

Posted on Thu, Aug. 13, 2009

Cintra to receive \$3.6 million after losing Texas 121 toll road project

BY GORDON DICKSON

gdickson@star-telegram.com

The Regional Transportation Council agreed Thursday to pay Spanish firm Cintra \$3.6 million to cover costs the Spanish firm incurred before losing its bid for the Texas 121 toll road project, despite objections from some Denton County officials.

The road is now known as Sam Rayburn Tollway, and connects cities north and east of Grapevine such as Coppell, Carrollton and Plano.

Cintra, a publicly held firm known worldwide for building toll roads with private investment dollars, was conditionally awarded the toll project in Denton and Collin counties by the Texas Transportation Commission in February 2007. But under pressure from Dallas-area leaders, the state commission terminated that award in August 2007, allowing the Plano-based tollway authority to take the project.

During the seven months it held the project, Cintra incurred costs related to the federal TIFIA loan program, a stipend for unsuccessful work and other, unidentified post-bid costs, North Central Texas Council of Governments transportation director Michael Morris said.

Denton County Commissioner Andy Eads spoke against the payment, noting that Denton County wanted Cintra to keep the project. "For Denton County to now be looked at to remedy this is, in our opinion, inappropriate," Eads said.

Even so, the 40-member RTC approved the \$3.6 million payment on a unanimous voice vote.

The money will come out of toll revenues generated on the tollway in these counties: Denton County, \$1,961,063; Collin County \$1,446,086; and Dallas County \$253,065.

Tarrant County won't have to pitch in to pay Cintra, even though about 4 percent of tollway traffic is from greater Fort Worth. State law prohibits the transfer of toll revenue from the Texas Department of Transportation Fort Worth district to the Dallas district, where the tollway is.