

## Open Letter Regarding Transportation Issues in Rockwall County

My name is John Polster. I am one of several members of a company called Innovative Transportation Solutions, Inc. I have had the honor of working for Rockwall County on transportation issues since 2004.

I avoid retail politics. I have found over the years that there is a profound difference between politicians and statesmen.

I would not be submitting this letter, if not but for, some very egregious statements being made by some politician, that are knowingly false, but in my estimation made worse because they besmirch the legacy of a great man.

Very few in Rockwall County do not know the name of David Magness. Until his untimely passing in December of 2020, David was and had been the “First Citizen” of Rockwall County for decades. His service and dedication to the people of Rockwall County is legendary. David was a statesman.

While I have had the privilege of working with many great folks in my 22 years with the county, it is with David Magness’ legacy and vision for the future of Rockwall County in mind that I write this letter.

That vision led to the first road bond program in Rockwall County’s history in 2004. With its success, the county soon passed a second bond program in 2008. From 2004 to January 1, 2023 (keep that date in mind), through the guidance of David Magness, Rockwall County worked with its partners to use its \$117 million bond funds to generate **more than \$1 Billion** in roadway improvements throughout Rockwall County.

The Transportation Road Improvement Program for 2021 began on David’s watch. On November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020, David sent out an email to all the Consortium members stating the following:

“At the October consortium meeting, we discussed road-way projects from each city for consideration in an upcoming county transportation bond election...I want to be sure that all cities have the same information when making their choices for projects to be submitted for consideration.”

Little did we know that a few short days later, on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020, Rockwall County would lose one of its greatest statesmen. With heavy hearts, Rockwall County continued to fulfill David's desires to build upon the momentum gained by the two previous bond programs.

Throughout 2021, Rockwall County and my staff reached out and met with each community in Rockwall County consistent with the wishes laid out in David's November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020, email.

The progress of those meetings was provided to the Transportation Consortium throughout the year. At the June 2021 meeting, the Consortium discussed the draft list of candidate projects. At its July 2021 meeting, the Consortium voted to recommend a list of projects that the court ultimately approved at its August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Commissioners Court meeting.

At the August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021 meeting of the Consortium, Frank New accused the County of not seeking input from the City of Heath, where he was a council member (it should be noted that neither Frank New, Aretha Adams-Heath City Manager nor Chuck Todd-Heath Director of Public Works were in attendance at the June and July Consortium meetings where Mayors and staff outlined their projects). However, the County was able to produce an email and document submitted by Ms. Adams and Mr. Todd that not only provided the list of projects they wanted to be included, but a color-coded map showing their priorities. The list of projects approved by the Court on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021, matched those priorities exactly.

Instead of conceding that he was ill-informed, Frank New vowed to oppose the road bond program and get his entire Heath council to oppose it as well. I believe this embarrassing episode drives every decision Frank makes as Judge.

On November 2, 2021, the Rockwall County Transportation Road Improvement Program was approved by the voters and carried 16 of 17 precincts. The only hold out was Heath.

From November 2021 to December 2022, Rockwall County worked to close out the TRIP 08 bond funds before issuing any of the TRIP 21 funds.

January 1, 2023, Frank New becomes Rockwall County Judge.

I am not on any social media platform, but I am told Frank is stating that “in the 3 years he’s been Judge, Rockwall County has made the largest allocation of funds for transportation in Rockwall County history.”

First, since taking office, Frank New has stymied, delayed and even illegally changed or removed agenda items pertaining to the TRIP 21 bond program issuances. It wasn’t until January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2026, a full 4 years and two months after the voters approved the bonds in November 2021, that the court authorized the **first** issuance of those bonds.

Any funding that the county has expended during Frank’s time in office has been bond funds from previous programs for which he had no part in.

Second, keep in mind the bond funds the court just recently authorized are TRIP 21 funds, the very bond program Frank New opposed and tried to defeat. If he had gotten his way, there would be no bond funds to issue. The only record Frank holds is for the longest time between voter approval and first issuance.

Another statement I have heard Frank has said is that he “has fundamentally changed the way roads get done in Rockwall County.” That is technically true if by “fundamentally change” you mean changing from getting things built to 3 years of stagnation.

Let me be clear, when it comes to transportation improvements and bond expenditures in Rockwall County, there have been no expenditure of funds that ITS was not involved in since 2004. Any expenditure of county bond funds that Frank mentions in any forum or venue are funds that neither he nor any member of the current court had any part of creating. The very first action that Frank or this court took that could be considered their action was on January 13, 2026, a mere 30 days ago.

But in describing his “fundamental change” he references SH 205 and a meeting with TxDOT. Frank states that after meeting with TxDOT officials, they “moved up SH 205 from 10 or more years out to next year.”

The facts tell a different story.

Keep in mind, Frank took office January 1, 2023. TxDOT had already been working on the 2024 Unified Transportation Program (UTP) since September of 2022. By the time the 2024 UTP was adopted in August 2024, SH 205

Middle/South had already been approved for \$326,303,786 million for construction years in 2026 and 2027, not 10 or more years.

Additionally, the funding allocated to SH 205 Middle/South comes from Categories 2, 4, and 5. Why does that matter? Because those are all categories of funding selected by your local TxDOT District Engineer and the Regional Transportation Council. Those draft requests were due December 2022, before Frank became Judge.

Incidentally, they are the same folks that committed to expedite projects critical to Rockwall County if Rockwall County could clear the region's Outer Loop. One of the very first things Frank did upon taking office was to go back on that deal.

SH 205 Middle/South is getting funded and constructed despite Frank New, not because of anything he has done.

It was reported that Frank stated that SH 205 was moved after some meeting he had with TxDOT representatives. An inquiry was made to TxDOT HQ staff and Commission Support; they have no record of meeting with Frank New about SH 205. The only contact anyone found with Frank New was on April 13, 2023, when Commissioner Vaughn attended the groundbreaking ceremony for IH 30 construction projects that had let the previous year before Frank was Judge. At a recent event Frank was asked who he met with and he stated he could not remember.

SH 205 would not have even been eligible for funding consideration had it not been for the work of previous Rockwall County Commissioners Courts and their partnerships with TxDOT and the Regional Transportation Council.

Below is the timeline for all the steps that were necessary for SH 205 to go through to get to construction. There is no "fundamental change" to get around good planning and sound project deliver. That is something a true statesman like David Magness understood and I write this letter to defend his legacy.

Cordially,

John R. Polster, President  
Innovative Transportation Solutions, Inc.

p.s. Every date and dollar in this letter can be sourced to an original document.

## **SH 205**

**South Section: From US 80 to North of FM 549**

**Middle Section: From SH 205/S. John King Blvd. to SH 205/N. John King Blvd.**

### **History**

- 2008 – SH 205 was included in the Rockwall County TRIP-08 bond program as a Tier 2 project.
- 2015 – TxDOT retained Halff Engineers to design and environmentally clear a capacity improvement project on SH 205.
- April 14, 2015, December 8, 2015 and June 9, 2016 – Stakeholder meetings with representatives of TxDOT, NCTCOG, Rockwall County, Kaufman County, and Cities of Terrell, McLendon-Chisholm, Rockwall.
- July 7, and July 12, 2016 - SH 205 Public Meetings
- June 13-15, 2017 – Value Engineering Study was performed
- October 18, 2018, September 19, 2019 – SH 205 Public Hearings
- July 3, 2018, May 1, 2019, July 25, 2019 – Design Schematics were approved for SH 205 South and SH 205 Middle.
- April 12, 2019, January 13, 2020 – Environmental Clearance granted for SH 205 South and SH 205 Middle.
- Summer 2019 – Plans, Specifications and Estimates (PS&E) and Right of Way Acquisition began.
- July 2023 – Right of way acquisition completed. Utility relocations started.
- Summer 2023 – After many months of preparation by TxDOT, the 2024 Unified Transportation Plan (UTP) the ten-year funding document for TxDOT was adopted. The 2024 UTP included \$147M for the construction of SH 205 in Rockwall County outlining the region’s and state’s dedication to the project.
- August 2024 – PS&E for SH 205 South complete.

### **Current Activity**

- March 2027 – PS&E for SH 205 Middle anticipated to be completed.
- 2027 – SH 205 South and Middle plans will be complete, utilities will be relocated and project will be ready to let to construction.
- Funding for construction of SH 205 from Rockwall County line to North of FM 549 has been secured and the anticipated letting date is September 2028. TxDOT funding for construction is highly competitive. Rockwall County’s decade long involvement in the development of SH 205 and the partnership

between Rockwall County, TxDOT and NCTCOG paved the way for funding of this critical project.

### **Challenges overcome**

- The City of Rockwall and Rockwall County desired to relocate SH 205 from the existing corridor to the John King Blvd. alignment to allow for capacity improvements and direct through traffic out of the downtown Rockwall corridor. Rockwall County's decade long involvement in the SH 205 project facilitated the inclusion of the John King alignment in the environmental process as the locally preferred alternative and eventually the technically preferred alternative.
- McLendon-Chisholm was initially opposed to an ultimate 6 lane roadway through the city limits. Due to the decade long partnership between TxDOT, NCTCOG, Rockwall County and McLendon-Chisholm, an agreement was reached to maintain the needed 6 lane ultimate roadway section through the corridor.

### Sources:

- TxDOT - [KeepitmovingDallas.com](http://KeepitmovingDallas.com)
- Rockwall County Consortium reports