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Lawmakers break gridlock, approve transportation funding plan



[Nicholas Sakelaris](#)

Staff Writer- Dallas Business Journal

[Email](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Google+](#)

After three special sessions, the Texas Legislature finally reached agreement on a long-term highway funding plan Monday night that puts voters in the driver's seat.

Senate Joint Resolution 1 [passed 106-21 in the House of Representatives and passed the senate last week](#), the Texas Tribune reported.

The constitutional amendment, which goes before voters in November, 2014, would divert some tax revenue from the state's booming oil and gas industry to pay for highway projects around the state. That includes some of the [biggest highway projects in Dallas-Fort Worth](#).

If approved by voters, the funding plan could boost road funding by \$1.2 billion a year. A companion bill, House Bill 2, also was adopted Monday night.

Increased drilling in the Eagle Ford Shale in South Texas and the Permian Basin in West Texas have sent [billions of dollars into the state's coffers in the form of severance taxes](#), which the oil and gas companies pay at the wellhead. Right now, 75 percent of that goes into the Rainy Day Fund. This proposal takes half of that and allocates it to Fund 6, the state's highway fund. The other half still goes to the Rainy Day Fund.

Much of the debate centered on whether there should be a minimum amount for the Rainy Day Fund that stops the diversion to the highway fund. The final bill approved by lawmakers instead establishes a committee that will meet before every legislative session to settle on a minimum amount. The legislature will then vote on that amount.

The transportation bill looked like it had the votes to pass at the end of June but got [pushed aside in the chaos of the abortion filibuster and debate](#).

Nicholas covers the energy and banking beats for the Dallas Business Journal.
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