

Highway Closure Report

Fiscal Year 2024

Background

Senate Bill 312 from the 85th legislative session included a new provision on highway closures during certain periods. When a proposed improvement requires the closing of a highway, the department will need to coordinate the closure with public officials from municipalities affected by the closure. The construction contract must contain a provision identifying the days that a highway may not be closed. In addition, the department must determine the estimated economic impact of the closure during periods of increased travel on holidays and other periods of high commercial activity. This change became effective September 1, 2017.

Sec. 224.034. HIGHWAY CLOSURES DURING CERTAIN PERIODS. (a) If a proposed improvement of the state highway system requires the closing of a highway, the department shall, before entering into a contract for the proposed improvement, coordinate the highway closure by communicating in person or by telephone call, e-mail, or other direct method of communication with public officials from municipalities affected by the closure to avoid any adverse economic impact on the municipalities during:

(1) periods of increased travel on the state highway system, including major state and federal holidays and school holidays; and

(2) other periods of high commercial activity in the state, including limited periods in which certain items are exempted from the sales tax imposed by Chapter 151, Tax Code.

(b) A contract for the proposed improvement of the state highway system that requires the closing of a highway as described by Subsection (a) must include a provision identifying the days on which the highway may not be closed.

(c) The department shall submit an annual report to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the House of Representatives, and each member of the legislature detailing all highway closures during periods listed in Subsection (a) and the estimated economic impact of those closures.

In November of 2017, the Texas Department of Transportation's Design Division provided the districts guidelines for how to handle road closures. It was determined that during the project development phase of each project the following processes are recommended at the district level:

- Maintain a database of key dates / special events for which roadway closures are prohibited under the provisions of Transportation Code, Section 224.034. This includes ramp closures.
- Coordinate between the Public Officials of Municipalities and the District's Public Involvement Officer(s) to identify and confirm specific key dates / special events that could affect the specific project.
- Once these key dates/special events are confirmed, they should be documented in the project's Design Summary Report.

During the development of plans, specifications, and estimates, it is required that "Special Provision 007-010" be added to the letting documents which states:

"If the construction of the project requires the closing of a highway, as directed, coordinate the

closure with the Engineer and work to ensure all lanes and ramps possible are available during peak traffic periods before, during, and after significant traffic generator events to avoid any adverse economic impact on the municipalities during:

- Dates or events as shown on the plans, and
- Other dates as directed.”

In addition, general notes are required for all projects stating that either no significant traffic generator or events had been identified or specifying when road closures would be prohibited.

If a road closure during the specified key dates / special events is unavoidable, an Economic Analysis is required. Should this happen, the district would begin coordination with the Transportation Planning and Programming Division to provide:

- Description of the project
- Description of the road closure
- Dates of the closure location
- Information on the key dates/special events

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During the twelve-month period from September 1, 2023 to August 31, 2024, there were 193 projects that contained lane closure restrictions. Through project planning and scheduling, TxDOT and its contractors avoided any lane closures on these projects during specified peak times. As a result, there was no need for an economic analysis.