



Contrary to popular myth: Texas transportation not awash in new money

Bond proposal provides one-time infusion, but state still short of money for new roads by 2014

Austin – Recent reports indicating a large infusion of money for TxDOT and state transportation funding are misleading today said the Transportation Advocates of Texas (TAoT).

“We welcome a one-time infusion of money from voter approved bonds, but that in no way sets Texas on the course to a reliable and sustainable source of transportation funding,” said Jim Reed, chairman of TAoT. “The state share of transportation funding is one-third what it was three decades ago before the explosion of healthcare costs and increases to education.”

“If legislators don’t provide new money through expanded bond authority, we will be out of money for new construction as early as next year. In fact, the reason legislators have given tentative approval for public-private partnerships is because state and local governments are short of money for vital projects” Reed said.

With \$3 billion in new bond spending authorized in the senate budget, senators recognize that voters approved this additional debt with the passage of Proposition 12. If House and Senate conferees agree to release such bonds, “they are simply affirming the will of the electorate,” said Reed.

Over the past 30 years, there has been a steady decline in how much Texas is investing in transportation. Proportionally, transportation was 15% of the state budget in 1980, but by 2009 transportation had declined to 4.8%.

Total transportation spending has also fallen on the federal level as well and now stands at 2.4% of GDP, while in Europe 5% of GDP is invested in its transportation infrastructure, as noted in a recent article by The Economist.

The Economist also pointed out that America not only spends considerably less on maintenance than Europe, but has a larger volume of deteriorating infrastructure, and a much larger traffic problem. In fact, a World Economic Forum study ranked America 23rd for overall infrastructure quality, between Spain and Chile.

“No one sitting in urban congestion in Texas thinks we spend too much on roads,” said Vic Suhm, vice-chairman of TAoT. “Safe, reliable and modern transportation is critical to jobs, economic growth and our quality of life.”

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