

# **NTTA ALTERNATIVE 3C VERSUS THE BALANCED VISION PLAN**

**PREPARED BY THE TEN PRESIDENTS**

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**IS THE TRINITY TOLL ROAD, AS PROPOSED BY NTTA IN ALTERNATIVE 3C,  
REALLY THE SAME AS THE TRINITY PARKWAY  
OF THE BALANCED VISION PLAN?**

**IN THE 2007 REFERENDUM, WHICH DID THE VOTERS  
THINK THEY WERE VOTING FOR?**

- In the 2007 referendum on the Trinity toll road, the pro-road side made their case in great part based on the premise that the “Trinity Parkway” was an integral part of the Balanced Vision Plan, and that it would be designed in accordance with the principles of that plan.
- The Balanced Vision Plan remains to this date on the City of Dallas website, identified as the guiding document for the development of the Trinity River Corridor, including the toll road.
- There have been verbal proposals from the NCTCOG about what might happen with the Trinity toll road – narrower lane widths, fewer lanes, fewer ramps, and the like – as part of an initial approach to make it more compliant with the Balanced Vision Plan. However, none of this is documented, certainly to the level of the detail of NTTA Alternative 3C, and none of it is committed to by an agency with standing. When assessing what the toll road actually is likely to be, the formal, written and detailed proposals must be considered first and foremost, above casual verbal comments made in various public and semi-public forums.
- The following images and quotes are taken directly from either the Balanced Vision Plan or from the Alternative 3C Design Drawings (February 2014) released by the North Texas Tollway.

## WHAT IS A PARKWAY?

The Balanced Vision Plan opens on page 43 with these examples of two noted parkways, the Potomac Parkway and the Memorial Parkway in Washington, D.C. Both are designed as true parkways, suitable for their locations through major urban parks and along major urban bodies of water.

Roads and parks are not necessarily incompatible....



Potomac Parkway, Washington, D.C.



Memorial Parkway, Washington, D.C.

## **WHAT WAS THE ‘VISION’ OF THE BALANCED VISION PLAN?**

The intent of the Balanced Vision Plan was clear, to design the Trinity Parkway as a true parkway, as evidenced by this statement:

*The agencies will diligently seek context-sensitive design recognizing that the road is passing through a major urban park. This design approach may include narrower lanes and shoulders, enhanced landscaping and design features, and reduced vertical clearances, all subject to FHWA approval. (p. 45).*

The NTTA has not formally applied or requested of FHWA any of these critical elements of a true parkway, and none of these are indicated on their drawings for Alternative 3C.

The Balanced Vision Plan also states:

*Indeed, it is only if all of these qualities are pursued with equal vigor that the Trinity River Corridor Project becomes worthy of undertaking, and once achieved, assumes its role as the premier open space environment in the Dallas region. (p.11).*

AND

*The proposed...road – properly designed and freed from the dimensional standards of an interstate highway, as is recommended in the ‘Transportation’ section of this chapter – can be fully integrated into an overall park design. (p. 11).*

This agreed-upon character for the Trinity Parkway is evidenced by a number of renderings, also included as prominent and integral portions of the Balanced Vision Plan (captions from the Balanced Vision Plan).

#### **LIKE THIS ONE (P.49)**



The Trinity Parkway's visual impact can be reduced through context sensitive design.

#### **OR THIS ONE (P. 8)**



The proposed Reunion overlook with the parkway below and the promenade along the urban lake in the foreground.

Compare these inspirational images to this dreary image offered by NTTA of Alternative 3C. Note as well that none of the exit and entrance ramps indicated on NTTA's plans are illustrated here, some of which will soar 20 or more feet above the adjacent levee (already 30 feet high) on their way to connect to the Continental Bridge and elsewhere.

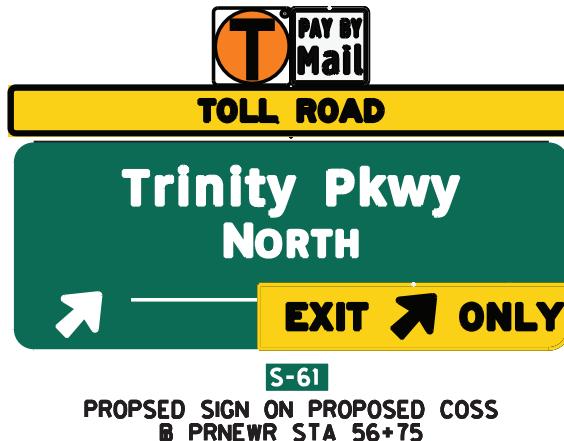


While few design details of Alternative 3C are known, those released by NTTA – such as the toll roads signage – are discouraging. Compare these images – taken from Alternative 3C – with the requirement of the Balanced Vision Plan that signage should have a ‘park character’ (p. 54).

This is hardly characteristic of a true parkway, but of a standard high-speed tollway.



#### ENLARGED DETAIL OF SIGNAGE



## **HOW ARE THEY DIFFERENT, PHYSICALLY?**

Clearly, the spirit (the vision, if you will) of a true parkway – as called for in the Balanced Vision Plan – is not achieved by Alternative 3C.

In addition, however, there are key dimensional differences between the Balanced Vision Plan and NTTA Alternative 3C. Most critical among these is simply the intrusion of Alternative 3C into the Trinity Park and floodway by up to 290 feet more than was envisioned in the BVP.

### **INTRUSION INTO FLOODWAY**

- North Section (SH-183 to Continental) up to 290 feet
- Central Section (South of I-35 E ) up to 198 feet
- South Section ( South of I-35 E) up to 246 feet

This is illustrated on the following series of drawings, each of which compares the sections of both the Balanced Vision Plan and Alternative 3C.

As a result, the space between the toll road and the nearest body of water – either the river channel or the proposed lakes – is reduced by up to 37 percent as noted below.

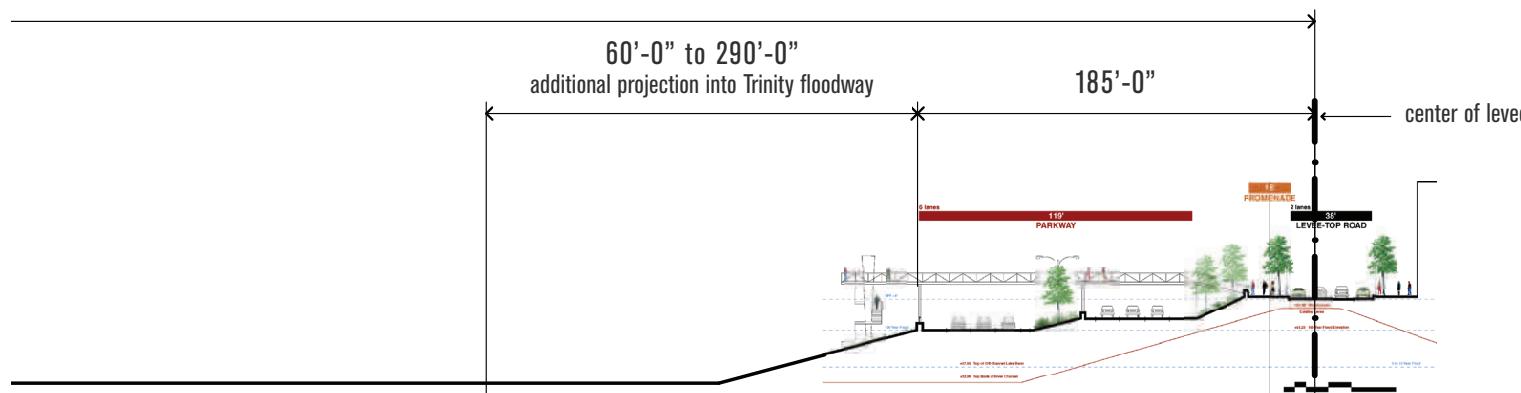
### **PERCENTAGE OF OPEN SPACE REDUCTION BY ALTERNATIVE 3C TOLL ROAD TO RIVER CHANNEL (BEYOND THAT SHOWN IN BALANCED VISION PLAN SECTIONS)**

- North Section (SH-183 to Continental) up to 28 percent
- Central Section (South of I-35 E ) up to 26 percent
- South Section ( South of I-35 E) up to 37 percent

## NORTH SECTION COMPARISON

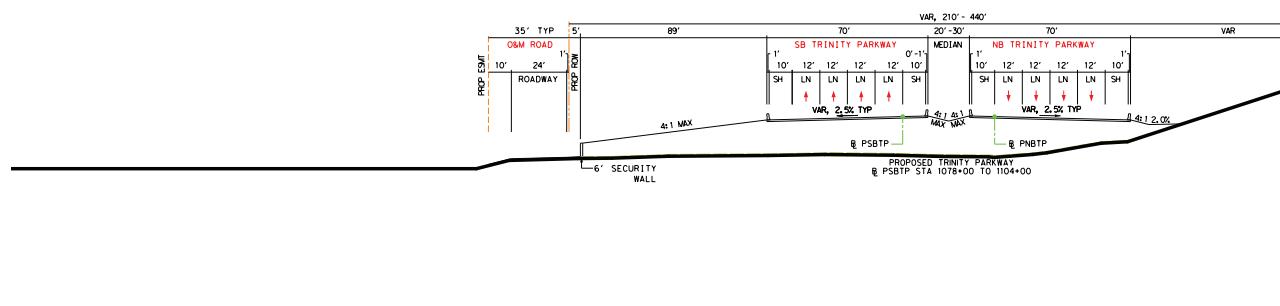
### BALANCED VISION PLAN (P. 48)

Section through northern Parkway (SH-183 to Continental Avenue)



### NTTA ALTERNATIVE 3C

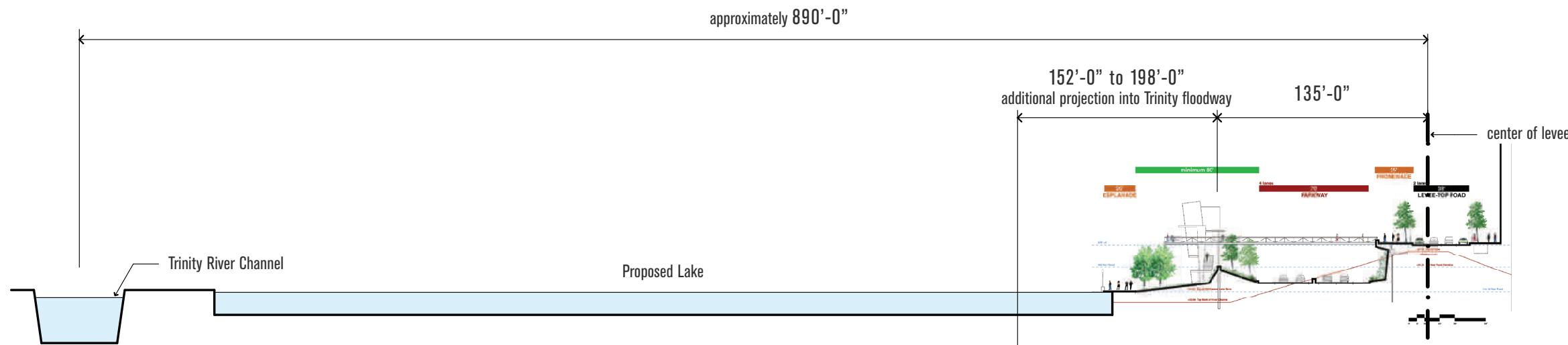
Section through northern Parkway (SH-183 to Continental Avenue)  
Flipped for comparison (refer to NTTA Trinity Parkway Roll 02)



## CENTRAL SECTION COMPARISON

### BALANCED VISION PLAN (P. 49)

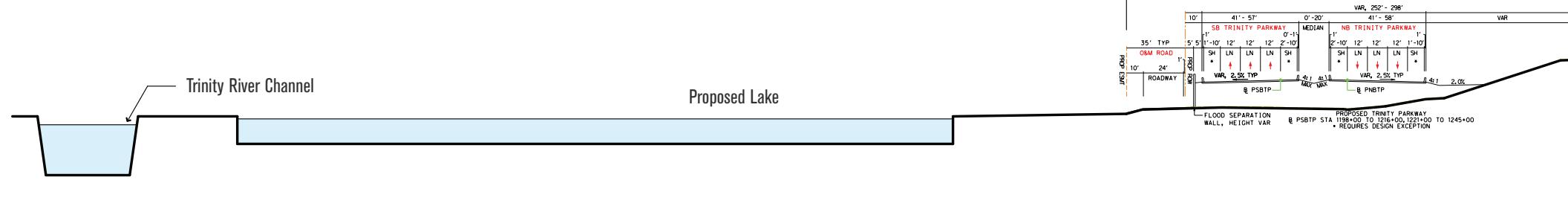
Section through Parkway at Downtown (Continental Avenue to Corinth Street)



### NTTA ALTERNATIVE 3C

Section through Parkway at Downtown

Flipped for comparison (refer to NTTA Trinity Parkway Roll 04)

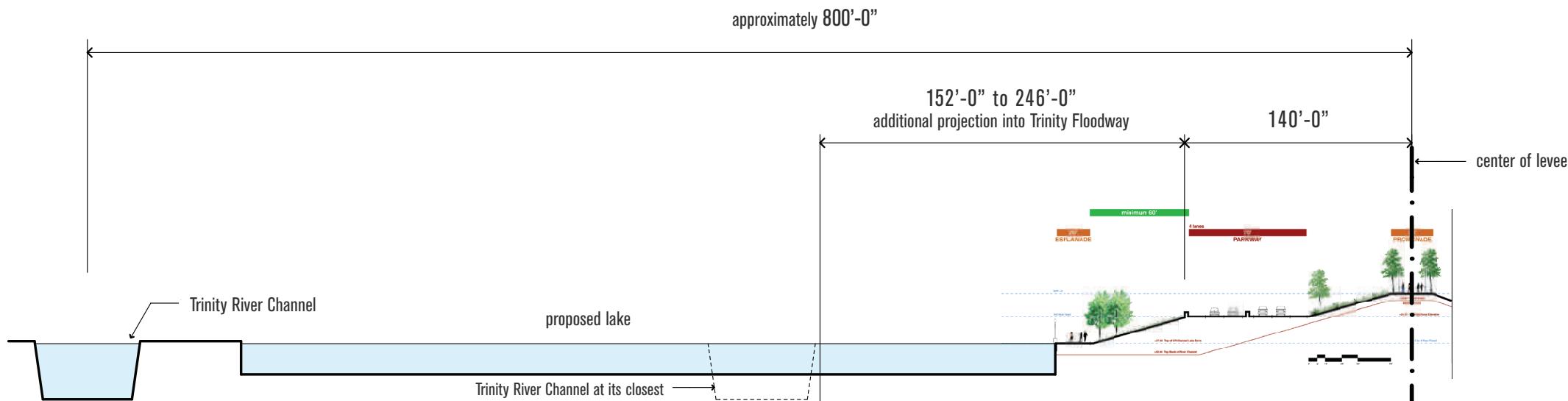


Note: Lake configuration related to Alternative 3C has changed from that shown in Balanced Vision Plan

## **SOUTH SECTION COMPARISON**

## **BALANCED VISION PLAN (P. 50)**

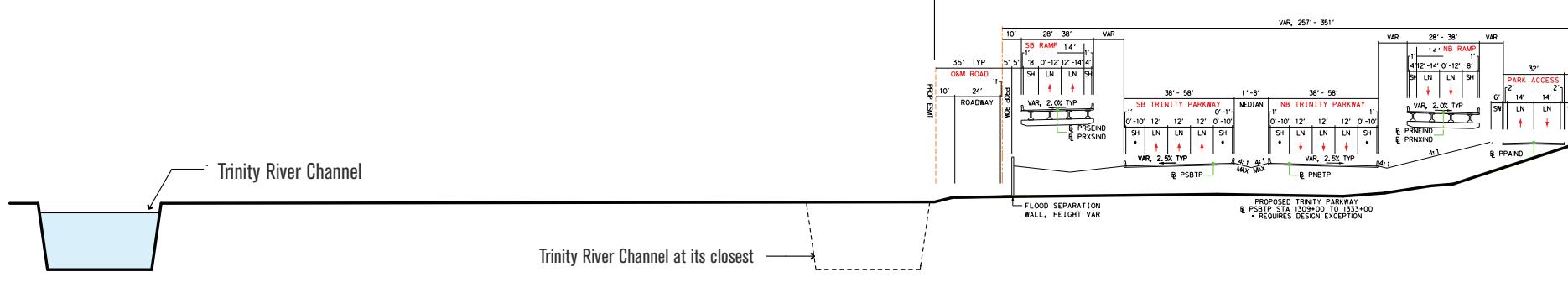
## Section through Parkway at Downtown (Continental Avenue to Corinth Street)



NTTA ALTERNATIVE 3C

## Section through parkway at Downtown

Flipped for comparison (refer to NTTA Trinity Parkway Roll 04)

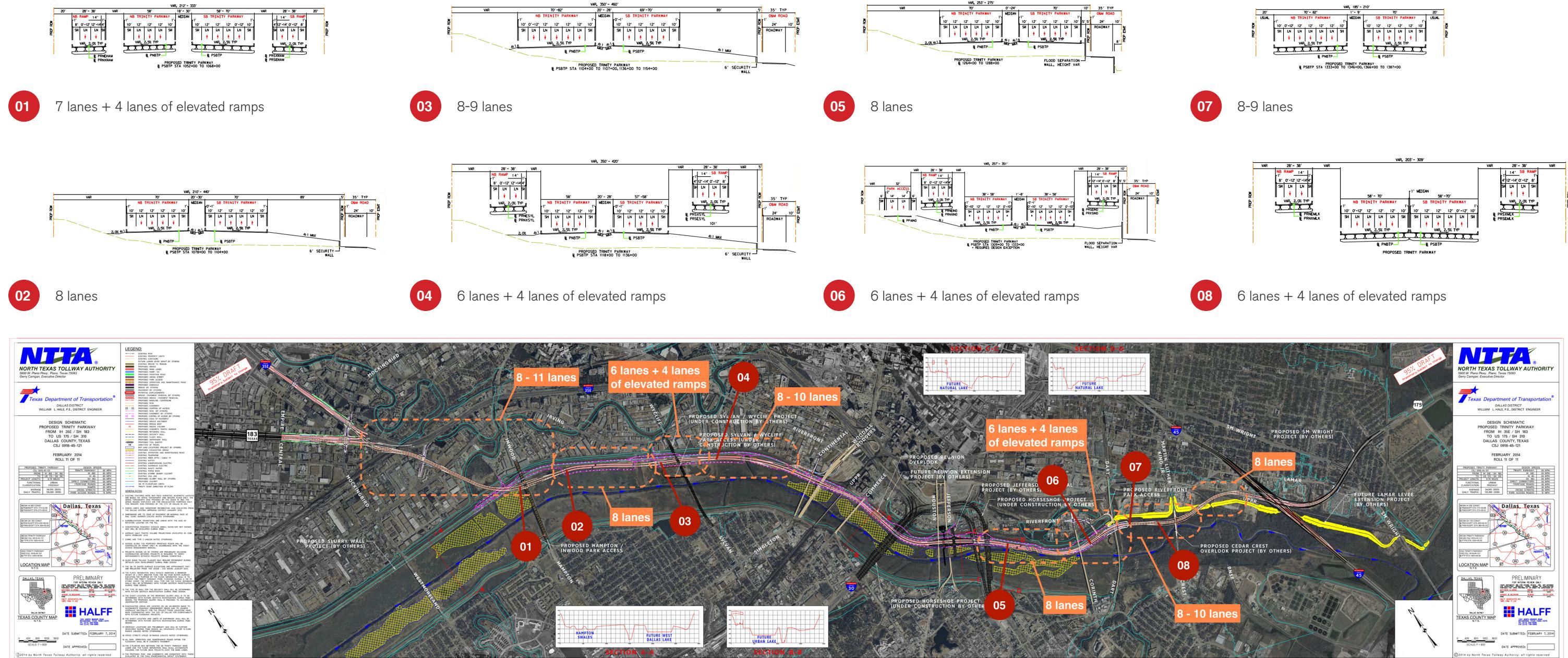


Note: Lake shown in BVP has been eliminated as related to Alternative 3C

## OVERALL LANE COUNT ANALYSIS

Much discussion has occurred about the number of lanes of the toll road, often stated as four or six in number. However, this refers only to the through traffic lanes.

The NTTA Alternative 3C drawings illustrate up to 11 total lanes (12 feet wide). These lanes are extensive, to the degree that over 40 percent of the toll road inside the levees is shown at 8 lanes or more. This does not include the additional 2 lanes of the O&M Road required for maintenance of the flood wall.



**TOLL ROAD PARKWAY INSIDE LEVEES APPROXIMATELY 6.10 MILES**

**TOLL ROAD PARKWAY WITH 8+ LANES APPROXIMATELY 2.66 MILES OR 43% OF LENGTH**

**DOES NOT INCLUDE O&M ROAD AT FOOT OF FLOODWALL, WHICH ADDS 2 MORE LANES (24')**

## METRICS COMPARING BVP TO NTTA ALTERNATIVE 3C

First, the Balanced Vision Plan states:

*The Parkway is anticipated to carry an estimated 80,000 to 100,000 vehicles per day. (p.52).*

Compare this to Alternative 3C which calls for average daily traffic up to 135,000 vehicles per day, or 35 percent more than the Balanced Vision Plan.

In addition, there are numerous details of Alternative 3C that vary from the Balanced Vision Plan. While some of these are small, they add up and have critical implications to the character of the proposed road.

	NORTH SECTION		CENTRAL SECTION		SOUTH SECTION	
	SH 183 to Continental		Continental to South of I-35E		South of I-35 to US 175	
PARKWAY	BVP	NTTA ALT 3C	BVP	NTTA ALT 3C	BVP	NTTA ALT 3C
Right of Way Width (feet)*	≈ 185 feet	≈192 - 530 feet	≈ 135 feet	≈ 253 - 464 feet	≈ 140 feet	≈ 190 - 351 feet
Lane Count (lanes)	6 lanes	up to 11 lanes	4-6 lanes	up to 8 lanes	6 lanes	up to 10 lanes
Platform Type	Terraced	Single Level	Single Level	Single Level	Terraced	Single Level
Lane Width (feet)	11 feet	12 feet	11 feet	12 feet	11 feet	12 feet
Median Width (feet)	25 feet	up to 42 feet	6 feet	up to 28 feet	25 feet	up to 11 feet
Right Shoulder Type	Paved	Paved	Stabilized Turf	Paved	Stabilized Turf	Paved
Left Shoulder Width (feet)	4 feet	up to 10 feet	2 feet	up to 10 feet	4 feet	up to 10 feet
Reduced Toll Plaza?	Yes	Unclear	N/A	Unclear	Yes	Unclear
Trucks Allowed	No	Unclear	No	Unclear	No	Unclear
Park Character, Signs	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

\* Variable distance due to topographical changes

## **WHAT ABOUT THE COST AND SCHEDULE?**

There are other numerical factors involved here that should be considered when deciding what the voters voted on in 2007, specifically the cost of the project and the schedule for its completion.

The Balanced Vision Plan called for the project, including the Parkway and lakes, as well as numerous amenities, to be approximately \$1,060,241,000, a little over a billion dollars. The Balanced Vision Plan stated that the funds – in addition to the city's \$246,000,000 – would be “contributed by State and Federal agencies and programs as well as other *identified sources*.”

While the math for Alternative 3C remains fuzzy, the most plausible estimates for the toll road have been most recently in the range of 1.5 billion dollars, without the lakes or any context-sensitive design elements. And no plausible source for attaining the majority of these funds have been identified, at least publicly.

The Balanced Vision Plan also indicated that major elements of the project (presumably including the toll road) would be complete by 2011. Here in 2015, the toll road has not been started yet, and no clear dates for its implementation have been identified.

## **IN SUM...**

The NTTA Alternative 3C cannot be held to be the same as the Trinity Parkway that was approved by the voters in the 2007 referendum. Compared to the Trinity Parkway of the Balanced Vision Plan (as presented to the voters in 2007), Alternative 3C:

- Does not – in any way – resemble a parkway as illustrated (repeatedly) in the Balanced Vision Plan with photos and renderings.
- Intrudes up to 290 feet further into the Trinity Park and floodway.
- Reduces available park space between the levee and adjacent water bodies by up to 37 percent.
- Has vastly increased in cost, with no clear definition of what it will ultimately cost.
- Has no clear indication of where that funding will come from.
- Is at least a decade behind schedule.
- Varies in numerous critical details and dimensions.

**ALTERNATIVE 3C, AS CURRENTLY PROPOSED BY NTTA,  
CANNOT BE CONSIDERED TO BE THE SAME – IN SPIRIT OR IN DETAIL  
– AS THE TRINITY PARKWAY OF THE BALANCED VISION PLAN.**

This comparison was prepared by The Ten Presidents, an informal collaboration of ten Dallas architects, each a former President of AIA Dallas and an AIA Fellow. All are opposed to the Trinity Toll Road as proposed by NTTA in Alternate 3C.

## **THE TEN PRESIDENTS**

Larry Good, FAIA	1986 AIA Dallas President
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Betsy del Monte, FAIA	2007 AIA Dallas President