



Lawmakers Should Deliver Every Cent of Highway Funding Overwhelmingly Approved by Texas Voters

In 2011 a blue-ribbon analysis concluded that Texas needs to be spending a minimum of \$5 billion more each year on highway improvements just to maintain current unacceptable levels of traveler safety and gridlocked congestion.

The Texas Legislature worked diligently over the last two legislative sessions to fund the growing demands on the Texas transportation system. The people of Texas showed their support by voting overwhelmingly for Proposition 1 funding in 2014 and Proposition 7 funding in 2015.

Prop 1 dedicates a portion of oil and gas production taxes and Prop 7 dedicates \$2.5 billion a year from general sales taxes.

In response, TxDOT has been working to fulfill its duty to the Legislature and the people of Texas to properly plan for the additional funding and execute on project selection and delivery across the state. Projects are lined up ready to commence using these voter mandated funds.

Texans Want Tax Dollars Spent on Highways

Texans clearly want more of their current tax dollars spent on congestion relief, rural connectivity, safety improvements and freight movement efficiency. Roads are critical to our economic viability and quality of life. Strong population growth and aging pavement and bridges make the challenge bigger every day.

But during this tough budget year, it is not clear whether the 85th Legislature will keep the promise to put all of the dedicated money toward highways.

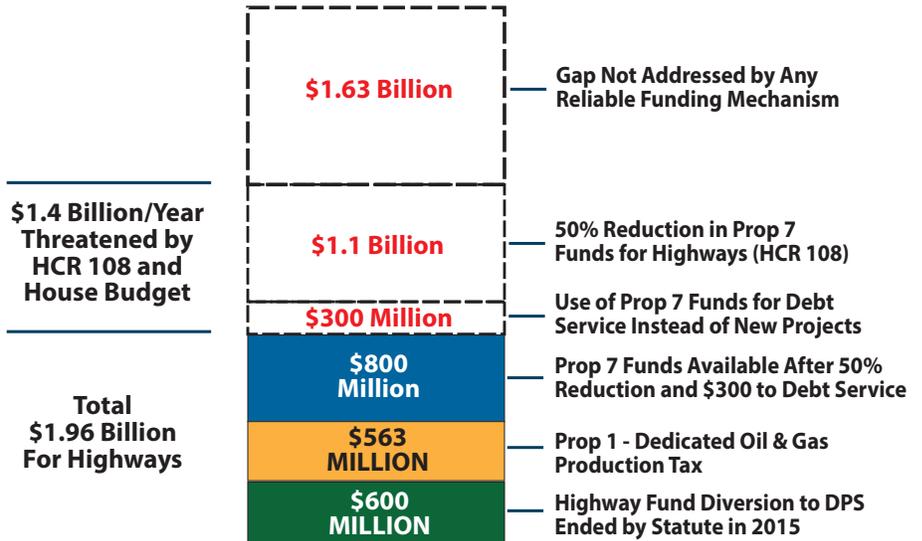
The initial versions of the state budget introduced in the House and Senate this year would take \$300 million each year from the Prop 7 funds to pay off previously issued debt instead of allocating the funds as promised toward new projects. And some members of the Legislature have raised the question of whether some portion of the money should be "clawed back" to spend on other state needs.

House Appropriations Chairman John Zerwas of Richmond has filed HCR 108 to do just that. It would take back \$1.1 billion a year.



Proposition 1 - 80% Voter Approval
Proposition 7 - 83% Voter Approval

House Proposals Result in Filling Less Than 40% of the \$5 Billion Per Year Highway Funding Gap



Still other members have discussed re-starting the diversion of highway funds to pay for the Department of Public Safety, a practice the Legislature stopped in 2015. Together these budget attacks on the Highway Fund would eliminate most of the progress made in the last two legislative sessions.



Time to Stop Talking About Raiding Highway Funds

These discussions need to stop, and the Legislature needs to keep its promise to improve mobility for Texas drivers. The funds that are being reallocated to transportation amount to less than 2% of the state's total budget; and this funding was overwhelmingly directed by the voters.

Furthermore, as critical as the new funding is, it is far less than the annual \$5 billion a year in inflation-protected funding needed.

There is much more to do to meet Texas' long-term transportation funding needs. We need a suite of robust, predictable, long-term financing sources and tools. The buying power of the fixed gasoline tax shrinks each year while vehicle fuel efficiency gains apply more downward pressure to traditional revenue. The fact is that incrementally more state and federal highway funding sources are needed.

If the members of 85th Legislature are not going to take another step forward to meet our needs, they at least should not take a step backward by failing to provide the full dedicated highway funding directed by Texas voters.

