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New Braunfels loop to get new review

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By Roger Croteau - Express-News

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The Texas Department of Transportation will take a second look at the route it chose last year for an Outer Loop around New Braunfels.

Mario Medina, TxDOT San Antonio District Engineer, announced formation of a task force to review the previous work to make sure "that our projects are sensitive to concerns raised by local property owners and residents."

"The task force is meant to bring transparency to the process and ensure we did not miss anything during our evaluations," he said.

The Outer Loop Task Force will include members of the previous Technical Work Group and the Community Work Group, plus others to be picked by the state agency, the city of New Braunfels and Comal and Guadalupe counties.

The group will review the consistency of the process used by consultants to develop a route recommendation and ensure the accuracy of data they collected.

A group of area residents, Citizens' Alliance for Smart Expansion, criticized the work done by TxDOT in identifying a route for the proposed loop, claiming that there were more houses in the corridor than were identified in the study, and that environmental concerns were not fully addressed.

The first task force meeting will be held at the New Braunfels Civic Center from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on April 2. TxDOT has hired an independent facilitator, with no previous involvement in the project, to work with the task force. Once complete, the task force will present its findings to the city of New Braunfels and to Comal and Guadalupe counties.

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The New Braunfels Outer Loop Study looked at a roughly 40-mile band around New Braunfels that included parts of Comal and Guadalupe counties to identify a corridor for the road. Officials wanted to identify a route to keep suburban development off it, but no funding is in place and officials said it could be decades before the highway is built.

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