



18 March 2015

The Dallas Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA Dallas) has issued the following statement:

AIA Dallas supports a great Trinity Park as essential to the future health and prosperity of Dallas. Any highway similar to the Trinity Toll Road will divide our city and destroy the park's unique potential and its recreational, economic, and environmental benefits. We oppose the Trinity Toll Road; it is an outdated approach from the past and will not solve the current or future mobility needs of our region.

AIA DALLAS TRINITY FAQs

To follow up on our position, AIA Dallas compiled this discussion to provide background on our deliberations.

1. Do you support any roads in the park?

Yes, small-scaled roadways can successfully provide access at multiple locations on both sides of the river. A continuous roadway may or may not be necessary, but this planning must be embedded in the detailed design of a great Trinity Park. The proposed toll road is designed primarily to operate as part of the regional freeway network and, in fact, separates the park from the city.

2. Do you still support the Balanced Vision Plan (BVP)?

Yes, we support the spirit and core principles of the Balanced Vision Plan. However, the road represented in the NTA Alternative 3C alignment is [not the road](#) detailed in the BVP. In the aftermath of Katrina, the Army Corps of Engineers became much stricter on how the road alignment could encroach on the structural walls of the levees. The road proposed in the BVP no longer became constructible within the alignment mandated by the BVP. As the engineering progressed, the road grew in size and scale and lost the context-sensitive design (character) that was required by the BVP. The road right-of-way grew in width and began further encroaching into the adjacent parkland, thereby negatively impacting the park amenities and the size of the lakes. Through the years, AIA Dallas has taken on the role of guardian of the Balanced Vision Plan and the road detailed in the Alternate 3C submittal is not this road and certainly not balanced.

3. How can we not build what the citizens have voted for?

The road that has been submitted to the Corps of Engineers for the environmental impact statement (EIS) is [not the road](#) that was presented to the citizens who voted for it. Between the shift in road placement further into the park due to the Army Corps of Engineers protecting the levee, and the design that developed for a faster, wider highway with long, high access and exit lanes, the road endorsed by the public is not the road being permitted now.

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4. How do you propose to solve the traffic congestion challenge that Dallas faces?

[Statistics](#) provided by proponents of the Trinity Toll Road indicate that it will provide minimal or no relief in congestion or commute times. Further, projections of traffic demand used to justify the toll road do not reflect the many demographic and technological shifts currently underway; they are, instead, based on driving patterns of the past. Americans are driving less, and young Americans (millennials) are driving a lot less. Nationally, mileage has dropped to 2005 levels and locally, traffic on Stemmons Corridor has steadily declined from 1997 through 2012. In addition, there are numerous technological changes on the near horizon, including pilotless cars, high-speed rail, and on-demand options (like Uber) that promise to greatly increase the efficiency and utilization of our existing roads.

More immediately, priority should be given to projects that are ready to go within existing transportation corridors, like full completion of the Pegasus Project for Stemmons. Serious consideration should be given to routing thru-traffic to the perimeter of the city (like Loop 12 in Irving) rather than encouraging it to pass through the urban core.

5. What do you do to connect residents of southern Dallas to jobs?

Connectivity to good jobs, medical care facilities, schools and other basic services are essential to any vibrant community. The Trinity Toll Road, currently marketed as a conduit for economic opportunity, imposes a financial hardship on the working class citizens of our city. Southern Dallas has the greatest growth potential. Developing sustainable neighborhoods (with access to services citizens utilize most within a 5-mile radius) boosts economic growth, promotes job creation and entrepreneurship, and builds stronger communities.

6. Is the AIA's position advocating for less or more connectivity?

We strongly support a different kind of connectivity. Intercity highways designed in the last 60 years have served to destroy connectivity between neighborhoods. With each new highway comes a winner and a loser. Unfortunately, Deep Ellum, Fair Park, Jubilee Park, and the Cedars are on the losing end of these investments. Many cities suffering from the trauma of 1950's inner-city highway planning have decided to remove their highway and reconnect their neighborhoods.

TxDOT Commissioner Victor Vandergriff is organizing a study of the four major highways bounding downtown Dallas with a city-map study soon to begin. AIA Dallas supports this study and is confident, as the entire network of highways is reviewed holistically, that there will be consensus on how to make our inner-city highways more efficient and neighborhood friendly.



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Finally, building yet another 1950's super-highway through our great Trinity Park for the benefit of expeditious passage through our city and to further facilitate the export of jobs and citizens to the suburbs will be detrimental to the citizenry and well-being of Dallas.

7. Can't we just build a small road now with plans to expand?

If we build anything based on NTA Alternative 3C, it will require the entire enlarged platform (raised bench) dictated by the eventual road dimensions. Even if the bench is topped with a temporarily narrower road, the damage that will destroy the park's potential will be done. Claims have been made that the road is only 30% designed, so we don't know what the final version will look like. Design professionals can attest that if the 30% design that is complete cannot be changed, then the key decisions that will shape the design and budget are already set and will remain as drivers throughout the remainder of the design development.

8. Why not wait for the Dream Team's report on the Trinity Toll Road before confirming a position?

Initially, we were encouraged by the "Dream Team" and their engagement in the project (much like the Connected City project). However, the process has not been transparent: no media access to team members, no confirmed schedule of the process, no clarifications of scope, no statement of implementation process, and local stake holders (including design professionals) have not been given the opportunity to engage and provide feedback. In December 2014, AIA Dallas issued an [open letter](#) to the "Dream Team" with questions for consideration. No public acknowledgment nor response has been provided by any "Dream Team" members or their clients. With no confirmed date for the "Dream Team" report and no follow up feedback process in place, along with numerous other factors, AIA Dallas is confident in the timing of taking a position on the Trinity Toll Road.

9. How do you encourage economic development without the Trinity Toll Road?

The economic engine is the great Trinity Park; therefore, that should be the planning focus. Tollways enable development in the suburbs, but kill development in the city core. The Trinity road is bounded by the Trinity River on the west and the levee on the east for much of nine-mile length. There is no land to develop adjacent to the road. Development opportunities will be limited to the access points and the southern terminus, areas that already have significant access. Like Klyde Warren Park that has become a driver of economic development in the Uptown area, the Trinity Park will encourage development of Riverfront Boulevard and surrounding areas that are just beginning to transform. Massive tollway entrance ramps, and the construction process to put them in place, will be a death knell for the emerging retail community in these locations.



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10. What about the 16 years and \$43 million already invested?

\$43 million is a large sum of money; however, the reported investment to date is less than 3% of the estimated \$1.5 BILLION total project cost. The City Council was aware that there was a risk in the investment when the project started. This risk was further enhanced with the Corps of Engineers' revised approach to the levees after Hurricane Katrina. As the toll road project evolved, from the initial BVP concept to the current design, several studies have revealed the Trinity Toll Road's deficiencies and raised questions as to the wisdom of continuing to invest time and money in an outdated proposal. The time and money invested to date is not a total loss. The exploration of the potential of the Trinity Park can better inform the design of Trinity Park access points and circulation network. Additionally, a portion of these funds have gone to flood control projects.

11. What about the funding that is already in place for the Trinity Toll Road?

Funding of the tollway is fuzzy. We understand that these funding sources are more or less in place – \$300 million from NTTA (estimated), \$84 million from the city, and \$141 million from NCTCOG – for a total of \$525 million. Compare this to the projected \$1.5 billion cost of the toll road, exclusive of any urban design “enhancements” under consideration, and what is clear is that at least another \$1 billion must be found. TxDOT Commissioner Victor Vandergriff has indicated that TxDOT is not interested in funding this shortfall, so the federal government and/or the city of Dallas will have to make up the difference which appear to be an unlikely source.

That said, if the \$1 billion can somehow be identified, there are more impactful projects to spend it on than a questionable toll road that would destroy the park and provide minimal congestion relief. A far wiser investment of the billion dollars of taxpayer dollars would be to fund smaller-scale, highly focused projects, such as improving our existing road network to optimize its efficiency, expanding transit options (including innovative, lower-cost approaches such as streetcars and bus rapid transit), building an integrated network of bike lanes throughout the city, and incentivizing businesses to locate in southern Dallas, expanding its insufficient job base. A billion dollars would go a long way towards making many such projects happen.