



NEWS RELEASE

HOUSTON DISTRICT

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TEXAS TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION APPROVES 10-YEAR PLAN INCLUDING THE I-45 EXPANSION PROJECT AS IS

Acknowledging federal pause, Commission will revisit decision on the project in 90 days

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HOUSTON – At its August 31, 2021 meeting, the Texas Transportation Commission unanimously approved TxDOT’s 10-year plan (Unified Transportation Program, UTP) retaining allocations for funding the I-45 improvement project in Houston. The project, commonly known as the North Houston Highway Improvement Project, or NHHIP, is supported by the majority of people who commented during the UTP’s public comment period. TxDOT received more than 8,000 comments on the NHHIP during the UTP’s 30-day public comment period, with 2/3 of them submitted in support of maintaining the NHHIP as proposed for funding in the UTP. However, since the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) still has the project on pause, the Commission chose to approve the UTP and retain the proposed funding on the project with a caveat to revisit the decision in 90 days to allow time for federal and state partners to address project concerns.

“We received more than 12,000 comments on this update to the UTP with more than 8,000 specific to the NHHIP and over 5,500 of them in support of the NHHIP as funded in our plan,” said Texas Transportation Chairman J. Bruce Bugg, Jr.

The UTP guides the development of transportation work across the state and authorizes the distribution of construction dollars expected to be available. For 30 days, TxDOT received public comments on the plan through various ways, including an online survey, email, telephone and U.S. mail. TxDOT also conducted a statewide virtual public meeting and a statewide virtual public hearing to receive more comments and testimony from the public.

Even with an historic number of comments in favor of the project, the Commission noted that there is still a pause on the project by the FHWA that needs to be addressed, driving the Commission’s decision to revisit the project and its funding allocations in 90 days.

Executive Director Marc Williams explained, “Our goal over the course of the next 90 days will be to work in tandem with our colleagues at FHWA to support the efforts needed to conclude their investigations with a focus on getting the FHWA pause on the NHHIP lifted to allow us to proceed with project development. Once the pause is lifted, TxDOT can begin the real work to review and evaluate options to refine the project in an effort to be responsive to stakeholders’ concerns and move the project forward.”

More about the I-45 Project (NHHIP)

The NHHIP will address critical needs including updating the 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 depress 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.ih45northandmore.com.

For more information, contact Danny Perez at (713) 802-5077. Also Follow us on Twitter and Instagram at @TxDOTHouston and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/TxDOTHouston .

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