

Will CAMPO, Perry's road plan conflict?

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Central Texas planners and politicians are trying to figure out their place in the vast transportation plan that Gov. Rick Perry sketched out last week as a campaign centerpiece.

The governor had a few words for them: We'll handle it.

Williamson, Hays, Travis, Bastrop and Burnet counties ought to form their own regional mobility authority and concentrate on proposed toll road extensions of U.S. 183, MoPac Boulevard (Loop 1) and Texas 45 North and South, Perry said.

That'll leave Texas 130 as the starting point for Perry's state corridor plan. And it could leave the region's traditional transportation planner, the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, a bit out of the loop.

CAMPO controls how federal transportation dollars are spent locally. But CAMPO is not yet certain how its say on the toll roads, the largest impending projects, changes if a Central Texas regional authority is created.

Texas 130, the subject of power struggles between CAMPO and the state in the past, would be the state's responsibility, the governor emphasized during his corridor plan announcement.

"CAMPOs will still have their input," Perry said. But, such groups "cannot stop a project unilaterally."

No one's talking about halting anything; everyone still seems skeptical that the corridors could ever get going. Perry calls for more than 4,000 miles of six-lane toll roads, six-lane high-speed rail lines and underground water, petroleum and utility pipelines. Each corridor would be at least 1,000 feet wide.

But Central Texas is where the Perry plan would begin. To that end, he was asked how he thought the region's history of fighting, revamping and fighting some more about new highways would affect his idea.

"I think TxDOT has bent over backward to work with CAMPO over the years," Perry said. "Moving people and goods . . . is more important than any political squabbling that can come

from CAMPO. And the bottom line is a MPO cannot unilaterally stop a project or stop progress."

Those who understand CAMPO (all three of you) know this, too: Them's fightin' words.

But of course . . .

Sometimes the best way to test a hunch is in the broadest possible forum. In other words, the person we suspected owned the NO RAIL license plate referenced Jan. 21 in fact does.

Gerald Daugherty of the anti-light rail group Reclaim Our Allocated Dollars called almost immediately after a recent column. Can't believe you wouldn't know it was me, he said.

Daugherty said he got the plate right after light rail failed in the November 2000 election. Rail is certain to be back on a ballot, either this November or in 2004.

"I will keep it until we bury this thing," Daugherty vowed.

By the way, Daugherty, a Republican, is running for the Travis County Precinct 3 commission seat. Suppose he wins. Suppose Precinct 4 Commissioner Margaret Gomez, also on the Capital Metro board, doesn't win re-election or leaves the transit board.

Just imagine who'll try to fill that spot.

And imagine the plates the other Capital Metro board members might get in response.

Getting There appears Mondays. For questions, tips or story ideas, contact Getting There at 912-5977 or commuters@statesman.com.