

## ***Fort Worth Business Press***

### **Truitt: Death of local transit bill will create gridlock**

**BY LESLIE WIMMER**

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State Representative Vicki Truitt, R-Keller, took state lawmakers to task for not supporting the Texas Local Option Transportation Act and for acting to protect their seats in the legislature instead of solving transportation problems. She also said supporters of the Local Option bill hope to revive the proposal during an upcoming special session of the Texas Legislature

Truitt, the featured speaker at a June 10 quarterly meeting of the 35W Coalition, said she felt some House members were hypocritical for supporting bills that would increase municipal taxes but at the same time not supporting the Local Option Bill for fears of raising taxes. Truitt added that some House members did not support the legislation for fear of retribution from voters and political groups in the next election session.

“I grew up in this area, I know what it was like in the 1950s, I know what it was like in the 1980s, and I know where we’re going,” Truitt said, adding that in a few years the North Texas region, and other regions in Texas, will be in gridlock as a result of fast population growth and slow transportation efforts.

Truitt repeated sentiments a number of area transportation officials have voiced recently, that the Local Option bill died because of a mixture of misinformation and misunderstandings about the bill.

A large misconception about the bill, which Truitt said was spread intentionally, was that tax dollars raised in any given county would be allowed to be spent by other counties in the state.

“The bill would have allowed us to keep every penny of tax dollars raised in our county to stay in our county,” Truitt said.

Truitt added that the last effort made in the legislature to keep the bill alive – when State Sen. John Carona, R-Dallas, added the bill as an amendment to TxDOT’s Sunset bill – did not work because House of Representatives conferees did not want the local option legislation to pass.

“The majority of House conferees refused to accept any version of the bill with TLOTA in it,” Truitt said. “And the Republican caucus supported that measure...

Since when do conservatives not trust people to make a decision at the ballot box?”

Truitt said she understood that legislators had trouble supporting any bills with the potential to raise taxes, even bills that would require voter approval, but added that a legislator’s job is to fix problems.

“Conservatives said ‘Tax bill! Tax bill!’ That’s rhetoric,” Truitt said. “Rhetoric doesn’t solve problems. Legislators are supposed to solve problems.”

The Texas Local Option Transportation Act began several years ago as a North Texas effort to find funding for area transit projects, including the 250 miles of regional commuter rail in the Rail North Texas plan.

The Texas Local Option Transportation Act, which began as Senate Bill 855, would have given counties across the state the opportunity to hold bond-style elections where voters would be provided with a list of needed transportation projects and construction dates – projects including roads and public transit – and a list of funding options to pay for those projects.

Funding options North Texas officials came up with included a regional gas tax, a drivers license fee, a vehicle registration fee, a new resident impact fee and a mileage fee.