



Texas House of Representatives

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Legislature

Straus, Joe

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STRAUS: USE ALL OF THE HIGHWAY FUND FOR TRANSPORTATION

by: **Straus, Joe**
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AUSTIN – The Texas House will propose a budget next year that uses all of the money in the State Highway Fund for transportation instead of sending some of those dollars to other state agencies, Speaker Joe Straus said Wednesday.

Various taxes and fees, such as the gas tax and fees on drivers' licenses, go into the State Highway Fund to pay for transportation. But for almost 80 years, some of that money has also helped fund agencies that are not directly related to transportation, such as the Department of Public Safety (DPS) and the Office of State Administrative Hearings.

Using the State Highway Fund exclusively for transportation would increase funding for roads by about \$1.3 billion over two years.

"This approach will make the state budget even more straightforward, just as taxpayers expect," said Straus, San Antonio. "It will also provide needed transportation revenue – without a tax increase – as Texas continues to grow twice as fast as the rest of the country."

Straus said that the continued strong performance of the Texas economy will allow the Legislature to fund DPS and other agencies affected by Wednesday's announcement.

"We will not abandon the state troopers and others who so bravely serve and protect Texans every day," he said. "The budget is a statement of priorities, and both public safety and mobility are top priorities for the Texas House."

The reform that Straus announced Wednesday is the latest piece of the House's effort to increase transparency in the state budget. For more than two decades, the state has increasingly relied on the practice of collecting taxes and fees for designated purposes, such as state parks and trauma care, but instead leaving that money unspent so that it could be counted to balance the rest of the budget.

The House reversed that trend last year, reducing by \$1 billion the amount of money that piled up in various accounts for the purposes of budget certification.

"It's now time to take the next step," Straus said. "The House will continue working to increase transparency and accountability in state government as the next legislative session approaches. So far, we've made good progress. Using gas-tax dollars for transportation makes sense for our economy and for taxpayers."

With the Texas population continuing to grow rapidly, Straus said comprehensive transportation reforms continue to warrant discussion.

He added, "I will continue to encourage all Members to propose bold transportation solutions that will make Texas an even better place to raise a family and do business."

Contact: Jason Embry or Erin Daly, 512-463-0223

Contact Info

Capitol Address:

Room CAP 2W.13, Capitol
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768
(512) 463-1000
(512) 463-0675 Fax

District Address:

7373 Broadway,
Suite 202-A
San Antonio, TX 78209
(210) 828-4411
(210) 832-9994 Fax