



Texas Sidestep

A favorite Aesop's fable is about an eagle. Perched on a lofty rock, he watched the movements of a hare, which he hoped to have for dinner. An archer, who saw the eagle from a place of concealment, took careful aim and mortally wounded him. The eagle gave one look at the arrow in his heart and saw in that single glance that the arrow was fletched with the eagle's own feathers. "It is a double grief to me," he exclaimed, "that I should perish by an arrow feathered from my own wings." The moral of the story is that we often give our enemies the means to destroy us.



This is true in personal interactions, politics, and world trade and economics — something that many Americans are beginning to learn. Texans were livid a few years ago when they discovered that a system of toll roads was being built without citizen input and that the "Trans Texas Corridor," which took vast swaths of land via eminent domain and funneled public tolls into private coffers through public-private partnerships, was being built to facilitate trucking from deepwater ports in Mexico throughout the United States and Canada so that American dockworkers and factory workers could be bypassed.

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Readers will remember the fierce conflict in Texas over the massive assemblage of freight and passenger lanes and utility, water, and electronic lines that were to have converged into a "transportation corridor" (TTC-35). Rather than solving the transportation problems of Texas (as the project was billed to do), it would have worked against Texans' (and the nation's) freedom and sovereignty. Criticism of the project was leveled against the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) for — among numerous other reasons — its bullying tactics, its use of "eminent domain" to confiscate private property, and for its almost incomprehensible plan to return toll-road revenues to a foreign *private* company, Cintra (Spain), for its share in helping develop the project. That alone is fascism. (See the online article "Trans Texas Corridor Renamed, Not Dead.")

Though the outrage surrounding the Trans Texas Corridor has died down, Americans would be foolish to mistake quietude for victory. The battle for the mid-continent is far from over, and America's enemies continue to take aim.

Where Does the Project Stand Now?

After Texans took their legislators behind the barn for a "knock-down, drag-out" in the 2007 legislative session and TxDOT came under review for its practices, the agency announced earlier this year a "No Action Alternative," a recommendation to the Federal Highway Administration that "No Action" be taken — end the TTC-35 project. The legislative process had required TxDOT to complete two "tiers," or phases, in constructing the superhighway — the first tier being the Environmental Impact Study (EIS), intended to gauge not only the environmental, but also the economic, social, and cultural impact of the



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project. It was during this initial stage that Texans unleashed their fury over the plan, after which TxDOT submitted its “No Action Alternative.”

TTC-35 went off the legislative radar, as there is no money to do the deal and no political will to resurrect it after citizens “got their Texan on.” And violence at the border has interrupted everybody’s efforts to do much of anything that doesn’t concern that issue. In a July 17 Fox interview with Greta Van Susteren, Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott said that the need for action (and federal assistance) on the border is urgent. Among other things, Abbott stated that “in the border city of Juarez alone (across the Rio Grande from El Paso, Texas), more than 2,400 people in the last couple of years have lost their lives to the drug cartel war.... It is more dangerous to walk the streets of Juarez than to walk the streets of Baghdad.” Political hurdles, border violence, taxpayer lack of money? Heck, with all that going on, it’s much more difficult to get the road through, and legislatively, the state cannot exercise what was the enabling legislation: the Comprehensive Development Agreement (CDA).

But that doesn’t mean Texas or the continent is safe. While the funding mechanism (CDA) for the project at a state level is gone, the framework for the corridor is still in the transportation code. And the superhighway is still being built — in pieces.

The loophole is that cities, counties, and municipalities *can*, using CDAs, make private equity toll deals all day long. This is happening in the Dallas/Fort Worth area with the North Texas Tollway Authority. NTTA is a political subdivision of the State of Texas representing five North Texas counties. This regional authority made its own deal with Cintra, not relying on the state to get the job done. Its website states that it is “empowered to acquire, construct, maintain, and operate turnpike projects to raise capital for construction projects, collect tolls to operate, maintain, and pay debt service on these projects.” It also states that its mission is “to enhance mobility through responsible and innovative tolling solutions.”

Innovative tolling solutions? Anytime a private company is involved in the collection of public tolls, the interests of the taxpayer are not served. Cintra is active in private toll deals and builds transportation infrastructure worldwide. A Texas capitol insider states that this project, between Cintra and NTTA, is the largest private equity toll deal in the world. CDAs such as the NTTA can solve local problems, but spell danger via their potential to link such urban projects with rural ones. The NTTA is an example of what to expect in Texas’ transportation future. This monstrous regional private equity transportation project will accomplish in North Texas what a statewide corridor project could not. Corridor building will happen this way: Urban stretches will be built first, instead of rural ones. Profits could fund other portions — that is, urban tolls could fund rural projects later.

Construction on other corridors around Texas (LaEntrada al Pacifico, Ports to Plains) continues as well. And then there’s I-69.

The I-69 Corridor is another high-priority corridor in the state, traversing the coastal area of Texas to points east and north, culminating in Michigan. Current focus is on a section between Beeville and Houston, Texas. While the scope of this project isn’t nearly as broad as TTC-35, and the footprint has been altered considerably owing to public pressure, construction on this project continues, keeping a lower profile. But it should be remembered that the goal behind constructing this highway remains the same — increase the ease and capacity for the transport of people and goods across the three “North American Union” nations.

TxDOT is unapologetic about building the superhighways piecemeal, even after facing the public’s



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outrage and despite an official negative review of its activities. In Texas, a process called Sunset Review is in place to make sure each agency is periodically reviewed for relevancy, funding, and violations. When it came TxDOT's turn for review, it was condemned for its slippery practices. It is under review *again*, largely for serious complaints lodged concerning its handling of the TTC. Has TxDOT reformed? No. It is still doing private toll deals, just doing them locally.

TxDOT's website has this to say: "TxDOT is updating the long-range, multimodal statewide transportation plan. The new Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan 2035 will serve as the state's 24-year 'blueprint' for the planning process. It will guide the collaborative efforts between TxDOT, local and regional decision-makers and all transportation stakeholders to reach a consensus on transportation needs." The concept of private companies doing deals is alive and well.

Also on the website, a document entitled "More Than Just a Road" promises to "build only those projects that serve unique regional needs and that can be integrated into a comprehensive statewide transportation project." Again, it shows no improvement. The original plan would have built the road in segments anyway, segments that would eventually be connected. The commitment to integrating the network of roads still stands. What a con.

Direction of the Project

And though it may seem as if the superhighway battle is solely Texas' show at this point, it's not a big jump to conclude that if the roads' progress has been at least slowed in Texas, then it will be built from Canada to Mexico instead. Corridors built from Canada through the continent's middle would eventually force Texas and Oklahoma (Oklahoma is the one other state in which citizens are actively fighting the superhighways) to concede unless the electorate understands the magnitude of the problem and how to stop it. Canada continues development of its north-south corridors intended to connect with the American segments, called the Canamex, Pacific, and Eastern Seaboard corridors, and, of course, the Mid-Continent Corridor that parallels I-35, the *critical* Texas segment.

Then there's the Arctic bridge — Canada is developing an east-west trade route called the Asia-Pacific Gateway and Corridor Initiative, including the Arctic Bridge. What is *that*? The Arctic Bridge is Canada's shared vision with Russia to "encompass both air and sea connections between Russia and Canada," according to the initiative's website. The mission of the initiative is to establish Canada's Asia-Pacific Gateway and Corridor as the "best transportation network facilitating global supply chains between North America and Asia." Do we really need to provide Russia with improved access to the northern portion of our continent?

Finally, remember NASCO, North America's Supercorridor Coalition? It is well developed and well funded, and it is providing the network for government, business, and trade entities dedicated to "uniting public and private sectors to address critical national and international trade, transportation, security and environmental issues." NASCO has been essential in developing cooperation (and who knows what else) among all the stakeholders to construct the Mid-Continent Corridor, and a video on its website indicates that it has not scaled back or slowed down its plans. Consider this. In NASCO's report for June 1, 2010, it applauded President Obama's May meeting with Mexican President Felipe Calderon in Washington: "Obama also emphasized that the governments of the U.S. and Mexico are working on a new customs cooperation program aimed at making cross-border trade more secure, while streamlining the process of inspection and security and deepening the process of standardization of norms and regulations to cut costs and eliminate waste for North American businesses." Realistically, this means more outsourcing of blue-collar jobs to Mexico on the way to opening up the border altogether (See



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“Express Route to Poverty,” October 15, 2007).

The report continued with this quote from Calderon, “The emergence of their nations from the economic global crisis is opening ‘a window of opportunity for Canada, the United States and Mexico to reposition Mexico and North America as a vigorous region — competitive and prosperous, capable of generating more and better jobs, and a region that will be attractive for investments, trade exchange and tourism, with a great future.” He said, “Together the NAFTA bloc could increase its joint exporting capacity to meet growing competitiveness from different regions of the world.”

All this to say, don’t look now, but the regionalists/globalists are still here. The ground that was reclaimed by Texas in defeating the TTC so far happened because the local electorate got mad and did something. As always, an informed electorate is the answer. And local action got the job done. Each state, municipality, and region in the path of one of the National Highway System’s 80 high priority corridors *must* be vigilant and informed about the true nature of these corridors — which is simply providing infrastructure to merge Canada, Mexico, and the United States into a North American Union (See the October 15, 2007 issue of *The New American*). And in the doing, private equity deals are just another way to steal your money and put it in the pocket of your government, or the pocket of a foreign company.

In the end, if the North American Union (NAU) is to be implemented, it is likely that a trade corridor must be constructed. Projects such those run by Texas’ NTTA are the way to get there. And there are no indications that the NAU will simply go away. In fact, our government’s immigration policies being what they are, it seems our political and business elites are working harder than ever to dissolve the remaining distinctions between Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

Other states will feel the pressure to begin corridor construction if they haven’t already. Learn about the corridors, and the private equity deals that surround them; otherwise, our feathers will show up in the arrow that kills us.

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