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# Mayor Rawlings won't commit to position on I-345 teardown until there's a study, and one is coming



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1:44 pm on March 12, 2014 | Permalink

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At this point it's quite clear: Either [you're really for tearing down Interstate 345](#), that rotting 1.7-mile-long stretch of concrete linking Interstate 30 with Woodall Rodgers, or you think [it's a gosh-darned bad idea](#). Unless you're Mayor Mike Rawlings, whose spokesman maintains he remains undecided about the fate of the highway.

"He's still [in information-gathering mode](#)," says Sam Merten.

And some of that information was gathered on Monday, when the mayor met at Dallas City Hall with folks Merten refers to as "the pro-tear-down group," though not all of the attendees would characterize themselves as such. Among those in attendance: Patrick Kennedy, who started this whole conversation; Stephen Mansfield, chairman of the Dallas Regional Chamber board and president-CEO of Methodist Health System; Michael Morris, transportation director for the North Central Texas Council of Governments; Downtown Dallas Inc. President and CEO John Crawford; Robert Decherd, the former chairman, president and CEO of *Dallas Morning News* parent company A.H. Belo Corporation; *D's* publisher, Wick Allison; Joel Allison, chief executive officer of Baylor Health Care System; and Linda McMahon, president and CEO of The Real Estate Council.

McMahon confirmed Wednesday morning that TREC has agreed to put up \$125,000 for a study that will look at the implications of repairing the overpass, as the Texas Department of Transportation says it will do, or razing it.

"The devil's in the details of all of this," says McMahon. "What we wanted to do was make sure this was something the city wanted and the mayor would support. Secondly, we also didn't want to endanger any of the funding TxDOT has allocated to the region, so the mayor has agreed to talk to TxDOT about this. But we still have to determine who will manage the scope of the study. We have some engineers on the board, and we're involved in Klyde Warren Park, which has a relationship with TxDOT, so they'll know how to go about this.

"For now, though, our position is pro-study. Then we'll determine what makes sense. That was the way most of the business representatives felt. Obviously, everyone has their personal option, but I think when we walked away, the mayor got the impression that we want to make sure whatever money is spent makes sense for the city long-term."

Merten says Rawlings is scheduled to meet with TxDOT representatives next week.

"He's heard from a lot of different people with different positions on it," says Merten. "I think the mayor, like a lot of people in that room, are in favor of a study that will not focus solely on one aspect of it but will look at the whole area and have somebody look at any and all options to make that a better place."

Kennedy, of course, believes there's only one option: yanking out 345 and redeveloping the 245 acres currently consumed by elevated concrete and the vast empty space below the interstate.

"I sent Linda a link to [the Toronto study](#), which explores various options: maintaining a highway, improving a highway and removing a highway," he says. "And that's where we are."

Kennedy is also taking the cause directly to the people: This morning [A New Dallas launched a petition](#) asking folks to sign it if "you believe that other alternatives besides maintaining the current highway facility should be fully explored as well as all social, economic, and environmental costs and benefits for a better, healthier, and more prosperous Dallas, DFW, and Texas." Says Kennedy, the petition was launched for two reasons: to gather email addresses in order to notify folks about upcoming public meetings, and to remind critics that he was shouting about tearing down the highway long before city hall and real-estaters took notice.

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