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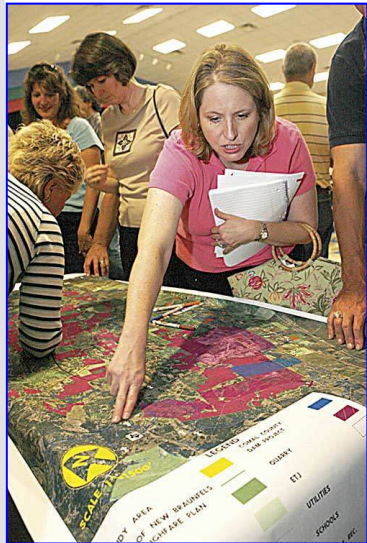


Photo by Monty Marion

West New Braunfels resident Susan Syamken discusses the possible route options of the proposed outer loop during the public meeting held Wednesday night at Hoffman Elementary.

Proposed construction stirs strong reactions

By [David Saleh Rauf](#)

The Herald-Zeitung

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When Judy Chantos pulled a glossy flyer out of her mailbox nearly two weeks ago, her stomach sank when she digested the contents: a map of the city and surrounding area encircled by a yellow band.

The mailer was sent by San Antonio-based consulting firm R.J. Rivera, which has been contracted by the Texas Department of Transportation to conduct a study for the possible construction of an outer loop around New Braunfels.

The yellow band around the city represents the New Braunfels Outer Loop Study area.

Chantos' home, located between Farm-to-Market 1102 and Farm-to-Market 306, is located in the study area's path.

"We're right smack dab in the middle of it," Chantos said. "It could ruin why we live out here — the quiet and the country."

On Wednesday, representatives from TxDOT and two consulting firms tasked with conducting the study and finding a feasible corridor for the loop answered questions and concerns from about 200 residents and land owners in Comal and Guadalupe counties who showed up for a public meeting on the

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proposed outer loop. It was the second meeting of its kind this week and provided another chance for TxDOT and consultants heading up the project to ease concerns shared by land owners that the loop could swallow up their homes.

"We're not in a position to begin acquiring any property," said Judy Friesenhahn, TxDOT transportation planning director for San Antonio. "This is a planning exercise."

The outer loop study area is a proposed 40-mile band around the city that could take up to 30 years to build. The project is currently unfunded.

The outer loop, which is in preliminary planning stages, could require at least two new crossings over the Guadalupe River and could connect to I-35 on New Braunfels' far north and south sides.

The yellow band that represents the study area is an estimated two to five miles wide. In about one year, TxDOT plans to have about a 400-foot wide corridor identified for the loop.

"We're looking to plan for the future," Friesenhahn said. "Like all plans, things can change over the years, but you've got to start somewhere."

TxDOT officials said the loop will be built in separate segments, depending on priority, and could be built and funded by different entities. At the two public meetings held this week, residents identified what segments were the most important to them. Among the key segments chosen by residents: Texas 46 between Farm-To-Market 725, Texas 46 between Interstate 35 and FM 306 to I-35 on the north side of the city. Citizens also identified historic buildings, landmarks, private homes, caves, cemeteries and an Indian burial ground as potential constraints to the proposed study area.

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