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JULY SPECIAL

Toll roads plan draws criticism

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Two Republican activists joined by a Rural Democratic legislator are fueling opposition to a 50-year plan ushered by GOP Gov. Rick Perry to build 4,000 miles of Texas toll roads and rail lines.

Rep. Robby Cook, of Eagle Lake, said he wants to slow or possibly cancel the plan that could cost up to \$183 billion. The plan calls for corridor projects crisscrossing the state with separate highway lanes for passenger vehicles and trucks, passenger rail, freight rail and dedicated utility zones.

The state is "moving way too fast. I don't think the general public is aware of all the information they need to know and whether or not this is good for all areas," Cook said in Sunday's editions of the San Antonio Express-News.

David and Linda Stall of Fayetteville, near La Grange, agree. They attended the GOP convention last month and won approval of a platform plank that calls for the repeal of a 2003 law authorizing the Texas Department of Transportation to proceed.

The Stalls in February Watch, which opposes using transportation projects to generate state funds, converting highways to toll roads or granting vendors control of public land or infrastructure, which are elements of the corridor strategy.

"It's just wrong. I don't care what your political affiliation is," said David Stall, expressing doubts about granting 30-year concessions to vendors who

could profit from building managing projects.

Some residents who attended TxDOT public hearings on the plan also have questions about the scope of project.

TxDOT engineers at hearings, where residents sketched desired routes, said the plan is settled.

The first project could parallel to Interstate 35. Vendors are competing to build and manage the I-35 corridor. The winner could be determined early next year.

The agency also wants to focus on the Interstate 69 corridor from Texarkana to Houston, with links to Corpus Christi and Laredo.

In La Grange, near Interstate 35, hundreds of residents questioned a contemplated east-west corridor.

The Fayetteville County Commission in May the corridor "would negatively affect Texas, split farms and ranches, uproot a neighborhood, have a negative impact on the local economy and would cause pollution."

"I don't think the general public is aware of all the information they need to know and whether or not this is good for all areas."

— Robby Cook, state representative

Woman drowns on Guadalupe

(AP) A woman has drowned while tubing in Texas and a Texas woman is presumed drowned in a tubing accident in California.

Gwendolyn Elizabeth Moore Wardlaw, 54, of Center Point, when her tube became caught in a culvert of a low-water crossing near Center Point, the Kerrville Daily Times reported Monday.

"The river flow is way above normal," Steve Backor, a game warden with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, told the newspaper. He said a large amount of debris had built up under the low-water crossing and created a whirlpool.

Two others tubing with the woman made it safely through the culverts under Government Crossing.

Meanwhile, Eunice Alvarado, 25, of Dallas is presumed drowned after her tube stuck in a culvert of a low-water crossing in the Sacramento River, police said Monday. Alvarado fell off her tube Sunday evening in a dangerous part of the river near Chinese Rapids, according to a news release from the Tehama County Sheriff's Department.

Authorities searched for Alvarado Sunday night and Monday using two boats and a California Highway Patrol helicopter.

Alvarado and her brother were tubing together at the time of the accident. He made it to safety, but was unable to save his sister.

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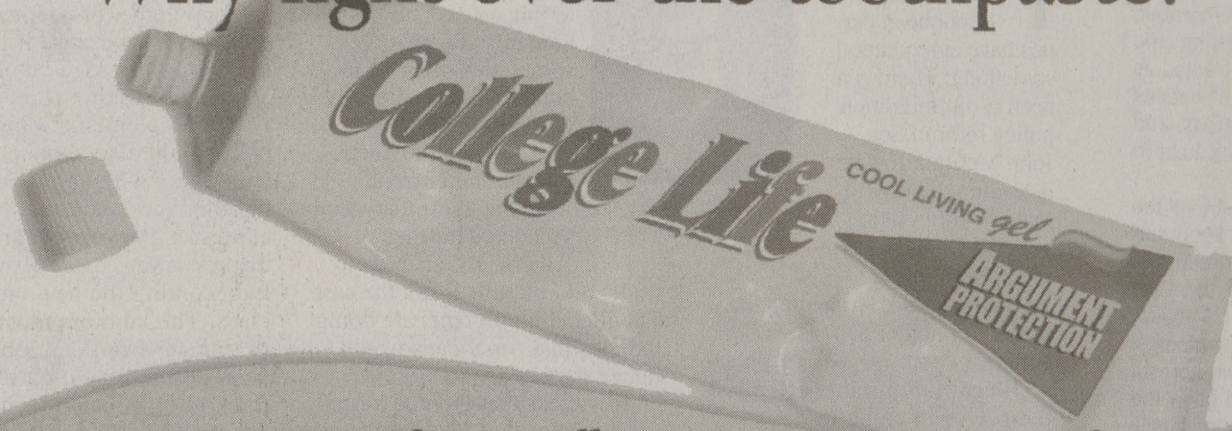
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