

I-345 removal is smart game-changer for city, including southern Dallas



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By J. BRANDON HANCOCK

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In an April 4 *Dallas Morning News* article, Michael Morris made some wild and unsubstantiated accusations about the true intentions behind the push to evaluate the feasibility of removing Interstate 345.

The main voice behind the freeway removal idea, A New Dallas, was co-founded by Patrick Kennedy and me five years ago as an idea on how to bring substantive change to the city of Dallas and position the city to be competitive over the next 50 years. At the time, Klyde Warren Park construction was just getting underway, and, while it was a great endeavor, it was connecting prosperous areas, downtown and Uptown, that enjoy the highest land values in the city.

A New Dallas wanted to bring the same kind of momentum to an area of downtown that could fully transform with a game-changing investment. It didn't take long to zero in on the east side of downtown, with its acres of underdeveloped parking lots, vacant buildings and decades of disinvestment in the shadow of an aging elevated freeway.

We undertook our own study, which we funded ourselves, and with the help of other individuals we have spent hundreds of unpaid hours forwarding the dialogue for the removal of I-345. Although anyone is welcome to voice support for the cause, there is no wealthy benefactor funding A New Dallas. If anything, this has been a grass-roots movement by young citizens who live in Dallas and who are taking a stake in the future of their city.

It's only five years later that the power structure and politicians are starting to take notice.

It's ironic that Morris, transportation director for the North Central Texas Council of Governments, is now aching for a formal public dialogue, as our numerous attempts to have TxDOT address this teardown option during its multiple-year I-345 reconstruction study were repeatedly ignored or rebuffed.

These two agencies have tried every trick in their bag not to explore the issue. They have used scare tactics to try to end the conversation before it can be explored by pegging the cost to demolish I-345 at \$1.9 billion. This has not been backed up with any substantive numbers and is contradictory to costs seen in other highway removals.

Morris and TxDOT have used delay tactics by claiming a study to determine the feasibility of removing a highway would take a decade to complete, no doubt hoping enthusiasm for the removal would die down with such a long and uncertain timeline.

If, in fact, this bureaucratic stall tactic was the appropriate amount of time for such a study, this is but a minute in time in the life of a city and worth the wait to position Dallas for the next century and beyond.

With public discourse finally taking shape, and the first two tactics not derailing the discussion, Morris has reached far back and thrown a Hail Mary by playing the race card in an attempt to stop this public process in its tracks.

The whole idea for A New Dallas started as a way to bring investment to areas that have long been neglected; removing I-345 would allow East and South Dallas to be sewn back into the fabric of downtown.

The people most affected by a car-dependent society are those who can't afford — or are overburdened — by the cost of owning and maintaining a car. By adding 20,000 residents to the east side of downtown, there are more opportunities for people to live closer to jobs and public transportation infrastructure. Residents in all areas of the city, especially in the southern portion, with no other option but to own a car, will benefit most from Dallas taking a step to a less car-dependent society.

A New Dallas welcomes the opportunity for the citizens of Dallas to determine the fate of I-345, and not the bureaucrats in Austin or

Arlington.

J. Brandon Hancock is co-founder of A NewDallas and may be contacted at jbhancock@greenshootsrealestate.com.

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19 Comments

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Bart Trollent 12 hours ago
 That's interesting, because the proposed freeway demolition would cut off South Dallas around I-45 from US-75 (North Central Expressway) Dallas' best freeway.

The more I think about it, the clearer it becomes that aside from lining the pockets of wealthy property developers looking to change a public freeway into a private apartment complex - this plan seeks to cut off South Dallas.

South Dallas and Oak Cliff are experiencing a bit of a renaissance right now as North Dallas drives South of downtown in search of something a little different. There is no better way to stop people from driving to Oak Cliff than cutting US-75 off from I-45.

I think these greedy hipsters should find a better way of attracting people to their neighborhood than cutting South Dallas off from Dallas freeways.

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Jim Schermbeck 11 hours ago
 Isn't it really East-West running I-30 that's walling off South Dallas and Fair Park off from the rest of Dallas - not this North-South connector from 30 to Central? This proposal actually brings a more dynamic Downtown closer to South Dallas ad Fair Park both by filling in everything east with new development and makes similar moves across 30 more likely. That development, if done effectively, could mean jobs closer to, and in, South Dallas so that folks don't have to drive north to work.

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Bart Trollent 10 hours ago
 Isn't it funny that while you claim this proposal brings South Dallas closer to the rest of the city, it actually increases the time required for visitors to get back and forth from South Dallas.

Personally, I really enjoy visiting Oak Cliff from North Dallas, but this proposal blocks a key pathway from North Central Expressway to I-45.

Now, are you suggesting that we should make it harder to get to Oak Cliff (which is having a great renaissance) by selling a widely used public freeway to real estate developers, who will personally profit by cutting a key artery: North Dallas from US-75 to I-45 to South Dallas and Oak Cliff?

Like Reply Share 2 replies 6 2

Daniel Windham 9 hours ago
 go look at google maps at the myriad other ways to get to north dallas from south dallas. in fact from certain areas its *faster* to go around on 635 (depending on how far north you're going). I345 isn't the only way, it's just the big fat highway we're used to using. If you wanted to, you could drive through east dallas back up to 75 and on up to north dallas. Change is hard and scary.

The only people i see profiting are the citizens of dallas. Right of way from under and next to the highway would now be auctioned off into development agreements. Dallas wouldn't have to subsidize the developments directly,