

DMN Editorial: Our Editorial Board Agenda for 2010

Transportation

The goals:

- Expand the region's rail transit network to ease congestion and provide options for commuters.
- Identify significant sources of new money to fund needed highway projects.

The plan:

Just because this is an off-year for the Texas Legislature doesn't mean that we can punt our transportation problems to 2011. The last two sessions have been failures in terms of planning and funding rail and roads.

The Dallas-Fort Worth delegation has gone 0-for-2 in building consensus for a local option that would allow North Texas voters to approve new taxes and fees to pay for expanded rail. This year, our legislative leaders must regroup and begin work on a streamlined funding approach that could be adopted in 2011.

Crafting a local option remains the best option so regions can tailor plans to their needs. As the last few years have shown, hammering out details and trying to build support on the fly during a legislative session can doom a plan to defeat, so our delegation needs to do some heavy lifting in the off-season.

Similarly, 2010 is the time to have some tough conversations about how to keep the state's highway fund on firm financial footing. Oft-repeated campaign promises to root out waste won't come close to addressing a shortfall that's in the billions and multiplying.

New money is needed – and lots of it. No one likes talking about tax increases during an election year, but when it comes to paying for highways, we find ourselves in a deep hole and sinking fast. State Sen. [John Carona](#) has the right idea with his call to raise the gas tax and index it to inflation.

Rail and roads are pricey propositions, but North Texas' needs are urgent. Failure to act in 2010 will cost us dearly next year and beyond.



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