



Powered by *The Dallas Morning News*



FORECAST TRAFFIC



Home > Transportation Blog

# Regional transportation director says state could help fund Trinity River toll road



By Brandon Formby

Follow @brandonformby

bformby@dallasnews.com

3:28 pm on July 18, 2014 | Permalink

89 13 Share 0 20

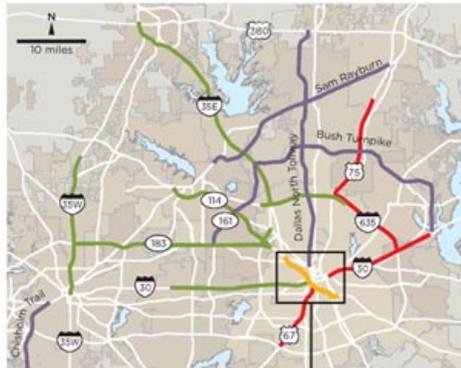
The state's transportation department, already cash-strapped and looking to voters for relief, could help pay for a controversial toll road that would run along the east levee of the Trinity River.

Michael Morris, the transportation director for the [North Central Texas Council of Governments](#), said the Texas Department of Transportation is among a cadre of public agencies trying to figure out how to fund the road. He said that group includes his organization, Dallas City Hall and the North Texas Tollway Authority.

### Trinity Tollway and the Region

The tolled Trinity Parkway will run roughly parallel to Interstate 35-E inside the Trinity River levees, where Dallas officials plan to build a massive park. The road would add to the number of toll projects built or planned for North Texas.

- Existing toll roads
- Planned toll roads
- Planned toll lanes
- Planned partial toll lanes



SOURCES: North Texas Tollway Authority; Texas Department of Transportation; Regional Transportation Council; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Staff Graphic

"We haven't gotten far enough in the process to know who's funding which parts," Morris said.

A member of the [Texas Transportation Commission](#), which oversees TxDOT, said helping fund the project would be "daunting" given other transportation needs in Dallas. But transportation commissioner Victor Vandergriff also said it's not outside the realm of possibilities.

"Never say never, but that would be a challenge," Vandergriff said.

TxDOT's involvement could move the long-delayed and consistently divisive project closer to completion if the NTTA and the city can't come up with the money needed to build it. So far, a source for the bulk of construction costs hasn't been identified. But TxDOT chipping in would also push the project farther, once again, from the narrative city leaders sold to voters who narrowly approved the project seven years ago. The road was portrayed in 2007 as a project that would largely be paid for by the drivers who would eventually use it.

Morris said the city still has some money left from about \$78 million earmarked for the road. But that leaves more than \$1.4 billion to be secured. NTTA is largely responsible for coming up with the financing once federal approval of the project is received. That's expected to come later this year.

"We won't have any specific visibility on funding the project until after it clears the environmental process," NTTA spokesman Michael Rey said.

The current regional push to put together funding comes as international experts and academicians say additional highway capacity will only increase — not relieve — roadway congestion. They argue, as they did during [two conferences](#) here last month, that such projects [subsidize suburban sprawl at the cost of Dallas' quality of life](#).

The latest attempts to keep the toll road alive also come as North Texans' fatigue over toll projects is prompting [state lawmakers and Collin County officials to push back](#) against plans to make the area home to the [nation's largest network of managed toll lanes](#).

It comes on the heels of a [short-term Congressional fix](#) that narrowly saved the nation's highway fund, a major source of local transportation projects, from a fiscal cliff.

It also comes as regional transit agencies are counting on increased roadway congestion to push a larger share of commuters on to public transit, something that [billions in additional rail lines alone has so far failed to do](#).

And it comes on the eve of a statewide campaign season in which [voters will decide whether TxDOT's expenses](#) should be partially funded by certain energy tax revenues currently being gathered in a ballooning state savings account. None of those new revenues would be allowed to be spent on a project with a tolling component. But that could help TxDOT free up existing revenues to put toward the Trinity — if NTTA says it needs help and state leaders agree to jump in.

"At this particular point, there's nothing being taken off the table," Morris said.

Still, TxDOT would have a lot of other planning, political and financial factors to weigh.

"The commission is going to be challenged to devote the kind of expense on that at the expense of other downtown projects," Vandergriff said.

### You Might Also Like



[20 Backyard Landscaping Ideas](#) 20 photos (HGTV Gardens)



[Tear Down the McMansion, All Hail the McMunchkin Home...](#) (CEPro)



[Everything Changes for Southwest Airlines Today](#) (Money)



[Kanye Fires Back At Obama: White House Can't 'Effect Change'](#) (Wall St. Cheat Sheet)

Recommended by

### From the web

[Super PAC Makes \\$7.3 Million in TV Reservations for Midterms](#) Roll Call

[Obama Administration Announces More Healthcare Law Delays](#) NFIB

[5 Cars Destined to Fail Before Ever Getting Off the Ground](#) Wall Street Cheat Sheet

### More from *Dallasnews.com*

[Report: Cowboys owner Jerry Jones' grandson injured in ATV accident](#) Sports

[Bike ride around Rowlett's lake reveals depth of drought](#) Transportation Blog

[Murder for hire case against Garland man dismissed](#) Crime Blog

Recommended by

### TOP PICKS



MUSIC

[KVIL gets into the](#)



TV

[As seen on TV:](#)



TRANSPORTATION BLOG



EDITORIAL CARTOONS