

## Blacklands Feasibility Study Could Result in a New Toll Road Impacting Rowlett

October, 2014

A MONTHLY MESSAGE FROM



MAYOR  
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Rowlett is definitely *On the Move*, and along with celebrating the wonderful growth and economic development opportunities coming our way, I often find myself having to clarify information on complex issues that has somehow been miscommunicated in the community, leading to confusion on the part of our citizens. We are an extremely open and transparent organization, so in an effort to ensure everyone in Rowlett understands these issues, and why the City Council makes the decisions we do, I am going to do a short monthly newsletter addressing one or two topics.

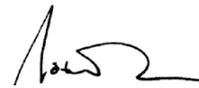
This month I would like to provide some information about the Blacklands Corridor Feasibility Study, and the possibility that the results of this study could be the recommendation for a new toll road, which could affect the City of Rowlett. The North Central Texas Council of Government (NCTCOG) conducted a feasibility study to review transportation needs in a wide area from Interstate Highway 30 in Greenville to the President George Bush Turnpike (PGBT) in Garland, beginning in July 2013. The feasibility study was commissioned to examine the need for transportation improvements in the corridor and identify potential projects that could enhance access, reduce congestion, address safety, and integrate with the regional transportation system.

NCTCOG determined that the multimodal feasibility study has demonstrated a transportation need exists in the study area, particularly in

the vicinity of Lake Ray Hubbard and Lavon Lake. *NCTCOG found that the traffic volume at the four current lake crossings is projected to increase by 95 percent, while the current transportation plan only provides a 25 percent increase in the number of lanes through these lake crossings. NCTCOG projects significant employment and population growth, adding just shy of 200,000 new residents in the study area by 2035.* As a result, the Texas Turnpike Corporation, a private entity, is currently developing a proposed limited access tollway facility called the Northeast Gateway.

There are several preliminary routes, and while it is not yet a “done deal”, a new toll road linking Greenville to the PGBT may directly impact the City of Rowlett. The City Council has not made a decision whether to support this proposed toll road or not because, at this time, there just is not enough information available. *We will be discussing this at the Tuesday, October 14 City Council work session.* However, I do feel it is time for our citizens to have all the information available to us, and I encourage you to stay tuned in to this important possible development by visiting the links provided at the end of this newsletter!

Regards,



Mayor Todd Gittel

19 neighborhoods participated in the 31st Annual National Night Out event on Tuesday, October 7!



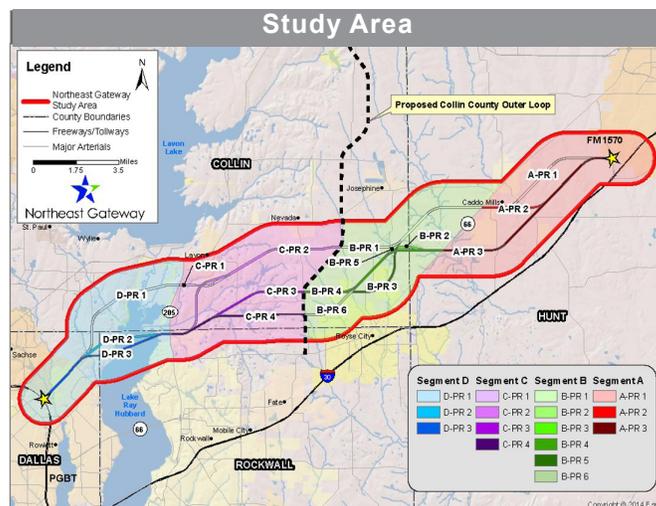
# 1. What is the Northeast Gateway?

The Northeast Gateway is a proposed 27-mile toll road that would extend from FM 1570 near Interstate 30 in Hunt County to the President George Bush Turnpike in Dallas County. There are several proposed routes, no preferred route has been established at this time.

The colored zones, or segments, on the maps are used to break the project into four smaller sections for analysis based on existing or planned roadways in the project area:

## Map Legend

- Segment A** - the eastern terminus over to SH 66
- Segment B** - State Highway 66 to the planned Collin County Outer Loop
- Segment C** - extends from that point to SH 205
- Segment D** - SH 205 to the western terminus at President George Bush Tollway.

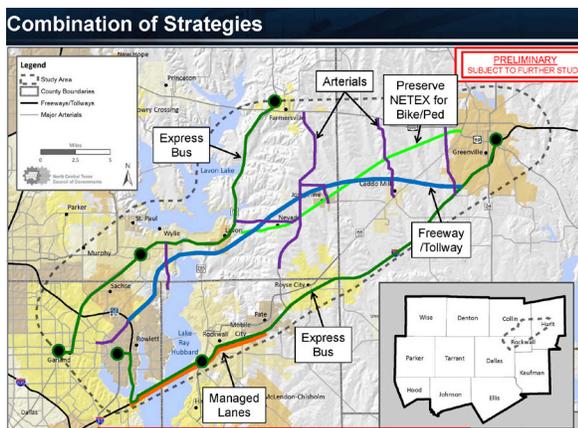


# 2. Why is a new toll road being proposed?

According to NCTCOG's projections, the population in Collin County to the west of Lavon Lake and Lake Ray Hubbard will grow 50 percent between now and 2035. People are rapidly moving into the area, which includes Rowlett, attracted by the quality of life, employment opportunities, good schools and affordable housing. To the east of the lakes and including Greenville and parts of Rockwall County, the population is expected to increase 91 percent in the next 20 years.

There are currently four roadways that serve vehicle traffic traversing the two lakes: US 380, SH 78, SH 66 and IH 30. The trips on these four roadways in 2011 was

219,000 vehicles per day, but are expected to grow to 382,000 vehicles per day. The Blacklands Feasibility Study determined that the current roadways cannot meet this demand.



bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and IH 30 bottleneck improvements were among those recommendations.

At the public meeting on September 22, planners recommended a combination of strategies to help meet local and regional transportation needs in the area based on the Blacklands Corridor Feasibility Study findings and public involvement. New and widened arterials, *a new freeway/tollway*,

# 3. Why must citizens pay to take a toll road, when roads are part of America's infrastructure funded by taxpayer dollars?



Privately owned and operated toll roads are a free market solution to one of the most critical infrastructure problems facing us today. Roads, both new and those in dire need of repair, are on a growing list of critical projects for which adequate government funding is not made available. This issue is occurring all over the country, but we are really feeling the effects here in North Texas, resulting in the proliferation of new toll roads.

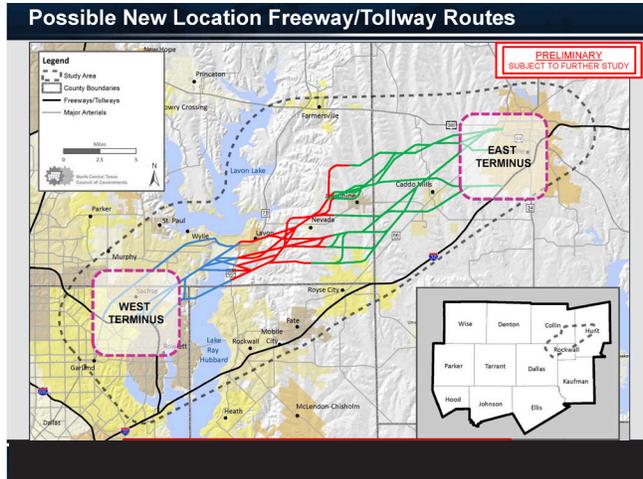
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## 4. What is the size of the proposed toll road and how much right-of-way will be required?

The proposed design for Northeast Gateway consists of approximately 27 miles of six- and four-lane highway. The required right-of-way varies depending on alignment, but generally Northeast Gateway can be implemented within a

250-foot wide corridor. More right-of-way will be required at intersections and significant crossings. The Texas Turnpike Corp. has stated that, overall, the project can be built on less than 1,000 acres of right-of-way.

## 5. When will more detailed routes be presented that show street names, neighborhoods, any easement being considered and potential displacements?



This level of detail is planned to be provided at the next public meeting, which could occur as soon as November.

The Texas Turnpike Corp. has indicated they are still engaging property owners in an effort to understand community dynamics, economic development strategies for both the public and private sectors, and the constraints to the various routes under consideration and therefore have not established a preferred route at this time.



## 6. Who grants Texas Turnpike Corporation the legal right to build and operate a toll road?

NCTOG may recommend the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) consider an amendment to the region's long-range transportation plan, *Mobility 2035 - 2013 Update*, at their November 13 meeting.

The RTC had originally been expected to consider the amendment at its meeting in October, but postponing a decision will allow more time for the RTC to review public comments about the Blacklands Corridor Feasibility Study following that study's public meeting held on September 22. More than 1,200 attended

the meeting, almost all expressing concerns about a potential toll road. Residents also submitted written comments in advance of the October 2 deadline for input.

Ultimately, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) will make a recommendation to the Texas Transportation Commission whether Northeast Gateway meets all requirements as mandated. Those requirements include financial capability, highest standards of construction, and appropriate measure and mitigation of any environmental effects of the project.

## 7. Does Texas Turnpike Corporation have eminent domain authority?

In Texas, some governmental and private entities are authorized by law to purchase private property through the use of eminent domain for transportation projects so long as the project serves a public necessity and is for public use. Texas Turnpike Corp. is one such private entity that has been authorized by law to use

eminent domain to acquire needed rights-of-way for toll road projects that serve the general public. They have stated they will make every effort to work with all landowners who may be potentially impacted to protect their rights and to assure that the process follows all applicable laws.

## 8. *If* this toll road moves forward, when will construction begin?

Once the public involvement process is complete and right-of-way acquisition has begun, construction activities can also begin. We're hearing anywhere from three to five years.



*For more information, to review the presentations and watch a video of the September 22 public meeting, and find a schedule of future public meetings, please visit:*

[NCTCOG Blacklands Corridor Feasibility Study webpage](#)  
[Texas Turnpike Corporation's Texas Northeast Gateway webpage](#)