



dallasnews OPINION

Powered by *The Dallas Morning News*

84° FORECAST TRAFFIC



Editorial: State-local road transfer needs to be negotiated

Share icons: Email, Print, Facebook (2), Twitter (4), Pinterest (0), + Share (0), RSS (4), Font size (AA), Print

Published: 25 August 2013 10:14 PM
Updated: 25 August 2013 10:19 PM

It's a trick that shouldn't be pulled in polite company: A party eats a full meal at a restaurant, then everyone drifts away from the table and leaves one hapless customer holding the check.

That's how some surprised local officials feel about a proposal by the state highway department to offload control — and an expensive maintenance bill — to cities and counties on 1,900 roadway miles in urban areas.

TxDOT figures it's a good way to save the cash-strapped agency up to \$165 million in annual costs.

Sure it would. But somebody else gets stuck with the bill.

The Texas Municipal League has this one pegged accurately: another unfunded mandate from Austin, one that has Dallas City Hall and others up in arms.

There is another side to this story, the one about the Legislature's failure to furnish TxDOT with the money it needs to expand the highway system to keep up with population growth and also maintain the 80,000 miles of existing state roads.

The shortfall has been pegged at \$5 billion a year, but lawmakers managed to find only about \$1 billion of that this year, contingent on voters approving a plan to tap the rainy day fund.

So if there is tension between the state and locals over a maintenance check, look no farther than the state Capitol for the cause. There's too little money in the highway department's wallet to cover its obligations.

TxDOT's "turnback" idea is now only a proposal to the policy-setting Texas Transportation Commission, which, at a meeting Thursday, is expected to hear from city representatives upset about the idea.

Agency officials say that the 600 road segments they have identified may be state-owned, but they function as part of local traffic systems. Most were once country roads — such as Loop 12 in Dallas and Preston Road in Plano — but are now lined with city growth.

In some cases, state officials say, transferring control could help cities advance plans to reshape those roads and the development around them. And there are cases where cities have asked for and received control over state roads in the past.

All true. TxDOT officials might add this: Some segments on the list are less than a mile long, and overall efficiency for taxpayers might argue for a transfer.

Still, TxDOT's "turnback" plan should not turn out to be a unilateral play by the state. The parties should negotiate what makes sense. One way to proceed might be phasing it in over years and making it contingent on the Legislature coming up with a funding scheme to pay for it.

"When pigs fly," state and local transportation officials might say.

Some day pigs might have to, if the state can't find the money to keep its roads in proper repair.

TxDOT'S 'turnback' proposal

What: Transfer control and maintenance of state-owned urban roadways to 59 cities and counties statewide

Number of roads: 1,900 miles over 600 roadway segments

Potential savings to state: \$165 million a year

Status: To be discussed Thursday by the Texas Transportation Commission

Local impact: 265 miles over 70 road segments in TxDOT's Dallas district

Road miles in local cities:

Dallas 101

Denton 25

Flower Mound 23

Frisco 17

Lewisville 17

Grand Prairie 12

McKinney 11

Garland 9

Irving 7

Did you see something wrong in this story, or something missing? [Let us know.](#)

Comments

To post a comment, log into your chosen social network and then add your comment below. Your comments are subject to our [Terms of Service](#) and the privacy policy and terms of service of your social network. If you do not want to comment with a social network, please consider writing a [letter to the editor](#).

Login to post a comment

Login    ...

[Post](#)

4 Comments

[RSS](#) | [Subscribe](#)

 **EJ Flynn** 44 minutes ago
"Some segments on the list are less than a mile long, and overall efficiency for taxpayers might argue for a transfer."

and I bet any student of logistics would be able to point out why sending state employees to fix those small segments makes no sense. Please publish maps of the roads involved every time you discuss this issue.

[Reply](#) 0  

 **richard schumacher** 3 hours ago
Everybody wins! 'Baggers can claim they're holding the line on taxes, and it reduces state-sponsored sprawl. Of course it's unlikely to happen when the concrete mafia starts twisting arms.

[Reply](#) [1 reply](#) 0  

 **1DaIM** 2 hours ago
Hook. Line. Sinker. You have taken the bait. It does not reduce sprawl. This subsidizes sprawl. The plan is to unload existing liabilities to make MORE highways further out.

[Reply](#) 0  

 **Oakley94763085** 7 hours ago
my neighbor's mother-in-law makes \$86 an hour on the internet. She has been fired from work for 6 months but last month her pay check was \$15646 just working on the internet for a few hours. Read more here... [url.//n/625dbc9](#)

[Reply](#) 0  