

June 22, 2010

County not ready to move on 290 toll lanes

The long-talked about addition of toll lanes to U.S. 290 will wait at least one more year.

Despite a citizens group's pleas for action to relieve traffic on the freeway, Commissioners Court not to include any construction on the lanes in the next year's construction plan.

It is not that the Court does not see the need, County Judge Ed Emmett said.

"There's no funding right now, and the design is still up in the air," Emmett said.

Art Storey, executive director of the Harris County Public Infrastructure Department, confirmed that the county and the Texas Department of Transportation have not agreed on a design or how to pay for an expansion of 290 that would include new lanes, the addition of toll lanes and the necessary work on interchanges.

Storey said there has been speculation that the total revamping of 290 could cost between \$5 billion and \$6 billion.

In a year when Harris County has identified more than \$800 million in building needs, but could fund only \$63 million in repairs and construction, the money is just not there, Storey said.

"We're doing all we can, considering fiscal responsibility, the public need and public safety," Storey said.

Posted by Chris Moran at June 22, 2010 12:32 PM

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