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Metroplex motorists to get hit with one-two punch

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BY GORDON DICKSON

gdickson@star-telegram.com

Dallas-Fort Worth motorists are getting smacked with a double whammy when it comes to transportation.

First, motorists will be spending much of the next five years dodging traffic cones as several major projects are scheduled, including the \$1 billion DFW Connector project under way in Grapevine.

Second, when all the road work is complete, many motorists will be asked to pay tolls to use what they had been waiting so long for construction workers to complete.

The DFW Connector includes construction of new toll and nontoll lanes on eight miles of Texas 114/121 in Grapevine. Other projects with toll elements include the North Tarrant Express project, scheduled to begin this year in Northeast Tarrant County, Southwest Parkway in Fort Worth and LBJ Managed Lanes in north Dallas.

These toll projects, painful as they will be for travelers, were necessary to ensure that North Texas received its fair share of transportation funding.

Since 1975, \$78.8 billion has been spent on transportation projects statewide, and of that \$19.9 billion, 25 percent, has gone to the Metroplex. That ratio is consistent with the region's population and economic status in the state.

But nearly a third of the region's \$19.9 billion, \$5.9 billion, came just during the past year or so, when private developers were hired to build projects that included toll lanes.

If not for the toll projects, Dallas-Fort Worth would lag far behind other areas of the state and would have received only about 20 percent of the state's gas-tax-supported funds.

The figures were compiled by the state Transportation Department's staff members at the request of Texas Transportation Commissioner Bill Meadows of Fort Worth.

Lately, Meadows has been taking heat from the other four commissioners, who perceive that the Metroplex is receiving too much of the state's attention and road money.

In fact, Meadows said, the data demonstrate that over 35 years, the transportation funds allotted to each part of the state balance out.

GORDON DICKSON, 817-390-7796

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