



**NEW BRAUNFELS OUTER LOOP TASK FORCE
FOURTH MEETING
JULY 20, 2009
NEW BRAUNFELS CIVIC CENTER
6:00 - 8:00 P.M.**

MEETING MINUTES

Attendance:

<p>TxDOT REPS: Jonathan Bean, PE Greg Malatek, PE Laura Lopez Darla Laughter</p> <p>Elected Officials: Doug Miller, State Representative Kathleen Krueger, Mayor Pro Tem for New Braunfels Jay Millikin, Comal County Commissioner</p>	<p>TASK FORCE MEMBERS: In order introduced at meeting: Jim Reeves Rusty Brockman Vincent Schwab Doug Carver Marcie Helmke Laura West Scott Wood Lenny Llerena Roy Linnartz Rod Smith Ted West Maegan Krueger -Blaschke Karen Dietz Sharon Levett Donna Jones Marilyn Altwein Philip Schulze</p> <p>Kevin Lehmann Benny Bock Tom Hornseth Mitch Sacco Tipton Ross Jackie Singaas</p> <p>Also in attendance but not introduced: Dean Word, III Connie Krause Arthur Brinkkoetter Cheryl Fisher George Antuna Shannon Mattingly Suzy Collins</p>	<p>CONSULTANTS: Ximenes & Associates, Inc. Linda Ximenes</p> <p>Kennedy Consulting, Inc. Tony Estes</p> <p>RJ RIVERA Associates, Inc. Rudy Rivera, PE Yobana Diaz William Long</p>
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The meeting followed the agenda set out. To obtain a copy of the meeting agenda, please visit www.nbolstudy.com and click on the "Public Involvement" page. There you will find the agenda and all handouts that were distributed at this Task Force meeting. The following minutes are meant to document the events of the evening in a detailed format. Transcription of public comments are included and made to the extent possible but there is no guarantee of accuracy. These portions of the minutes are indicated and indented.

Agenda Item I - Welcome

Linda Ximenes, the facilitator, convened the fourth meeting of the New Braunfels Outer Loop Task Force shortly after 6:00 PM.

Agenda Item II: Introductions

Ms. Ximenes introduced herself and recognized the elected officials in attendance. Ms. Ximenes opened up the meeting with introductions of Task Force members in attendance. Ms. Ximenes let the Task Force know that a letter had gone out to invited members of the Task Force that had not indicated any interest in participating on the Task Force. One exception was Mr. Lenny Llerena who was in attendance. Communication had been going to the person who had held his position but was no longer at the New Braunfels Airport.

Agenda Item III: Review of the Task Force's Charge

Ms. Ximenes informed the Task Force that there was a procedure being set up to distribute information from Task Force members to other members of the Task Force. She asked that a synopsis of the information that would be distributed be submitted to her and that would go out to the Task Force via Yobana Diaz. If the recipient wanted to receive the full information presented in the synopsis they would contact the individual wanting to send out the information to receive the full document.

Agenda Item IV: Review the Desired Results of the Meeting

Handout: This information is located at the top of the Agenda for this meeting.

- Get acquainted with the Task Force members and their interests
- Review the concerns regarding the Need and Purpose.
- Review information addressing the Need and Purpose.
- Identify preliminary recommendations regarding the Need and Purpose and the Study Process.
- Identify information needed for the August meeting on the constraints.
- Allow for public comment at the beginning and end of the meeting.

Agenda Item V: Review the Agenda

Handout: This information is located at the bottom half and page 2 of the Agenda for this meeting.

Ms. Ximenes reviewed the agenda with the Task Force. Ms. Ximenes let the Task Force know they would be given a presentation on the need and purpose and then work in small groups to discuss their views and make recommendations on ways to strengthen the study process.

Ms. Ximenes let the Task Force know that all recommendations made to-date would be preliminary recommendations. There will be a date scheduled in January 2010 to revisit, re-evaluate and accept or reject all of the recommendations at one time. The recommendations agreed upon at that time would be included in the New Braunfels Outer Loop Study Final Report.

Ms. Ximenes reminded the Task Force about the importance of filling out their evaluation forms and to also please be sure to include any information that they would like to see for the upcoming meeting dealing with constraints.

Agenda Item VI: Approval of the Minutes from April 2, 2009

Ms. Ximenes asked for any corrections to the meeting minutes from June 15, 2009. They were approved by the Task Force with no comments or changes.

Agenda Item VII: Comments from the Public

There were no comments at this time.

Agenda Item VIII: Address Concerns and Comments Regarding Need and Purpose

Handout: The small work group done in the later part of this section responds to the questions on the handout titled Need and Purpose Worksheet.

Ms. Ximenes explained that there would be a short presentation by Tipton Ross regarding the Need and Purpose of the study.

A Short Summary of the Request to do the Study

Mr. Ross stated that the information subcommittee discussed information needed for this meeting and discussed what the purpose of the Task Force and the Outer Loop Study. What became clear during the discussion was that if there is opposition to the loop, the time to protest it would be when the report is complete with the Task Force recommendations, and they are presented to the City Council. The Council will then decide whether or not to accept, reject or amend the transportation plan based on the study report's results. That is when the citizens will be able to be for or against the project. The study was undertaken to put a line on the map but the merits of the plan would be discussed by the individual cities and counties. He stated he saw copies of the County resolutions and that he was aware that there is concern about the role of the City of New Braunfels in requesting the study but that he was also in attendance at a meeting in this same building where the New Braunfels City Council was discussing the project. Mr. Ross stated that the Task Force should focus on the report and not the merits of whether the City Council should approve this corridor or a loop.

Ms. Ximenes reviewed the scope of work for the Task Force. She stated that the Task Force has reviewed the public involvement portion of the study process. She stated that the Task Force should keep in mind that what was done was a planning study and the charge is to evaluate the study process taking into account the Level of Analysis chart which outlines the various levels of planning in relation to the New Braunfels Outer Loop Study.

Review Information related to the Need and Purpose

Ms. Ximenes then introduced Rudy Rivera with RJ RIVERA Associates to give a presentation on the Need and Purpose process that was undertaken for the New Braunfels Outer Loop Study.

Mr. Rivera stated that TxDOT's charge was to enhance the currently adopted loop on the New Braunfels Thoroughfare Plan. TxDOT conducted the study to identify a corridor for future transportation needs, to identify projects that could be built as individual projects and to follow NEPA guidelines to be able to use federal funds, if they were to become available. The rapid growth, especially in the areas outside of New Braunfels, were also considered in identifying the need since the higher growth was taking place in the outlying areas of the city. Mr. Rivera stated that the slides presented and information given was information that was used during the study and the slides are from the original presentations made during the study. Growth projections were also used from the State Demographer's office indicating rapid growth in both Comal and Guadalupe County. From a traffic standpoint, Mr. Rivera stated that from 1990 to 2000 traffic more than doubled and from 2000 to 2010 it will double again. He stated that in identifying the need and purpose they also looked at how traffic is flowing on the major arterials and graded the level of service. The presentation showed 'good', 'tolerable' and 'undesirable' levels for the major thoroughfares. Level of service projections were made based on the growth scenarios to show the capacity of roadways. Mr. Rivera stated that in addition to technical information there was an Agency Coordination Conference held along with public meetings and a technical and a community work group were assembled to get input from the technical experts and the community. Mr. Rivera stated that the technical information and public input gathered was for a high level planning study and further, more detailed environmental documentation would be done in the future for sections of the loop if and when they are constructed.

There was a question about who asked him to do the Study. Mr. Rivera answered that TxDOT put the consultant team together to conduct the study. TxDOT holds yearly statewide Transportation Improvement Program meetings with counties to get input on projects they require. It was during these meetings that Comal County listed the New Braunfels Outer Loop as a project need.

Mr. Rivera stated that the verbiage of the study states that there was a transportation corridor identified but that does not necessarily mean that it is limited to roadways only. There would be future assessments made to determine what types of projects would best serve the needs.

Philip Schulze stated that the public input does not support the need and purpose based on information he reviewed in the interview statements and comment cards. How does the public input relate to the stated purpose and need? Mr. Rivera stated that TxDOT was very serious about considering public input. From a technical and engineering standpoint if there was a constraint pointed out, that was considered in the analysis, but sometimes that does not change the answer and sometimes it does affect the alignment. If someone has a comment saying they don't want the loop because they just don't want it, it is hard from a technical standpoint to address the comment because there are identified needs. But if a constraint is found that is a historical cemetery or other constraint, that would affect the alignment.

A follow up statement was made that there was a lot of information to be gotten from the comment cards that goes beyond answering a question. The concerns from those who chose to speak their mind also stem from wanting to balance transportation planning with other needs of the community. It is important to put transportation needs in a larger context and balance it with all of the community needs and not for central Texas and the larger state transportation infrastructure. Mr. Rivera stated that was what was done for the study and asked the Task Force to help make improvements wherever possible. Mr. Rivera stated that they heard from the community that homes were important and home displacements went down from 109 to 23 in the recommended corridor. Cemeteries were avoided. The community asked not to sever farms and Mr. Rivera stated they attempted to do that as well. The one thing that cannot be done is to avoid every single thing. There is going to be a trade off and what currently exists as land use would change from what it is now to transportation land use. Mr. Rivera said that although not everything can be avoided there are ways to mitigate impacts through engineering.

There was a discussion about the need and purpose by Rod Smith who stated that it was the most important point for him during the life of the Task Force. He stated that usually studies have general goals at the onset and so it is difficult to know if the alternatives being discussed address them or not. He would like to have a very specific discussion in the future about what the community wants to do with this facility. That is what he believes should be in the need and purpose statement. He stated that there are issues beyond transportation that are discussed in the document. He finally got annoyed enough to do something and he outlined what this outer loop should do and problems the outer loop should help with. He said you can argue that it is too early in the study to look at this, but his engineering firm focuses on rigorous problem definition. Find the problem up front so you can focus on what the solutions are. Mr. Smith stated that the discussion needs to go beyond the scope of the study and Task Force. He would like to see a recommendation come out of the Task Force to focus the discussion, after the study wraps up, with the counties and cities involved and talk about the needs the community has that the loop might address, from economic development to transportation issues in order to rework the study for the next go-round on a homegrown level and get an outer loop that gets to those issues. Mr. Smith warned the Task Force that he would keep pushing to have them consider making that recommendation.

Tipton Ross asked for Mr. Rivera's comments regarding the statements from Rod Smith. Mr. Rivera stated that if there were funds identified to build projects he would consider the types of steps that Rod suggested. He stated that because projects are so far in the future it is too high a level of effort for projects that do not have funding identified. If those detailed steps were to be taken at this point, they would have to be redone when funds became available because things change and would need to be re-evaluated.

Mr. Smith stated that he thought that the first day of the study should tackle issues such as how the community as a whole wants to deal with growth on the aquifer. He stated that it needs to be a homegrown solution and figure out what our home problems are.

Ms. Ximenes clarified that Mr. Smith's main point was that there is a community-wide discussion that needs to take place outside of the Task Force. That what is typically done is what was done and the loop requires special considerations. Mr. Smith reiterated that it should be a key recommendation from the Task Force.

Mr. Scott Wood stated that he was involved in the original task force and knows that people want to re-write history. He stated that they were not tasked to look at the needs for the study but to look at what the study did and to figure out where to put it. He said that about 14 or 15 years ago the City Council wanted to put together a master plan for the city and asked the citizenry for input. He said there was a group that put forth the idea for an outer loop and brought the idea to the City Council and they voted for it. The idea for the outer loop did not come from the City Council it came from a community group. He stated that he was aggravated, a little bit, having people second guess all of those decisions but that is where we are.

Ms. Connie Krause stated that a few weeks ago to see the new courthouse in La Grange. The County Judge gave them a tour and told them that when they look at projects for their county they look at how it affects the quality of life in the county. She said that is what Comal County is missing. Things are not looked at how they affect the quality of life here, right now, and then look forward. She stated that one reason she was on the committee was to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves but mainly because this is a democratic process and she appreciates the comments from Rudy, Rod and Ross. We need to look at what things have been made, but we also need to look at other things. This recommendation that is being put together is going to the City of Santa Clara, City of Marion, City of Seguin, New Braunfels and the two counties. She stated that the comments from the document that Rod Smith sent out needs to be incorporated into what is being turned over. TxDOT wants to be more transparent, we are the most unique community in the United States and a large community that is evolving. She stated that she owns a house in Leander and the area has changed a lot since she moved there. There is a toll road there now. She said that never in her wildest dreams would she believe that that little community would have a toll road. When she moved there, there was a little over 2,000 people and there are over 25,000 people living there now. Things can happen fast and faster than you think.

Work in small groups to discuss the information and identify lessons learned and recommendations

Ms. Ximenes asked the Task Force to break up into small groups to work on the handout titled "Need and Purpose Worksheet". She went over the questions on the worksheet and emphasized that the first questions were to get them thinking and talking and the last question was what they should focus on and was the meat of the work they should be doing. The last question asked for recommendations and that was the part that was going to be compiled and incorporated into the New Braunfels Outer Loop Study report.

Ms. Ximenes also asked the Task Force to look over the document "Comments and Concerns Regarding Purpose and Need and the Study Process Based on Interviews with Potential Task Force Members" during their discussion.

Small groups report out on their recommendations

Ms. Ximenes asked the groups to report out to the Task Force the recommendations they came up with to strengthen the need and purpose process of the study.

GROUP 6

- Economic impact for Downtown NB be considered
- Options to a loop should be considered
- Planning authorities should pay special attention to specific sensitive areas

GROUP 1

- Facility should be controlled by local entity/authority
- Consider how facility type or size impacts other community needs
- Need and purpose more accurately describe land use patterns (P. 28 of report, "undeveloped land")

GROUP 2

- Develop in a way where are no subdivisions so roadway can be built
- Guadalupe and Comal Counties have high growth rates, so use that as a tool for management and direction of growth.
- Preserve resources like Edwards Aquifer, green space, wildlife, etc.

- Preserve Mobility
- Quit spending time on rehashing the same information

GROUP 3

- More specific information
- Define the actual need
- Environmental studies early on
- Thoroughly review existing roadways and the use of them
- Review needs for water supply to not have contamination – Edwards, Trinity and Glen Rose Aquifers
- Larger minimum sizes on lots in the County - > 5 acres
- Due diligence for why we need study – be sure there is a true need and not just somebody wants it. Need or want?

GROUP 4

- Before the study is complete all conflicts need to be addressed – answer them in such a way that it's clear how it will be dealt with or if it can be dealt with.
- More specific or better define info on funding sources – for design and construction to complete this study. Who might be able to pay?
- Using independent consultants to do the corridor studies – someone not contracted by TxDOT. For two different opinions to be considered.

GROUP 5

- Update and quantify the future growth estimates
- Look at alternatives to an outer loop
- What would happen if we do nothing?
- Requirements added to preserve quality of life as part of the need and purpose – heritage and community values

GROUP 7

- Community wide discussion of needs to supplement previous needs identified.
- Already solicited lots of input; study okay as is.

Agenda Item IX: Identify information need for the [August] Meeting on Constraints

Ms. Ximenes asked the Task Force to include comments on their evaluation form to include information that they would like to see in discussing the constraints identified in the study.

Agenda Item X: Decision about Paid Advertising of the Meetings

Ms. Ximenes announced that TxDOT has agreed to place an ad in the New Braunfels and Seguin papers eight days before the date of each Task Force meeting.

Agenda Item XI: Recommend Schedule for November and January

Ms. Ximenes recommended that the November Task Force meeting move to November 30th which is the Monday following the regularly scheduled date. The recommended date for the January meeting is January 16th. There was a comment that that weekend would conflict with MLK Day. Ms. Ximenes suggested that the date proposed would be Saturday, January 23rd but to state on the evaluation form if they prefer to keep the meeting date on January 16th.

Agenda Item XII: Comments from the public

Ms. Ximenes reviewed the Task Force's charge and began the public comment portion of the meeting.

Sue Cummings

[From Sue Cummings] "Tonight's meeting was to be on the need and purpose of the outer loop. For over a year and half I have been trying to get an answer to this very question to no avail. I have just returned from a three week vacation on which I drove a little over 3,200 miles. I covered six states and cities including Minneapolis and St. Paul and also a town of a population of about 200. Most of my time was spent in Minneapolis and St. Paul and two other cities with populations of over four times that of New Braunfels right now. The only traffic problem I had on the trip was in Austin on my way home. That was between where [US] 290 enters [IH] 35 on the north side and where [US] 290 exits [IH] 35 on the south side. In May I was also in Nashville. They built a loop around 30 to 35 years ago to accommodate the Grande Ole Opry and the tourists. All of the back-ups now are on what they call the spokes going thru the town to and from the loop. They are unhappy with their loop. I feel the citizens of New Braunfels and Comal County need and deserve the answers to the need and purposes of the proposed outer loop and not just say that we are growing."

Theresa King

[From Theresa King] "I live out in Mission Hills Ranch and I moved here a little over a year and half ago. When it comes to the purpose and need, I know there is growth and there is traffic but I guess I have not been sold on this and I have been to several meetings. I haven't seen enough specific data to say that a loop is the answer. I don't know what else is considered or what is driving it. The recommendations that came out of this group, I think, are excellent. I lived in New Jersey and commuted for sixteen years to work. It is the most densely populated state in the United States. You don't have traffic problems yet. Close to where I live it is supposed to be six lanes and triple tiered and just kind of a monster and I just don't understand the need. It hasn't been made clear to me. It hasn't been sold at all. I am kind of an interloper in that I have only been here for a short time. I have sat in meetings with people who have lived on ranches for generations and this is a big cloud over them. Are we going to do it? Are we not going to do it? Are we going to pay for it? Are we not going to pay for it? And in the meantime what happens to their property values? How do they plan for their families? That just doesn't make sense to me. So again, I think the purpose and the need need to be clearly identified and the data behind it and the rationalization needs to be more public."

Deborah Schuman

[From Deborah Schuman] "I'm Debbie Schuman and I live on 535 Elm Creek and our family has been there for ages. I am very appalled by the process this is going thru. I know that Rudy is probably a newcomer that they redid the process but I believe that old timers always taught me that what is already good enough, don't screw it up. And we already have great roads. Why don't we do just like Austin. Austin has the double deckers. Why do we need to buy land that is going to be our tax money and we are paying for these people, all this stuff. And they do too. TxDOT knows that we are paying for their input too. And they are being generous to us and they are going to put this in the paper? I don't believe in this. I think more people should stand up. That group #3 had a lot of meat and potatoes. We should have more people stand up to this. And the more people that stand up to this the more they are not going to get their way. And that is what I am trying to explain to ya'll. Number 5 said that Rudy was very redundant. How long have ya'll been doing this as studies for traffic? What are your credentials? How many years have ya'll done this? So I'm saying this is the problem. We need more people to stand up. They don't know what the land is about. They have all of these engineers and geographer people, and geologists and stuff, but I live there and I have dug many a post hole. You start messing with environment and underground and all those hollow stuff is really going to screw it up big time. And ya'll are going to regret it for not standing up, really and truly."

Jackie Russell

[From Jackie Russell] “I think my comments mostly pertain to the quality of life and the impact to homes around the loop. Has any consideration, or will any consideration be given to the adverse or potentially adverse impacts on the watershed in Guadalupe County? Specifically, any drainage issues impacting homes downstream from the loop portion between I-35 and Marion? We already have a problem with the development going on in Comal County creating additional drainage problems for us. This loop could also potentially adversely impact that and I think it should also be included in part of the needs.”

Patty Godfrey

[From Patty Godfrey] “My concerns with this loop are environmentally based. Over half of this loop is located in the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone which has been deemed the most environmentally sensitive part of our whole state. How can we possibly ask any elected official to vote on this and make this determination without any information on this. If we develop this loop we will expose our aquifer to more and more pollutants. This had already been identified. If you look at River Road where they are proposing that it crosses, [the] second crossing, it has already been identified by two state agencies that this is an environmentally sensitive area. The first being the Edwards Aquifer, there is a sign right in that area and the second being Word. So if we are going to be responsible about this, let's get all the information so we know all the impacts before we ask any elected official to vote on this and make some kind of decision. The other thing that we need to consider is using existing roads because this will take us outside a lot of the Edwards Aquifer. We have already spent a lot of money blasting through rock and the hillside throughout this country. Why can't we use existing roads and make plans for the future?”

Kathleen Krueger

[From Kathleen Krueger] “Thank you. My name is Kathleen Krueger and I am currently Mayor Pro Tem for the New Braunfels City Council. I appreciate so much how many dozens of people have put so many hours into this and I am extremely impressed by the discussion and questions. There are a couple of things I want to clarify. One, I have been on City Council since 2005. It is often said that the City and County requested the Outer Loop Study. The City Council never requested this. We never discussed it and we never voted on it. If there were “conversations” about it to me that is very troubling, that a multi-million dollar study was requested, so to speak, without public input and without the vote of public officials. I speak for myself, not for my colleagues, but I simply would like that to be clarified. Because the City Council will be the ones to vote on this however, regardless of your perspective pro or con, I urge all of you please to begin communicating with City Council members. Because you have been meeting for weeks and months and have had in-depth discussions that for me and most of my colleagues we have not been a party to, so I think it is very, very important that we hear from you. For me, I always like to keep an open mind till the very end, but I do have a lot of questions about this. I have a lot of questions about the environment, about water, about what it does to ranches and what it does to our community. I'm open to hear from the people who feel otherwise and I want to hear from you. I'll be happy to go to lunch. Send me an e-mail or anything else, but for now I have many, many unanswered questions and I appreciate the time that you all are putting into this.”

Agenda Item XIII: Adjourn

Ms. Ximenes reminded those in attendance to please fill out and turn in their comment cards and evaluation forms. She thanked all of those in attendance for their time and comments and adjourned the meeting.