

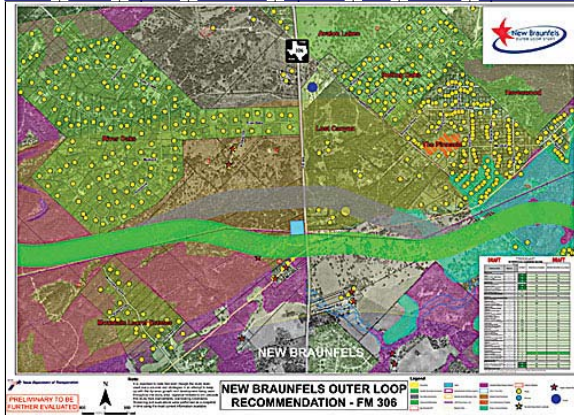


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TxDOT's newly revised plan for how the Outer Loop would cross FM 306.

[TxDOT graphic](#)

Changes to Outer Loop provoke mixed reactions

By Andrew Martinez

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"It's always tough because you're going to affect somebody," said Texas Department of Transportation Area Engineer Greg Malatek.

Those affected by the changes made to the proposed 40-mile Outer Loop met at Canyon High School on Wednesday night for a meeting that was often contentious. The meeting focused on the changes made to the Outer Loop route crossing Farm-to-Market 306, changes which were made after April's town hall meeting.

"This stems from information that we received at the town hall meeting," Malatek said. "We went out and investigated, and this is one of the changes that we were able to make."

The meeting was one of two that will take place this week to allow affected homeowners to publicly comment on the changes made by TxDOT. A meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m., tonight at Canyon High School for changes made to a route on Texas 46 crossing east of New Braunfels.

The changes were a relief to some homeowners, but drew the ire of others. The question and answer session featured mostly negative comments by homeowners affected by the new changes.

Kathy Leber, a person who's property would be affected by the proposed changes, believes there are better ways to solve the city's transportation needs.

"We should improve and expand existing roadways," Leber said. "There are better ways that will not impact the environment, ways that will not impact homeowners," she said. "Let's do it and see before this kind of thing is implemented."

There were a few positive public comments that were made during the meeting. Renee Wineinger said she felt, "very confident in the work that TxDOT did in listening to affected homeowners and I feel they found a better route."

Others at the meeting like Linda Perine were mostly concerned with the effects that the proposed loop would have on the environment. She believes that public officials have not responded to the concerns of citizens.

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"It's a bad idea and it's an idea that has not been thought through," Perine said. "It's being crammed down the throats of an unwilling public by unresponsive elected officials," she said.

Clint Ray, a project manager for RJ Rivera Associates Inc., thought that the meeting went as expected. RJ Rivera is the company consulting with TxDOT in developing the proposed Outer Loop.

"What you saw tonight was relief from the people that were not affected and a cry of anger from the people that were being affected," Ray said.

Ray indicated during the question and answer session that TxDOT and RJ Rivera put an emphasis on avoiding houses when trying to minimize the impact of the proposed Outer Loop. He admitted to concerned citizens that one house affected by the proposed Outer Loop was the impetus for changing the route.

"I absolutely feel that this is the right loop," Ray said "The route that we took and the modifications that we presented tonight, I feel is the best way to go."

Ray said that in the coming months, he expects TxDOT to make its final presentation to Comal County and the City of New Braunfels on the proposed route for the new corridor.

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