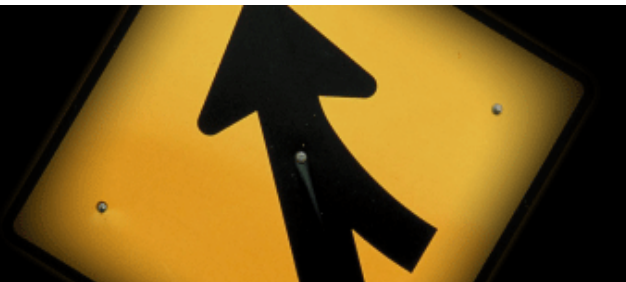


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# Honkin' mad

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## Honkin' Mad

Release your road rage here. Don't let gas prices and gridlock get your goat.

January 17, 2013

### Of Texas' Top 100 transportation challenges, 26 are in DFW area



@gdickson

DFW AIRPORT - More than a fourth of Texas' 100 top transportation challenges are in the Dallas Fort Worth area, a report released Thursday concluded.

The worst roads include two sections of Interstate 35W north of downtown Fort Worth - although both areas are scheduled for improvements over the next couple of years.

Still, the report on deficient roads was released Thursday by local and national advocates, who called on the Texas Legislature to increase Texas highway funding to avoid stumping the state's economic growth.

"The consequence of not making these improvements is severe," said Carolyn Bonifas Kelly, associate director of research for TRIP, Washington-based organization supported by insurance and construction companies and other businesses that favor increased highway funding.

Gathering at Dallas Fort Worth Airport's headquarters, officials from TRIP, the Texas Good Roads and Transportation Association and other groups called for lawmakers to embrace new funding sources for Texas highways.

Texas, which relies mostly on motor fuels taxes to pay for roads, is losing ground in trying to keep up with its mobility needs, said Lawrence Olsen, executive vice president of Texas Good Roads. In recent years, lawmakers have allowed the Texas Department of Transportation to issue bond-backed debt to temporarily make up for a lack of road funding. But, Olsen said, the new reality of now making regular installment payments on that debt has made the long-term funding picture more bleak.

"Now when TxDot does its budget it takes \$2 billion off the top for debt," Olsen said. "That's money that's not going to these projects."

Among the local projects listed on the report's top 100 Texas transportation challenges:

- Interstate 30 from Jefferson Street to Loop 12 in Dallas - a corridor that will be addressed in the Horseshoe project recently funded by the Texas Transportation Commission. Late last year, the commission selected a developer, Pegasus Link Constructors, which committed to performing \$798 million worth of work in the corridor. That area is often used by motorists arriving in Dallas from the Arlington area.
- I-35W from Texas 183 (28th Street) to U.S. 81 (Decatur Cutoff) in north Fort Worth - a project that is being addressed in the North Tarrant Express development project. Work is expected to begin this spring on the reconstruction of existing general purpose lanes and the addition of two toll lanes in each direction - but the long-term goal of adding free lanes and continuous frontage roads will not be achieved for more than a decade under current funding realities, officials said.
- U.S. 75 from Texas 190 (Bush Turnpike) to Interstate 635 in Dallas County. State officials said the proposed addition of managed lanes will be the subject of a corridor study over the next couple of years. However, the improvements aren't

currently funded.

- I-35W from Interstate 30 to Texas 183 (28th Street) in Fort Worth - also part of North Tarrant Express. This area also will get a makeover, with the addition of toll lanes, but new free lanes won't be added in the near term.

During the current legislative session, lawmakers are being asked to get serious about providing better long-term funding sources for transportation. Rider Scott, executive director of the Dallas Regional Mobility Coalition, said a growing number of state residents is calling for elected leaders to find the funds to fix the state's crumbling roads.

Among the suggestions is that the state stop diverting transportation funds to non-transportation projects, which could generate about \$1.2 billion per year. Another idea would be to dedicate sales taxes paid on automobile purchases to the state's Fund 6 highway fund, rather than the general fund, which would raise another \$3 billion.

Of course, both of those ideas would create funding gaps in other state programs.

Similar reports were released nearly simultaneously in other Texas metro areas.

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