

Search Here

Switch to State Farm and save \$480* on auto insurance.



Get A Quote ▶

*Legal



Even as early construction winds down, officials press ahead with State Highway 183 project

By TOM BENNING

Staff Writer

tbenning@dallasnews.com

Published: 07 October 2012 10:44 PM

Even as work has wrapped up on State Highway 183's early renovation projects — sound walls, a stretch of frontage road and a redone interchange with State Highway 114 and Loop 12 — the lack of new construction in Irving doesn't mean that all progress has stopped.

The exact funding source for the rest of the approximately \$2 billion remaking remains unclear. State and local officials are pursuing a couple of different avenues in the hope of keeping the full expansion on track to begin sometime late next year.

The possible funding options include an effort by the Texas Department of Transportation to partner with a private firm to build the road — with tolled HOV lanes — and an \$876 million loan request through the Federal Highway Administration that could expedite the project.

"It's moving along rather well right now," said state Rep. Linda Harper-Brown, R-Irving. "It's one of the top projects in the state."

An upgrade has long been the works for the 6.6-mile stretch of State Highway 183 from State Highway 161 to the 183/114 split.

The road, built in 1959, carries upward of 170,000 vehicles a day, including many motorists traveling to and from Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport. And transportation officials expect congestion to increase in the coming decades.

So while the highway, which was last expanded in 1973, currently has a total of six main lanes and four frontage lanes, the widening plans call for eight main lanes, four tolled HOV lanes and six frontage lanes.

State and local officials hope the project will improve traffic through Irving, but also stimulate the revitalization of retail and office space along the corridor.

TxDOT bought up about two-thirds of the right of way needed for the highway expansion before the initial funding dried up, and several businesses have already relocated in anticipation of eventual construction.

Now the state transportation agency is pursuing a model similar to the LBJ Express expansion on Interstate 635, in which a private firm builds the road with funding from projected revenue from the tolled HOV lanes.

A request for proposals will be sent out later this year, and a contract is expected to be awarded next summer.

"The important thing is to keep things moving forward," said Dan Vedral, Irving's transportation director. "We don't want these projects going stale."

Also key is the \$876 million loan request through the federal Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act program. The State Highway 183 project is one of four loan requests TxDOT submitted to the Federal Highway Administration this year.

Officials said the loan would make the project more appealing to private firms and that it would allow the expansion to be rolled out faster — and in fewer phases.

"We are shovel-ready," Harper-Brown said. "That's what they want in Washington."

Follow Tom Benning on Twitter at [@tombenning](https://twitter.com/tombenning).