



## I-45 North Houston Highway Improvement Project

# CHANGED FOR THE BETTER



## What Changes Have Been Made?

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) designed the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) so that it increases safety for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians by improving freeway and local street mobility. The overall design is a collaboration between TxDOT and a variety of stakeholders including the City of Houston, the Harris County Flood Control District, METRO, the Houston Housing Authority, management districts, super neighborhoods, civic associations and residents of affected areas and other interested individuals and groups. Through more than 300 public and stakeholder meetings over the last nine years, TxDOT has received valuable feedback that it has incorporated into the design of the NHHIP.

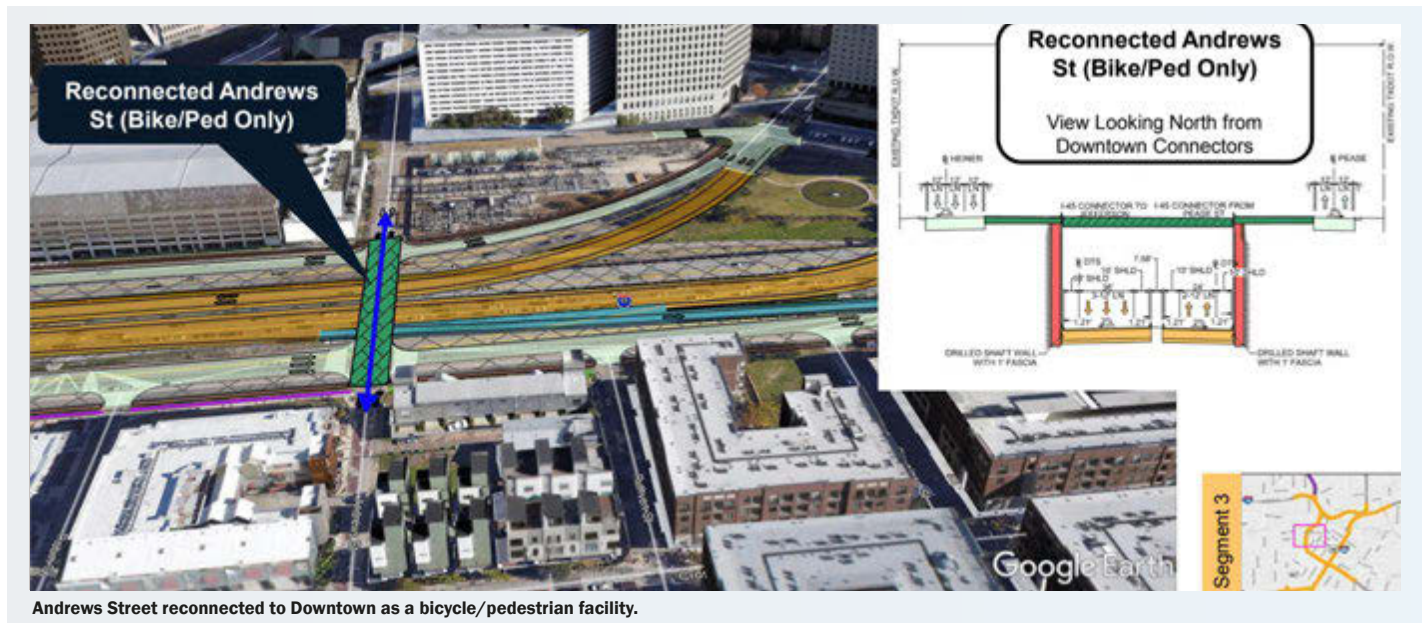
A variety of issues have been brought up by the public and stakeholders over the last several years. This fact sheet provides an overview of how those issues have been evaluated and addressed in the schematic design. The following describes select changes that were made, what is still being evaluated, and what could not be accommodated, and why.

### New Connectivity

Some of the changes include new roadway connections that did not exist before at locations such as Blue Bell Road under I-45 and a new northbound I-45 frontage road between Quitman and North Main Streets. Due to feedback received, the I-610/I-45 interchange will include a connection to Melbourne Street on the I-45 North frontage road. Additionally, the northbound SH 288 frontage road will have a connection to Hutchins Street added.

New and restored bicycle and pedestrian connections were incorporated into the revised schematics. Please see the *Pedestrian & Bicyclist Accommodations* fact sheet for more details on additional accommodations that may be incorporated, when feasible.

Another special request TxDOT received was to reconnect Andrews Street to Downtown, but as a dedicated bicycle/pedestrian connection. Andrews Street originally connected to Downtown before I-45 was constructed in the 1950s. This required TxDOT to make substantial changes to the Downtown Connector schematics so they could pass underneath Dallas and Andrews Streets. Please see figure below.



Andrews Street reconnected to Downtown as a bicycle/pedestrian facility.

## Restored Connectivity

In addition to new connections, the project design has been revised based on public feedback to restore connections where feasible. Here are a few examples of these revisions:

Segment	Original Design	Select changes made, or being evaluated based on public/stakeholder feedback	Status of Revision
2	Removed a westbound entrance ramp from Fulton Street to I-610.	Added a westbound entrance ramp from Irvington Boulevard to westbound I-610 which will be elevated to span over the existing METRO light rail tracks along Fulton Street.	Included in the current schematics.
3	Removed southbound entrance ramp from San Jacinto Street to US 59/I-69 North.	Added an entrance ramp near the intersection of San Jacinto Street and Blodgett Street that accommodates street crossings at Caroline and Austin Streets.	Included in the current schematics.
3	Hamilton Street (SH 288 and US 59/I-69 southbound frontage road) did not connect to Stuart Street.	A connection was added between Stuart Street and Hamilton Street.	Included in the current schematics.
3	Relocated the existing I-10 eastbound exit ramp to Jensen Drive further west.	Exit ramp was relocated west to the McKee Street area to allow for the I-10/US 59/I-69 interchange to be improved. This relocated ramp maintains direct access to Jensen and eastbound traffic between Jensen Drive and Main Street will have a grade separated crossing over the Union Pacific and Houston Belt Terminal Road.	Included in the current schematics.
<b>All segments</b>	14' of 15' outside shared lanes on frontage roads to accommodate bicycles.	Removed shared-use lanes. Added a new pedestrian realm at cross streets which includes dedicated bicycle and pedestrian lanes separated from vehicular lanes by a 5' buffer zone. For more information, see NHHIP Fact Sheet: <i>Pedestrian &amp; Bicyclist Accommodations</i> .	Included in the current schematics.

## Special Requests

The City of Houston asked TxDOT to accommodate a future proposed railroad underpass project for Navigation Boulevard and Commerce Street in the NHHIP plan. As a result, the NHHIP was modified to realign a portion of St. Emanuel Street so that the city's underpass project could be constructed with minimal changes to St. Emanuel. Also, the reconstruction of St. Emanuel Street has been expanded to improve the drainage system and make enhancements for one-way operations.

A proposal to convert the Walker Street bridge over I-45 between Hamilton and St. Emmanuel Streets into a bicycle/pedestrian only bridge is possible and is now included in the design. Additionally, a left-turn lane from Elgin Street to Hamilton Street was added to the revised design, and Congress Street has been reverted back to one-way with traffic flowing towards Downtown.

During the public hearing, a request was made to remove connections from the southbound I-45 exit ramp to and from Wrightwood Street. The redesigned ramp to Quitman now restricts traffic from turning right onto Wrightwood Street.

## Reduced Impacts

Many public comments pointed out impacts that they hoped could be avoided. Here are a few examples of where the design was revised to reduce impacts:

- The revised plan will now not impact the Unity Spirit Missionary Worship Center.
- Right of way infringement on American Statesman Park has been eliminated.
- Woodland Park will no longer be impacted through an adjustment in the alignment of I-45 southbound to the I-10 westbound connector.
- On the initial design, access to Garrott Street from Main Street would affect a non-profit apartment complex for veterans. A revised intersection at Garrott and Main Streets now eliminates this impact.
- The Montrose Bridge was scheduled for reconstruction with a proposed right of way on the south side of Montrose. That plan has been revised in response to public request. The original schematic required the Montrose Bridge to be reconstructed to allow for an additional lane on I-69, but through public comment and working with METRO regarding their future transit plans, the FEIS schematic was revised to defer the reconstruction of the Montrose Bridge to a future project.



## Other Options Considered

TxDOT considered and evaluated public and stakeholder feedback and incorporated where feasible. Unfortunately, not all feedback could be incorporated because it conflicted with other feedback, does not meet safety design standards or requirements, or it would not meet the project's purpose and need. Three main areas of public concern have been the North Street Bridge, Polk Street, and Runnels Street.

### Polk Street

Untangling the freeway systems around Downtown to achieve the crash reduction and mobility improvements of the NHHIP plan required the design team to place US 59/I-69 and I-45 below ground between Commerce Street and Spur 527. One of the unfortunate outcomes of this was not being able to maintain Polk Street as a continuous street between EaDo/East Downtown and Downtown. To restore connectivity in this area, a continuous southbound city street (Hamilton Street) that was previously cut off when the George R. Brown Convention Center was built, is now restored with the NHHIP. Polk Street will connect to this restored Hamilton Street and will allow for continuous flow back to Polk Street by using the Lamar Street overpass.

### Runnels Street

A similar request to connect Runnels Street across the NHHIP near Buffalo Bayou could not be implemented because Runnels would need to be a tunnel to go under the freeway and was too close to Buffalo Bayou. This connection would also block access of Marquis Downtown Lofts to Runnels. The existing connection across the NHHIP will be through the Navigation Boulevard railroad underpass. The NHHIP is designed to accommodate the city's planned improvement to this underpass to further improve access.

### North Street Bridge

Throughout the alternatives development, TxDOT looked at every option to retain the North Street Bridge over I-45. However, the improvements required to raise I-45 out of the floodplain and to provide the requested enhanced access from Quitman Street conflicted with the elevation of the bridge.

TxDOT understands the importance of the North Street bridge to the local communities for access to Travis Elementary and for access to the White Oak Music Hall. To enhance circulation between the east and west side of I-45 without the North Street Bridge, a new northbound frontage road has been added between Quitman and North Main Streets. This will allow neighborhoods on the east side to access points of interest on the west side using North Main Street to Houston Avenue and return by using Quitman Street and the new northbound frontage road without having to enter I-45 at Quitman Street and exit soon after at North Main Street as one does today. North Main and Quitman Streets will have improved pedestrian and bicycle accommodations that separate these movements from vehicular traffic. In addition, raising I-45 above the floodplain creates the opportunity to make a first ever connection between Woodland Park and Moody Park.



Segment 3 Visualization of Proposed Improvements near Polk Street.

By working together with the public, groups, and agencies, the NHHIP has been greatly improved. TxDOT knows the users of these roadways, bike and pedestrian byways will have greater access and beneficial use of this transportation system.

The design of the NHHIP remains open to future design changes and improvements after environmental clearance is achieved, which is documented in the Record of Decision (ROD). The federal process to obtain environmental clearance is based on a schematic level design which accounts for the right of way footprint at a specific "snapshot in time" needed for completing

impact analysis and identifying mitigation for adverse impacts that can't be avoided per the current level design. Obtaining environmental clearance is a prerequisite of taking a project into detailed design where additional refinements and design improvements can be made. Accordingly, any changes in the design after environmental approval will be thoroughly evaluated and additional design development will be conducted and vetted with the public. TxDOT will keep the public engaged throughout the design and construction phases through a comprehensive outreach program.



Segment 3 Visualization of Proposed Improvements near George R. Brown Convention Center.



Scan this QR code with your phone or mobile device to view a simulation of this project.

Content prepared and distributed by:

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Para obtener más información sobre NHHIP, escanee o haga clic en el código QR y mire el cambio para mejor video.



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