 20-cents-a-gallon fuel tax that hasn't been raised since 1991. State officials say they'll soon run out of money for any construction or expansion without changes.

Among some proposals, the top ideas appear to be rededicating sales tax revenue on vehicle purchases to TxDOT or adding \$50 to the annual vehicle registration fee. Other proposals include ending diversions from the gas tax revenue and taking \$1 billion from the state "rainy day fund" to create a highway infrastructure bank.

Wilson, speaking at a 35W Coalition meeting at Texas Motor Speedway in Fort Worth, declined to offer support for any specific funding proposals, The Dallas Morning News reported (<http://bit.ly/ZxzT0d>). But he said "there's a lot of desire" from the House, Senate and governor to address infrastructure needs.

Wilson did offer backing for a couple of broader proposals that could affect TxDOT's financial standing.

He said he hoped the Legislature would continue to approve public-private partnerships, such as the LBJ Express in Dallas or North Tarrant Express in the Fort Worth area. Those efforts, known as comprehensive development agreements, typically feature managed toll lanes and allow for expedited project timelines.

Wilson also said the problem of road damage from heavy trucks associated with oil and gas development should be addressed.

Information from: The Dallas Morning News, <http://www.dallasnews.com>

				
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