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While much recent attention has been devoted to the school finance issue, we should also remember that there is a second major crisis in Texas—a crisis in transportation. Overall there are two reasons for this crisis.

First is a lack of federal funding. Since the 1950s, Texas has consistently ranked at or near the bottom in receiving federal funds from Washington. For every dollar Texans send to the nation's capital we have in years past only received an average of 86 cents in return. In 2001 and 2002, Texas caught up by receiving \$1.03 and \$1.01 in return.

However, in 2003, this figured dropped to 89 cents. In 2004, it went up to 90.5 cents.

It is estimated that Texas' return could go to 92 cents this year.

Senator Cornyn has stated that his goal is for Texas to receive back 95 cents for every dollar but estimates that it could be 2009 before that goal is achieved.

A comparison to other states shows how far Texas is behind. For example, Alaska

receives \$6.40 for every dollar it sends to Washington; the District of Columbia

receives \$3.65. Larger populated states such as New York and Pennsylvania receive \$1.30 and \$1.23 respectively. California receives 95 cents, a losing formula, but still better than Texas.

In addition Collin County also received very little out of the \$286.5 billion federal highway bill which was recently enacted. Overall, we received only \$12 million for SH 121, a \$400 million project, while Dallas received over \$60 million for their Trinity River bridges and other projects.

The second major issue contributing to the transportation crisis in Texas is the state diverting highway funds to other departments and agencies. For example, in FY 03, Texas collected approximately \$6.4 billion annually through road related taxes and fees.

Of the \$6.4 billion collected only \$2.9 billion (46%) is used to fund transportation projects throughout the state. The remaining \$3.5 billion (54%) is used to fund other projects and agencies. For example, approximately \$700 million is constitutionally mandated to go to education.

Other areas where transportation dollars are diverted are:

- \$445.6 million to fund the Department of Public Safety
- \$55.9 million for funding of Health and Human Services medical transportation
- \$26 million for road maintenance at state universities
- \$340,000 to the Attorney General's Office
- \$918,925 to the State Office of Administrative hearings

If Texas could end its non-school related diversions and get its federal rate up to 95 cents for every dollar sent to Washington this would add approximately \$3 billion to the state's highway fund for a total of \$5.9 billion instead of \$2.9 billion. This alone would be over a 100 percent increase in highway funding.

However, in order to do that there will need to be more money in the system to cover those projects/agencies that diverted money will be taken from. How do you do that? Raise taxes? No one wants that. Have more toll roads to make up the shortcomings? Better be careful there, Collin County could become one big gated community.

The Texas Supreme Court will be ruling on school finance within the next few months.

This ruling will spur our legislators to go back to Austin and make the difficult decisions necessary. However, once school finance is settled we need to look at reforming our funding of a broken transportation system.