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Transportation funding study indicates system needs overhaul



By Ray Leszcynski
 rleszcynski@dallasnews.com
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Changes to a complex transportation funding system of federal, state and local elements are needed to maintain the network and plan for years ahead, according to authorities and [a report released Tuesday](#).

The effort must reach beyond short-term shoring up of the federal highway trust fund, according to the Pew Charitable Trust.

Only four states receive fewer federal transportation dollars per capita than Texas. Its state and local per capita spending fall below the national average as well.

"Our region is not constrained by oceans, rivers, mountains or lakes like so many transit cities are. So we're allowed to sprawl as far and fast as we can," said Gary Thomas, DART president and executive director. "Then when people move outward, they expect someone to come out and provide that transportation. They don't want to raise taxes and yet they don't want to pay tolls."

The study notes that the gas tax, a major revenue source for surface transportation, hasn't generated enough money in recent years to keep up with the rising cost of construction. Texas is one of 16 states that hasn't increased the gas tax in more than 20 years.

More fuel-efficient vehicles and changed driving habits increase the pressure on the multilayered funding system. The highway trust fund has drawn down its balance and borrowed \$54 billion from general fund revenues.

"Thus far, the trust fund has relied on temporary fixes," said Pew team member Phillip Oliff. "The fixes have not addressed underlying problem of revenues not keeping up with spending."

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Ria Conn

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Highway funding has become an issue lately with toll roads being built by private companies in partnership with the state. Cintra was the chosen private company to build the toll roads around Fort Worth. Cintra went in partnership with a company called Macquarie forming Cintra Macquarie and built a toll road in Indiana which is in the news today for going BANKRUPT. Wall Street Journal has a story on it.

Now if Mr. Abbott would be kind enough to tell us exactly where all the money for new roads will be coming from I'd appreciate it.

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