



## NEWS RELEASE

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### FHWA AND TXDOT SIGN AGREEMENT TO ALLOW I-45 NORTH HOUSTON HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT TO MOVE FORWARD

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#### HOUSTON –

Today, TxDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) signed a [Voluntary Resolution Agreement](#) (VRA) resolving the FHWA Title VI investigation of the I-45 North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) and lifting FHWA's pause on the project. This VRA takes significant steps to address project impacts to the community and provides clear enforceable timelines that will be monitored by FHWA as TxDOT proceeds with the NHHIP, including detailed design, stakeholder engagement, affordable housing initiatives, right-of-way acquisition, flood mitigation and construction activities. The review of [TxDOT's responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act](#) is also concluded with no findings.

The actions in the VRA will be performed in addition to and/or in compliance with the mitigation actions already committed to by TxDOT, as contained within the Record of Decision (ROD), including:

- Twice Annual Public Meetings through Design and Construction;
- Mitigating Displacements, Relocations, Housing, and Other Community Impacts;
- Drainage Improvements to Reduce Flooding;
- Parks, Open Space, Trails, Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities;
- Community Access During Construction;
- Highway "Footprint" Reduction;
- Structural Highway Caps;
- Air Quality Mitigation; and
- Meaningful Access for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

"This agreement moves forward an important project, responds to community concerns, and improves the North Houston Highway Improvement Project in ways that will make a real difference in people's lives. Through this agreement the community will have a greater voice in the design and throughout the project's life cycle," said **Federal Highway Administrator Shailen Bhatt**. "We have lifted the pause, and with FHWA oversight, TXDOT may proceed with design and construction."

The \$9 billion NHHIP will ultimately reconstruct I-45 North between Houston's downtown and the North Sam Houston Tollway to bring the roadway up to federal safety standards and enhance mobility. Improvements also include increased modal options through four non-tolled managed lanes, bicycle and pedestrian features along frontage roads and cross streets, and trails parallel to bayous within the right of way. Detention ponds, pump stations and other flood mitigation tools are also included in the project. Air quality will also benefit from less congested traffic and idling cars along with various project mitigations.

"This portion of I-45 was built in stages in the 1950s and 1960s and the design remained essentially the same while the area population has doubled," stated Marc Williams, TxDOT executive director. "The reconstruction of I-45 will address mobility needs for people and freight, while also improving safety and a number of environmental mitigations that include critical measures to improve storm water drainage. Considering the recently executed agreements with Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner, Harris County, and now the FHWA, we are excited to get this critical infrastructure project moving with our partnering agencies."

For more information, contact TxDOT Public Information Office at (713) 802-5077 or by email [hou-piowebmail@txdot.gov](mailto:hou-piowebmail@txdot.gov) or contact FHWA Press Office at (202) 366-0660 or by email to [FHWA.PressOffice@dot.gov](mailto:FHWA.PressOffice@dot.gov).

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### **More about the I-45 Project (NHHIP)**

The NHHIP will address critical needs including updating three highways to current design and safety standards, relieving traffic congestion, improving storm water drainage, and improving the evacuation routes. The NHHIP will add four managed express lanes on I-45 from Downtown Houston to Beltway 8 North; reroute I-45 to be parallel with I-10 on the north side of Downtown Houston and parallel to US 59/I-69 on the east side of Downtown Houston; realign sections of I-10 and I-69 in the downtown area to eliminate the current roadway reverse curves that limit capacity; and lower I-69 between I-10 and Spur 527 south of Downtown to improve safety by eliminating unsafe weaving.

The purpose of the NHHIP is to implement an integrated system of transportation improvements that would:

- Bring I-45, I-10, and US 59/I-69 up to current design standards to improve safety and operations.
- Manage I-45 traffic congestion in the NHHIP area through added capacity, MaX lanes, options for single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) lanes, and improved operations.
- Improve mobility on I-45 between US 59/I-69 and Beltway 8 North by accommodating projected population growth and latent demand in the project area.
- Provide expanded transit and carpool opportunities.
- Improve the capabilities of I-45 as an emergency evacuation route.
- Improve storm water drainage on I-45.
- Support the projected significant increase in travel on the regional highways in the Houston-Galveston area.
- For NHHIP project facts and highlights, visit [www.txdot.gov/nhhip](http://www.txdot.gov/nhhip).

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The Texas Department of Transportation is responsible for maintaining 80,000 miles of road and for supporting aviation, maritime, rail and public transportation across the state.

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