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# Overflow crowd prompts premature end to meeting on toll road to Greenville

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LAVON — An overflow crowd filled a school cafeteria Thursday to hear the North Central Texas Council of Government’s recommendations for a toll road linking Bush Turnpike with Greenville.

But the crowd at Nesmith Elementary was so large — at least 500 — that the local fire marshal stepped in about a half-hour into the presentation and ordered everyone to leave.

“The fire marshal has indicated there are too many people in here, and we’re going to have to close the public meeting,” said Michael Morris, who’s the council’s transportation director.

The announcement was met with moans, laughter and applause.

“What’s critical for me is we know who you are so we can contact you in seven to 10 days to come” to another public meeting in a much larger venue, Morris said. That comment was greeted by calls of “You’re railroading it!” and a sharply sarcastic, “We learned a lot.”

Toll road supporters were tough to find in the crowd, which consisted of hundreds perched at school lunch tables and many more sitting in an adjacent gym with a balky sound system. Just before the fire marshal arrived, council of government officials said that because so many people couldn’t hear the presentation, they would schedule another one. Moments later, everyone was ordered to leave.

The proposed toll road, called the Northeast Gateway, is intended to serve motorists who otherwise would be using Interstate 30 or State Highway 78, a heavily traveled two-lane road on many stretches between Wylie and Farmersville.

Dallas-based Texas Turnpike Corp., the company behind the toll road idea, says construction could begin as soon as 2015 with an anticipated price tag of less than \$500 million.

While the final path won’t be set until Texas Turnpike completes a state-mandated environmental assessment, the council of government’s presentation showed a route from Bush Turnpike in Rowlett, across the narrow neck of land between Lavon Lake and Lake Ray Hubbard, running just north of Nevada, Josephine and Caddo Mills before connecting to I-30 on the southern edge of Greenville.

Before the meeting ended, Morris sketched out the planning process and the region’s needs.

“We have looked at every possible transportation need, and we’ve been doing this for 15 months,” he said. “We’ve been through a detailed series of options, and we think we’ve figured it out.”

The council of governments’ recommendations would also add managed lanes to I-30 from Bush Turnpike, over Lake Ray Hubbard, through Rockwall and into Fate.

But most in the crowd wanted to talk about the 28-mile limited-access toll road, with questions about Texas Turnpike's track record, the need for the road, and most often, eminent domain and what the project might mean for residents' private property.

On this night, they didn't get the chance.

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**Robin Welch**

8 days ago

We just bought a house on Dorothy Lane off of Vinson and nothing was disclosed about this tollway! NOT happy!

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0 0



**John O'Neill**

10 days ago

"...Dallas-based Texas Turnpike Corp., the company behind the toll road..."

I've lived here 13 years now and have never heard of this company. What rock did they crawl out from under?

I'm really surprised it's taken Texas this long to get pissed off over the tolling of virtually every "freeway."

Reply Share

1 0



**mdunlap1**

10 days ago

Michael Morris is a tyrant.

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4 0



**enerjazz**

10 days ago

Meeting organizers will set up another meeting in a larger facility - and they'll charge people a toll to enter.

Reply Share

5 0



**Henry**

10 days ago

LET THE REBELLION begin in Lavon against the evil toll road empire that is taking over Texas and has already conquered much of North Texas. Once upon a time, we Texans would have nothing to do with

those corrupt toll road empires in New Jersey and New York. They have come to Texas now. Next we'll have the casinos. They are all schemes to get your money directly from your bank account.

Reply Share 3 0



**1DaIM** 10 days ago

"Seriously guys, trust us. We've been looking at this for like 15 months or something like that. Sure, the decisions we make today will make millionaires of some and throw others into poverty, and effect the towns for like generations to come- but really, we've thought about this over many lunch meetings over the past not quite year and a half."

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**WalkableDFW** 10 days ago

Not much of a public process if this is the first meeting after "we've been looking at this for 15 months and we've figured it out."

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**TheSlowPath** 10 days ago

Hey, if the Sim City 2000 modeling says they need a highway there...

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**Fred Bailey** 10 days ago

Sounds like a lot of "we the people" don't like this idea.

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**Bozo D. Clown** 10 days ago

Why in God's green earth would ANYBODY want to take a toll road to Greenville? Or for that matter, take any road to Greenville? Much less a 500 million dollar toll road. .No slur intended to yall Greenvillites but i've been there. There just isn't much to write home about in Greenville. Haven't we got anything else to spend our tax dollars on? There is a big pot hole out in front of my house. Maybe they could spend some of that money to fix it.

Reply Share 2 replies 2 0



**Henry** 10 days ago

Promoters of toll roads want to develop property out that way. You know. another sprawling suburban development that has no water. Maybe a shopping center, too. There are these major partners to the toll road empires: bill collectors, lawyers, road contractors, land speculators, politicians on the take and quite a few Republicans.

Reply Share 1 reply 2 0



**Bozo D. Clown** 9 days ago

Might even be a few Democrats, Ya think? Politicians are politicians no matter what party. They smell a little money and all propriety goes out the window.

Reply Share 0 0