



## Trans Texas Corridor: Here We Go Again

Battle-weary Texans who spent much of the last decade working to defeat the proposed — and hugely unpopular — gigantic north-south highway through Texas up to Canada, known as the Trans Texas Corridor (TTC), are being called to take a deep breath and gather forces once again. New bills have been introduced in the biennial Texas Legislature that would revive the old conflicts for sovereignty.

A June 2007 article in *The New American* dubbed the Corridor the [modern El Camino Real](#), or King's Highway, an ancient network of trails used by 17th-century Spanish explorers to transport goods and missionaries from Mexico to the new colony. Many Texans believe such an appellation doesn't seem too far off at all.

The TTC was proclaimed dead two years ago by nearly every public official; however, Texas Governor Rick Perry declared at the time, "We'll build it, but we'll just change the name." Now the Corridor, which has always been the cynosure of Perry's transportation policy, is getting a new push.

State Representative Larry Phillips has introduced [H.B. 3789](#), one of several related bills affecting infrastructure — a reincarnation of the old legislation that enabled the Corridor projects, but without the old name.

Though the history of the [Trans Texas Corridor](#) has been well-documented by *The New American*, and activists in the state are already putting up a fierce struggle, a [refresher course](#) doesn't hurt. The multi-modal, 4000-mile network of highways and toll roads, which would have required over 500,000 Texas acres, gained national attention when Texans learned the real agenda behind the project and sounded the alarm. Even [Oklahoma](#) stepped up and enacted its own legislation to prevent the road from jumping the Red River — the Texas/Oklahoma state line.

In January of 2009, Texas Department of Transportation official Amadeo Saenz issued a statement for Governor Perry that declared the [TTC dead](#); in August of that year, the Legislature refused to extend authority for the Texas Department of Transportation to contract with private firms — specifically CINTRA, a publicly-held company headquartered in Spain.

But Governor Perry has never given up. Because with budget shortfalls and a growing population, public funding isn't enough to fund road projects, Perry turned once again to Public Private Partnerships (PPPs). And with a new legislature, he went to work again on the Corridor. According to Michael Lindenberger of the *Dallas Morning News*,

Immediately after the last session adjourned, Perry's chief transportation aide promised a hard push to restore the authority to enter into so-called comprehensive development agreements in



Written by [Kelly Holt](#) on March 30, 2011

2011. And in an interview with *The Dallas Morning News* just before his re-election in November, Perry said he would ask lawmakers to renew authority for the state to partner with private toll firms.

"The fact of the matter is that we don't really care what name they attach to building infrastructure in the state of Texas. The key is that we have to go forward and build the infrastructure so that the state of Texas and our economy can continue to grow." He noted that the most important part of the plan to him, its reliance on private capital to help finance toll roads, remains a key priority and an approach he expects will be continued: "We'll continue to use all the tools available to build the infrastructure."

The new bills serve to reauthorize the old enabling legislation and the dangerous PPP. For Texas this means that existing roadways will be converted to toll roads, and that everything even touching the roads will be under the authority of the tolling entity. Terri Hall, founder of [Texans Uniting for Reform and Freedom](#) (TURF), explains:

It would grant the private toll road developers control of not only the toll lanes/road, but also non-toll lanes, frontage roads, buildings on the tollway, parking areas, rest stops, ancillary facilities, etc. It's eminent domain for private gain all over again, which is what caused a Texas-sized backlash against the TTC in earnest in 2007, when a moratorium on PPPs was put in place.

The bill would also allow contracts to be negotiated confidentially and not be revealed to the public until late in the game. The conversion of existing roads to toll roads would burden Texas drivers with excessive tolls; furthermore, if events proceed as previously, there will be no free road alternatives, property will be seized for the project through fraudulent eminent domain procedures, non-compete clauses will be in place, and Texans will have no recourse. Through the PPP's toll revenues the coffers of the private partners will be filled, and with partial ownership goes control of the project.

The main focus of this new transportation agenda will be the [I-69](#) plan. Two years ago, this project was forced to keep a lower profile and reduce its footprint; however, H.B. 3789 will renew attention to that corridor.

All of this pales when one knows the bigger picture. The Trans Texas Corridor, a portion of which is in operation and funded by taxpayers (the tolls are really only a tax), serves as part of a national system of corridors designed to facilitate the movement of a gigantic amount of goods coming from foreign countries. The TTC was intended to be the Texas portion of the NAFTA Superhighway, commencing on the west coast of Mexico, and ending up in Canada. Ultimately, the integration of Canada, Mexico and the United States into a North American Union (NAU) must have infrastructure. And these corridors are intended to link the countries.

Texans flat-out do not want the corridors. Opposition to the TTC at every session of the Texas Legislature in recent years has made clear their hearty disapproval. And once Americans in other states have understood the threat to national sovereignty posed by such corridors, they have also expressed their outrage.

It is understood that when it comes to NAFTA, as Texas goes, so goes the nation.

So saddle up and tighten the surcingle for another bumpy ride.

*Photo: David Zachry (standing on the left) president and CEO of Zachry Construction Corp., shakes hands with Texas Gov. Rick Perry (standing on the right) after the state and a private company signed a transportation contract on March 11, 2005, in Austin, Texas: AP Images*



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