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## Dallas-Fort Worth's supporters of local-option transit fees taxes are ready to force the issue again if special session is called

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FORT WORTH — Supporters of a local option to ask voters' permission to raise taxes and fees for rail and roads say they'll ask Gov. Rick Perry to include the initiative in a possible special session.

Perry said this week that he may be forced to call a special session because a group of senators failed to cast a procedural vote, a move that could lead to the shutdown of the Texas Department of Transportation and other agencies.

"If there's a special session for TxDOT, then the local option needs to be part of that discussion. It is not dead and gone," Fort Worth Mayor Mike Moncrief told about 200 Tarrant Regional Transportation Coalition members Wednesday.

The coalition lobbied heavily for a change in state law allowing metro areas to hold elections, asking voters to possibly raise gas taxes, driver's license renewals or car registration fees.

The money could have been used to build a 215-mile-plus rail network or fix highways, but it fell short of legislative approval in the final hours of the regular session, which ended Monday.

"We don't have to start from scratch," Moncrief said. "We have a product, and the support for that product broadened way beyond this room. I hope you all recharge your batteries and continue the fight."

Despite the enthusiasm, some coalition members acknowledged that getting the local option back on the table in a special session may be a long shot.

But supporters of expanding the region's passenger rail system are getting serious about fielding candidates for state office in 2010 who will be more supportive of the mass-transit concept.

Most of a group of 47 North Texas lawmakers supported the local-option effort. Those who didn't support it will likely face opposition, several members said.

Though nobody named names, among those voting against the measure were Rep. Charlie Geren, R-Fort Worth; Rep. Kelly Hancock, R-North Richland Hills; and Sen. Jane Nelson, R-Flower Mound.

"We need to make sure they're accountable for how they stood during the session," Mike Leyman, a Mansfield councilman, told the coalition. "The right thing was not done, not only in this region but in the entire state."

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