

## Commissioners vote to continue controversial Grand Pkwy, feeder to Trans Texas Corridor

Contributed by Terri Hall  
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Grand Parkway is a feeder to and possibly even a leg of the Trans Texas Corridor TTC-69 (the route around Houston has not yet been identified). Another controversial aspect of the Parkway is the fact officials are seeking stimulus money to subsidize the project as a toll road, a massive double tax. [More here.](#)

### County to seek Grand Parkway stimulus funding

By JAMES PINKERTON Copyright 2009 Houston Chronicle

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Harris County

Commissioners Court voted today to apply for \$181 million in federal stimulus money to pay for construction work on a \$600 million section of the controversial \$5.1 billion Grand Parkway project.

The court also

voted to solicit proposals for a comprehensive traffic and revenue study to determine the viability of the 15-mile toll road known as "Segment E," a stretch of the proposed 180-mile Grand Parkway project that would link U.S. 290 and the Katy Freeway in northwest Harris County.

Although contracts

for \$20 million in engineering and other work on Segment E were approved this year, an "investment grade" study of the ability of tolls to pay for the project has not been awarded and may not be completed by the February deadline to begin construction.

Art Storey, who

heads the county's Public Infrastructure Department, said the study does not have to be completed before construction begins.

"Today's action was

merely a formality in the process," County Judge Ed Emmett said afterward. "But anything that helps expedite this project is an important step in the process of alleviating the persistent congestion that has become such an obstacle for motorists across western and northwestern Harris County."

The toll project

and the use of federal stimulus funds, which was recommended by the Texas Department of Transportation, has a number of critics.

"Today, the problem

is they're rushing to spend stimulus money that could have been spent on maintenance and transit, and other things more aligned to community priorities. Instead, they're spending on new roads where a small fraction of the people in our region live," said Jay Blazek Crossley, program developer for Houston Tomorrow, a nonprofit group focusing on transportation and urban planning.

Precinct 3

Commissioner Steve Radack, who has been critical of TxDOT's handling of the project, called Segment E "the only thing out there, short term,

that will bring any kind of relief to 290.”

He acknowledged that the roadway project still faces environmental hurdles, including a obtaining a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

“The fact of matter is, this has to be ready to bid by February and we don't even know if we'll have a Corps permit by February,” Radack said. “There are all kinds of things that can jump up and keep us from getting a permit. ”