

Mobilizing the Truth

Toll Facts and Fiction

Mike Heiligenstein
Executive Director, Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority



CENTRAL TEXAS REGIONAL
MOBILITY AUTHORITY



Solving the Mobility Puzzle...*One Truth at a Time*

- With a diverse set of mobility needs to serve, **tolling is merely one piece of the funding puzzle**; a tool by which more timely infrastructure expansion is made possible
- But it's tolling that garners the most public attention, and with that attention comes misconceptions

We'd like to take the opportunity to provide some clarity and separate fact from fiction

The background image is a photograph of a multi-lane highway stretching into the distance. On the right side of the road, there is a tall signpost with two signs: the top one says 'NORTH' and the bottom one says '183 A' with a circular arrow icon and the word 'TOLL' below it. The road is flanked by grassy shoulders and utility poles with power lines. The sky is blue with some clouds. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

> TOLL MYTH

Population growth in Central Texas is leveling out



TOLL FACT

Central Texas continues to see extraordinary levels of population growth.

- Austin was ranked America's fastest-growing city in 2016 by Forbes.
- The Austin metro area's population reached 2 million in 2016 and is on track to reach 3 million by 2030.
- A plurality of Central Texans (43%) believe the cause of the overburdened roadways is that there are too many people moving to Central Texas.
- 87% of Central Texans agree that mobility is the critical factor in our economy and its continued growth.

The background image shows a perspective view of a multi-lane highway stretching into the distance. On the right side of the road, there is a tall signpost with two signs: the top one says 'NORTH' and the bottom one says '183 A' with a 'TOLL' symbol below it. The sky is blue with some clouds. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

> TOLL MYTH

The current roadway system in Central Texas provides access to all employers and affordable housing options



TOLL FACT

The congested Central Texas roadway network makes it difficult to access employers, affordable housing, and other needs.

- 81% of Central Texans say traffic congestion has had a negative impact on their life.
- Housing prices are forcing families to live farther and farther outside of Austin's downtown core.
- Alternate routes and mobility options are needed in order to move people and goods efficiently.
- Toll roads provide an option to bypass congestion and connect people to work, recreation, and home.

The background image shows a perspective view of a multi-lane road stretching into the distance. On the right side of the road, there is a tall signpost with two signs: the top one says 'NORTH' and the bottom one says '183 A' with a circular arrow icon and the word 'TOLL' below it. The road is flanked by grass and a concrete barrier with wooden posts. The sky is blue with some clouds. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent blue overlay.

> TOLL MYTH

Funds raised by the gas tax
are paying for new road
construction



TOLL FACT

**Gas taxes are not enough to fit the need.
The state and federal governments have not
increased their respective portions of the gas
tax since 1991 and 1993.**

- Gas taxes are fixed based on cents per gallon, rather than a percentage that increases with inflation.
- Decreases in consumer demand due to people driving less and/or driving more fuel-efficient vehicles equates to less revenue.
- Texas is a "donor state" at the federal level, which means that it gets less in federal funding than it pays in federal gas taxes.
- 25% of Central Texans would rather pay higher taxes than pay a toll.



> TOLL MYTH

Tolling a road is a double tax on drivers



TOLL FACT

Taxes are mandatory. Tolls are a user fee for a service that drivers choose to pay.

- Tolls collected from drivers who choose to use the toll roads pay for construction and maintenance of the roads.
- If you haven't driven on a toll road, you haven't contributed any funds for that road.
- You always have a choice to drive on the non-tolled, taxpayer funded lanes.

The background image shows a multi-lane highway stretching into the distance under a blue sky with scattered clouds. On the right side of the road, there is a tall signpost with two signs: the top one says 'NORTH' and the bottom one says '183 A' with a circular arrow icon and the word 'TOLL' below it. A concrete barrier with rounded posts runs along the right edge of the road. In the distance, a bridge or overpass is visible on the left side of the highway.

> TOLL MYTH

There is plenty of money from Propositions 1 and 7 to pay for new roads



TOLL FACT

New money from the Texas legislature will not cover the great need Texas has statewide for mobility improvements.

- These funds are a great tool in the transportation funding toolbox. However, it is not sufficient cover all of our transportation needs.
- Recent combined funds from Proposition 1 and Proposition 7 that have been allocated to the Central Texas region total about \$140 million.
- The proposed I-35 improvements alone are estimated to cost approximately \$8 billion.
- A majority of Central Texans (58%) do not think the Texas Legislature has allocated enough funding for transportation improvements.



> TOLL MYTH

Texans pay road taxes to have their highways built and maintained. Therefore, everyone should have fair and equal access to those roads.



TOLL FACT

Transportation funding is in short supply, and the legislature has not allocated sufficient funds to meet demand in our region.

- Toll roads provide a viable funding option to build roads in an expedited manner rather than using the traditional gas tax-funded, pay-as-you-go approach.
- Drivers have a choice to use toll roads if they need a faster, more reliable way to get to their destination.



> TOLL MYTH

We've already paid for the roads



TOLL FACT

Gas taxes are not enough to fit the need for future improvements, and the cost of road maintenance over time is greater than the initial cost of building the road.

- Roads are never really paid off.
- Use of roadways degrades them, and maintenance is always ongoing.
- A continuous funding stream is needed to maintain the road, and this can only be paid through increased taxes or tolls.



> TOLL MYTH

You're converting my non-tolled highway to a tolled highway



TOLL FACT

Under state law, we cannot and will not convert non-tolled lanes to tolled lanes.

- The same number of non-tolled lanes you have today, you'll have in the future.
- As part of our toll projects, we strive to preserve and enhance the non-tolled capacity.

The background image shows a perspective view of a multi-lane highway stretching into the distance. On the right side of the road, there is a tall signpost with two signs: the top one says 'NORTH' and the bottom one says '183 A' with a circular arrow icon and the word 'TOLL' below it. The road is flanked by grassy areas and utility poles with power lines. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

> TOLL MYTH

People will cut through my neighborhood to avoid paying tolls



TOLL FACT

Our projects increase capacity, allowing for free-flowing tolled and non-tolled options.

- Non-tolled general purpose lanes run adjacent to the tolled lanes.
- As our projects result in congestion relief, there will be no need to cut through your neighborhood anymore.



> TOLL MYTH

I'm going to be forced to take the toll road



TOLL FACT

There is always a non-tolled option for our current and proposed corridors.

- The presence of a tolled option reduces demand for the existing non-tolled routes, thereby relieving congestion for all drivers.

The background image shows a perspective view of a multi-lane highway stretching into the distance. On the right side of the road, there is a tall signpost with two signs: the top one says 'NORTH' and the bottom one says '183 A' with a circular arrow icon and the word 'TOLL' below it. The road is flanked by grassy shoulders and utility poles with power lines. The sky is blue with some clouds. The entire image has a blue color overlay.

> TOLL MYTH

There is no public support for toll roads in Central Texas



TOLL FACT

We continue to see an increase in drivers and travel time savings on our roadways.

- 64% of Central Texans use toll roads at least once a month.
- Due to increased traffic on toll roads across the region, many toll expansion and improvement projects are in progress.
- Our open roads continue to show yearly increases in total system transactions.
- With more than 2 million active TxTag customers in the state, the use of toll roads continues to rise in our state and community.
- A majority of adults drivers in Central Texas (58%) support using tolls as a funding source for the transportation needs.



> TOLL MYTH

There is no oversight of toll road entities



TOLL FACT

We are a local government agency accountable to the communities we serve.

- Our Board of Directors Chairman is appointed by the governor.
- Members of our Board of Directors are appointed by Travis and Williamson counties; they serve in a volunteer capacity.
- We are subject to rigorous reporting and auditing requirements.
- The Texas A&M Transportation Institute has cited the Mobility Authority as a standard for transparency and accountability and encourages other regional mobility authorities to follow its lead.

The background image shows a perspective view of a multi-lane highway stretching into the distance. On the right side of the road, there is a tall signpost with two signs: the top one says 'NORTH' and the bottom one says '183 A' with a circular arrow icon and the word 'TOLL' below it. The sky is blue with some white clouds. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

> TOLL MYTH

Toll road entities get to choose if and where they build a toll road



TOLL FACT

The Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) assigns projects out of their transportation plans for implementation.

- The Mobility Authority does not determine which roads to build; we implement regional plans that have been developed by CAMPO.
- No entity can build roads that are not a part of the regional plan.
- Based on what financing is available, no road can be tolled without it being in the regional plan as a tolled road.

The background image shows a perspective view of a multi-lane highway stretching into the distance. On the right side of the road, there is a tall signpost with two signs: the top one says 'NORTH' and the bottom one says '183 A' with a circular arrow icon and the word 'TOLL' below it. The road is flanked by grassy areas and utility poles with power lines. The sky is blue with some clouds. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

> TOLL MYTH

There is no accountability for where the toll revenue funds go



TOLL FACT

The revenue from the Mobility Authority's toll roads stays local; it doesn't go to Dallas or Houston, and it does not go to a foreign company.

- The Mobility Authority is a local government agency and our toll revenue is reinvested in the region's mobility needs.
- You pay for toll roads only when you drive on them while the taxes you have to pay support local and state roads you may never use.

The background image shows a multi-lane highway stretching into the distance under a blue sky with scattered clouds. On the right side of the road, there is a tall signpost with two signs: the top one says 'NORTH' and the bottom one says '183 A' with a 'TOLL' symbol below it. A concrete barrier with rounded posts runs along the right edge of the highway. In the distance, a bridge or overpass is visible on the left side of the road.

> TOLL MYTH

Express lanes will only add to congestion when prices increase



TOLL FACT

Express lanes are a congestion management tool that provides a reliable route when you need it.

- Express lanes are an option when you simply cannot be late.
- Express lanes free up capacity on the non-tolled route, improving commute times for all drivers.
- Express lanes leverage supply and demand principles to manage congestion, raising the cost of the toll when demand is high and decreasing the cost of the toll when demand is light.
- Express lanes work efficiently and effectively across the state and nation.



Solving the Mobility Puzzle...*One Truth at a Time*

Until the legislature allocates sufficient public funding for all of our infrastructure needs, **tolls help to meet the evolving mobility demands of the traveling public**



CENTRAL TEXAS REGIONAL
MOBILITY AUTHORITY

Thank You

www.MobilityAuthority.com





CENTRAL TEXAS REGIONAL
MOBILITY AUTHORITY
