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Last August, the McKinney City Council passed a resolution expressing its support for the tolling of SH 121. Since that time, various other cities along 121 have passed similar resolutions, as did the Denton County Commissioners Court. This will be an issue that the Collin County Commissioners Court will be considering within the next few months.

Funding for the service roads, overpasses and some of the main lanes (from Hillcrest west to the Dallas North Tollway) are already in place and construction is under way. However, the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) has said that if we depend on state funding for the remainder of 121 main lanes, it could be as late as 2037 before the necessary funding could be provided.

TXDOT further states that if 121 does become a toll road, they would generate \$250 million in bonds for the completion of 121, with the remainder going to other roads in the area. In today's dollars, it is estimated that it will cost approximately \$90 million to fully complete 121. This would, counting the service roads, turn 121 into a 12-lane highway. With 12-lanes a new interchange would be needed at 121 and US 75. The estimated cost for the interchange is approximately \$100 million.

This would leave approximately \$50 to \$60 million left for funding other roads in the "area." However, if 121 is tolled, the North Texas Tollway Authority would most likely operate the road and their definition of "area" includes Collin, Denton, Dallas and Tarrant counties. I believe "area" should be defined as strictly Collin County.

If "area" is defined as Collin County, the most logical and needed improvements are along US 75 through McKinney. However, it's safe to assume that Plano, Allen and Frisco may not be in total agreement with that assessment as they have much needed projects of their own which will require funding.

In order to work through these issues, Collin County has initiated a study to determine the feasibility of tolling. This study will answer questions as to the amount of money which might be raised and if any additional funding will be left over. If there are additional funds then the issues of whether or not the funding stays in Collin County and, if so, where it should be allocated will also need to be addressed. The study could also show alternatives to tolling as well.

Our goal is to have the study back in March, make it public, and then hold public hearings on the matter. While everyone agrees that the expansion of SH 121 is essential to our growth and economic development, I believe that we should not rush to judgment on tolling until all the questions are answered and the public has had an opportunity for input.

This does not mean we will be conducting a long and drawn out study over what we should or should not do--we do not have the luxury of spending an extended amount of time on this matter. Local cities run the risk of losing opportunities for economic development without a clear answer in sight. It does mean, however, that on an issue as important as this one, we will soon have answers to the many questions being asked so we can proceed with the proper information.