

# Blow: Talk of tearing down Dallas freeway distracts from better ideas



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Published: 01 March 2014 11:14 PM

Updated: 01 March 2014 11:24 PM

Stop it. Really, just stop it.

Let's not waste another moment talking about tearing down a freeway in downtown Dallas.

It's never, ever, not-in-a-million-years going to happen. And furthermore, it shouldn't happen.

With all due respect to the handful of folks pushing this idea, it's about the silliest notion to come along in years.

And, yeah, I know I'm stepping on toes. Some really smart people have praised this really dumb idea.

Actually, I'm all in favor of the sentiment behind the proposal —less concrete, a more walkable city, downtown development, fewer cars, more mass transportation and so forth.

But I also like living in the real world. And I'm never going to do my taxes on a postcard. A solar panel on my roof will never replace my electric bill. And pigs will fly before Dallas rips out one of its most important freeway links.

If you haven't paid attention to this proposal, I don't blame you. You can usually count on crazy-town proposals to quickly die on their own. (e.g., the canals of downtown Dallas).

But this freeway tear-down fantasy is suddenly getting serious discussion — or at least serious lip service — and really needs to be dispensed with. It's a time-waster and nothing more.

In a nutshell, a few urban dreamers (ANewDallas.com) want to demolish the elevated freeway that runs along the eastern edge of downtown Dallas.

Technically, we're talking about I-345, but you won't find  designation on any road signs. That's just the official name of the 2-mile elevated connection between U.S. 75/Central Expressway to the north and I-45/Julius Schepps Freeway to the south.

About 200,000 cars a day travel that stretch. And they're supposed to just, poof, find somewhere else to go.

Well, we all know what happens with just one rush-hour fender-bender on any downtown freeway. It bottles up traffic in nine directions. So imagine the impact of permanently closing one side of the downtown freeway loop.

Traffic is already so bad through the Dallas mixmaster that the Texas Department of Transportation is doing an \$800 million overhaul. And you really think we're going to demolish an adjoining freeway segment at the same time?

This emperor doesn't just have no clothes, he's buck-wild naked. And I keep waiting for someone to say that.

But talk of tearing down freeways has gained a kind of urban hipster cache that makes it hard for people to speak the plain truth.

Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings is usually pretty plain-spoken, but I was pained to read the other day that even he won't pronounce the idea dead. He mumbled something about it still being on the table.

Yeah, a dead duck on the table.

Complicating things is that TxDOT needs to start a \$100 million rehab project on the elevated freeway. That work can't wait, but doing just

the federally required studies for a tear-down could take up to 10 years.

I don't even buy the dreamers' premise that the elevated freeway represents some horrible barrier between downtown and Deep Ellum.

No, it's not ideal. But it's not the Berlin Wall either.

Good development has already been taking place along both sides of the freeway. With more landscaping, lighting and pocket parks beneath it, the freeway doesn't have to be a pedestrian barrier at all.

Heck, in Texas, all that shade is kind of nice.

Again, I salute the idea behind this proposal. Urban planning can no longer revolve around the car. People want to live in a different way.

But neither can we transform our car culture overnight. Blowing up freeways may be fun to talk about, but ultimately it's just a distraction from more practical steps at hand.

And is that really so hard to say?

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**Wylie H Dallas**

23 hours ago

So..... Steve..... did you do ANY research before putting pen to paper?

I'm curious, because your primary argument appears to be unsubstantiated "common sense." In contrast, I spent the last hour compiling a list of the world's "best" major cities, as cited by a wide variety of authoritative sources, such as CNN Money, the Economist Intelligence Unit, Mercer Consulting, Monocle, etc. Then, I used Google Earth to pull-up roads maps of these "world class" cities.

By your "logic," each of these cities should feature an urban core with a tightly packed network of large, limited access highways paralleling each other in close proximity (like Dallas). Otherwise, as you and our esteemed Assistant City Manager, Jill Jordan wonder, "where would the traffic go?!" (I like to picture both of you wearing bewildered grins, palms facing upwards, when you say this.)

Well, Steve, here's what I found from pulling the maps: NONE of these "world class" cities contain anywhere near the number and lane miles of high volume freeways that Dallas contain, especially not in the urban core and they evidently function much BETTER than Dallas.

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**Steve Blow**

22 hours ago

Let's dig a little deeper into your research, Wylie. How many of the cities on your list had urban core freeways and tore them down? (Versus growing to start with as high-density cities with abundant mass transit.) I'm going to hazard guess of "zero."

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**Patrick Kennedy**

22 hours ago

Manhattan, San Francisco, Portland. Dallas too was once a high density city with abundant mass transit. A city can be anything it wants to be.

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**Wylie H Dallas**

21 hours ago

First, as Patrick (and the universe of other urban planning experts will point out), most U.S. cities, including Dallas used to have substantially more density. It wasn't until the