Rough road ahead for Texas drivers

Texas is one of the fastest growing states in the nation but the Texas highways system has failed to keep up with the state’s growing population, economy and traffic.

Every year, our highways become more congested and less safe. If Texas stays on its current course, the outlook for the future is even worse.

Here are the facts

Over the past 20 years, Texas’ population has grown 46 percent; the number of vehicles has increased 52 percent but the capacity of the highway system has only grown about 6 percent.

• Bad pavement costs Texas drivers $343 per year in added vehicle repairs.
• Traffic congestion wastes more than a million gallons of gas every day.
• The fatality rate on rural highways is more than double the rate on other roads.
• Since 1986, more than $13 billion has been diverted from the highway fund to other parts of the state budget.

The cost of doing nothing

If nothing changes, the level of funding for new maintenance and construction contracts for next year and the years beyond will drop to the lowest level since 1997. When adjusted for inflation, funding will actually be 65 percent less than 1997.

The only way to fund new construction will be to sacrifice maintenance of the current system. As a result, urban commuting times and fuel waste will double over the next 15 years.

Inadequate, poorly maintained roads will slow economic development, reducing job growth by 43,000 jobs over the next five years.

How can we avoid a highway funding crisis?

The following steps won’t solve all our highway problems but they would keep our roads from getting even worse in the years ahead.

1. Authorize for contract the final $2 billion of the highway bond program approved by voters in 2007.
2. Reduce the diversion of $700 million per year from the highway fund.
3. Find other methods to pay for highway bonds instead of borrowing from future highway revenues.

If you are concerned about the condition of the Texas highway system, you should contact your state senator and your state representative. To find out who represents you in the Texas Legislature, go to this website: www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us.

For more information, contact Texas Good Roads/Transportation Association

1122 Colorado, Suite 305, Austin, TX 78701 512-478-9351 www.tgrta.com