



MEDIA RELEASE

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New Braunfels Outer Loop Study

More than 200 attend public meeting to view proposed alignments for proposed outer loop

NEW BRAUNFELS – Thursday, October 11, 2007, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) held a second public meeting in a series of two public meetings regarding the New Braunfels Outer Loop Study. The meeting was the second opportunity for members of the public to view possible route locations for the proposed outer loop. Participants had mixed reactions to the maps on display with some expressing relief that options near their property had been screened out of the process, while others remained concerned by the remaining options.

“Any time we initiate a study on a new location roadway, we know the public will be concerned,” said Judy Friesenhahn, P.E., with TxDOT. “Our goal is to involve local property owners in the decision-making process so they are fully aware of the benefits and impacts of the proposed roadway. For this study, residents have assisted the study team in identifying a number of constraints including many historic cemeteries. It is my sincere hope that they continue to be forthcoming with their knowledge of the study area and that they stay involved throughout the process.”

The public meeting was geared towards property owners, residents, and business owners who live or own property on the west of IH 35. While people attended from all areas of Comal and Guadalupe counties, the west side of the study area was a primary focus for many. The options remaining on the west side weave through portions of the study area that are extremely constrained by subdivisions, endangered species habitat (Golden-Cheeked Warbler), the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone, and historical sites. These constraints are of particular concern to those residents who live in subdivisions that could potentially be affected and environmental organizations that monitor impacts to the Edwards Aquifer.

In response, TxDOT screened the initial Universe of Options, the wide-range of possible corridors and connections to be considered during the alternatives analysis portion of the New Braunfels Outer Loop Study, according to criteria developed with public input at the first round of public meetings. The top five constraints identified by the public involvement efforts were residential displacement, natural vegetation/wildlife habitat, hazardous materials, wetlands/floodplains and archeological/historical sites. TxDOT also attempted to avoid impacts to community resources such as parks, landfills, historical structures, archeological sites, and cemeteries during the initial screening of options.

The remaining options drew support and criticism by public meeting participants. TxDOT assured these participants that additional study and analysis would be conducted on the remaining viable options to identify the best possible corridor which minimizes the most impacts and maximizes benefits for the local community. TxDOT also stated that the list of screening criteria will expand throughout the course of the study as more information is identified for each of the options. This will allow the list of viable options to be narrowed down to one option by the end of the study. Stakeholders will continue to be a part of the study which is scheduled for completion in spring of 2008.

The public meeting began with an open house consisting of maps and displays describing the study area, the current identified constraints, the Universe of Options, the Refined Universe of Options and screening criteria. This was followed by a study update presentation given by Clint Ray, P. E. with RJ RIVERA Associates, Inc. Following the presentation, participants had the opportunity to go to different stations around the cafeteria to view the study area, ask questions and provide input regarding constraints, the Universe of Options and the screening criteria. The meeting concluded with each station giving a report on comments or concerns relayed by participants and a public comment session.

The New Braunfels Outer Loop study area is approximately a 40-mile band around the City of New Braunfels that encompasses portions of Comal and Guadalupe Counties. The outer loop could require two new crossings over the Guadalupe River and would connect to IH 35 on the north side of New Braunfels and to IH 35 on the south side of New Braunfels. The purpose of the study is to conduct the necessary planning and analysis needed to identify a corridor for the possible development of a New Braunfels Outer Loop. The study will seek to:

- Identify a potential corridor for land (right of way) preservation.
- Identify and prioritize segments of the loop that are needed sooner than others.
- Follow NEPA guidelines to ensure information collected can be used for the development of future environmental documents for the segments of independent utility.

For more information on the New Braunfels Outer Loop Study, please call the New Braunfels Outer Loop Study Hotline at (866) 704-1114 or visit the New Braunfels Outer Loop Study website at www.nbolstudy.com. Maps and photographs of the study area are available to members of the media upon request.

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