
 Search

[About Us](#) | [Advertise with Us](#) | [ImpactDeals](#)

Connect with Us

New money for TxDOT: Lawmakers discuss potential funding increase

by [Karen Brooks Harper—Capitol Correspondent](#)

April 4, 2013

Do you like this?

Be the first of your friends to like this.

[RSS](#) [Print](#)

Texas lawmakers are searching for a path to finding billions of dollars in new funding each year for highway maintenance.



Devising a plan to double the state's highway capacity in the next 50 years has emerged as one of the top priorities of the 83rd Legislative Session, and there has been little debate over funding new projects with the state's healthy rainy day fund.

Ideas vary widely on how to significantly raise the budget of the Texas Department of Transportation, which has said it needs more than \$4 billion in additional funding every year just to maintain highway projects in the face of

rapid population growth and infrastructure strain in the coming decades.

Bills in the Texas House of representatives and Senate range from "century loans," which would issue 100-year loans at a low fixed rate, to increasing fees for driver's licenses to raising registration fees or fuel taxes for the first time in two decades.

But halfway through the session, which ends in late May, no clear plan has yet been outlined on how to solve the funding issue in a state that has exhausted its transportation bonding capacity and runs out of bond money in 2014 after a decade of successful building and borrowing.

New funding source needed

State Sen. Kirk Watson, D-Austin, is pushing for a \$50 increase in annual motor vehicle registration fees, which currently start at \$50.75 per year. Local governments have the power to raise that fee by \$10.

Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst has promised to propose an amendment to the budget passed by the Senate Finance Committee in early March that would authorize at least \$1 billion from the state's Economic Stabilization Fund, also known as the rainy day fund, for a revolving loan program for local transportation projects.

Gov. Rick Perry, who held off efforts to use the fund during the money-strapped session of 2011, has endorsed the use of \$1.7 billion for transportation projects from the fund, which is expected to have a record high balance of \$11.8 billion in the next two years.

Using rainy day funds

Bills have also been filed in the House of Representatives to withdraw money from the rainy day fund.

The caveat to using the fund is that it cannot be used for any revolving cash flow to the Texas Department of Transportation, so another funding mechanism for maintenance and other operating costs must be found.

Leaders, including Perry, have suggested that more than \$1 billion can be found in dedicated fees that are diverted from highway projects, but House Transportation Committee Chairman Larry Phillips has argued that the amount might be closer to \$300 million—nowhere near the more than \$4 billion in additional annual funding TxDOT officials have said the department needs just to maintain highways.

Proposed fee increases

House Speaker Joe Straus has said the \$25 fee paid for driver's license renewals every six years should be looked at as an additional revenue stream, and bills have been filed that would both increase that fee and decrease the amount of time between renewals.

A comprehensive omnibus bill by Rep. Patricia Harless, R-Spring, addresses several methods of funding in a proposal that would require voter approval for transportation funding and collects nearly \$5 billion in annual new money for highway maintenance.

The bill would include a \$50 increase in registration fees, a 10 cent increase in the gas tax and a redirection of some sales taxes from car sales into highway maintenance. The bill also addresses the fee diversion issue described by Perry and others.



April 26-27-28 Southlake Town Square [#AITS2013](#) [www.artinthesquare.com](#)



Voters will get the chance to approve a Lone Star College bond on election day, May 11, which would help fund improvements to LSC campuses, as well as

85,000 square-foot centers in Creekside and Magnolia. The bond would not increase the tax rate.

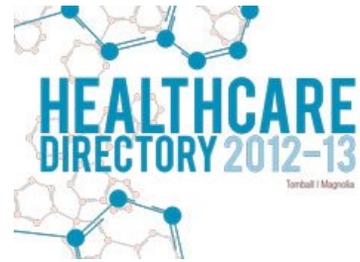
Do you support the bond?

- Yes, Magnolia and/or Creekside students will benefit from the new centers.
- Yes, the improvements will help LSC keep up with enrollment growth.
- No, the improvements are not important to me.
- No, I do not agree with LSC calling for more bond money at this point in time.
- I have no opinion.

[View Results](#)

Tags

83rd Texas Legislature, At the Capitol, Karen Brooks Harper—Capitol Correspondent, Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst, Patricia Harless, Texas Department of Transportation, Tomball | Magnolia April 2013, transportation, transportation funding



Latest Comments

Be the first to post...



TOM Latest Print Edition

[Tomball | Magnolia February 2013](#)

[Tomball | Magnolia January 2013](#)

[Tomball | Magnolia December 2012](#)



APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT

April

Food & Drink

[Wine Fair Cy-Fair](#)

Apr 5, 2013 - Apr 6, 2013

[Cypress Village Station](#)

Charity & Fundraisers

[The Woodlands High School PTO Spring Market](#)

Apr 6, 2013

[The Woodlands High School](#)

Outdoors & Recreation Sports

[Adventure Race at Indigo Lakes](#)

Apr 6, 2013

[Indigo Lakes Estates](#)

[Search Events](#) | [Submit Yours](#)



[Tomball | Magnolia Impacts](#)

[Now Open: Ground Up Athletics](#)

The locally owned business provides athletic footwear, specifically shoes with the proper support for athletes with the help of custom-made insoles.

Apr 2, 2013 4:34:00 PM

[Tomball | Magnolia Impacts](#)

[Magnolia Wood Mulch](#)

The business offers wood chipping services for trees, logs, brush and clippings. It sells mulch, compost, and a variety of soils and offers septic pumping services.

Mar 21, 2013 4:28:00 PM

[Tomball | Magnolia Impacts](#)

[Big Tex Self Storage](#)

The company offers climate controlled storage units in a variety of sizes with state-of-the-art features, including door alarms on every unit, digital surveillance throughout the property, covered loading areas and onsite resident managers.

Mar 21, 2013 4:21:00 PM



Sign up for our Email Newsletter

Privacy by SafeSubscribeSM

For Email Marketing you can trust

 Impact **Twitter** feed

TOMORROW: The City of Magnolia hosts a public hearing on its comprehensive plan. <http://t.co/xfXGxsG2jD> 7 days ago

Harris County extends Northpointe Boulevard to Shaw Road. <http://t.co/VpXkMvJhc9> 7 days ago

The Miss Magnolia Pageant may be making a comeback this December with help from the Magnolia Community Foundation —<http://t.co/YKGuCkcX9V> 8 days ago

Read about what's happening at Creative Christians—Magnolia business owners to start nonprofit helping women: <http://t.co/Kp24E7RXZ0> 12 days ago

Get the low down on what's in store at the Tomball German Heritage Festival this weekend @ the #OnTheTownHouston blog: <http://t.co/xmEYmUMFL> 13 days ago

[Follow Us on Twitter](#)

 Like us on **Facebook**

 **Community Impact Tomball / Magnolia**

[Like](#)

 **Community Impact Tomball / Magnolia**

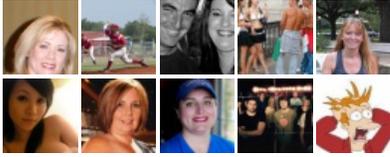
HISTORY: The family behind the Flying D Texas Longhorn Ranch in Magnolia

Flying D Ranch
impactnews.com

Three decades ago Dorie and G.C. "Bo" Damuth founded Flying D Texas Longhorns Ranch in Magnolia on family land with ranching history dating to the mid-1800s.

Tuesday at 7:07am

286 people like Community Impact Tomball / Magnolia.



Facebook social plugin

 **Recent Comments**

Excellent Beer
I too am a friend privileged with sampling beer in Trevor's garage, usually after earning the oppor...
Jay Redmon | [Lone Pint Brewery](#)

LonePint!
As one of the many friends who sampled the early brews in Trevor's garage, followed the constructio...
Douglas Aitken | [Lone Pint Brewery](#)

new name for magnolia
old town magnolia is the best
mary hendrix | [Magnolia seeks community input in renaming city limits](#)



© 2005 - 2013 JG Media, Inc. All rights reserved.

Built with [Metro Publisher™](#)