



Texas officials opt for more ambitious overhaul of State Highway 183 through Irving

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The Texas Department of Transportation is expanding the scope of a proposed overhaul to State Highway 183 through Irving, as the agency tries to encourage more interest from developers and get the project rolling.

The Airport Freeway project, envisioned as a public-private partnership featuring managed toll lanes, initially stretched from State Highway 161 on the west to Interstate 35E on the east.

But officials decided to regroup earlier last month, after only one private developer bid on the reconstruction project.

The Texas Transportation Commission on Thursday approved a new plan, which allows the overhaul to extend farther west from its current end point. The new version, stretching 13.5 miles total, would take the work to State Highway 121.

The project might also include revamping stretches of State Highway 114 and Loop 12, depending on what local officials decide.

The larger project — which has the prospect of generating more toll revenue — should spur a more competitive bidding process to begin construction next year.

“The expanded scope, as decided by our local partners, will further improve connectivity for the citizens in both the eastern and western parts of the state,” Transportation Commissioner Bill Meadows said.

Built in 1959, State Highway 183 carries more than 170,000 vehicles a day, including many going to and from Dallas/Fort Worth. It is listed by TxDOT as one of the state’s 100 most congested roads.

Barring a fix, that congestion will only get worse.

Early renovation projects — sound walls, frontage roads and a revamped interchange with State Highway 114 and Loop 12 — are already complete. So now the focus has turned to the main revamp, which will cost an estimated \$1.4 billion for the new, longer stretch.

The highway, which was last expanded in 1973, has a total of six main lanes and four frontage lanes. Plans have called for widening 183 to include eight main lanes, four tolled HOV lanes and six frontage lanes.

Those tolled HOV lanes, running in both directions, are a key element of the project. The feature, increasingly common on North Texas highways, allows a private firm to build the road with projected revenue from the managed lanes.

TxDOT will still need to provide an initial investment for the project. Michael Morris, transportation director for the North Central Texas Council of Governments, estimated that investment at \$560 million.

To help meet that obligation, TxDOT has requested a federal loan for the 183 project. It’s one of four such loan requests the state agency submitted to the Federal Highway Administration last year. Securing that loan, officials said, could help make the project more appealing to private developers.

Details about the Airport Freeway overhaul should surface in coming weeks, especially when TxDOT issues a new request for qualifications, this month or next.



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