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## TxDOT to review outer loop study

**By Chris Cobb**

The Herald-Zeitung

Published March 12, 2009

The Texas Department of Transportation is forming a task force to review the findings of the New Braunfels Outer Loop Study and address the concerns of local residents over the much-debated planned thoroughfare.

To handle future growth, a potential 40-mile loop encircling New Braunfels in both Comal and Guadalupe counties first was unveiled by TxDOT in June 2007. Hundreds of area residents, including many landowners in the path of the outer loop, have turned out at various public meetings since to voice their concerns about TxDOT's planned route and the potential environmental impact of a new highway.

A local organization, Citizens Alliance for Smart Expansion, has contested that TxDOT made numerous errors during its data collection for the initial study.

The new task force is designed to address those potential issues, TxDOT Interim Transportation Planning Director Jonathan Bean said.

"We want to ensure that we've looked at everything and every stone is turned over," Bean said. "We don't believe anything was done wrong, but because of the concerns raised by citizens, we just want to be sure."

A potential outer loop is already on the thoroughfare plan for the city of New Braunfels.

"We're not here to say whether there should or shouldn't be a road," Bean said. "We've been tasked with designing a road, and we want to recommend an alternative everyone can live with."




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The task force will be made up of local stakeholders and state transportation officials and will review the process used by the consultants who designed the initial study to ensure that the data used was accurate, according to a TxDOT news release.

Its first meeting will be at 6 p.m. on April 2 at the New Braunfels Civic Convention Center.

"It's important to me that our projects are sensitive to concerns raised by local property owners and residents," TxDOT District Engineer Mario Medina said in the release. "The task force is meant to bring transparency to the process and ensure we didn't miss anything during our evaluations."

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