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### Transportation Funding

2:55 PM THU MAY 8, 2014

# Transportation Expert Says Texas Will Need \$28 Billion To Maintain Roads

By [RYAN POPPE](#) ((PEOPLE/RYAN-POPPE))



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Northbound traffic on Hwy. 281 at Nakoma.

Chris Eudaily TPR News

Following a study on the issue of transportation funding, a researcher from Texas A&M left lawmakers stunned when he detailed how the state will need even more money for roads over the next two years.

State lawmakers heard details of a study out this month that details how much the Texas Department of Transportation will need during the 2015 legislative session. David Ellis with Texas A&M's Transportation Institute provided the House Transportation Funding, Expenditures and Finance Select Committee an assessment of how much Texas roads will cost over the next two years.

**Ellis:** "The unfunded need currently is probably somewhere in the neighborhood of \$4 billion a year."

**State Rep. Joe Pickett, D-El Paso:** "Now to be clear, that's on top of the current

appropriation you're recommending besides the \$4 billion on top of that, so we're looking at \$28 billion."

That price tag just keeps the roads the same and does not include money needed to fix the roads in the energy sectors of the state, like the Eagle Ford Shale in South Texas. So why the increase cost?

"The fuel tax," Ellis said. "Because we keep increasing fuel efficiency, which is a good thing, the number of gallons of gas you consume to drive the same number of miles goes down."

Ellis said the other component is a rising cost in road construction and materials, which is paid for by that fixed fuel tax. Outlined in the report is that much of the money currently being used is borrowed money, which lawmakers worry will soon run out of.

This November, voters will decide whether to provide TxDOT with \$1.3 billion, money that would've gone into the Rainy Day Fund, money that oil and gas companies pay to operate in Texas. If that proposition fails, the overall cost to maintain Texas roads will exceed the two-year projected need of \$28 billion.

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