



**CONFLICT IS
EVERYWHERE.**



SMU

ANNETTE CALDWELL SIMMONS
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
& HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Conflict Management

APPLY NOW

The Dallas Morning News

[Home](#) [News](#) [Business](#) [Sports](#) [Entertainment](#) [Arts & Life](#) [Opinion](#) [Obituaries](#) [Classifieds](#) [ePaper](#)

[Communities](#) [Crime](#) [Education](#) [Investigations](#) [State](#) [Nation/World](#) [Politics](#) [Videos](#) [Photos](#)

41° 7-day Forecast

Follow Us Search



Transportation

Smaller Trinity toll road: a legitimate plan or political ploy?

Share Tweet Email **23** Comment Print

By **BRANDON FORMBY**

Transportation Writer

Published: 15 February 2015 11:01 PM

Updated: 15 February 2015 11:01 PM

Like all things related to the Trinity Parkway, a group of urban design experts' conclusions about the project mean different things to different people.

Supporters of the \$1.5 billion toll road see the 12 consultants' desire for a meandering, four-lane road providing views of planned parks as a return to the spirit of the abstract idea voters approved in 2003.

"This is really exciting stuff," said Craig Holcomb, executive director of the Trinity Commons Foundation. "I couldn't have dreamed this up in a year."

Opponents view the findings — and the consultants' privately funded task itself — as a political distraction that ignores the financial and bureaucratic realities of a road whose designs call for six lanes and several large interchanges.

"The problem with the apparent task presented to the 'dream team' is there's no resemblance with the actual issue Dallas is dealing with," said Angela Hunt, a longtime opponent of the project as currently designed.

That "dream team" of urban planning and transportation experts who reviewed Dallas' plans for the toll road said the version under federal review would be inhospitable to adjacent parkland and economic development opportunities.

Larry Beasley, the team's chair, said the traffic estimates used to justify the project to federal officials won't warrant the large-scale version for several decades.

The team is preparing a report, expected to include recommendations for a narrower road with far fewer interchanges, for Mayor Mike Rawlings. What happens next hasn't been decided.

"If the final work is something I'm excited about, all citizens of Dallas will see it," Rawlings said Friday. "That obviously includes City Council members."

Future decisions

Beasley and Rawlings said the city could start out with a smaller road and leave it to future politicians to decide whether or not to build what's been sent to federal authorities for approval. But project opponents said the obscurity of the process — and vague descriptions of a meandering parkway — is meant to distract voters about what the city actually plans to build.

"I wish the process was more transparent and open to the public," said City Council member Sandy Greyson.

The mayor and all 14 council seats are on the May ballot, meaning voters will decide who determines the project's fate. Trinity Parkway faces a financing shortfall of more than \$990 million.

Federal authorities have said that the city could have to start the approval process over if it makes fundamental changes. Beasley described the experts' conclusions as changing the "nature" of what's already been submitted.

Driving down costs

Meanwhile, one of the region's most influential transportation officials said that even if Trinity Parkway debuts as a four-lane road meandering along a massive park, that's not what it will ultimately look like.

North Central Texas Council of Governments transportation director Michael Morris said last week that Dallas should send federal authorities a new project approval request if it does not plan to eventually build the six-lane, high-speed toll road with large interchanges that was already submitted.

Morris described the idea of building a smaller version now as a way to drive down initial construction costs until the full-scale project can be afforded.

Hunt said supporters are talking out of both sides of their mouth by publicly discussing a smaller, four-lane park access road while asking federal approval for a larger, six-lane highway.

“It’s an incredibly smart tactic,” she said.

Trinity Parkway supporters, though, said the goal is to build what’s best for the city.

“I would only endorse spending citizens’ private money on this project to make Dallas better, never for a personal agenda,” Rawlings said.

Former City Manager Mary Suhm was instrumental in putting together the experts. She said several nonprofits supported the work and helped fund it, though exact costs and individual donors aren’t being released.

“I want there to be some ideas on the table to make it the best parkway it can be,” she said.

Follow Brandon Formby on Twitter at @brandonformby.

 Share
  Tweet
  Email
 23 Comment
  Print

Promoted Stories From The Web



Uncover a World of Luxury in Highlands Scotland

(Visit Britain - Countryside)



Man Finds Secret Room In Office -- Where It Led Was Astounding

(Viral Nova)



Who killed the gayborhood? A Grist podcast investigation

(Grist Magazine)



The 4 Ways Holland Stands Above The Rest

(Holland.com)

More Promoted Stories

Photos: 45 Amazing Never Before Seen Images From History
Viral Nova

IKEA Makeover Turns Small DC Apartment Into a Spacious Home With Entertainment Space Racked DC

25 Biggest Decorating Mistakes to Avoid HGTV

More From *Dallasnews.com*

Paris massacre may have inspired suspect in Danish attacks
News

Collin County to ask Texas Legislature to create 3 more courts
News

Watch: Mavericks’ Dirk Nowitzki finishes alley-oop, makes Tim Duncan lose it at NBA All-Star Game
Dallas Mavericks Blog

Recommended by

Top Picks

Comments

To post a comment, log into your chosen social network and then add your comment below. Your comments are subject to our [Terms of Service](#) and the privacy policy and terms of service of your social network. If you do not want to comment with a social network, please consider writing a [letter to the editor](#).



Write a comment

23 Comments

Sort [Subscribe](#) [RSS](#)



Jim Luther

15 hours ago

I agree I think it is indeed a ploy. Rawlings is like "pat your pretty little, wishful head." to the "Dream Team" and anyone else who isn't gung-hoe all-out for the mega tollway. He's so clearly trying to placate and has no intention of making any changes. Laws and regulations need to be made to stipulate exactly what would be allowed now and in the future and then present those to the feds. Everyone says that that they can pretty much do whatever the hell they want -- and go on with this unneeded wasteful monstrosity, as long as they can come up with enough funds (and thankfully, at least that looks like it is the biggest constraint so far).

Reply [Share](#)

1 0



roscoe jett

3 days ago

It's a ploy. Why would they suddenly stop lying?

Reply [Share](#) 1 reply

7 0



UpTn DallasSocial

3 days ago

Unfortunately, they cannot, and WILL NOT stop lying. It is up to us, the citizens of Dallas to stop them.

Reply [Share](#)

6 0



UpTn DallasSocial

3 days ago

Hey, Mary, "the best parkway it can be" would be invisible. Oh, and Mayor Mike, just what does it take to get you "excited" these days? How's about we stick a picture of #AmberCampisi from her Playboy days on the cover of the report? Will that do the trick and get the "dream team" epistle in front of public eyes? Huh? When are you people going to stop running city government like a private club? #VoteForChange

Reply [Share](#)

6 0



Ken Duble

3 days ago

"The team is preparing a report, expected to include recommendations for a narrower road with far fewer interchanges, for Mayor Mike Rawlings. What happens next hasn't been decided."

The "fewer interchanges" phrase reveals their true intentions. If the intention is a "meandering, four-lane road," whatever that means, then they'd want as many interchanges as possible to make the park accessible to the neighborhoods above. Reducing the number of interchanges makes it a freeway by definition.

Reply [Share](#)

12 0



Lorlee Bartos

3 days ago

I am waiting to see a list of the non-profits and donors. Again, why does a private group think they have the right to make this very important decision. I propose that we initiate our own Charette Charade and put our proposal on the table.

Reply [Share](#)

14 0

Edward

3 days ago



I think that Smoke 'n Mirrors machine came with a manual.

Best read it. Too rich on the mirror aspect ratio.

Need to belch more smoke.

Reply Share

8 0



Wylie H Dallas

3 days ago

["This is really exciting stuff," said Craig Holcomb, executive director of the Trinity Commons Foundation. "I couldn't have dreamed this up in a year."]

Uhhh...

Reply Share

15 0



Brenda Marks

3 days ago

Angela Hunt is right. Still. Again.

Of course this is nothing but political ploy to blunt the public outrage between now and May 6. It's a well-known Communications 101 script. The people of Dallas do not want this road in their park. Mayor Rawlings, Mary Suhm, Craig Holcomb, Alice Murray, and Vonciel Jones Hill know this. So what to do? ... change the conversation. The road is already designed. The floodway studies have been done on the massive road design -- Alternative C. The environmental impact study is based upon that road design -- Alternative C. To say we can build a completely different road from the decision that will be made within the next 60 days is a lie. This is nothing more than an attempt to calm the discussion long enough to hold onto enough seats on the council to prevent an up-or-down vote on cancellation of the contract between the City of Dallas and the NTTA.

The only honest comment from this magical fairy team came from Craig Holcomb. "I couldn't have dreamed this up in a year." How true Craig. Sad that you had to get hard cash from your magical fairy team supports to pay for this dream.

Reply Share

19 0



Jeffery Weber

3 days ago

This is not exciting stuff as one supporter says.

It is disappointing that the supporters of the proposed Trinity Parkway mislead and do their own meandering about the truth.

It is a disastrous idea to build a road inside the levee and it will ALWAYS be a bad idea.

If supporters believe it is a good idea put it to a vote and CEASE these constant efforts to study and mislead.

Reply Share

16 0



Biff Loeder

3 days ago

100% Political Ploy.

You have to be ultra-gullible to think otherwise.

Reply Share

18 0



Raymond Crawford

3 days ago

"If the final work is something I'm excited about, all citizens of Dallas will see it," Rawlings said Friday. "That obviously includes City Council members." Really? Perhaps he could RSVP and show up at the Mayoral Candidate Q/A next week at Methodist Hospital and bring the plans. We're all ears.

Reply Share 16 0



Amy Severson

3 days ago

Will a "No" vote = "Yes" in the next election? All my neighbors were confused in the last one. It was tricky, and effective.

Reply Share 18 0



Wylie H Dallas

3 days ago

Political ploy, of course. It is fascinating to witness these people selling themselves to the highest bidder.

Reply Share 24 0



Mike Dunlap

3 days ago

I like that a giant strip of concrete and asphalt soon to be littered with oil and shards of rubber, glass, hard plastic and giant metal machines racing up and down it "meanders."

Reply Share 20 0



1DaIM

3 days ago

You forgot to interview the most important party in all of this: the NTTA. They are the ones that get to decide what they build -not the Mayor and not the COG. What's their opinion of the smaller, "meandering" road?

Reply Share 1 reply 18 0



Ken Duble

3 days ago

From what I've read, NTTA has already declined participation in this project.

Reply Share 5 0



Henry

3 days ago

Just total deception. The "Dream Team" is a diversionary tactic.

Reply Share 23 0



Brent Tee

3 days ago

It should be self evident that the toll road proponents are willing to say anything to get this passed.

Reply Share 25 0



Justin Earl

3 days ago

You forgot to add the dream team said a 55-miles-per-hour speed limit would be completely compatible with their glorious vision a "meandering road." Try feeling safe crossing that road into a park. I know the city of Dallas will not allow mid-street crossing signals until a pedestrian is killed, so it shouldn't be long until one is allowed and there will be a whole lot of meandering skid marks.

Reply Share 20 0



Jim Schermbeck

3 days ago

Oh please, the ONLY aspect of this piece of Kabuki theater that's completely transparent is its political intent.

Reply Share 1 reply 23 0



MidniteCowboy

3 days ago

It's somewhere between a Kabuki Theater and a dog -n-pony show.

Reply Share

20 0



MidniteCowboy

3 days ago

"I would only endorse spending citizens' private money on this project to make Dallas better, never for a personal agenda," Rawlings said.

Sir this is nothing short of your personal agenda. An overwhelming percentage of Dallas citizens want nothing to do with a F'ing high speed limited access freeway running through (and destroying) our proposed park before we can even build the park.

Reply Share

27 0
