



North Houston Highway Improvement Project

**Scoping Meeting #2
October 9-11, 2012**

Responses to Comments



North Houston Highway Improvement Project Scoping Meeting Summary

October 9 - 11, 2012

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP), located in Harris County, Texas. The proposed project and study limits begin at the interchange of US 59 and SH 288 south of downtown Houston and follow northward along IH 45 to the interchange of IH 45 and Beltway 8 North, a distance of approximately 16 miles. The proposed project area also includes portions of IH 10 and US 59 near downtown Houston, IH 610 and Beltway 8 North between IH 45 and Hardy Toll Road, and Hardy Toll Road from north of downtown to Beltway 8 North. The purpose of the proposed project is to create additional roadway capacity to manage congestion, enhance safety, and to improve mobility and operational efficiency.

This report summarizes the activities used to solicit participation for the second agency and public scoping meetings, and the input received at the meetings and during the associated comment period.

Agency and Public Scoping Meetings

Two **agency scoping meetings** were held on Wednesday, October 10, 2012 at the TxDOT Houston District office, 7600 Washington Avenue, Houston, Texas 77007, at the times listed below.

- Participating agencies - 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
- Cooperating agencies - 2:00 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Invitations were mailed to 17 participating agencies and 6 cooperating agencies on September 18, 2012.

Six individuals from three agencies (Harris County Flood Control District; City of Houston; and Downtown District/Central Houston, Inc.) attended the morning session for participating agencies. Seven individuals with four agencies (METRO, Houston-Galveston Area Council, Federal Highway Administration, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) attended the afternoon session for cooperating agencies. Meeting attendees were provided an informational handout, survey form, and comment form. Reference materials were also available, including the exhibits from the first public scoping meeting, the North-Hardy Planning Studies, Alternatives Analysis Report (Highway Component), a summary from the first public scoping meeting, a glossary of common terms, the Need and Purpose Statement, and the Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan. An open discussion followed the scoping meeting presentation. No written comments were submitted at the meeting.

The **public scoping meetings** were held in two locations in the project area, on two different days, to provide two opportunities for interested citizens to attend. Both meetings were held from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm, on the dates and at the locations listed below.

- Tuesday, October 9, 2012 at Jefferson Davis High School, 1101 Quitman Street, Houston, Texas 77009
- Thursday, October 11, 2012 at Aldine Ninth Grade School, 10650 North Freeway, Houston, Texas 77037

The purpose of the public scoping meetings was to:

1. Present and gather input on the Alternatives Evaluation Screening Process, the Universe of Alternatives, and the Six Preliminary Alternatives
2. Present two updated documents: Need and Purpose Statement, and Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan
3. Provide project timeline, history and background
4. Discuss project with the public and answer questions
5. Encourage the public's continued involvement

Representatives from TxDOT and the project consultant team were present at both meetings and included Spanish-speaking individuals for translation and communication.

Scoping Meeting Documentation

The complete NHHIP Scoping Meeting Documentation report is available for review at the TxDOT Houston District Office, 7600 Washington Avenue, Houston, Texas 77007. The 2-volume document includes documentation of the agency and public scoping meetings, and comments received during the associated comment period.

Volume 1 - Meeting summary and photographs, meeting notifications, registration sheets, handouts, the printed PowerPoint presentation frames with printed narration script, and reduced-size copies of the exhibit boards and maps.

Volume 2 – Introduction and comment index table, comment and survey matrix table, copies of all written comments received during the scoping meeting comment period, and meeting surveys.

Summary of Comments

Written comments were submitted during the comment period that ended on November 9, 2012. The written comments were submitted at the scoping meetings, and by mail and email. Some comments were written on forms provided at the scoping meetings, and include scoping meeting survey forms. The survey form had questions related to public outreach and knowledge of the NHHIP project.

This meeting summary and responses to comments will be posted on the project website: www.ih45northandmore.com. The Public Scoping Meeting Documentation report includes copies of all comments submitted during the associated comment period.

TxDOT and project team members reviewed all of the comments, and grouped the concerns, questions, and suggestions into the 34 categories of issues listed below. Responses to comments related to the issues listed are included in the "Responses to Comments" section of this summary, with an accompanying table that lists names of the commenters and related response numbers.

The detailed comments are included in Volume 2 of the Scoping Meeting Documentation report. Specific comments and questions about alternatives and project design have been reviewed by the project team and are being considered during the project development process. At this stage of the alternatives evaluation process, each comment and question cannot be responded to, as many details about the project are not known. More detailed information about the alternatives will be developed as the study proceeds.

Comment Categories

1. Project alternatives
2. Cost of project compared to project goals
3. Modes of transportation
4. Congestion in the inner city and related impacts
5. Neighborhood quality of life
6. Impacts to neighborhoods and homes
7. Impacts to businesses and employment
8. Noise and vibration
9. Air quality
10. Flooding and drainage
11. Tolling
12. Funding through sale of bonds
13. Visual impacts
14. Parks and recreation
15. Project goals
16. Property values and property acquisition
17. Aesthetics and landscaping
18. Access for pedestrian, bicycle, and transit riders
19. Encouraging single-passenger vehicle use
20. Project would benefit suburban areas, and adversely affect City of Houston residents
21. Project would encourage suburban growth
22. Connect Hardy Toll road to downtown Houston
23. Conservation of natural resources
24. Historic resources and cemeteries
25. Impacts to cemeteries
26. Rejoin disconnected neighborhoods
27. Providing project information in Spanish.
28. Ways to improve public outreach
29. Consider downtown roads as a separate project
30. Website
31. Receipt of project information
32. Estimated start of construction
33. Sustainable project planning
34. General comments

All comments received will be considered as TxDOT and the project team develops and evaluates roadway alternatives for this project.

North Houston Highway Improvement Project
Scoping Meeting #2
Key to Responses to Comments

| Name | | Commenter No. (see note below) | Response Nos. |
|---------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| 141 petitions | NA | P1 | 1,2 |
| Aker | Joe | W107 | 1,2 |
| Alberts | Michael | W352 | 3,34 |
| Almond | Anna | W232 | 1,20 |
| Almond | Anna | W182 | 1,2,20 |
| Ameri | Hamid | M22 | 7 |
| Amjadi | Aaron | W295 | 34 |
| Arezpo | Julian | W140 | 34 |
| Ator | Mike | W53 | 1 |
| Ayham | Victor | W73 | 34 |
| B | Adam | W66 | 34 |
| Baier | Kyle | W50 | 1,18 |
| Bailey | Paige | W270 | 2 |
| Barnard | Janis | W322 | 1,5,16,34 |
| Barnard | John | W323 | 1,5,16,34 |
| Barnum | Daniel | W40 | 1,34 |
| Beck | Jason | W60 | 1,17,26,34 |
| Beebe | Mark | W205 | 1,2,8 |
| Beene | Donna | W38 | 34 |
| Benavides | Judy | W195 | 1,2 |
| Benes | Kallie | W301 | 1 |
| Bennett | Donna | W192 | 1,2 |
| Bibliowicz | Hana | W125 | 2,34 |
| Blake | Frank | W333 | 1,2 |
| Block | Robinson | W119 | 1,2,34 |
| Bodenheimer | Laura | W161 | 1,2,8,17 |
| Bolger | Kathy | W347 | 2 |
| Bolger | Kathy | W349 | 1,4,8,22 |
| Bonica | John | W101 | 1,2,8 |
| Bonica | Judy | W102 | 1,2,8 |
| Boudreaux | Brady | SM72 | 1 |
| Box | David | E105 | 1 |
| Brandenberger | Emily | W217 | 1,2,8 |
| Brenner | Noah | W340 | 2 |
| Brenner | Noah | W341 | 1 |
| Brenner | Noah | W342 | 1,22 |
| Brenner | Noah | W344 | 34 |
| Brenner | Noah | W346 | 34 |
| Brenner | Noah | W348 | 1 |
| Brooks | Elizabeth | W331 | 1,3 |
| Broyles | Nicole | W181 | 1,2 |
| Burke | Kristen | W337 | 1 |
| Buschlen | Mary Jane | W162 | 1 |
| Butron | Jose | E90 | 7 |
| Calle | Miriam | W165 | 1,7 |
| Calle | Julio | E99 | 1,7 |

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| Name | | Commenter No. (see note below) | Response Nos. |
|-----------|-----------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Calle | Julio | W163 | 1,7 |
| Calle | Miriam | W165 | 1,7 |
| Carter | Carrie | W204 | 1,2 |
| Caul | Carol | E106 | 34 |
| Chang | Judith | W298 | 1,2 |
| Chinelli | Jeanette | W273 | 1,3,34 |
| Cho | Peter | SM46 | 3,5,6,34 |
| Cho | Peter | W59 | 1,7,28,34 |
| Cho | Sharon | W34 | 1,34 |
| Chomin | Christy | W239 | 1,6,7 |
| Cicack | Christina | W223 | 1,2 |
| Clark | F.I. | W228 | 1,2 |
| Clark | Florence | W98 | 1,2 |
| Cooper | Jon | W305 | 1 |
| Covalla | Elizabeth | W306+A2 | 1,2 |
| Dahse | Winston | M14 | 34 |
| Damani | Sonal | W179 | 2 |
| Davenport | Kimberly | W255 | 1,2 |
| Day | Jonathan | W308 | 1,21,34 |
| Decell | Michael | M16 | 1,7 |
| Derry | Jon | W70 | 1,8 |
| Devine | Kelley | W168 | 2 |
| Dieckman | Eric | W324 | 1,2 |
| Dilip | P | W57 | 16,34 |
| DiStefano | Frances | W68 | 34 |
| Doby | Carl | W208 | 1,2 |
| Domask | Mary | E109 | 13,34 |
| Donahue | Kay | SM47 | 1,3,17,18,28,31,34 |
| Dorn | Michael | W147 | 5 |
| Dornbusch | Tom | W311 | 1,2,13,34 |
| Dower | Margaret | W176 | 1,2 |
| Downs | Travis | SM48 | 34 |
| Downs | Travis | W33 | 34 |
| Downs | Travis | W64 | 32 |
| Duran | Elias | E98 | 7 |
| Duran | Elias | E98 | 7,34 |
| Durham | Phillip | W206 | 1,2 |
| Dvoretzky | Rachel | SM49 | 1,6,8,10,17,34 |
| Dvoretzky | Rachel | W197 | 1,34 |
| Eaton | Seth | W260 | 1 |
| Eggleston | Tammy | W90 | 34 |
| Emal | Matthew | W35 | 34 |
| England | Liz | W245 | 1 |
| Engle | J.R. | W277 | 1 |
| Epps | Scott | W131 | 1,2 |
| Eury | Robert | M21 | 1,4,26,34 |

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| Name | | Commenter No. (see note below) | Response Nos. |
|-----------|------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| Eyler | Alan | W152 | 1,3,34 |
| Fairchild | Elizabeth | W62 | 1 |
| Fairchild | Elizabeth | W166 | 1,34 |
| Farrar | Jessica | E107 | 1,4,34 |
| Ferguson | Shiela | W213 | 34 |
| Fernandez | Sara | W198 | 1,2 |
| Filipow | Sean | W132 | 1,2,34 |
| Fischer | Beth | W221 | 3,23 |
| Fischer | Stephen | W219 | 1,2 |
| Fischer | Beth | W36 | 3,23,25 |
| Fleetwood | Carolyn | E89 | 1 |
| Flores | Alma | W284 | 1 |
| Fogelson | Abby | W285 | 1 |
| Foster | Michael | E110 | 7,34 |
| Friedman | Rex | W281 | 34 |
| Fudge | Dawn | W338 | 1,2,22 |
| Gammill | Cecil | W144 | 1 |
| Gammill | Cecil | W320 | 1 |
| Gammill | Cecil | W321 | 34 |
| Gammill | Cecil | W326 | 34 |
| Gary | Patrick | SM73 | 34 |
| Garza | Janie | W123 | 3,34 |
| Gibson | Josh | SM74 | 34 |
| Gonzales | Anthony & Pamela | SM50 | 1 |
| Goodwin | Kathy | W354 | 34 |
| Gordon | Lana | W87 | 1,2 |
| Greco | Debbie | W279 | 1,2 |
| Greco | Stephen | W280 | 1,2 |
| Greene | Stuart | W106 | 34 |
| Greenspan | Heather | W231 | 1,2 |
| Greenspan | Marcus | W230 | 1,2 |
| Greenspan | Marcus | W233 | 34 |
| Griffith | Debra Elliott | W173 | 1,2,21 |
| Griffith | Rob | SM51 | 1,5,7,28,34 |
| Griffith | Robert | W266 | 34 |
| Guerrero | Hugo | W45 | 8,9 |
| Guerrero | Hugo | W108 | 1,34 |
| H | Jack | W83 | 34 |
| Halder | Avijit | W78 | 34 |
| Hall | Tory | M13 | 16 |
| Harbert | Clint | M24 | 1,34 |
| Harris | Brooke | W178 | 1,2 |
| Harrison | Jackie | W299 | 34 |
| Harrison | Laura | W193 | 1,2 |
| Harrison | Victoria | W169 | 34 |
| Harrison | Victoria | W170 | 1,2,22 |

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| Name | | Commenter No. (see note below) | Response Nos. |
|---------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| Hart | J. Barry | E92 | 7,34 |
| Hauptman | Julie | W185 | 1,2 |
| Hayes | Lisa | W201 | 1,2 |
| Hayles | Joseph | W259 | 1 |
| Hayslip | Mary | W177 | 1,2 |
| Hazen | Ryan | W158 | 1 |
| Hazen | Ryan | W159 | 1 |
| Helm | Thomas | W296 | 34 |
| Henn | Lydia | W128 | 1,2 |
| Herbage | Ann | W94 | 1,2 |
| Hernandez | Nery | E100 | 1,7 |
| Hernandez | Nery | W164 | 1,7 |
| Hernandez | Nery | W164 | 1,7 |
| Hohmann | Garrett | W97 | 1,2 |
| Hohmann | Stacie | W95 | 1,2 |
| Hooge | Jeff | W136 | 1,2 |
| Houghton | Adele | W251 | 1,2 |
| House | Doug | W207 | 1,2 |
| Houston | Becky | W256 | 1,34 |
| Hoyle | Kimberly | W261 | 1,2 |
| Hrivnatz | David | SM75 | 1,5,18,34 |
| Hurst | Randolph | W143 | 1 |
| Jahangiri | Jay | W291 | 34 |
| Jahangiri | Romin & Jay | SM76 | 1,7,34 |
| Jahangiri | Sherwin | W293 | 34 |
| Jahangiri | Soheila | W294 | 34 |
| Jaso | Rebecca | E101 | 1,31,34 |
| Jimenez | Manuel | W127 | 34 |
| Johnson | Scott | W111 | 1,34 |
| Johnson | Scott | W269 | 1,2,3,34 |
| Jones | Tamela | W155 | 26,34 |
| Joseph | Karen | W82 | 34 |
| K | K | W75 | 34 |
| K | George | W76 | 34 |
| Keller | Angie | W267 | 34 |
| Kelley | Skiles | W203 | 1,2 |
| Kellogg | Paul | W329 | 1,34 |
| Kelly | David | W265 | 1,2,34 |
| Kelman | Brie | W312 | 1 |
| Kelman | Scott | W313 | 1 |
| Kern | Nancy | W116 | 1,2,34 |
| Kopczynski | Kurt | W118 | 1,2,5 |
| Kressman | Monica | W134 | 1,2 |
| Lambertz | Larry | W325 | 34 |
| Landen-Greene | Heidi | W355 | 1 |
| Landin | H | W79 | 34 |

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| Name | | Commenter No. (see note below) | Response Nos. |
|-----------|----------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| Lane | Suzette | W249 | 1,2,34 |
| Large | Monte | E95 | 26,34 |
| Larimore | James | E104 | 3 |
| Latter | Richard | W39 | 16 |
| Laureles | Heather | W226 | 1,2,8,24 |
| Laurent | Dion & Lisa | W268 | 1,34 |
| Lawler | Mary | W113 | 1,2 |
| Lenz | Paula | W43 | 34 |
| Lessman | Sarah | SM52 | 1,17,18,28 |
| Levinson | Francis | W141 | 34 |
| Liddle | Jeffrey | W91 | 1,2 |
| Lindner | Fred | W100 | 1 |
| Lindner | Janette | W227 | 2 |
| Lindow | Kenneth Taylor | W32 | 5,6,8,34 |
| Lindow | Peggy | W51 | 1 |
| Liu | Frank | W288 | 1,34 |
| Lovett | Julia | W150 | 34 |
| Lynch | Sandra | W121 | 34 |
| Lytle | Aaron | W209 | 1 |
| Mackey | James | W167 | 1 |
| Madrid | Sarah | W286 | 1 |
| Mahendru | Sameera | W238 | 1 |
| Margle | Michael | W194 | 34 |
| Marroquin | Linda | W99 | 1,2 |
| Marshall | Jerry | W84 | 34 |
| Martinez | Jaime | M23 | 7,34 |
| Martinez | Janice | W157 | 1,2 |
| Martinez | Melanie | W130 | 1,2 |
| Mastal | Megan | W96 | 1,2 |
| Masters | Juleena | SM54 | 1, 13 |
| Masters | Blake | SM53 | 1,8,9,17 |
| Masters | Blake | W114 | 1 |
| Masters | Blake | W175 | 1 |
| Mather | Tara | W110 | 1,2 |
| Mattenson | Jan | W222 | 1,2,22 |
| Matthews | Carl | W287 | 15,34 |
| Maxwell | Robert | W49 | 3 |
| Mazoch | Dominic | SM55 | 3,9,28,34 |
| McCready | Erica | W218 | 1,2 |
| McGary | John | W104 | 1 |
| McIntyre | Heather | W112 | 1,2,34 |
| McMahan | Arielle | W316 | 2 |
| McMahan | Harry | W315 | 2 |
| McMillan | Dan | W105 | 34 |
| McNally | Kevin | W310 | 1 |
| Mechlem | Jeff | W129 | 34 |

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| Name | | Commenter No. (see note below) | Response Nos. |
|------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Mendoza | Angie | E96 | 34 |
| Mendoza | Maria | W37 | 10,34 |
| Merrick | Tami | W31 | 34 |
| Merrick | Tami | E87 | 34 |
| Merrick | Tami | W44 | 34 |
| Merrick | Tami | W46 | 30, |
| Merrick | Tami | E91 | 1,3,5,9,10,13,17,18,34 |
| Merrick | Tami | W120 | 34 |
| Merrick | Tami | W149 | 12,34 |
| Merrick | Tami | W271 | 25, 34 |
| Merrick | Tami | W278 | 34 |
| Merrick | Tami | W351 | 34 |
| Merrick | Tami | M20 | 24 |
| Meyers | Martha | W242 | 1,34 |
| Meza | Arturo | W307 | 1,2 |
| Mielke | Jaymie | W52 | 1 |
| Milner | Deborah | W302 | 1 |
| Mladineo | Fernando | W357 | 1 |
| Mongeon | Chris | W253 | 1 |
| Moon | Nancy | W202 | 1,2 |
| Moschioni | John | M17 | 5,24,34 |
| Moss | John | SM56 | 34 |
| Moss | Louise | SM57 | 6,8,14,25,34 |
| Mueller | Kristen | W229 | 1,2 |
| Murphy | Sean | W248 | 3 |
| Muscara | Joe | W196 | 1,2 |
| Myers | Gretchen | W220 | 1,2 |
| Netherland | Kristin | W319 | 1 |
| Nickerson | Dave | W63 | 1,19,34 |
| Noble | Melissa | W250 | 1,2 |
| Norton | Joseph | W199 | 1 |
| Noxon | Carrie | W236 | 1 |
| Nuber | Tim | E88 | 34 |
| O'Leary | Kevin | W77 | 34 |
| Olson | David & Kaela | W160 | 34 |
| O'Malley | Marcia | W328 | 1 |
| Orgish | Eleonore | W339 | 34 |
| Ostlind | Jennifer | W191 | 21,34 |
| P | Andrew | W67 | 1 |
| Pacheco | Andrea | W117 | 1,2 |
| Pacheco | Yvonne | W109 | 1,2 |
| Parker | Wendy | W41 | 28 |
| Parker | Wendy | W137 | 1,2,34 |
| Perkins | D. Craig | W263 | 1,2 |
| Perkins | Patricia | W262 | 1,2 |
| Perrkins | Donna | W126 | 1,34 |

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|------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| Perry | Marci | W327 | 34 |
| Peterson | Selma | W151 | 1 |
| Petitions signed by approx. 237 | Cecil | P2 | 1 |
| Pina | Jose | W48 | 5 |
| Pounds | Lisa | W69 | 34 |
| Preston | Stephen | E111 | 7 |
| Preston | Stephen | W56 | 7 |
| Prochaska | Mike | W188 | 34 |
| Proctor | Robert | W309 | 1,34 |
| Puento | Sandra | SM58 | 5,24,34 |
| Quiroz | A. | W146 | 1,2 |
| R | Frank | W85 | 1 |
| Radtke | Nathan | W257 | 1,2 |
| Raimond | Randy | W154 | 1,2 |
| Ralph | Susan | W148 | 5,7 |
| Reddy | Malladi | M15 | 1,7,34 |
| Reyna | Rebecca | W187 | 7 |
| Reyna | Sandra | SM59 | 27,28 |
| Riceman | Stephanie | W214 | 1,2 |
| Richards | Brett | W81 | 34 |
| Richmond Jr. | Jonathan | W276 | 34 |
| Richter | Coyia | W103 | 1,2 |
| Richter | Coyia | W241 | 1,2 |
| Risner | Cody | W184 | 34 |
| Riviera | Nick | W92 | 2,20 |
| Robbins | Mary | W225 | 1,34 |
| Roberts | Marco | W350 | 34 |
| Robertson | Gregory | W89 | 1 |
| Robertson | John | W54 | 1 |
| Robinson | Ann | M18 | 1,34 |
| Robinson | Devin | W289 | 34 |
| Rodriguez | Paul | W156 | 1 |
| Rosales | Brennan | W345 | 34 |
| Rosales | Miguel | SM60 | 1,11,28 |
| Rosario | Joanna | SM61 | 16,27,28 |
| Ruth | Carolynn | W86 | 7 |
| Rutledge | Patrick | W200 | 1 |
| Salil | Suparna | W303 | 1 |
| Samson | Christie | W133 | 34 |
| Sandefer Hill | Shea | W240 | 1 |
| Santos | Dolores | SM62 | 16,34 |
| Saunders | Stacey | W216 | 1,2,3 |
| SB | Daniel | W71 | 1 |
| Scheuli | Adam | W282 | 34 |

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|----------------|--------------|---|----------------------|
| Schroller | Jay | W189 | 1,5,14,24,34 |
| Sears | April | W183 | 1,2 |
| Shatswell | Barry | W122 | 1,2 |
| Sheeren | Bonnie | W171 | 1,2 |
| Shepard III | Thomas | W290 | 1 |
| Sherman | Howard | W246 | 2 |
| Showalter | Jamie | W138 | 1,2 |
| Simpson | Richard | W314 | 1 |
| Simpson | J. Royce | W224 | 1,2 |
| Slotboom | Oscar | SM63 | 34 |
| Smith | Louise | W186 | 1,2 |
| Smith | Philip | W356 | 1,2 |
| Smith | Terry | W88 | 34 |
| Smith-Levinson | Fontana | W300 | 34 |
| Snyder | Paula | W336 | 1 |
| Spieldenner | Angela | W237 | 1,2 |
| Steichen | Aaron | W142 | 1,2 |
| Stein | Madilyn | W174 | 34 |
| Sternfels | Melissa | W252 | 1,34 |
| Stockton | Pete | W330 | 34 |
| Stratton | Mark | E102 | 7,34 |
| Strawn | Sabrina | W115 | 1,34 |
| Stuart | Laurence | W247 | 1 |
| Sutherland | Carrie | W275 | 1 |
| Tabatabai | Syed Ali | E103 | 1,7 |
| Tabatabai | Syed Ali | W153 | 1,7 |
| Taylor | Richard | W190 | 1,2 |
| Tennant | Barbara | W332 | 1,2 |
| Thomas | Damon | W283 | 1,2 |
| Thomas | Heather | W297 | 1 |
| Thomas | Larry | W139 | 34 |
| Tomlinson | Jeff | W274 | 1 |
| Torgerson | Viula | W234 | 1 |
| Trang | Anna Sundrud | W172 | 1,2 |
| Trevino | Jose | W264 | 34 |
| Trevino | Jose Angel | W47 | 3 |
| Trevino | Jose Angel | W180 | 3 |
| Truman | Bob | SM64 | 3 |
| TwoSisters | Rowan | W318 | 2 |
| Unknown 1 | | SM65 | 3 |
| Unknown 2 | | SM66 | 18 |
| Unknown 3 | | SM67 | 20,34 |
| Unknown 4 | | SM68 | 34 |
| Unknown 5 | | SM69 | 34 |
| Unknown 6 | | SM70 | 34 |
| Unknown 7 | | SM77 | 34 |

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| Name | | Commenter No. (see note below) | Response Nos. |
|-------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| Unknown 8 | | M19 | 34 |
| Valdez | Rafael | SM78 | 34 |
| Van Burkleo | Lix | W254 | 2 |
| Vance | Mike | W124 | 1,5,6,20 |
| Vargas | Rachel | E93 | 1 |
| Vega | Roland | W74 | 34 |
| Villaescusa | Doug | W135 | 1,2 |
| Villaescusa | Julie | W93 | 1,2 |
| W. | Judy | W353 | 34 |
| W. | Kristen | W145 | 34 |
| Walters | Randy | W58 | 7 |
| Ware | Keville | W55 | 1 |
| Warfield | Benjamin | W212 | 1,2 |
| Watkins | Nathan | W317 | 34 |
| Watkins | Nathan | E94 | 34 |
| Watkins | Nathan | E97 | 34 |
| Watkins | Nathan | E108 | 1,7 |
| Webb | Jarret | W235 | 1,2 |
| Webb | Suzanne | W215 | 1,2 |
| Webb | Valerie | W243 | 1,2 |
| Werner III | Braynard | W258 | 34 |
| West | Carly | W272 | 1,2 |
| West | Jane Cahill | W210 | 1,4,13,34 |
| Weston | Jim | W334 | 1,2 |
| Wienbroer | Walter | SM71 | 5,20,24,34 |
| Wilkerson | Larry | W343 | 1 |
| Willcockson | J.E. | W42 | 1,34 |
| Williams | Dana | W244 | 1,2,34 |
| Williams | M. | W61 | 26,34 |
| Wixted | James | W304 | 34 |
| Woodson | Norman | SM79 | 1 |
| Yoon | Sunghwan | W72 | 26,34 |
| York | E | W292 | 1,2 |
| | AJ | W80 | 34 |
| | Angela | W211 | 1,20 |
| | Jeff | W65 | 34 |
| | Jim | W335 | 1,2 |
| | Anonymous 1 | SM80 | 7,34 |
| | Anonymous 2 | SM81 | 28,30 |

Commenter Numbers: SM=Scoping Meeting, E=Email, M=Mail, W=Website

North Houston Highway Improvement Project

Scoping Meetings – October 2012

Responses to Comments

1. Response to comments about the process of developing and evaluating alternatives for the proposed North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP), and the design alternatives for Segments 1, 2, and 3.

We are still in the early stages of project development. The NHHIP involves evaluation of IH 45 North from the US 59/SH 288 interchange to Beltway 8 North, the Hardy Toll Road from IH 610 North Loop to Beltway 8 North, and portions of IH 10 and US 59 near downtown Houston. The solution to the highway transportation needs in the study corridor has not been determined. Previous studies (North-Hardy Corridor Studies) identified a need for additional highway capacity in the north Houston corridor, and recommended adding 4 managed lanes to the IH 45/Hardy Toll Road corridor from downtown Houston to Beltway 8 North (North-Hardy Planning Studies, Highway Component, 2005).

We considered traffic projections and regional roadway planning, information on environmental constraints, and input from the public and agencies to develop a “universe” of alternatives that meet the highway transportation needs in the study corridor. These alternatives were presented to agencies and the public for comments in October 2012. Traffic data from 2012 was used to screen the project alternatives. This data is more recent than what was used in the project Purpose and Need Statement. The 2012 traffic data is currently being updated and will be continuously, for use in future alternative screening. The most up to date traffic data will be available at the next public meetings.

The plan is for the project team to narrow the focus of study from the wide range of alternatives, the “universe of alternatives”, to a reasonable range of alternatives for more detailed study. The range of alternatives includes a "No Action", or No Build alternative. The universe of alternatives was developed from previously identified alternatives that were presented in the *North-Hardy Planning Studies Alternatives Analysis Report (Highway Component)*, and alternatives developed by the project engineering team. The NHHIP alternatives are roadway transportation alternatives, and include at-grade, elevated, and tunnel design options. Interchanges, access ramps, frontage roads, access to adjacent properties, and other design considerations will be determined in overview only as high level access points. Specific design details will not be available at this stage of the alternative review process. Input from agencies and the public will be considered in the development of alternatives. TxDOT and FHWA will determine the reasonable alternatives and preferred alternative, considering input from other agencies and the public throughout the study process.

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As discussed in the presentation at the Scoping Meeting, during the approval process for the Final North-Hardy report for the Highway Component, TxDOT agreed to the following goals for this phase of project planning.

- Stay within the existing IH 45 right-of-way between Quitman Street and Cavalcade Street, except at intersections where turn lanes may be needed.
- Minimize adverse effects on quality of life issues of the residents and neighborhoods in the project area.
- Study Hardy Toll Road as an alternative route for additional lanes.
- Evaluate use of tunnels as an alternative in areas of constrained right-of-way.

As discussed in the Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan (ACPIP) for the NHHIP, two additional public meetings are planned during development and evaluation of alternatives, prior to distribution of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). A public hearing will be held after distribution of the DEIS. TxDOT and FHWA will also continue conducting meetings with cooperating and participating agencies. The project team will also meet with elected officials and resource agencies as needed or as requested to discuss the alternatives and evaluation criteria. A final decision on the proposed project will not be made by TxDOT and FHWA until after agencies and the public have the opportunity to comment on the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The ACPIP includes a proposed schedule for planned meetings and project milestones and describes the study process and agency and public review in detail. It is not expected that the DEIS would be complete before 2014. Final design would not be completed until after the EIS process is complete.

Specific comments and questions about alternatives and project design have been reviewed by the project team and are being considered during the project development process. At this stage of the alternatives evaluation process, each comment and question cannot be responded to, as many details about the project are not known. More detailed information about the alternatives will be developed as the study proceeds.

Yellow circles presented on the exhibits at the Second Public Meeting were indications of where future interchanges may be constructed. These did not indicate right-of-way requirements for this project.

2. Response to comments about the cost of the project and estimated improvement of average speed (3 miles per hour) on general-purpose lanes, and request to update traffic data.

The North-Hardy Planning Studies - Alternatives Analysis Report (Highway Component) documents the analysis of highway alternatives evaluated for the North-Hardy study

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corridor. Conceptual Capital Cost was one factor examined in the analysis of the “short list” of six build alternatives. Other factors were: Mobility Improvements/Demand Potential, Regional Connectivity, Ease of Implementation, Environmental Impacts, and Community Impacts. Similar evaluation factors, and additional criteria are being used to evaluate and compare alternatives for the proposed NHHIP. Traffic mobility impacts of the Universe of Alternatives were evaluated, and will continue to be evaluated as alternatives are refined. Reduced travel times can reduce travel costs, and for roadways with thousands of trips per day, the cumulative cost savings can be substantial. Project construction costs will be evaluated for the three reasonable alternatives once these are identified.

3. Response to comments about considering other modes of transportation (rail, transit) as alternatives for the proposed NHHIP.

- a. Agencies should work together to develop a project that includes transit (rail, bus, etc.)
- b. Coordinate this study with TxDOT Rail Division’s HSIPR (high speed rail) study
- c. HOV lanes should be preserved, and FTA’s investment in them
- d. METRO needs to ensure that alternatives would maintain or improve access points and accommodate buses

A variety of modal choices were considered during the North-Hardy Corridor studies, which the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) participated in with TxDOT and the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC). Modes of transportation addressed in the North-Hardy Corridor Studies included transit (bus and rail) and highway. The studies identified a need for alternative transportation modes in the north Houston corridor. METRO is implementing the transit plan in the corridor, including light rail projects. The Gulf Coast Rail District and TxDOT Rail Division are studying other regional commuter rail alternatives. The NHHIP is proposed to implement highway improvements in the area of the North-Hardy Corridor from downtown Houston to Beltway 8 North.

Summary of North-Hardy Corridor Studies

The North-Hardy Corridor studies evaluated transit and highway improvement alternatives for a corridor from downtown Houston to 30 miles north, principally in the area between IH 45 and the Hardy Toll Road, and including Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH) and segments of IH 45 and US 59 south of downtown. Study results were documented in the three reports listed below.

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2003 North-Hardy Corridor Alternatives Analysis Report: Examined transit and highway alternatives; recommended that transit alternatives be examined prior to detailed evaluation of highway alternatives.

2004 North-Hardy Corridor Planning Studies, Alternatives Analysis Report (Transit Component): Findings used to develop a regional Transit System Plan that combines an aggressive bus service program with Advanced High Capacity Transit (light rail). METRO is implementing the transit plan, including light rail.

2005 North-Hardy Planning Studies, Alternatives Analysis Report (Highway Component): The Recommended Highway Alternative from downtown Houston to Beltway 8 North was to add four managed lanes to the IH 45/Hardy Toll Road corridor.

4. Response to comments about possible increases in congestion in the inner city, additional traffic on surface streets and in neighborhoods, and potential impacts to community and public resources caused by congestion or additional neighborhood traffic.

The proposed project will be planned to reduce traffic congestion, increase safety, and facilitate hurricane evacuation. TxDOT will make every effort to avoid or minimize potential adverse impacts to community, public, and other sensitive resources by minimizing right-of-way acquisition, and will identify mitigation measures for unavoidable adverse impacts. Every effort will be made to minimize adverse effects on quality of life issues of the residents and neighborhoods. Neighborhood traffic should not increase, and may decrease if highways are improved. Traffic analysis studies will be performed.

5. Response to comments about possible adverse impacts to neighborhoods and quality of life.

FHWA and TxDOT will make every effort to minimize adverse impacts to neighborhoods and associated quality of life issues of the residents of neighborhoods. Potential environmental impacts of the alternatives developed will be evaluated and will be an integral part of the transportation decision-making process for the project. An important purpose of the EIS process is to identify potential impacts resulting from a proposed project, including beneficial and adverse impacts, and to identify measures that may avoid, minimize, or mitigate unavoidable adverse impacts. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and FHWA's implementing regulations and related guidance, the EIS will consider various environmental, socioeconomic, and other impacts for each reasonable alternative considered. The

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analysis of quality of life considerations will include evaluation of existing neighborhood resources (for example, residences, businesses, parks, churches and other places of worship, historic properties, public land, visual/aesthetic characteristics) and the potential impacts of construction, traffic noise, air emissions, changes in access, right-of-way acquisition, etc. Direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the proposed project will be evaluated.

Potential impacts to low-income and minority populations will be identified in accordance with Executive Order 12898 - Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, 1994. The proposed project will be developed in consideration and support of the fundamental goals of environmental justice:

- To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.
- To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.
- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

6. Response to comments about the impact to neighborhoods and homes, due to expanding roadway right-of-way.

Preliminary right-of-way requirements for the proposed project alternatives were identified and shown at the scoping meetings in October 2012. Maps and typical sections are also shown on the project website (www.ih45northandmore.com). For the three study segments, the alternatives that were developed would have varying right-of-way requirements, and a detailed assessment has not been performed. The next phase of alternatives analysis and development will include an evaluation of the potential impacts to neighborhoods and homes. The proposed evaluation criteria are listed in the "Secondary Screening Process for Preliminary Alternatives".

One of TxDOT's goals for this phase of project planning is to stay within the existing IH 45 right-of-way way between Quitman Street and Cavalcade Street, except at intersections where turn lanes may be needed. Another goal is to minimize adverse effects on quality of life issues of the residents and neighborhoods in the project area.

In accordance with NEPA and FHWA's implementing regulations and related guidance, the EIS will consider various environmental, socioeconomic, and other impacts for each reasonable alternative considered. The analysis of potential impacts of expanding the

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roadway right-of-way will include evaluating potential impacts to neighborhoods, homes, businesses, and other land uses. Direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the proposed project will be evaluated.

7. Responses to comments about the potential impact to businesses and employment.

In accordance with NEPA and FHWA's implementing regulations and related guidance, the EIS will consider various environmental, socioeconomic, and other impacts for each reasonable alternative considered. The analysis of potential impacts of expanding the roadway right-of-way will include evaluating potential impacts to businesses, including employment. Direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the proposed project will be evaluated. As alternatives are evaluated in more detail, the study team will evaluate potential right-of-way requirements, changes in access, traffic impacts, and other factors that could affect businesses.

Preliminary right-of-way requirements for the proposed project alternatives were identified and shown at the scoping meetings in October 2012. Maps and typical sections are also shown on the project website (www.ih45northandmore.com). For the three study segments, the alternatives that were developed would have varying right-of-way requirements, and a detailed assessment has not been performed. The next phase of alternatives analysis and development will include an evaluation of the potential impacts to businesses. The proposed evaluation criteria are listed in the "Secondary Screening Process for Preliminary Alternatives".

Specific questions and comments from business owners are being noted by the project team for consideration, but are not being individually responded to at this stage of the alternatives evaluation process.

8. Response to comments about noise and vibration.

Traffic noise impacts will be evaluated during the EIS process in accordance with federal regulations. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 provides broad authority and responsibility for evaluating and mitigating adverse environmental effects, including roadway traffic noise. The federal legislation that specifically involves abatement of roadway traffic noise is the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1970. This law mandates FHWA to develop noise standards for mitigating roadway traffic noise and requires promulgation of traffic noise-level criteria for various land use activities. FHWA's Noise Standard is at 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 772. TxDOT

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developed guidelines for analysis and abatement of roadway traffic noise for Federal projects authorized under 23 United States Code (USC). The guidance was reviewed and approved by FHWA. Analysis of traffic noise impacts and noise abatement will be performed as part of the EIS for the NHHIP.

TxDOT is not required to assess the impact of operational traffic-induced vibrations. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) determined in 2005 that most studies have shown that both measured and predicted vibration levels are less than any known criteria for structural damage to buildings.

Some specific comments on noise include:

- Construct noise barriers prior to roadway construction.
 - Response: This would be decided by the contractor for the project and is not known at this time.
- Noise abatement should be included on elevated structures to reduce noise levels.
 - Response: This will be included in the noise evaluation which will be produced later on in the alternative evaluation process.
- Use polymer pour or other materials to reduce noise levels.
 - Use of specific pavement types or surface textures is not considered as a noise abatement measure, per TxDOT's guidelines and in accordance with 23 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) 772.13. Asphaltic concrete pavement (ACP) will not be used because of maintenance issues. On high volume freeways an overlay is required every 3-4 years. This introduces a level of danger to the traveling public and the construction crews, since the main lanes have to be closed at night to perform the overlay. The Department feels the risk of loss of life and injury is not worth the possible benefit.
- Reduce noise levels with landscaping.
 - Response: Landscaping will be included but it has been determined to be ineffective for noise reduction.

9. Response to comments about air quality, air pollution and emissions, and health protection.

Air quality impacts will be evaluated and documented in the EIS in accordance with applicable air quality regulations and guidance. Because the project is in an area that does not attain the ozone standard, it must conform to the State Implementation Plan (SIP) to achieve national ambient air quality standards. The proposed project must be consistent with the area's financially constrained Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The RTP and the first four years of roadway projects, called the Transportation

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Improvement Program (TIP), for the Houston-Galveston region must be determined to be conforming to the region's motor vehicle emissions budget set by the state.

The air quality analysis conducted for the EIS will address ozone, carbon monoxide (CO) and Mobile Source Air Toxics (MSAT). Carbon dioxide is recognized as a naturally occurring greenhouse gas. It has been classified as a pollutant by the EPA, but is not currently regulated under the National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

10. Response to comments about flooding and drainage.

Drainage and flooding are important considerations that will be addressed during the project development process. The proposed project would be designed to not adversely impact the base flooding elevations to a level that would violate applicable floodplain regulations and ordinances. Proposed roadway drainage facilities would permit conveyance of the 100-year flood without causing major impacts to the main lanes of the proposed roadways, streams, or adjacent properties. Fill placement in the floodplain would be mitigated with equivalent floodplain storage in the vicinity of the proposed project. During final design, final drainage and mitigation analyses will be performed, and will be reviewed by regulatory agencies to confirm that adequate measures have been taken to ensure that floodplain encroachment does not increase the risk of flooding to adjacent property. Addressing current flooding is not a focal point of this project, nor is it an issue under the jurisdiction of TxDOT. The NHHIP will not contribute to additional flooding. Storm water detention ponds may be required as mitigation for storm water flow; TxDOT will consider wet-bottom detention ponds if another local agency will maintain them.

11. Response to comments about tolling.

A reasonable range of alternatives will be considered to satisfy the identified need for and purpose of the project. The alternatives will include managed lanes/tolling alternatives. The Texas transportation system faces challenges like never before. Demand on the system is outpacing available revenue, and factors like inflation, a growing population, an aging infrastructure and more fuel-efficient vehicles are pushing current funding sources to their limits. Tolls are used as an additional source of revenue to fund construction and maintenance of roadways. Existing lanes on IH 45 would not be tolled. New lanes on IH 45 may be tolled. Hardy Toll Road will continue to be tolled. TxDOT is coordinating with Harris County Toll Road Authority (HCTRA) during the NHHIP studies.

Some specific comments on tolling include:

- Would TxDOT or HCTRA be responsible for tolling?

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- Response: This has not yet been determined.
- Charge single occupant vehicles a toll
 - Response: This is a good probability but has not yet been decided.
- Explore adding free HOV access to HCTRA toll roads during rush hour
 - Response: This will be decided by HCTRA. HOV lanes will not be removed.

12. Response to comments about funding the project through sale of bonds.

This is a funding option that will probably be used to fund part of the project.

13. Response to comments about visual impacts.

FHWA and TxDOT will make every effort to minimize adverse visual impacts. Potential environmental impacts of the alternatives developed will be evaluated and will be an integral part of the transportation decision-making process for the project. An important purpose of the EIS process is to identify potential impacts resulting from a proposed project, including beneficial and adverse visual impacts, and to identify measures that may avoid, minimize, or mitigate unavoidable adverse impacts.

14. Response to comments about impacts to parks and recreation.

FHWA and TxDOT will make every effort to minimize adverse impacts to parks and other recreation resources. Potential environmental impacts of the alternatives developed will be evaluated and will be an integral part of the transportation decision-making process for the project. An important purpose of the EIS process is to identify potential impacts resulting from a proposed project, including beneficial and adverse impacts, and to identify measures that may avoid, minimize, or mitigate unavoidable adverse impacts.

Some specific comments on parks include:

- Coordinate with City of Houston Parks Department to create a covered green belt (Segment 2)
 - Response: It is too early in the process to commit or not commit to this request. It will be addressed in the future if required by the selected alternatives.

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- Is there federal money available for building more parks? Use carbon credits or sell right-of-way on TXDOT land
 - Response: The federal money TxDOT receives for projects are for transportation projects only and cannot be used to build parks. Coordination with the City of Houston Parks Department will be addressed in the future if required by the selected alternatives.

Per federal regulations, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and other DOT agencies cannot approve the use of land from publicly owned parks, recreational areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, or public and private historical sites unless certain conditions apply. FHWA will ensure that the study process complies with the regulations.

15. Response to comments about having better, more definitive goals for the project.

FWHA and TXDOT will review the project goals throughout the study process, as alternatives are developed and evaluated, and consider input from agencies and the public. Goals will be quantified, where appropriate, to address transportation needs related to congestion, safety, emergency evacuation, and roadway design.

16. Response to comments about impacts to property values and property acquisition.

There are many variables that influence property values. Property values can increase, decrease, or remain the same as a result of roadway improvements. A cursory review of studies on this topic reveals that transportation improvements can affect property values both beneficially and negatively. The NHHIP will be developed to minimize adverse impacts to residential, commercial, industrial, and other land uses in the project area.

Property acquisition would not occur until the EIS study and engineering design is complete. When property acquisition is required, TXDOT's acquisition and relocation assistance program would provide assistance and counseling to residential property owners that would be required to relocate. The relocation assistance program is conducted in accordance with the *Uniform Relocation and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970*, as amended; *49 CFR Part 24, Subparts C through F*; *Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968* (Federal Fair Housing law); *Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Amendment Act of 1974* and TXDOT policies and procedures. Relocation resources would be available, without discrimination, to all affected property owners required to relocate as a result of the implementation of a proposed project. No person would be displaced by this project unless and until adequate replacement housing has already been provided or is in place. Replacement housing would be

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offered to all displaced persons regardless of their race, color, religion, sex, disability, or national origin. All replacement housing would be decent, safe, and sanitary, without causing undue financial hardship. Non-residential property owners, such as businesses, churches, and others would be provided information on adequate replacement locations for their current property and may be reimbursed for costs based on TxDOT policies and procedures.

17. Response to comments about aesthetics and incorporating landscaping into the project.

There are a variety of federal, state, and departmental acts and directives that mandate TxDOT design and maintenance activities related to landscape and aesthetics design. While there are numerous citations, the combined impact of these requirements can be summarized as follows:

- The landscape and visual aesthetic qualities of a transportation corridor are an environmental characteristic that, by law, must be considered in the design process and, where possible, enhanced.
- The landscape disturbed by the construction of a highway must be reestablished for environmental and aesthetic reasons. The revegetation process is to be accomplished with appropriate native and adapted species.
- To the extent possible, plants used for revegetation of rights-of-way should be low water use (xeric) plant materials.
- Where a transportation project must disturb an environmentally sensitive landscape, wetland, historic site, established residential neighborhood, or scenic landscape, appropriate actions must be taken to mitigate visual and adverse environmental impacts.
- TxDOT recognizes the need for developing highways with acceptable visual quality and has developed several proactive programs that encourage and assist the development of such transportation corridors. These include the Transportation Enhancements Program, Construction Landscape Program, Cost Share Program, the Governors Community Achievement Awards, Green Ribbon Landscape Improvement Program, and Landscape Partnership Program.

18. Response to comments about improving access for pedestrians, cyclists, and/or transit riders.

Bicycle use on frontage roads will be considered if enough right-of-way is available. Bicyclists and pedestrians would not be allowed on the main lanes of IH 45, Hardy Toll Road, IH 10 and US 59.

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In accordance with the federal Policy Statement on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations Regulations and Recommendations by U.S. Department of Transportation (March 2010), TxDOT will consider including bicycle and pedestrian accommodations in the proposed project, taking into consideration existing and anticipated bicycle and pedestrian facility systems and needs, and linkages to transit stops and corridors.

19. Response to comments about encouraging single-passenger commuter traffic.

Highway transportation improvements are needed within the NHHIP area because the existing IH 45 facility currently operates near capacity, resulting in congestion during peak and off-peak periods. Additionally, future transportation demand from projected population and economic growth is expected to place a greater strain on the existing facility. The population of the Houston-Galveston region is expected to increase by an estimated 3 million people, or 65 percent, between the years 2000 to 2035, while the growth rate in the study corridor is projected to be approximately 35 percent. The additional travel demand resulting from population growth in the region will put a strain on the existing facility. The purpose of the proposed action is to help manage the projected transportation problems in the project corridor to improve mobility and safety.

Managed lanes are proposed and will be evaluated as part of this study. The managed lanes would provide travel options through a combination of limited capacity expansion coupled with operational strategies that seek to manage travel demand and improve transit and carpool opportunities.

20. Response to comments about the proposed project providing benefit to suburban areas while adversely affecting those who live in the city of Houston.

The NHHIP will be planned to provide benefit to all users of the roadway(s) that TxDOT would propose to improve under this project. Projected increases in population and employment in the Houston region will contribute to additional traffic congestion on IH 45, which is currently classified as serious to severe. The existing IH 45 facility in the north Houston area currently operates near capacity, resulting in severe congestion during peak and off-peak periods. The proposed project is needed to address the severe congestion and to accommodate existing and anticipated future traffic. Additionally, the project is needed to bring the roadway up to current design standards, which would improve safety and provide for more efficient movement of people and goods. Improved efficiency is also needed to aid in evacuation events. The additional demand will put a strain on the existing facility, which also has design deficiencies in some areas, which affects safety. The purpose of the proposed North Houston Highway

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Improvement Project is to create additional roadway capacity to manage congestion, enhance safety, and to improve mobility and operational efficiency.

The Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) is the region-wide voluntary association of local governments in the 13-county Gulf Coast planning region of Texas. H-GAC has developed forecasts of the future development trends and growth patterns in the region, and the effects on the traffic volumes for the design year 2035 – as reflected in the long-range plan, the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Update, adopted January 25, 2011. The regional traffic model incorporates all of the approved and planned roadway, transit, and other transportation projects that are projected to be needed in the region for the next 20+ years.

21. Response to comments about the project encouraging suburban growth.

The proposed project is needed to address the severe congestion on existing IH 45 and to accommodate anticipated future highway traffic for the design year 2035. The existing IH 45 roadway facility in the north Houston area currently operates near capacity, resulting in congestion during peak and off-peak periods. Additionally, future transportation demand from projected population and economic growth throughout the entire Houston-Galveston region is expected to place a greater strain on the existing facility. The population of the entire Houston-Galveston region is expected to increase by an estimated 3 million people, or 65 percent, between the years 2000 to 2035. Suburban development is likely to continue to grow with or without the proposed project.

22. Response to comments about connecting Hardy Toll Road to downtown Houston.

The Harris County Toll Road Authority system map shows the Hardy Toll Road extension to downtown Houston as a future project. An assumption for the NHHIP study is that the extension is a reasonably foreseeable project, and that it will be operational by the time the NHHIP would be completed. Currently, the Harris County Toll Road Authority estimates that construction of the extension would begin in approximately two years.

23. Response to comments about conservation of natural resources.

FHWA and TxDOT will make every effort to minimize adverse impacts to natural resources. Potential environmental impacts of the alternatives developed will be evaluated and will be an integral part of the transportation decision-making process for the project. An important purpose of the EIS process is to identify potential impacts

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resulting from a proposed project, including beneficial and adverse impacts, and to identify measures that may avoid, minimize, or mitigate unavoidable adverse impacts. In accordance with NEPA and FHWA's implementing regulations and related guidance, the EIS process will consider the potential impacts to natural resources of reasonable alternatives considered. Natural resources to be addressed include wetlands, streams, vegetation, and wildlife.

Coordination regarding potential impacts to regulated resources, such as wetlands and water quality, would be in accordance with regulatory requirements. Permitting would be conducted in coordination with the applicable regulatory agency, and would involve review by agencies and the public, if required.

24. Response to comments about potential impacts to historic resources, including historic neighborhoods, districts, and buildings.

Potential environmental impacts to historic resources are being considered during the development and analysis of alternatives. In the initial screening of the universe of alternatives, no alternatives were identified that would impact a historic property that is on the National Register of Historic Places. Potential effects to historic resources will be evaluated in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) and the Antiquities Code of Texas.

In accordance with federal and state regulations, studies will be conducted during the EIS process to identify historic and archeological resources and the potential adverse effects of the proposed project. Every effort will be made to minimize disruption of and preserve existing historic resources, including potential historic districts, individual buildings/resources, and archeological resources.

25. Response to comments about potential impacts to cemeteries.

Potential environmental impacts to cemeteries will be considered during the development and analysis of alternatives. In the initial screening of the universe of alternatives, no alternatives were identified that would impact a cemetery.

Additional studies will be conducted during the EIS process to identify cemeteries and the potential adverse effects of the proposed project. Every effort will be made to minimize impacts to cemeteries.

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26. Response to comments about “rejoining”, or connecting, neighborhoods, and connecting to downtown Houston.

As alternatives are developed and evaluated, the feasibility of improving connections between neighborhoods will be investigated. Potential impacts to access to downtown Houston will be evaluated.

27. Response to comments about providing project information in Spanish.

Some project information was provided in Spanish at the October 2012 public meeting. Additional information will be produced in Spanish for future public meetings. TxDOT will conduct a bi-lingual public hearing. Spanish-speaking persons can discuss the proposed project with Spanish-speaking project team members who will be present at public meetings, and also by contacting the TxDOT Public Information Office at 713-802-5076.

28. Response to comments regarding ways to improve public outreach.

TxDOT will consider all suggestions received and will implement strategies and methods to improve the dissemination of information to the public. Some specific measures would include: more Spanish translated material, and 3D visuals once alternatives are narrowed down to the three reasonable alternatives.

29. Response to comments about considering the downtown Houston area roadways as a separate project.

Alternatives specific to the downtown area will be evaluated and may become separate projects for development if they can be shown to be independent projects. At this time, the highways around downtown - IH 45, IH 10, and US 59 – are included for evaluation in the NHHIP studies.

The limits or logical termini for project development are defined as (1) rational end points for a transportation improvement, and (2) rational end points for review of the environmental impacts. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) considers three factors when determining the limits of study for an EIS. The action evaluated in the EIS shall: (1) connect logical termini and be of sufficient length to address environmental matters on a broad scope, (2) have independent utility or independent significance, i.e., be usable and be a reasonable expenditure even if no additional transportation improvements in the area are made, and (3) not restrict consideration of alternatives for other reasonably foreseeable transportation improvements.

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30. Response to comments about the website (www.ih45northandmore.com).

- The third town hall meeting is not clearly listed on the website! Please add this data to the website.
 - Response: Only meetings sponsored by TxDOT will be advertised on the website.
- Keep website updated.
 - Response: Updates to the website will be more regularly as the project progresses.

31. Response to requests for receipt of project information.

Commenter(s) who requested to be included on the project mailing list have been added to the list. Commenter(s) who asked to be kept informed or updated on the project will be included on project communications, such as newsletters and emails. In addition, TxDOT will provide information on the website (www.ih45northandmore.com) and via the Public Information Office when there is news regarding the NHHIP.

32. When would the project be constructed?

A construction date has not been determined. The project development process is expected to last until 2016, including public and agency coordination, development and evaluation of alternatives, preparation of a Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision. The project could not be constructed after FHWA has approved the EIS and issued Record of Decision, design plans has been approved, and necessary permits and approvals are obtained. It is not known when construction will begin; it is too early in the process to estimate.

33. Response to comments about planning this as a sustainable project, and requesting information about practices TxDOT will implement in this project to provide sustainability and green practices.

The project would be developed under TxDOT's Green Ribbon Program, which allocates funds for trees and plants within the roadway right-of-way.

34. Response to general comments.

Comment noted.