



- HOME
- TOP STORIES
- EAGLE FORD NEWS
- ENERGY
- SHALE NEWS
- BUSINESS
- INTERNATIONAL
- HEALTH
- JOB
- OPINION

Home / Uncategorized / State road boosters looking for big win on Proposition 1



# State road boosters looking for big win on Proposition 1

Posted by: Zachary Tolliver in Uncategorized 1 day ago 0 5 Views

0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL SHARES				

Ben Wear | Austin American-Statesman, Texas

The people pushing for Texans to approve Proposition 1 in November don't want to just win. They want to run up the score.

Proposition 1, to remind you, is the proposed amendment to the Texas Constitution that would redirect half of the money now going to the state's rainy day fund to the Texas Department of Transportation. The most current official estimate of how much this would be — and it is probably less than the actual number, I'm told — is \$1.4 billion for 2014.

The amendment specifies that the money could not be used for toll road projects.

If voters say yes to Proposition 1, which is highly likely given that it levies no new or increased tax and would pay for something everyone uses, then TxDOT would have the money by sometime near Thanksgiving. And then every autumn the agency would get a similar large bonus, at least until the shale boom ebbs or oil prices collapse.

And \$1.4 billion (or whatever the actual figure turns out to be) will make a huge difference for Texas highways. TxDOT has been very busy the past decade or so, typically putting \$3 billion to \$7 billion each year into repairing roads and building new ones. But the bulk of that money has been borrowed, using one of several new ways of financing that Gov. Rick Perry and the Legislature devised between 2001 and 2005.

But TxDOT's ability to borrow under those programs is mostly exhausted, and the Legislature doesn't seem inclined to create other ways for TxDOT to go in hock. The result is that while TxDOT will be able to keep repairing roads and doing the road expansions it scheduled with all that previous money, as of 2016 it would not be able to add projects to the list.

TxDOT officials said last year that to keep urban road congestion more or less at its current level, repair rural roads torn up by trucks from the oil and gas boom, and maintain the state's 80,000-mile road system, it needs about \$5 billion more a year than it has now.

Related: TxDOT pushes safe driving campaign in the Eagle Ford

ADVERTISEMENT

ADVERTISEMENT



### LOCAL WEATHER

Tomorrow 98° / 78°

ADVERTISEMENT

### TOP STORIES IN YOUR INBOX

Don't miss the Top Headlines Signup

Email Address

**Subscribe Now**

[unsubscribe from list](#)

### RECENT POSTS

- Colorado pulls lawsuit against Longmin minute fracking deal
- Obama to announce \$14 billion in U.S. investments in Africa
- Pioneer Natural Resources sells Barr holdings
- Bakken oil report findings released
- Houston American Energy charged v misleading investors over oil claims

ADVERTISEMENT



139 Followers

34



Like any other statistical government claim, it's hard to know how much of it is genuine need and how much is genuine want (including wanting more business for highway contractors). But that's what is out there.

Proposition 1 would get the state about 30 percent of the way there.

That's where the running-up-the-score part comes in.

As is the case with all proposed Texas constitutional amendments, Proposition 1 is only on the ballot because the Texas Legislature voted to put it there. Back in 2013, when lawmakers debated about doing so, some legislative leaders fretted about it because, they said, if voters said yes it would drain all momentum from efforts to raise more money for transportation.

In other words, legislators would be loath to do something about that other 70 percent.

With that in mind, Proposition 1 supporters I met with last month said they need a big number Nov. 4. Passing with, say, 60 percent of the vote — their polling shows it at 62 percent before voters even hear the details — would be nice. But it might not move the legislative needle in January, when transportation-minded lawmakers have other plans.

They want to complete the job of ending "diversions," that is, revenue from the state gas tax and vehicle registration fees that goes to state agencies other than TxDOT. That would raise another \$750 million a year for transportation.

The dicier proposal, one that briefly surged during the 2013 legislative session before the rainy day fund idea supplanted it, would be to redirect part of the vehicle sales tax to TxDOT. This tax raises about \$3.6 billion a year, and the original idea was to move it all over. But doing so would, in Legislature-speak, blow a hole in the state budget. That money would no longer be available for education, prisons, health and human services, and other state needs.

Instead, the idea's prime mover, state Sen. Robert Nichols, a Jacksonville Republican and former Texas Transportation Commission member, this session is likely to propose that some base portion of that \$3.6 billion (\$2.5 billion, possibly) remain available for general state spending and that any money above that level from the vehicle sales tax, now and in the future, go to TxDOT.

Those measures, if they pass, would make for a larger, better maintained state system. And it would mean a lot of work for highway contractors. They have, of course, taken notice.

A group called Moving Texas Forward has formed a political action committee, dubbed MTF. According to campaign finance reports filed July 15, covering the first half of the year, MTF raised \$441,400. That included \$200,000 from Williams Brothers Construction and its president, James D. Pitcock Jr., and a number of five-figure donations from other players in the highway industry.

That well is probably far from tapped out.

(c)2014 Austin American-Statesman, Texas

Visit Austin American-Statesman, Texas at [www.statesman.com](http://www.statesman.com)

Distributed by MCT Information Services

Tagged with: ROAD CONSTRUCTION ROADS TAXES TEXAS TXDOT VOTERS

**CRUDE ROYALTIES**  
**OIL & GAS ROYALTIES**  
 Immediate cash flow properties  
 Low investment. Large potential  
 Do you qualify to invest?  
 Click here to find out

Previous: Carbon captured from power plants potential key to future oil production

Next: Federal agency considers regulating oil, gas drilling on wildlife refuges

### RELATED ARTICLES



Vets get oilfield training from Dickinson School  
4 days ago



EPA chief defends power plant rule against GOP charges of overreach  
13 days ago



Higher gasoline costs raise US producer prices  
20 days ago

### FIND US ON FACEBOOK



34,217 people like Eagle Ford Texas.



Facebook social plugin

ADVERTISEMENT