

Dallas Morning News

Editorial: An update from Austin

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With deadlines approaching, state lawmakers have picked up the pace this week. Some important bills finally are on the move, but unfortunately, legislators also have taken a few wrong turns. And they've let other good proposals languish. Here's where the Legislature should be headed on some of these issues:

Don't let transportation bill die in committee
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House Transportation Committee Chairman Joe Pickett must ensure fair time for debate on the session's only major funding bill for transportation.

The local-option tax plan passed by the Senate has been languishing in Pickett's committee so long that it could become a casualty of the calendar. That would be irresponsible, and we hope Speaker Joe Straus does not let it happen.

State lawmakers and scores of North Texas officials have been working for years to upgrade the region's transportation system through voter approval of new revenue. This year they have been joined in Austin by leaders from other metro areas who are tired of traffic congestion and also want resources for roads and rail.

House critics of the Senate bill, authored by Dallas' John Carona, say it's too complicated, with too many revenue choices that vary by metro area. Fine. At least let the debate go to the floor. The state has done a pitiful job of enabling urban Texas to keep up with transportation needs. If legislators don't want to make the hard decisions and raise new taxes, let the locals decide.