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## Roads rework?

Mayors say new deal is needed

**By Brad Rollins**  
Staff Reporter

San Marcos Mayor Susan Narvaiz, along with the mayors of Kyle and Buda, will try to resurrect part of a highway bond package rejected by voters this weekend.

A majority of voters countywide voted on Saturday against selling \$172 million in bonds for four highway projects, but the proposal passed comfortably in San Marcos and Kyle and by huge margins in Buda. The western half of the county — concentrated around Wimberley, Dripping Springs and Woodcreek — voted in similarly large numbers against the proposal.

Under a deal with the Texas Department of Transportation, the county would have fronted the money for the roads and be reimbursed up to \$133 million over 20 years. In a meeting with the County Judge Elizabeth Sumter on Monday, the Interstate 35 corridor mayors sounded out the possibility of dropping controversial plans for widening Ranch Road 12 to four and five lanes while moving forward with the first three-mile segment of the San Marcos loop and adding lanes to Farm-to-Market 1626, an important arterial between Hays County and Austin.

"Those of us in the fastest growing parts of the county know that we have critical transportation needs that have to be addressed. We are asking if there is something we can do to not lose this significant amount of money TxDOT was offering," Narvaiz said.

The answer to that question may have to wait for a May 24 meeting between Sumter and TxDOT area engineer Bob Daigh, who said before the election that the county would not get a better offer than the \$133 million on the table. Comal and Williamson counties are among those lining up to apply for the \$133 million that would have gone to Hays County.

Pct. 1 Commissioner Debbie Gonzales Ingalsbe, who represents big chunks of San Marcos and Kyle, alluded to the possibility of a reworked deal at the commissioner court's regular session on Tuesday. She pointed out that a new high school opening with the fall semester would be accessed mainly by McCarty lane, a narrow, rutted country road flanked closely much of its length by barbed wire fences.

Sumter meanwhile said she would move to appoint a citizens committee to assemble a new roads proposal for the ballot, possibly as soon as November.

In lengthy post mortems of the election results, Pct. 3 Commissioner Will Conley and Pct. 2 Commissioner Jeff Barton said the election results show a growing divide between rural western Hays County and the urbanizing east side.

"The history of the world to some degree is shaped by geography and that's no different in Hays County. ...You can draw a line roughly down the Balcones fault line and see it was supported on the east and not on the west. Those in areas of higher growth have differences in perspective on transportation issues," said Barton, who represents increasingly suburban Kyle and Buda.

Said Conley, whose precinct includes part of San Marcos, Wimberley and ranch land in between: "We have two different communities at two different levels at this point."

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