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Regional transportation official defends Trinity toll road plan

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The region's most influential transportation official on Friday defended his support for the controversial Trinity Parkway, two weeks after a report used his organization's own traffic projections to call it a boondoggle.

Although the road won't significantly improve traffic conditions throughout that corridor, Michael Morris said it would help congestion on several arterial streets. He said it would also spur economic development in West Dallas and Oak Cliff by increasing the number of drivers on other surface streets.

"We think that by providing accessibility, we too are increasing economic development," said the transportation director for the North Central Texas Council of Governments.

Morris said that the road would also help development along Interstate 35E south of downtown. When asked whether a plan to widen that stretch of highway could do that without the toll road, Morris said the connectivity to the Trinity toll road would buttress efforts.

"We build transportation systems," Morris said. "You guys look at them as individual projects."

Traffic projections for 2035 show the controversial toll road would increase average traffic speed two miles in that area to 32 mph. Those same estimates say time spent in traffic would drop 7 percent, but that the same percentage of lane miles in the area would be congested regardless of whether the road is built.

Morris said he couldn't comment on those estimates because they are part of a document that seeks federal approval to build the road, a process now underway. Yet Morris said that the large area used in the document uses averages for several roads. He said ones farther from the Trinity toll road probably wouldn't be affected, suggesting that roads closer to the Trinity project would see greater effects.

Morris also used maps from the same document as evidence that the number of drivers on several city streets would drop dramatically if the road were built. Those maps show big drops on Riverfront and Irving boulevards, which would run parallel to the toll road. It also shows significant drops for Lamar Street in east Oak Cliff. Several streets in downtown Dallas would also see the number of drivers drop by up to 3,500 a day.

Other arteries would see significant increases in drivers with the toll road. That includes Hampton Road from the Trinity River to Wright Street, the Houston Street viaduct and Oak Lawn Avenue between I-35E and Maple Avenue.

The document seeking federal clearance was used by the Texas Public Interest Research Group to call the project one of 11 highway boondoggles in the country. Morris said the group used national trends to support its conclusion without considering North Texas demographics. He also said the group discounted the fact that Dallas Area Rapid Transit built the largest light-rail system in America when it said Dallas needs to diversify its transportation infrastructure.

Sara E. Smith, state director of Texas Public Interest Research Group, said that she applauds DART's achievement and that Dallas has made great strides in increasing transportation options.

"That doesn't justify millions in dollars for a toll road project that the numbers just aren't there to support," she said.

Dallas City Council member Scott Griggs also took issue with Morris' statements that the toll road would help economic development in Oak Cliff, the district he represents. Griggs said that area and West Dallas have already had several economic success stories without a new road.

"No one tells me I'm coming here [because I'm] waiting for this toll road," Griggs said.

Griggs said increased traffic on surface streets would bring only big-box shopping centers and chain restaurants. He said that's not the kind of development Dallas residents want in the urban core.

"We have to decide if we want downtown Dallas to be a place that people just drive through very quickly or if we want to make it a place that people call home," he said.

Griggs asked a city attorney to determine if a contract Dallas has with North Texas Tollway Authority to build the road obligates the city to fund the project. The attorney said the contract is probably unenforceable.

Morris denied early Friday that he ever said the contract bound Dallas to build the road. He said he's never read it, paid attention to it or weighed in on it.

The opinion by Dallas' attorney hasn't prompted NTTA officials to seek a different assessment.

"We have not sought any legal opinions," said NTTA spokesman Michael Rey. "As always, we are focused on completing the environmental process and must remain neutral."

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_ryanbehr

1 day ago

[Traffic on Sylvan/Wycliffe is just fine.](#)

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cwag13

3 days ago

Several generations of Texans will be born, live their lives, and die while these morons talk about this road. ON OUR TAX DOLLARS! Get real jobs, you slimy, unethical, bureaucratic jerks.

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mdunlap1

4 days ago

"We build transportation systems," Morris said.

And you really suck at it.

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10 0



Biff Loeder

4 days ago

Who exactly is holding the voters of Dallas hostage by refusing to develop the parks, jogging trails, lakes, picnic areas, gardens, and all the other items that were promised in the bond elections years and years ago?

Until all (ANY would be nice) of the originally promised KEY components of the Trinity River Project are complete, they can run to toll road right up that tunnel where the sun never shines!
LIARS!

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7 0



Wylie H Dallas

3 days ago

I think city staff reprogrammed a lot of that money into toll road consulting studies. They've evidently blown \$40 million on stuff like that to date.

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Jim Schermbeck

4 days ago

What about the emergency vehicles and response time? What about access to Baylor? Where did those equally ridiculous reasons go? Morris and the Mayor are making this up as they go along. I bet the guy has never even been to Bishop Arts or Trinity Grove where they're doing just fine without a toll road, thank you. There's almost always a study with these proposals to back-up claims of economic growth from a project vs no project. Where are they? Oh, we just have to take Michael Morris' word for it.

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Ben

3 days ago

Trinity Groves doesn't have a toll road, but I doubt it would be viable without the Bridge to Nowhere!

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L lastname

4 days ago

oh it has benefit all right. It benefits NTTA and Perry's and Abbott's pockets.

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4 1



Biff Loeder

4 days ago

This has nothing to do with Abbott or Perry....so dumb.

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1 2



L lastname

3 days ago

you really believe that? so dumb...

Reply Share

0 0



Fred Bailey

4 days ago

You expected something different from a person who gets their paycheck from the group he is promoting? Duh...

Kinda like the wolf and the sheep discussing what to have for dinner...

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5 1



PersonManMan

4 days ago

The best possible outcome for MM is for 345 to fall on him while carpooling with Vonciel Jones Hill.

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Wylie H Dallas

4 days ago

This time, Michael Morris arguments are internally inconsistent. One the one hand, he says LESS traffic on Irving, Riverfront, Lamar and in downtown would be good. On the other hand, he says MORE traffic on Hampton, the Houston St. Viaduct and Oak Lawn between I-35 and Maple would be good.

This is nonsensical gibberish. He wants us to spend \$2 billion and destroy a park based on THAT?

[Morris denied early Friday that he ever said the contract bound Dallas to build the road. He said he's never read it, paid attention to it or weighed in on it.]

I find this very hard to believe. If he is lying, he should be fired. If he hasn't ever read it or paid attention to it, he should also be fired.

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11 1



1DaIM

4 days ago

Okay, Google: Translate "We build transportation systems," Morris said. "You guys look at them as individual projects." into English.

"Bleep" "Shut up and stop asking questions." "Bleep"

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Susan Wansbrough

4 days ago

Mr. Morris sees the world through concrete colored lenses.

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14 1



Fred Bailey

4 days ago

You and I don't agree a lot- but you dang sure nailed this one...

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**Stan**

4 days ago

After reading this story, I wonder if Michael Morris has ever driven at rush hour in Dallas? His comments are nonsense. How is road going from Irving to Seagoville going to increase traffic on Hampton Road? At rush hour, Hampton Road is bumper to bumper as commuters drive south to I-20 and points further south. There is no more room for additional traffic. How could the Toll road reduce traffic on Industrial Blvd., those folks are driving to the various bridges or freeway on ramps along the Trinity but not all the way to Seagoville?

I think he should retire before he does anymore damage to Dallas or the region.

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**William**

4 days ago

"We have to decide if we want downtown Dallas to be a place that people just drive through very quickly or if we want to make it a place that people call home," he - Giggs- said

I avoid downtown because all of the one way streets and the parking. If downtown Dallas wants to be an entertainment center, why does Dart quit running at midnight? Dart should run 24 hours (reduced schedule after midnight). It's taken how long for Dart / Dallas to get public transportation out to DFW? Isn't it interesting that "public" transportation in Dallas is becoming privately owned instead of publicly owned? I've often wondered how a private entity (Dart) could have its own police force. I expect to see a Dart MRAP in my review mirror while traveling in the rarely used and confusing (you can enter the HOV, but you can never leave) HOV lanes in the future ...

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**Joe**

4 days ago

DART is not a private entity.

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**HordsRidge**

4 days ago

Downtown Dallas does not want to be an entertainment center.

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**mdunlap1**

4 days ago

Apartments in downtown Dallas are over 90% occupied at a \$/sqft higher than 99% of the rest of DFW. If downtown is a failure, what is the rest of the area given the market has put a lower value on its properties?

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4 0

**lakewoodhobo**

3 days ago

You probably haven't been paying attention, but many of the one-way streets have been converted to two-way streets. Three parks have opened downtown in the last 8 years, one replacing surface parking, another replacing a parking garage and another decked above a freeway.

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**Joe**

4 days ago

Oak Cliff does not require a large transportation project to support it. It is moving and regrowing without big economic development projects or freeway building. Leave it alone. It is good for Dallas for it to grow the way it is going.

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**WalkableDFW**

4 days ago

Similarly, West Dallas has 2000+ new residential units in the pipeline. Not in expectation of a toll road between it and downtown.

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**Susan Wansbrough**

4 days ago

Went up to the "ball" at Hyatt Regency the other day, for the first time in a decade. Well worth the \$8. Primary observation? There are WAY too many highways around downtown Dallas already. And the area around the Trinity River would be destroyed by adding another. The west side of downtown Dallas is a concrete jungle. I recommend this vantage point for anyone thinking adding another highway is a good idea. Everyone we were with was of the same mind once they looked down on all the concrete.

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**Fred Bailey**

4 days ago

Excellent points. Enough is enough. And I'm in the concrete business...how's that grab ya?

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**HordsRidge**

4 days ago

"Several streets in downtown Dallas would also see the number of drivers drop by up to 3,500 a day."

Do we need any more evidence that highways decimate downtowns? Michael Morris only wants to kill downtown Dallas just to make his powerful friends rich.

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Shawn 4 days ago

Griggs! Griggs for mayor! that's all I got...

Reply Share 11 1



Willie 4 days ago

Why is Michael Morris hell bent on building a highway in the river bottoms that nobody else wants?

Because he cares so much about economic development in Oak Cliff?

Why does Vonciel, Rawlings and the Dallas Citizens Council (puppet masters) want it built? Oh, because people in Pleasant Grove need a tollway to get to Parkland.

Here's hoping that DMN pulls their head out of the sand and follows the money.

Unfortunately, not enough people see the good work Schutze and Co. do at the Observer to expose these fools.

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