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The Highwayman

Transportation in Houston with Dug Begley

Lot riding on Highway Trust Fund for Texas, like \$3.8 billion

Posted on April 30, 2014 | By Dug Begley

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The dire straits facing federal transportation spending have been a recurring theme this week, from the [sorry state of traffic congestion in Houston](#) (if you ask the drivers) to the [Obama Administration's release of its transportation plan](#), which includes [loosening restrictions on tolling interstates](#).



Traffic on U.S. 290 near Cypress North Houston
May 23, 2013, in Houston. (Smiley N. Pool /
Houston Chronicle)

Now, the folks at Transportation For America, a pro-investment group, [have calculated what's at stake](#) if the highway fund does indeed run out of money at the end of August. For Texas, assuming the fund goes bust, it means a \$3.78 billion dip in highway and transit funding. In Houston, the agency estimates it means \$184.7 million less to improve the traffic problem. The Woodlands and Conroe lose out on \$8.6 million, Transportation For America estimated.

"America is at a crucial decision point for transportation," said James Corless, director of Transportation for America, in a [news release](#).

The upside is the current federal transportation act expires in a few months, and lawmakers are working on the next one, or at least talking about it.

Teeth-gnashing and doomsday scenarios are nothing new about the [Highway Trust Fund](#), and lawmakers usually push the limits and then swoop in at the end to do something, even it's only a temporary fix. It [happens every couple of years](#). Running out of money is always a danger, but rarely a reality.

The panic mode, however, nudges the process along and groups position themselves for the long-term transportation bill. In the meantime, planners have plenty of projects awaiting the money.

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