



## **I-45 North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP)**

# **December 2023 Public Meeting Series**

**Summary Documentation Report  
February 23, 2024**





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# Public Meeting Series Purpose



The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Houston District's I-45 North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) has a Voluntary Resolution Agreement (VRA) with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). This transformational project's limits include I-45 from US 59/I-69 to Beltway 8 North, including improvements on US 59/I-69 between I-45 and Spur 527 in Harris County, Texas. The VRA mandates two annual public meetings to provide updates on any of the three project segments under design and construction. TxDOT was required to hold two public meetings by December 31, 2023, as per VRA guidelines as Segment 3 is the only area currently undergoing design and construction of the project's three segments.

Before the VRA agreement in June 2023, a two-year FHWA administrative pause halted public meetings. Because of the pause, TxDOT had not provided updates since releasing the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) in February 2019. Recognizing the importance of keeping impacted property owners, tenants, and communities in all three segments informed, TxDOT decided to hold two public meetings for each of the three project segments. These meetings were scheduled between December 6 and December 14, 2023.



# Public Meeting Series Engagement by the Numbers



Approximately 964 impacted property owners, tenants, community members, stakeholders and other interested public attended the meetings series.

The figures below represent the comments and questions submitted and the sources by which they were received.

## Public Meeting Series Attendees

### Segment 3 Meetings

<b>Meeting #1</b> (In-Person)	<b>Location: St. John's Downtown Church</b>	<b>Meeting #2</b> (Virtual)	<b>Platform: ZOOM</b>
Meeting Date	Wednesday, December 6, 2023	Meeting Date	Thursday, December 7, 2023
Meeting Time	5 - 7 p.m.	Meeting Time	5 - 7 p.m.
Total Number of Attendees (approx.)	<b>243</b>	Total Number of Attendees (approx.)	<b>248</b>

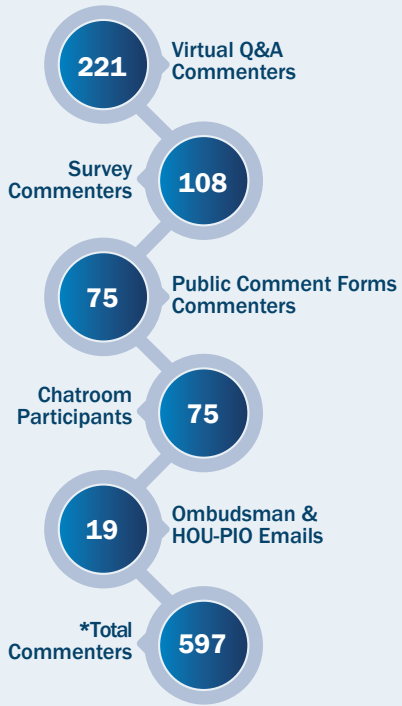
### Segment 2 Meetings

<b>Meeting #3</b> (In-Person)	<b>Segment 2: Moody Community Center</b>	<b>Meeting #4</b> (Virtual)	<b>Platform: ZOOM</b>
Meeting Date	Tuesday, December 12, 2023	Meeting Date	Wednesday, December 13, 2023
Meeting Time	5 - 7 p.m.	Meeting Time	5 - 7 p.m.
Total Number of Attendees (approx.)	<b>157</b>	Total Number of Attendees (approx.)	<b>128</b>

### Segment 1 Meetings

<b>Meeting #6</b> (In-Person)	<b>Segment 1: Aldine Ninth Grade Center</b>	<b>Meeting #5</b> (Virtual)	<b>Platform: ZOOM</b>
Meeting Date	Thursday, December 14, 2023	Meeting Date	Wednesday, December 13, 2023
Meeting Time	5 - 7 p.m.	Meeting Time	5 - 7 p.m.
Total Number of Attendees (approx.)	<b>97</b>	Total Number of Attendees (approx.)	<b>97</b>

### Public Commenters



**Total Comments Submitted: 1008**

\*Several commenters submitted multiple comments  
Approx. numbers as of January 5, 2024





I-45 North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP)

## December 2023 Public Meeting Series Documentation

# Planning & Execution Approach

### A. Public Meeting Series

1. Overview
2. In-Person Meeting Format
3. Virtual Meeting Format
4. Segment 3B Reevaluation and Design Changes Outreach
5. Elected Officials Briefing

### B. Communication Strategy and Tools

1. Meeting Notification Collateral
2. Public Feedback Sources

### C. Limited English Proficiency (LEP) & Accessibility Accommodations

1. Advance Requests for Accommodation Services
2. On-Site Language Requests
3. In-Person Accommodations





## Public Meeting Series

Planning & Execution Approach > **Public Meeting Series**

### Overview

The Public Meeting Series for the I-45 North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) was meticulously organized to engage the community and provide vital project updates.

A total of six public meetings were thoughtfully planned, advertised, and presented as a series. Bilingual legal notices and subsequent advertisements included dates, locations, and times, ensuring accessibility for impacted property owners, tenants, communities, and the interested public. Each segment had both in-person and virtual meetings scheduled.



Texas Department of Transportation **I-45 North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP)**

### DECEMBER 2023 PUBLIC MEETING SERIES

CHANGES FOR THE BETTER

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) invites you to the I-45 NHHIP "Changes for the Better" public meeting series. The purpose of these public meetings is for TxDOT to update the public on overall project status, design refinements, details regarding the Voluntary Resolution Agreement (VRA) and future construction schedule in an open house format. The public meeting series includes two public meetings for each of the three segments (in-person and a live virtual meeting). Please note that both the virtual and in-person public meetings will be conducted in English with real-time Spanish translation.

The project limits are I-45 from US 59/I-69 to Beltway 8 North, including improvements on US 59/I-69 between I-45 and Spur 527 in Harris County, Texas.

#### PUBLIC MEETING SERIES SCHEDULE

##### SEGMENT 3\* (DOWNTOWN ROADWAYS)

**IN-PERSON:**  
Wed., Dec. 6, 2023  
St. John's Downtown Church  
2018 Crawford St., Houston, TX 77002  
5-7 P.M.  
PRESENTATION: 5:15 P.M.

**VIRTUAL:**  
Thurs., Dec. 7, 2023  
5-7 P.M.  
PRESENTATION: 5:15 P.M.  
www.nhhipmeetings.com/Segment3  
or scan the segment QR code

##### SEGMENT 2 (I-45 FROM I-10 TO I-610)

**IN-PERSON:**  
Mon., Dec. 11, 2023  
Woody Community Center  
3725 Fulton St., Houston, TX 77009  
5-7 P.M.  
PRESENTATION: 5:15 P.M.

**VIRTUAL:**  
Tue., Dec. 12, 2023  
5-7 P.M.  
PRESENTATION: 5:15 P.M.  
www.nhhipmeetings.com/Segment2  
or scan the segment QR code

##### SEGMENT 1 (I-45 FROM I-610 TO BELTWAY 8)

**IN-PERSON:**  
Thurs., Dec. 14, 2023  
Alaina Smith Church Center  
10650 North Fay, Houston, TX 77037  
5-7 P.M.  
PRESENTATION: 5:15 P.M.

**VIRTUAL:**  
Wed., Dec. 13, 2023  
5-7 P.M.  
PRESENTATION: 5:15 P.M.  
www.nhhipmeetings.com/Segment1  
or scan the segment QR code

The public will have an opportunity to provide feedback during the meetings. Feedback from the public regarding the project may be submitted in any language by mail to: TxDOT I-45 NHHIP Ombudsman, TxDOT Houston District, P.O. Box 1386, Houston, Texas 77251-1386. Feedback may also be submitted by email to: [nhhip.ombudsman@txdot.gov](mailto:nhhip.ombudsman@txdot.gov) or [HQI-PI@nhmail.txdot.gov](mailto:HQI-PI@nhmail.txdot.gov). All feedback must be received or postmarked by Fri., January 5, 2024.

Should you need assistance with meeting access services, translation services, or other accommodations, please call (713) 802-5199 no later than 4 p.m. by the following dates for:

- Segment 3 meetings, Thurs., Nov. 30, 2023
- Segment 2 meetings, Mon., Dec. 4, 2023
- Segment 1 meetings, Fri., Dec. 8, 2023

If you do not have internet access, you may call (713) 866-7040 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, to ask questions and access project materials during the project development process, by appointment only with TxDOT staff. Those without internet access are encouraged to attend in-person meetings.

Door Hanger Public Meeting Advertisement

Segment 3	In-person DEC 6, 2023	Virtual DEC 7, 2023	TOTAL
Public	222	238	460
Elected Officials	8	6	14
Media	13	4	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>491</b>

Segment 2	In-person DEC 12, 2023	Virtual DEC 13, 2023	TOTAL
Public	151	122	273
Elected Officials	3	3	6
Media	3	3	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>285</b>

Segment 1	In-person DEC 14, 2023	Virtual DEC 13, 2023	TOTAL
Public	94	89	183
Elected Officials	2	5	7
Media	1	3	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>194</b>

December 2023 Public Meeting Series Attendance Summary





## In-Person Meeting Format

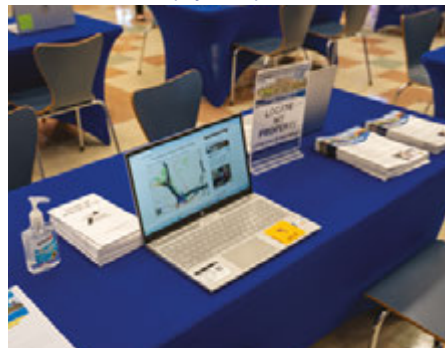
Three in-person public meetings utilized an Open House format. Held between 5 and 7 p.m., this flexible approach allowed attendees to explore project details at their own pace. It also encouraged one-on-one interactions with TxDOT subject matter experts, tailored to individual interests. Impressively, these in-person meetings attracted 497 attendees.



Segment 3 St. John's Downtown Church



Property owners could determine if property is within the project footprint



Member of the public reviews map of the right of way acquisition process

### Meeting Location Criteria:

The selection of meeting venues adhered to a set of stringent criteria, ensuring accessibility and convenience. These criteria included proximity to imminent construction areas, capacity for approximately 150 attendees, an open house layout, free parking, bicycle-friendliness, public transit accessibility, availability of the facility, and ADA accommodations.

### Comprehensive Information Stations:

Attendees at each public meeting could explore various information stations, covering general project updates, segment-specific details, VRA information, ROW acquisition specifics, and resource stations. Real-time Spanish translation was diligently provided.

### Resource Stations for Property Owners and Other Attendees:

Resource tables were set up during in-person meetings dedicated to assisting property owners in determining if their properties fell within the project's footprint. TxDOT Right of Way bilingual specialists were available for personalized consultations. Attendees could complete comment forms, surveys, and seek general project information. Additionally, a continuously playing 10-minute general project update video was available, with real-time language interpretation for those who requested it.

# Planning & Execution Approach



Planning & Execution Approach > Public Meeting Series > **In-Person Meeting Format**



At all 6 meetings, the Segment 3B Redesign and Reevaluation Process was explained

## Interactive Project Exhibit Banners and Boards:

Exhibit banners at each station featured QR codes with Spanish translations of English content. These 10' wide x 8' high banners also included QR codes for online public comment forms and surveys in both English and Spanish. Exhibit boards were created to provide more detailed explanations. Attendees were given the option to use laptops, tablets, or personal mobile devices to access segment exhibits, resources, and provide feedback, either at the meeting or online.



All presentation sections included project details, opportunity for feedback, and accommodations





Hard copy feedback forms

**Diverse Public Feedback Channels:**

To collect public feedback effectively, TxDOT provided multiple avenues for sharing input from December 6 to January 5. Attendees at in-person meetings could use surveys (in hard copy or electronic format), a General Public Comment Form, or reach out to the ombudsman and TxDOT Houston district public information officer via email. Additionally, they could submit feedback via U.S. postal mail.



Presentations, comment forms and surveys online

**Online Information Accessibility:**

TxDOT ensured real-time online access to information presented during both in-person and virtual meetings through the I-45 NHHIP website. This platform offers project exhibits, presentation videos, surveys, and General Public Comment Forms in both English and Spanish.



Spanish translation, American Sign Language

**Inclusive Accommodations:**

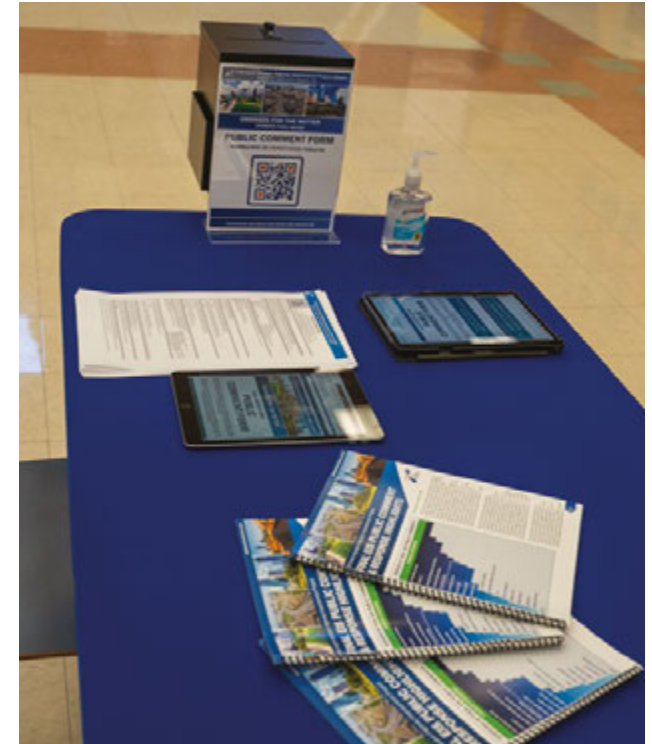
In-person meetings were designed to be inclusive, with real-time Spanish translation and American Sign Language (ASL) available for the hearing impaired. Each venue met ADA requirements to ensure accessibility for all.



Ample greeting staff for sign-in

**Efficient Staffing Plan:**

TxDOT's staffing plan ensured adequate staff to set up and break down the open house venue, serve as check-in and resource staff, subject matter experts, provide translation services, and security. A total of 173 dedicated staff members supported all three in-person public meetings.



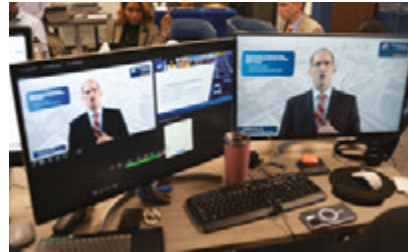
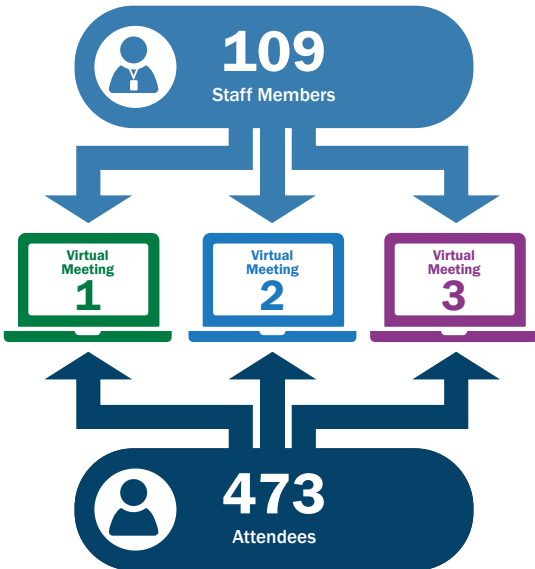
In-person Resource Station and Public Comment Form

This comprehensive approach for the in-person public meetings, encompassing general project updates, segment-specific information, VRA details, ROW acquisition specifics, testimonials, and resource stations, underscores TxDOT's commitment to transparency, community engagement, and accessibility in the I-45 NHHIP project.



## Virtual Meeting Format

Three virtual public meetings were held between 5 and 7 p.m. and structured to mirror the in-person meetings in that attendees could explore project details at their own pace. While the presentations finished by 7 p.m., the virtual platform stayed open until 7:30 p.m. to allow for the subject matter experts to respond to the many questions that were submitted. These virtual meetings attracted 473 attendees and were supported by 109 staff.



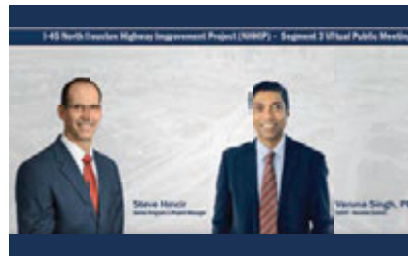
Project Manager Steve Hrcir presents online



Virtual moderator instructs public on available resources



Recordings for in-person and virtual meetings are identical



Experts answer online questions

### Virtual Platform:

The selection of Zoom as a meeting platform provided TxDOT with the flexibility of providing closed caption simultaneous translation in any language of an attendee's choosing, the privacy of a chat function, and breakout sessions to mirror the information offered in the in-person meetings.

### General Project Update:

Prerecorded video presentations provided an update of the project's progress and the construction timeline.

### Segment Specific Topic Video Presentations:

Prerecorded presentations mirroring the information on the project exhibit banners used in the in-person meetings were used to explain details about the project.

### Question & Answer Sessions:

The virtual platform allowed questions to be submitted to a group of subject matter experts who could answer questions directly to the questioner or post the question and answer publicly. This approach allowed a conversation to be private between a subject expert and the questioner to maintain privacy about issues surrounding property acquisition and related topics.

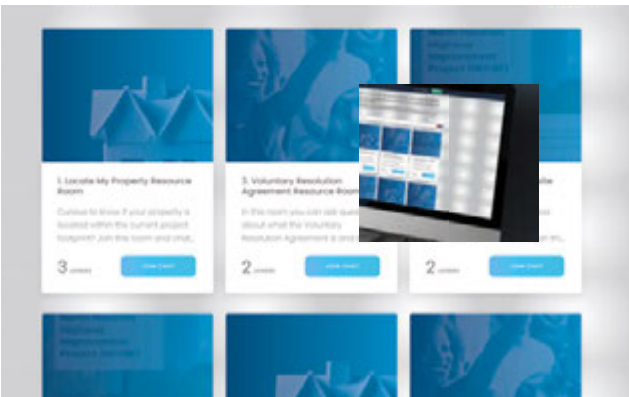


Virtual meeting agenda provides opportunities to engage

**Comprehensive Information Virtual Agenda:**

Each participant in the virtual public meetings received an agenda that closely mirrored the content of the in-person meetings. Just like the in-person meetings, each virtual meeting featured a general project update, project-specific information, details about ROW acquisition, insights into the VRA and dedicated Resource Rooms. Real-time Spanish translation was provided during the presentations, and closed captioning for the hearing impaired was available in multiple languages through the Zoom platform.

Participants had the opportunity to engage in personalized question and answer sessions with TxDOT leadership and subject matter experts. Following the general project update session, attendees were given the flexibility to explore scheduled information or navigate freely between five distinct resource rooms. This approach allowed for personalized question and answer experiences based on the specific topics of interest. Attendees could seamlessly return to the general session at any point during the meeting to ask questions related to the presentation topics.

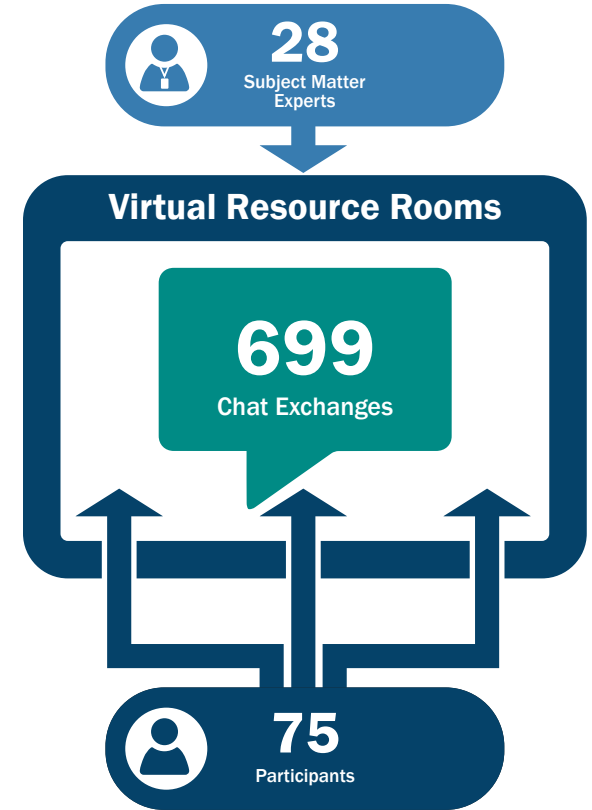


Virtual Resource Room Prompts

**Virtual Resource Rooms:**

The virtual resource information was designed to mirror the concept of our in-person resource tables and open house format. These virtual resource rooms consisted of five dedicated areas:

- NEPA/Environmental Review Questions
- Locate My Property Assistance
- Information Requests in Spanish
- Segment Design Change
- Segment 3B Reevaluation and Design Changes



These resource rooms were staffed with 28 subject matter experts who provided one-on-one real-time responses to questions from the attendees. Over the course of the three virtual public meetings, a total of 75 individuals actively participated, generating a remarkable 699 chat messages.

# Planning & Execution Approach



Planning & Execution Approach > Public Meeting Series > Virtual Meeting Format



Electronic comment form landing page

## Surveys:

Feedback was gathered from virtual participants through electronic surveys. Attendees could also reach out to the Ombudsman and Houston Public Information Officer via email or submit feedback via U.S. postal mail.



Virtual meeting control room concentrates expertise

## Staffing Plan:

TxDOT scheduled adequate staff to manage the technology as well as resource staffing and subject matter expert needs to provide live responses to the questions asked during the virtual meetings. A total of 109 staff members supported all three virtual public meetings.



Electronic surveys gathered preferences for specific project designs

[Planning & Execution Approach](#) > [Public Meeting Series](#) > **Virtual Meeting Format**

This comprehensive virtual meeting format underscores TxDOT's commitment to ensuring that all attendees, whether in-person or virtually, receive equal access to information and an engaging experience throughout the I-45 NHHIP project.





## Segment 3B Reevaluation and Design Changes Outreach

TxDOT conducted a comprehensive outreach effort during the December public meeting series to solicit feedback on the 3B design changes and reevaluation. Various communication channels, including legal notices, ad displays, yard signs, door hangers, the project website, and a press release, were utilized to inform the public about the opportunity to provide input.

In compliance with NEPA reevaluation requirements, TxDOT facilitated a 3B design change and reevaluation exhibit station at the Segment 3 in-person meeting, staffed with subject matter experts. Attendees were provided with a general project overview video, including updates on the 3B design changes and reevaluation. Surveys for both 3B design changes and general public comments were distributed for completion either in hard copy or online.

Similarly, during the Segment 3 virtual meeting, attendees were presented with the general project overview video and a Segment 3B design changes and reevaluation video, offering a detailed overview of proposed changes. Attendees had the opportunity to ask questions and make comments, receiving real-time responses from subject matter experts. A virtual resource room was available for further discussions with experts, and surveys were provided for feedback collection.

To ensure broad participation, TxDOT also presented the Segment 3 general overview and the 3B reevaluation exhibit stations during Segments 2 and 1 in-person public meetings, all staffed with subject matter experts.

The culmination of these efforts is documented in the Segment 3B Design Changes and Reevaluation Summary Report, available in the appendix of this report.



*A member of the public gets close up look at design changes in Segment 3B.*



## Elected Officials Briefing

Before the Public Meeting Series began, TxDOT hosted an in-person briefing for elected officials at its Houston District office on Monday, November 13, 2023, from 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. Invitations were extended to elected officials representing areas in the project's footprint. In all, 20 elected officials or their office representatives attended.

**I-45 North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP)**

DECEMBER 2023  
**PUBLIC MEETING SERIES  
ELECTED OFFICIALS BRIEFING**

**CHANGES FOR THE BETTER**

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Houston District invites you to an Elected Officials Briefing on the I-45 North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP). This project has limits from I-45 from US 59/I-69 to Belway 8 North, including improvements on US 59/I-69 between I-45 and Spur 527 in Harris County, Texas. In March 2023, TxDOT signed a Voluntary Resolution Agreement (VRA) with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), which removed the federal pause on this project.

TxDOT will be holding a series of public meetings in early December. We are hosting this briefing to update you on this year's progress and provide details about the first construction projects, which are anticipated to begin just east of downtown Houston in 2024.

We look forward to having the opportunity to update you on this vital project for the Houston area's transportation future.

Mon, Nov. 13, 2023  
TxDOT Houston District Auditorium  
7600 Washington Ave., Houston, Texas 77007  
10:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.

RSVP by  
5 p.m., Fri, Nov. 10

TO RSVP VISIT [www.txdotpublicmeetings.com/electedofficialbriefings](http://www.txdotpublicmeetings.com/electedofficialbriefings) OR SCAN TO RSVP

Should you need more information about the briefing, please contact Raquelle Lewis at [raquelle.lewis@txdot.gov](mailto:raquelle.lewis@txdot.gov) or call (713) 902-5071



TxDOT Regional Com. Dir. Raquelle Lewis briefs Houston City Council Staffer

The primary objective of this briefing was to provide elected officials with a comprehensive update on the I-45 North Houston Highway Improvement Project. Additionally, the briefing served as a platform to inform elected officials about the upcoming Public Meeting Series and to request their support in disseminating information about the public meetings to their constituents.

The presentation was delivered by TxDOT Houston District leadership and included an interactive question and answer session. To facilitate communication with their constituents, participants received presentation packets and bilingual meeting notice postcards.

The briefing was met with enthusiasm and appreciation from the attendees, culminating in a resounding round of applause for the project's progress and the diligent public outreach efforts undertaken by TxDOT. This briefing successfully set the stage for productive collaboration between elected officials and TxDOT in ensuring that the public meetings were effectively communicated to the community.



TxDOT Houston District Deputy Engineer Varuna Singh spoke with elected officials' staff members during the briefing



City of Houston Council Member Sallie Alcorn participated in the briefing



Paul confers with Houston City Council Member David Robinson



Planning & Execution Approach > **Communication Strategy & Tools**

## Meeting Notification Collateral

To ensure effective communication with the public, TxDOT employed a comprehensive and bilingual communication strategy. All communication collateral was crafted in both English and Spanish, accompanied by QR codes and hyperlinks for easy access to additional meeting information and virtual registration. To reach the target audience more effectively, TxDOT introduced some new communication tools as part of its outreach efforts.



### Print Media Outreach:

Legal notices in both English and Spanish were prepared and published during the second week of November in prominent print news media outlets, including the Houston Chronicle Newspaper, La Voz Newspaper, and the Houston Defender Newspaper. The combined circulation of these publications totals approximately 105,424.



### Direct Mail Campaign:

Bilingual meeting notice postcards were direct mailed to around 45,000 adjacent property owners, tenants within a half-mile radius of the project footprint, elected officials, and other key stakeholders. These mailings were dispatched at least 20 days prior to the first meeting in the series.

Planning & Execution Approach > Communication Strategy & Tools > Meeting Notification Collateral



**Online Presence:**

Bilingual meeting notices were prominently featured on TxDOT's NHHIP website and distributed across its social media platforms on X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and NextDoor. Public meeting notification ads were strategically placed in nine local publications to maximize outreach. Follow-up reminders were posted and emailed to maintain awareness.



**Door-to-Door Engagement:**

A total of 15,000 bilingual door hangers promoting the meetings were created and distributed to low-income residences and community frequented businesses within the project area five days before the meetings began.



**Signage:**

Yard signs displaying meeting dates and times were strategically placed on esplanades and beside sidewalks near meeting locations. In the 72 hours leading up to each in-person meeting, TxDOT utilized fixed and portable signs within the project area to further advertise the event.



**Press Releases:**

Local media outlets received press releases to help promote the upcoming public meetings



### Wayfinding Assistance:

Wayfinding signs were utilized on the day of the meetings to guide attendees from parking areas to the meeting sites.



### Media Engagement:

TxDOT disseminated across the newswire a media advisory and a comprehensive fact sheet to enhance awareness and understanding of the project. The major local broadcast and print media promoted the meetings and ran stories about the project.

*In accordance with National Environmental Policy Act, TxDOT has developed public meeting summary documentation for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Segment 3B Redesign and Reevaluation. That document can be found in the appendix section of this document.*



*Yard signs strategically placed in pedestrian areas within the segments promoting the meetings*

This multifaceted communication strategy and the array of tools deployed underscore TxDOT's commitment to transparent and inclusive communication, ensuring that the public is well-informed and engaged throughout the I-45 NHHIP project.

## Public Feedback Sources

At the in-person public meetings, a variety of feedback mechanisms were employed. Bilingual project specific surveys that sought responses to design questions were deployed both in electronic format as well as hard copy at a public comment station. General public comment forms were also bilingual and offered in electronic and hard copy formats. The display banners included QR codes that led users to surveys.

At the virtual meetings, questions could be asked during the general presentation and in a resource room accessible at any time. Links and QR codes to surveys were also posted during the general presentation. A specific survey and comment form for the 3B Reevaluation was available at all meetings in paper and electronic forms accessed via QR codes.

Individuals could also offer feedback by reaching out to the Ombudsman and Houston Public Information Officer via email or submit feedback via U.S. postal mail. Information on how to make contact was on every piece of collateral distributed and a deadline of January 5, 2024, for all feedback was set.



QR Codes linking to public comment forms & translated meeting materials



#### TxDOT's Support for LEP Accommodations

TxDOT recognizes that notices advising Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individuals of free language assistance are 'vital documents' and should be translated into the languages of each LEP group regularly encountered and affected by the project.

For the I-45 NHHIP December 2023 Public Meeting Series, TxDOT published legal notices in newspapers, on its [Hearing and Meetings webpage](https://www.txdot.gov/projects/hearings-meetings/houston/2023/i45-nhhip-120623.html) [https://www.txdot.gov/projects/hearings-meetings/houston/2023/i45-nhhip-120623.html], and on the [TxDOT NHHIP website](https://www.txdot.gov/nhhip.html) [https://www.txdot.gov/nhhip.html].

#### Advance Requests for LEP Assistance

These notices, in print and electronic formats, offered language and ADA accommodations, and were available in English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Somali, Swahili, and Kinyarwanda.

Additionally, TxDOT placed display ads in community newspapers, targeting a diverse linguistic audience, in English, Spanish, Chinese (Mandarin), and Vietnamese. (Refer to Appendix)

These notices and ads prompted attendees needing language accommodations to make advance requests to TxDOT three days prior to the meetings, but no requests were made.

#### Addressing On-Site Language Requests

At the public meetings, TxDOT provided professionals fluent in English, Spanish, and Mandarin, along with an American Sign Language translator.

The virtual meeting software supported simultaneous closed captioning in multiple languages to accommodate both LEP individuals and the hearing impaired. Spanish-speaking subject matter experts were available to answer questions and provide translations.

Three chat rooms conducted in Spanish were available for Segments 3, 2, and 1 during the virtual meetings. Nevertheless, all virtual meeting participants opted to use English for viewing and participation.



Live sign-language interpretation of the meeting video presentation



A display ad translated into Mandarin and published in a newspaper



## In-Person Accommodations

### Americans with Disabilities Act

All in-person venues met ADA compliance standards, with no special accommodation requests.



### American Sign Language

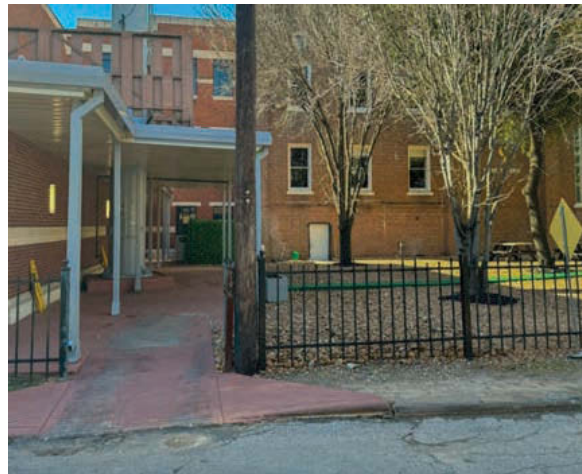
American Sign Language interpreters were provided at in-person events in both English and Spanish, ensuring comprehensive accessibility.

### Closed Captioning

For virtual meetings, closed captioning was provided for all presented material, meeting the needs of attendees with hearing impairments.



Real-time Spanish translation during an in-person public meeting



Handicap-accessible accommodations leading into meeting venue



Video closed captioning for the hearing impaired







I-45 North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP)

## December 2023 Public Meeting Series Documentation

# What Have We Learned & What's Next?

### A. General Overview

1. Introduction
2. Personalized Engagement Yields Focused Results
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  - b. Support for Limited English Proficiency
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2. Strategies and Tactics Moving Forward

# What Have We Learned & What's Next?



What Have We Learned & What's Next? > [General Overview](#) > [Introduction](#)

## General Overview

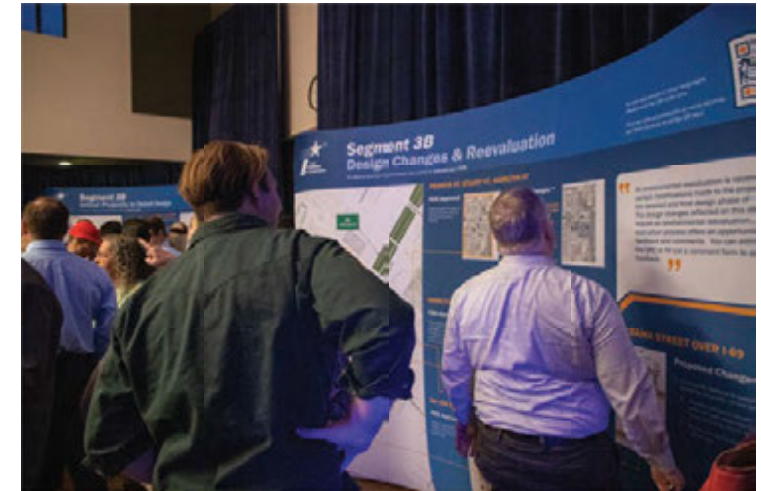


## Introduction

The Lessons Learned and What's Next section of this public meeting summary report encapsulates the profound impact of TxDOT's strategic approach to public engagement throughout the I-45 NHHIP project. By hosting targeted public meetings across all project segments, TxDOT has cultivated invaluable feedback through multiple communication sources from property owners, tenants, communities, and stakeholders, shaping its understanding of key insights and paving the way forward. The active participation of over 960 attendees in the meeting series underscores the community's strong interest and engagement with project-related information.

Within this section, the report delves into the core takeaways gleaned from public feedback, exploring insights gathered through various communication sources. The section not only highlights what TxDOT learned but it also outlines TxDOT's proactive strategies and planned initiatives for the future.

Furthermore, this section provides a concise overview of key survey findings related to Segment 3B design changes and reevaluation. Additionally, it offers insights into public engagement regarding design concepts for freeway caps and bridges. For a comprehensive review of commenter topics and responses, and detailed survey results, readers are directed to the subsequent sections and the appendix of the document.



### What Have We Learned?

The three open house-styled public meetings held across the three project segments offered opportunities for participants to engage directly with the I-45 NHHIP project team's experts. Attendees were able to gather tailored information relevant to their interests. Comprehensive updates on the project, insights into the right of way acquisition process, and an overview of TxDOT's commitment to the Voluntary Resolution Agreement were also provided through engaging video presentations. Moreover, the inclusion of large-scale 8' by 10' exhibit banners facilitated a holistic understanding of various facets of the project.



### What's Next

#### **Based on feedback and interaction, TxDOT plans to take the following actions:**

- Consider workshops in communities where acquisition is early in the process or about to get started to provide information and keep communities informed of ROW acquisition activity timelines.
- The Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation (TSAHC), TxDOT's sister agency will publish grant program guidelines concerning the affordable housing initiatives and TxDOT will highlight program availability to the communities including posting a link to the project website. The final details of TxDOT's agreement with TSAHC are being reviewed currently with implementation to follow in 2024.
- Publish eligibility requirements for the Weatherization Program to the project website in the first quarter of Calendar Year 2024 and begin implementation of the program in the vicinity of Projects 3B-1, 3B-2, and 3A so that eligible property owners not displaced but adjacent to project construction can make application for these benefits.

# What Have We Learned & What's Next?



What Have We Learned & What's Next? > [General Overview](#) > **Personalized Engagement Yields Focused Results**

## Personalized Engagement Yields Focused Results

Virtual interactions that allowed for more tailored and prescriptive engagements particularly benefit Segment 1 residents by providing information to navigate the limited information associated with this more long-range project timeline.

Virtual meetings and the chat room function allowed TxDOT to focus on presenting the core messages regarding the development of the project and address the maximum amount of questions in a very focused manner. The Customer Relations Management tool allowed attendees to ask their questions and get them answered efficiently without the noise and interference that can come from posturing in public meetings.

Over the course of the three virtual meetings and the use of the chat room, NHHIP subject matter experts were able to field and respond to 110 inquiries regarding right of way acquisition. Many attendees asked whether their property was affected by the project. Many received confirming information based on prior communication that yes their property was in the footprint. For some the information was new. Others were provided with information that their property was not within the footprint.

The chat rooms also provided an opportunity for attendees to actively engage and provide opinions on design changes such as those taking place in Segment 3B of the NHHIP. A total of 75 commenters provided their opinions on either actively considered design changes or changes they would like to see. A total of 81 chat room commenters shared their opinions on how TxDOT could best proceed with design for the freeway caps or bridges over depressed portions of the NHHIP east of downtown Houston.

Along with right of way and design development, environmental concerns remain high on the list of interests for attendees. Their concerns include management of air and noise pollution, preservation of greenspace and connectivity for pedestrians, cyclists and public transportation from neighborhoods on one side of the corridor to the other.



What Have We Learned?

## Virtual Meeting Resource Chat Rooms: A Game Changer for Responsive Public Engagement.

The integration of personalized chat rooms during virtual public meetings represented a significant advancement towards a tailored, customer centric approach in addressing public inquiries. With TxDOT Houston District's top administrators and other NHHIP subject matter experts operating from a setup reminiscent of a NASA control room, TxDOT effectively provided individualized attention to the multitude of questions received each night during these virtual gatherings.

Throughout each of the three virtual public meetings, attendees had access to five resource rooms:

- Locate My Property (Right of Way Acquisition),
- NEPA/Environmental Review Questions,
- Segment Design Changes,
- Segment 3B General Update Questions, and
- Spanish Translation (for any topic).

These resource rooms were staffed by subject matter experts poised to address micro-level inquiries important to participants. Emulating the interactive nature of in-person open house-style public meetings, the more than 470 virtual meeting participants were able to navigate between the presentation agenda and their preferred resource rooms.

This customer centric chat function seamlessly complemented the real-time question-and-answer sessions, offering a comprehensive overview of the project while addressing individual concerns. The resource rooms remained available 30 minutes after each of the virtual meetings ended to answer questions and respond to the chat inquiries posed during the presentation. Notably, these inquiries were systematically captured and included in the public meeting analysis, ensuring that all voices were heard and accounted for in the decision making process.

What's Next

**Based on this experience, TxDOT will continue to look for ways to leverage technology to provide increased access to the public in a timely manner.**





## What Have We Learned?

### Support for Limited English Proficiency

TxDOT ensured that all materials were available in both English and Spanish. The legal public notices were published in English and Spanish. In addition to the public notices, public meeting notices display ads were published in local community newspapers in English, Spanish Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic and Mandarin. Public Meeting Series legal notices and the display ads provided notice of how to seek language accommodations prior to the meeting and the associated deadlines per meeting to such accommodations. Spanish language translation was provided in real-time for all presentations, both in-person and virtual.

TxDOT received no advance requests for languages other than English or Spanish. During the first in-person meeting, a single individual, who spoke in Mandarin, requested in writing that all public meeting information be translated in Mandarin, Vietnamese, Korean, and Arabic. The request was written in English using the LEP Accommodation Request form provided by TxDOT. The participant was provided with a Mandarin translator during the public meeting, though a request for the accommodation was not made in advance. Had individuals who needed this translation request been present, or submitted the request themselves in advance, TxDOT would have provided the translation in Vietnamese, Korean and Arabic as well.



## What's Next

**Based on the results of the interactions at the meetings and the identified language needs, as well as past language requests, TxDOT Houston District will undertake the following actions:**

- Periodically review the LEP Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to assess whether any updates or modifications are warranted.
- Progress LEP training to ensure that all personnel currently involved in the program and any new personnel joining the program have received appropriate LEP training and are adhering to the SOPs.
- Provide materials on the project website and at public meetings in both English and Spanish, with additional languages available upon request. This includes right of way acquisition information requested and provided in seven languages.

What Have We Learned?

## Increased Interest and Requests for Information

TxDOT's engagement efforts have extended beyond the segment public meetings held in December, with outreach to elected officials and community stakeholders through charrettes. These expanded efforts not only notified impacted property owners, tenants, communities, and other stakeholders about the public meetings but also facilitated accommodations and planning for the Segment 3B Design Changes Reevaluation. This inclusive approach has encouraged more active participation from the public in these crucial discussions.

The resurgence of the I-45 NHHIP Public Meetings Series, following a two-year hiatus, witnessed a highly engaged public eager for updates on the project and its implications for themselves or their communities. This heightened interest underscores a growing desire for project-related information.



What's Next

**TxDOT is committed to providing multiple opportunities for public input as the various projects proceed into final design.**

This includes the following:

- Conduct assessments of essential services access in accordance with the NHHIP Essential Services Plan developed in adherence to the VRA, and report the results of these assessments in community and agency meetings associated with the respective projects, including the monthly Multi-Agency Meetings currently being held for Projects 3A, 3B-1, and 3B-2.
- Expand participation in the monthly Multi-Agency Meetings and establish a similar monthly group meeting for the 3C projects along I-10 as they progress with final design in 2024.
- Conduct one-on-one meetings with schools in Projects 3A, 3B-1, and 3B-2 as design progresses, and initiate similar meetings with schools along the 3C projects as design begins in 2024.
- Inform schools in Projects 3B-1, 3B-2, and 3A of the ombudsman for the construction phase to facilitate communication during construction.
- Continue stakeholder and community group meetings for projects in final design to provide the latest progress updates and assess feedback as designs advance.
- Update the project website to include construction phase services information with the upcoming start of construction in Project 3B-1, providing details such as project phasing information, timelines, opportunities for public inquiries, and data related to construction timing, major traffic shifts, and progression of construction activities.

# What Have We Learned & What's Next?



## Comment Categories, Results & Next Steps



[What Have We Learned & What's Next?](#) > [Comment Categories, Results & Next Steps](#) > **Public Feedback**

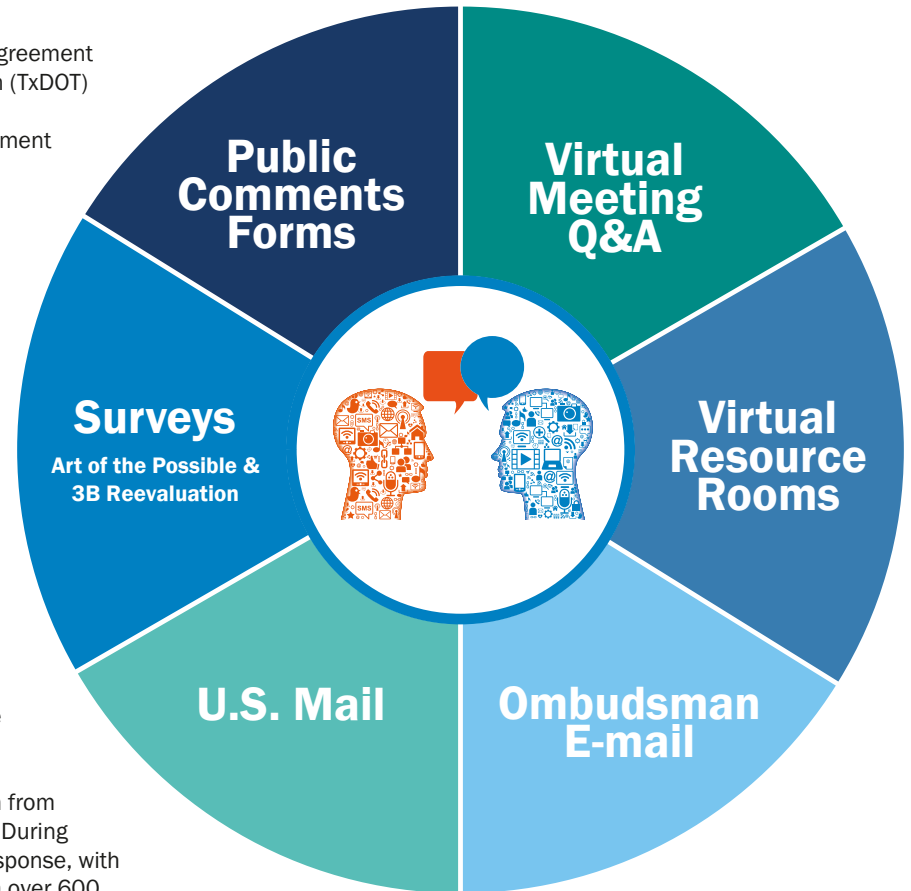
### Public Feedback

In accordance with the Voluntary Resolution Agreement (VRA), the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Houston District conducted an extensive and inclusive I-45 North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) Public Meeting Series, from December 6 to December 14, 2023. The primary objective of this public meeting series was to create a platform for impacted property owners, tenants, local communities, and the broader public to articulate their concerns and express their interests regarding the project's potential impacts.

To facilitate the exchange of information and to receive feedback, several communication sources were made accessible to the public, enabling them to share their invaluable feedback. These sources included public comment forms, surveys, virtual resource rooms, interactive question-and-answer sessions conducted during virtual meetings, NHHIP Ombudsman and Houston PIO District emails, and the more traditional means of U.S. Post Office Mail.

The feedback collection period remained open from December 6, 2023, through January 5, 2024. During this time, TxDOT received an overwhelming response, with over 1000 written comment submissions from over 600 commenters. To present a comprehensive overview of the public sentiment, this feedback has been tabulated into the Public Comment Categories Chart. This chart highlights the most frequently mentioned comment categories, providing insight into the community's collective concerns and interests.

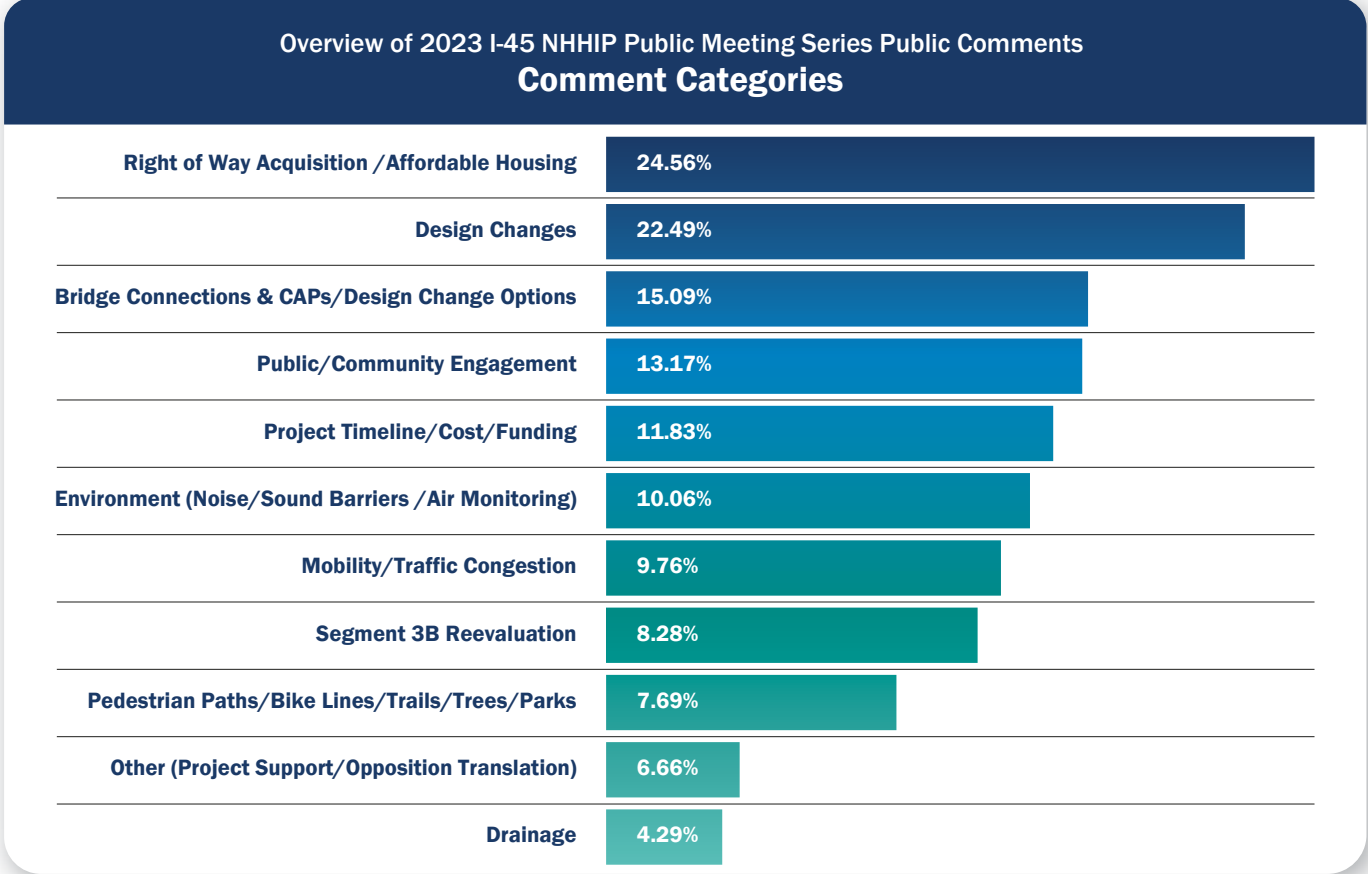
### Communication Source Diagram





What Have We Learned & What's Next? > Comment Categories, Results & Next Steps > **Public Feedback**

With a robust attendance of more than 970 participants across the six meetings, the community's interest is demonstrated through this heat map that illustrates the general comment categories that garnered the most attention.



# What Have We Learned & What's Next?



## What Have We Learned?

### High Interest in Right of Way (ROW) Acquisition Impact and Process

Three fundamental topics consistently dominated discussions:

1. Property owners and tenants are deeply interested in understanding whether their property(ies), in part or in full, would be impacted by the project.
2. A strong need exists by property owners and tenants to understand TxDOT's right of way acquisition process and timeline and the steps involved should their property be impacted.
3. Property owners want to be connected with a designated TxDOT contact for assistance throughout the ROW acquisition process.

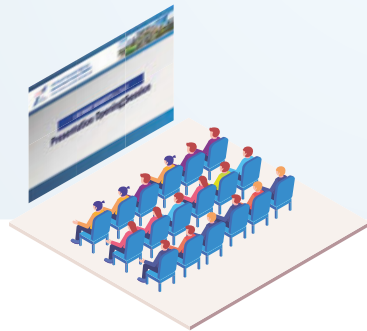
## What's Next

**TxDOT is committed to making accessible comprehensive information regarding the ROW acquisition process. Efforts will be made to make this information more readily available and easily understandable to stakeholders.**

Additionally, the project team will actively seek opportunities to provide firsthand learning experiences by collaborating directly with stakeholders, grassroots organizations, community resources, and interest groups. This collaborative approach aims to foster better understanding and engagement among all parties involved in the project.



Pop-up exhibits with ROW staff and consultants readily available to answer questions and provide details regarding impacts, benefits and TxDOT processes



Targeted presentations and briefings in high impact areas



Participate in/have exhibit space at community events such as job fairs, health fairs, business procurement forums and others



Schedule live chat events to allow interests, impacted residents and business owners opportunities to obtain real-time engagement with ROW subject matter experts.

What Have We Learned?

## Property Impact Questions Across Different Project Stages

As Segment 3 moves closer to its construction phase in mid-2024, the funding for Segments 1 and 2 remains further down the road, with minimal to no allocated funding at present. This long-term perspective has created an information gap that TxDOT addressed during recent meetings. Residents gained awareness or confirmation that their properties may fall within the project's footprint. TxDOT successfully directed these individuals toward ongoing communication efforts aimed at keeping them informed as the project progresses. Additionally, property owners discovered that they have the option to request early buyout consideration by submitting a written request to TxDOT.

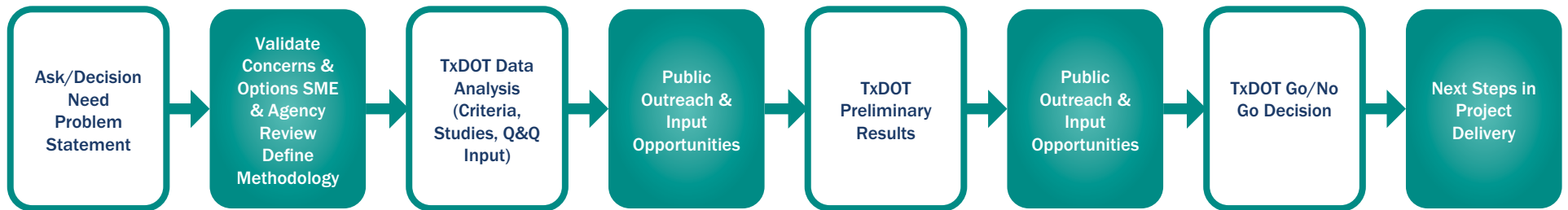
What's Next

**In response to feedback and interaction, TxDOT recognizes the importance of advancing the right of way (ROW) footprint assessments in Segments 1 and 2.**

TxDOT plans to take the following actions:

- Conduct assessments to explore potential footprint reductions in Segments 1 and 2, aligning with the requirements of the VRA. Subsequently, TxDOT will engage in discussions with Harris County to review the assessment results and present them to the public in meetings later in 2024.
- As the project team progresses with the analysis to reduce the footprint, TxDOT will adhere to a decision making protocol to ensure that key stakeholders and the public have ample opportunities to provide feedback and contribute to the go/no-go decisions.

### The Consensus Building Process





## What Have We Learned?

### Understanding the Significance of East Downtown Investment

As we prepare to embark on the construction phase of Segment 3, it is imperative to underscore the critical importance of sensitivity towards East Downtown (EaDo) investment. The commencement of I-45 NHHIP construction, starting with drainage systems in the Fall of 2024, notably intersects with the vibrant fabric of St. Emanuel Street in East Downtown, colloquially known as EaDo. Over the past two decades, this dynamic district in Houston has undergone remarkable transformation, catalyzed by the establishment of two iconic stadiums: Minute Maid Park, home to the Houston Astros, and Shell Stadium, housing the Houston Dynamo Major League Soccer Team. The rationale behind public investment in these landmark projects stemmed from their envisioned positive impact on residential and commercial development in this quadrant of Houston, a vision that has since blossomed into reality.

#### Drawing Insights from Segment 3 Discourse:

During deliberations on Segment 3, stakeholders articulated valid concerns regarding the potential ramifications of the redevelopment and rerouting of Interstate 45 on the thriving East Downtown residential and retail sectors. It is incumbent upon us to ensure that the evolution of I-45 remains attuned to the evolving needs of businesses, whether residential or retail, in this bustling enclave situated directly east of the NHHIP.

#### Addressing Concerns and Anticipating Impacts:

Furthermore, attention was drawn to the potential disruptions posed by detours on critical Midtown thoroughfares such as West Alabama Street and Richmond Avenue, which have historically facilitated detours for various TxDOT projects, including the development of Highway 288 and the redevelopment of Highway 59 through Houston's Midtown. The recent Segment 3 meeting, which drew a diverse audience of over 300 individuals, also provided a platform for discussions surrounding the necessity of highways primarily catering to single-occupancy motorized vehicle usage and the need to diversify transportation modalities for Houston's daily commute.

#### Embracing Collaboration for Comprehensive Solutions:

It is worth emphasizing that TxDOT's approach to highway development in Houston is underscored by direct collaboration with public transportation agencies, aimed at advancing diverse transportation modalities across the region. This collaborative ethos serves a dual purpose: providing commuters with a broad spectrum of transportation options and ensuring prudent stewardship of the substantial investment in transportation infrastructure within the region.

## What's Next

### Charting the Course Forward

Looking ahead, TxDOT is actively coordinating meetings with businesses along St. Emanuel Street and the East Downtown Management District to delve into the intricacies of design, planned traffic control measures, detours, and estimated timelines. Furthermore, plans are underway to reinvigorate the previously established I-45 NHHIP Traffic Management Steering Committee, bolstering efforts to explore, plan, advance, and execute strategies for effective traffic management during the construction phase.

By internalizing these key lessons and fostering proactive collaboration, TxDOT endeavors to navigate the complexities of the I-45 NHHIP construction while mitigating disruptions and maximizing benefits for all stakeholders involved.

What Have We Learned?

## Feedback, Comments, and Surveys: A Valuable Source of Insight

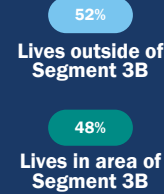
Survey respondents support proposed design changes for I-45 NHHIP Segment 3B.

Of the 61 respondents who answered some or all of the questions in the 3B Reevaluation survey, 29 or 48% indicated that they lived in the area of Segment 3B.

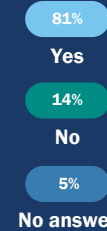
One key design change in Segment 3B aims to reconfigure Chenevert Street, Jackson Street, and Francis Street to align with the traditional grid network of Houston streets. When asked if they supported this reconfiguration, 81% of the 42 respondents answered affirmatively, while 14% dissented, and 5% had no opinion.

Another significant design change involves the Hamilton ramp merging into the general purpose lanes on SH 288 instead of the managed lanes, streamlining traffic flow. An impressive 79% of the 42 respondents expressed support for this modification.

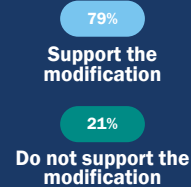
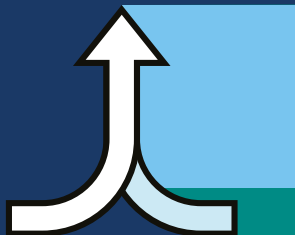
Do you live or work in the areas adjacent to any of the proposed design changes?



Do you support the reconfiguration of Chenevert St., Jackson Street and Francis Street to match a more traditional city street grid network?



Do you support the reconfiguration of the Hamilton ramp to merge into the general purpose (non-toll) lanes on SH 288?



What's Next

Based on the feedback received, TxDOT will proceed with these recommendations of Project 3B design changes to complete the reevaluation efforts and if reevaluation is approved, the applicable changes will be incorporated into the final design.

# What Have We Learned & What's Next?



What Have We Learned & What's Next? > Comment Categories, Results & Next Steps > Public Feedback > Segment 3 > **The Art of the Possible - Caps**

## Unveiling the Potential: The Art of the Possible - Caps Survey participants highlight the significance of public park space in freeway cap designs.

In "The Art of the Possible - Caps" survey, a total of 37 engaged respondents completed all sections, providing valuable insights. The survey had four questions designed to gauge what the public values in such a public space.

A freeway cap, as envisioned here, represents an architectural or engineered decking spanning over a segment of a below-grade highway. This innovative concept serves as a pivotal component of the I-45 NHHIP, strategically optimizing traffic flow along I-45 as it traverses downtown Houston, while seamlessly integrating with intersecting streets.



**I-45 North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP)**

**CHANGES FOR THE BETTER**

**PUBLIC MEETING SERIES**

**ART OF THE POSSIBLE:  
CAPS**

Thank you for your participation in today's I-45 NHHIP Public Meeting. Please fill out the survey below.

Gracias por su participación en la Reunión Pública de NHHIP I-45 de hoy. Por favor, rellene la encuesta a continuación.

**1** Which type of amenities would you like to see incorporated into the structural caps over the depressed freeway in Segment 3?  
¿Qué tipo de instalaciones le gustaría que se incorporaran a las cubiertas estructurales sobre la autopista rebajada del Segmento 3?

Choose one of the following answers:

- Green spaces and parks / Espacios verdes y parques
- Outdoor seating and recreational areas / Asientos al aire libre y zonas recreativas
- Retail spaces and shops / Espacios comerciales y tiendas
- Community event spaces / Espacios para eventos comunitarios

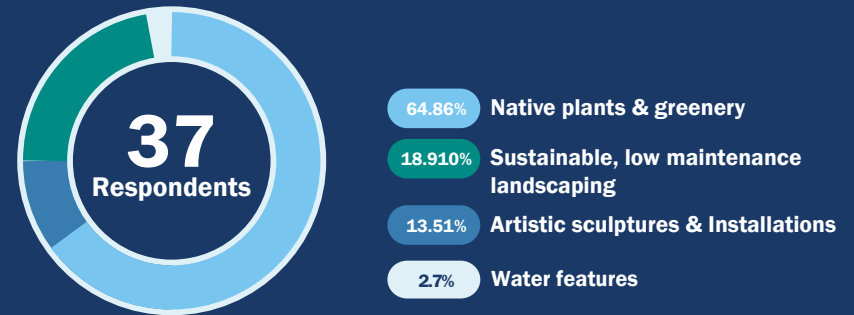
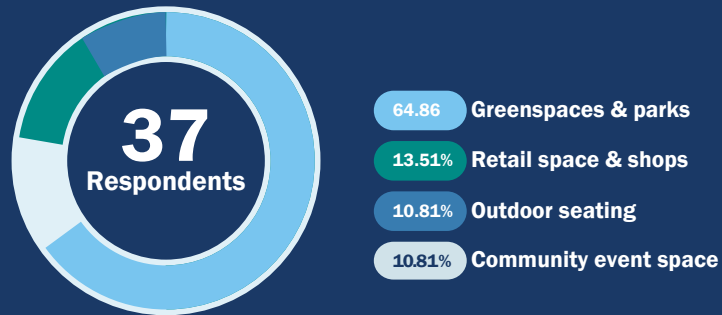
**2** Which landscaping option would enhance the appeal of the structural caps as public spaces?  
¿Qué opción paisajística realzaría el atractivo de las cubiertas estructurales como espacios públicos?

## Caps Survey

### What Have We Learned?

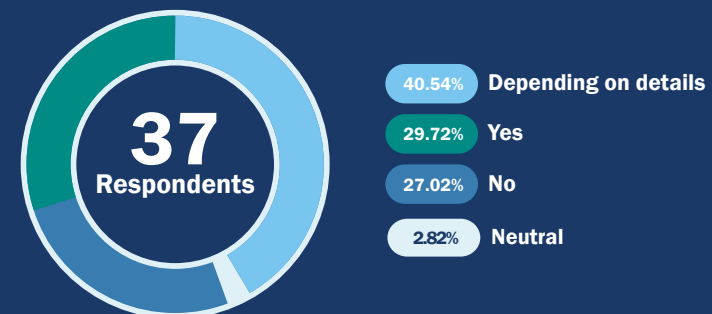
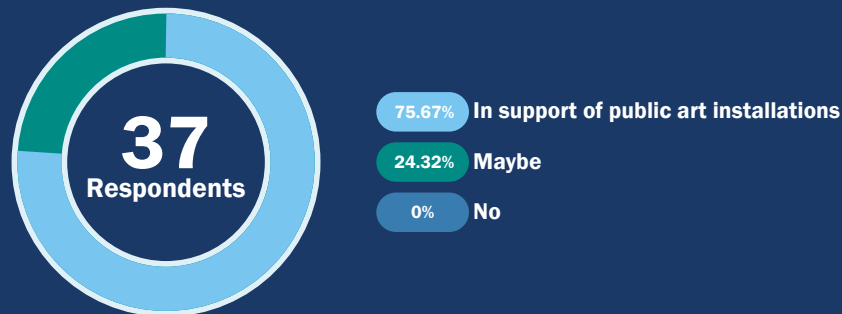
In the first question about amenities on the structural caps, nearly 65 percent of the respondents agreed that greenspaces and parks represent the best opportunity to utilization of freeway caps. 13.51% were interested in adding retail space, and 10.81% suggested the space should include outdoor seating. 10.81% of respondents recommended community event space.

In the second question concerning landscaping, nearly 65% of respondents suggested native plants and greenery would be the preference. Nearly 19% recommended sustainable and low maintenance landscaping, 5% suggested artistic sculptures and nearly 3% suggested the use of water features.



Question 3 asked whether the respondents would support the inclusion of public art installations and 76% of respondents said they were in support of the use of public art. The remaining 24% responded “Maybe”, with 0% choosing “No”.

The fourth question asked whether the caps should serve as a hub for local businesses and economic activities. Of those who responded, 40.54% said it depended on the details, 30% agreed, and 27% said, “No, it should focus on recreational and community aspects.”



# What Have We Learned & What's Next?



What Have We Learned & What's Next? > Comment Categories, Results & Next Steps > Public Feedback > Segment 3 > **The Art of the Possible - Bridges**

## Exploring Creative Opportunities: The Art of the Possible - Bridges Survey respondents overwhelmingly endorse artistic lighting concepts for NHHIP bridge designs.

In an initiative dubbed "Art of the Possible - Bridges," TxDOT public input regarding the potential utilization of bridges spanning the depressed sections of the I-45 project.

During this collaborative endeavor, 28 enthusiastic participants seized the opportunity to contribute their insights and preferences regarding the envisioned bridges.

It's worth emphasizing that the surveys deliberately abstained from juxtaposing ratings between the design concepts of caps and bridges. The intention was to refrain from soliciting a comparative analysis of preferences between the two design approaches.



**I-45 North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP)**

**CHANGES FOR THE BETTER**

**PUBLIC MEETING SERIES**

**ART OF THE POSSIBLE:  
BRIDGES**

Thank you for your participation in today's I-45 NHHIP Public Meeting. Please fill out the survey below.

Gracias por su participación en la Reunión Pública de NHHIP I-45 de hoy. Por favor, rellene la encuesta a continuación.

**1** Which of the following aesthetic features would you prioritize in the design of an arch bridge?  
¿Cuál de las siguientes características estéticas consideraría prioritaria en el diseño de un puente de arco?

Choose one of the following answers:

- Intricate artistic patterns / Patrones artísticos intrincados
- Minimalistic and modern design / Diseño minimalista y moderno
- Incorporation of local cultural elements / Incorporación de elementos culturales locales
- Natural landscaping on bridge approaches / Paisajismo natural en los accesos al puente

**2** Which type of lighting would you prefer for an archbridge in the evening?  
¿Qué tipo de iluminación preferiría para un puente de arco en la noche?

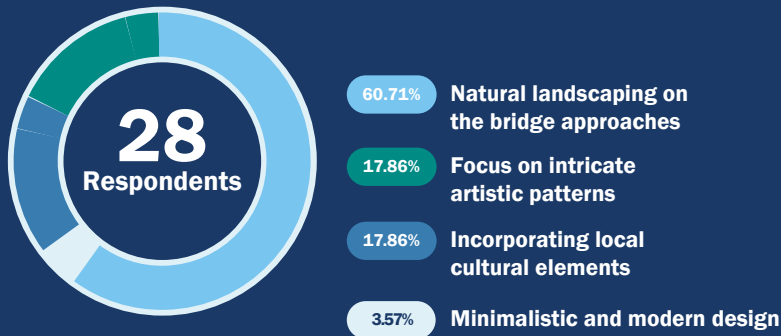
Choose one of the following answers:



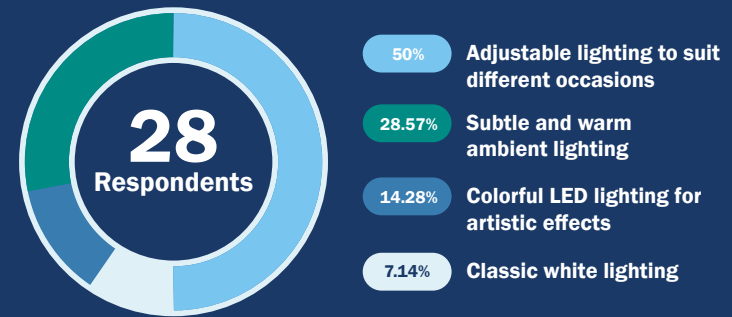
## Bridges Survey

### What Have We Learned?

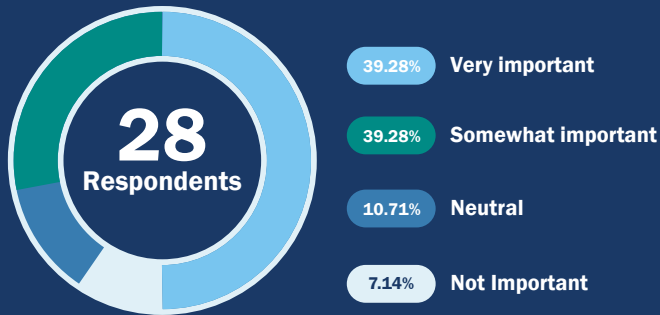
In the first question about aesthetic design priorities, a total of 28 people responded to the question. 60.71% suggested natural landscaping on the bridge approaches suited their preference. 17.86% preferred a focus on intricate artistic patterns, and 17.86% preferred incorporating local cultural elements. 3.57% preferred minimalist and modern design.



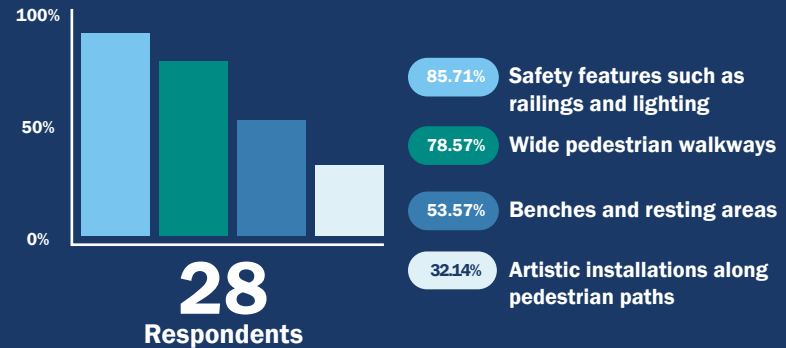
In the second question related to the bridges, “Which type of lighting would you prefer for an arch bridge in the evening”, 50% indicated “adjustable lighting to suit different occasions”. 28.57% said “subtle warm lighting”, 14.28% indicated colorful “LED lighting for artistic affect”, and 07.14% indicated “classic white lighting”.



The third question in this section asked, “How important is it to you that an arch bridge reflects the historical and cultural identity of the surrounding community”?



The fourth question in the Art of the Possible – Bridges Survey asked about improvements to the pedestrian experience on bridges. In this question, respondents had the option of providing more than one response. 85% said safety features such as railings and lighting are most important. The next most significant response also dealt with safety with about 79% saying that wide walkways would be most inviting. 54% said benches and resting areas were key. And 32% said artistic installations along walking paths would be of interest to them.



# What Have We Learned & What's Next?



[What Have We Learned & What's Next?](#) > [Comment Categories, Results & Next Steps](#) > [Public Feedback](#) > **Segment 2**

## What Have We Learned?

**Segment 2 has revealed that connectivity for pedestrians and public transportation plays a crucial role in fostering a growing sense of community. Additionally, the presence of greenspaces and a deep appreciation for historical significance are key aspects observed.**

Situated to the west of Segment 2 is the rapidly expanding Heights area of Houston, characterized by emerging urban design, with restaurants and retail outlets conveniently interspersed within walking distance from both single-family and multi-family residences. On the eastern side lies the more established northside, boasting a sizable middle-class population.

The area features a mix of traditional homes alongside new developments, offering strong community connectivity. Stakeholder comments underscore a collective desire to maintain seamless pedestrian connectivity across the freeway corridor and enhance access to public transportation.

Notably, the region is home to significant natural features such as the White Oak Bayou, which converges with Buffalo Bayou. Over the past two decades, the development of bike paths linking parks and greenspaces has brought considerable value to residents. Feedback from stakeholders emphasizes the importance of preserving and expanding greenspaces adjacent to the I-45 corridor.

Closer to the neighborhood of Independence Heights, property owners and community members expressed a profound desire for the corridor to honor the area's rich history. Independence Heights holds historical significance as the first city incorporated by African Americans in Texas. TxDOT acknowledges the importance of this heritage and will factor it into the design process.

## What's Next

**In addition to assessing the right of way (ROW) footprint in Segment 2, TxDOT will focus on drainage modifications to lift Independence Heights out of the flood plain.**

Furthermore, in alignment with public meeting discussions, TxDOT is advancing assessments for an elevated pedestrian crossing over I-45 near North Street as per the VRA requirements. Collaboration with the City of Houston, Harris County Flood Control District, and the Houston Parks Board will be prioritized, with a meeting scheduled in the first half of 2024 to address commitments outlined in the VRA. This includes discussions on trail developments as part of the NHHIP, identification of additional trail connectivity opportunities, and coordination on third party projects outside TxDOT's ROW that leverage connectivity with NHHIP improvements.



**What's Next**



**1. Preservation of Greenbelts**

Given the proximity of I-45 NHHIP Segment 2 to the confluence of White Oak Bayou and Buffalo Bayou, the preservation of corresponding greenspace stands as a shared priority for residents along this corridor. TxDOT remains committed to advocating for safeguarding park space, collaborating with the city to enhance hike and bike connectivity, and establishing a native vegetation buffer along the freeway post-construction.



**2. Enhancing Bike and Pedestrian Connectivity**

Recognizing the intrinsic value attached by residents along Segment 2 to bikeable and walkable pathways, TxDOT remains attuned to the importance of fostering connectivity across the corridors. These vibrant communities have cultivated a harmonious blend of residential, retail, and dining establishments that promote multi-modal and short distance travel.



**3. Mitigating Flood Risks**

In collaboration with Harris County Flood Control and the City of Houston, TxDOT has formulated a comprehensive drainage plan extending from downtown up Little White Oak Bayou to Independence Heights. This plan is designed to alleviate hydrologic chokepoints and enhance drainage towards the west, thereby augmenting the capacity of White Oak Bayou and reducing flood risks in the vicinity.



**4. Facilitating New Connectivity to Downtown**

Several enhancements to connectivity are poised to transform the landscape, including the establishment of new roadway connections at previously unexplored locations such as Blue Bell Road under I-45 and a new northbound I-45 frontage road between Quitman and North Main Streets. Responding to feedback, the I-610/I-45 interchange will now incorporate a connection to Melbourne Street on the I-45 North frontage road, underscoring the commitment to maintaining accessibility to the west side of downtown amidst mainline realignments to the east.

# What Have We Learned & What's Next?



What Have We Learned & What's Next? > Comment Categories, Results & Next Steps > Public Feedback > **Segment 1**

## What Have We Learned?

**In Segment 1, it has become evident that supporting families through the process of right of way acquisition, addressing flooding issues, and enhancing beautification efforts to emphasize a sense of place are paramount concerns for property owners and tenants along the corridor.**

Safety concerns related to flooding along the freeway corridor remain a core issue for residents, particularly evidenced in comments from the Segment 1 meeting. Historically, heavy rain has consistently led to flooded intersections near Tidwell Street, Parker Street, and approaching Little York Road. Additionally, residents in this segment expressed a desire for enhanced beautification efforts that reflect Houston in a positive light, with one commenter recommending the inclusion of palm trees.

This section of I-45 serves as a vital corridor from Houston's largest airport to the heart of the city, making concerns about its appearance a longstanding community priority. Comments from the Segment 1 meeting also underscored the importance of TxDOT being sensitive to the impact of right of way acquisition in an area with a significant number of tenants living near the right of way. The concern primarily revolves around how these individuals will be supported during the right of way acquisition process.

## What's Next

**Following the assessment of potential ROW footprint reductions, TxDOT will present these findings at future public events in Segment 1 before revising ROW maps to advance acquisitions.**

It is crucial to ensure that the project remains responsive to the needs and aspirations of the local community while advancing key objectives related to safety, beautification, and community support. Drawing insights from the Segment 1 meeting, strategies and tactics have been devised to effectively address the feedback and concerns raised by stakeholders, particularly property owners and tenants along the corridor.



**What's Next**



**1. Beautification Initiatives**

TxDOT is committed to addressing the community's desire for beautification efforts along Segment 1 by integrating elements that reflect Houston's positive image. During detailed design phases, the project team will explore opportunities to enhance the corridor's aesthetic appeal through landscaping enhancements. TxDOT will also collaborate with partners to spearhead beautification projects aimed at improving the visual character of the area, addressing longstanding concerns about its appearance.



**2. Sense of Place Enhancement**

Emphasizing the importance of enhancing the sense of place along Segment 1, TxDOT will incorporate elements that resonate with the local community's identity and values. Through collaboration with stakeholders, place-making initiatives will be identified to celebrate the corridor's unique character and history. This collaborative effort aims to instill a greater sense of pride and ownership among residents and visitors.



**3. Engagement with Stakeholders**

The project team will maintain ongoing dialogue and engagement with community stakeholders, including property owners, tenants, and residents. Opportunities for feedback and input on proposed changes and initiatives will be provided, ensuring that community perspectives are considered and integrated into project development during detailed design phases.



**4. Collaborative Problem-Solving**

Adopting a collaborative problem solving approach, TxDOT will work closely with local authorities, community organizations, and other stakeholders. As the analysis to reduce the footprint progresses, TxDOT will follow a decision making protocol, allowing key stakeholders and the public to provide feedback and contribute to decisions. Leveraging partnerships and resources, TxDOT will implement comprehensive solutions that benefit the community and enhance the corridor's overall well-being and resilience.

# What Have We Learned & What's Next?



What Have We Learned & What's Next? > Comment Categories, Results & Next Steps > **Strategies and Tactics Moving Forward**

## Strategies and Tactics Moving Forward

To harness the insights gleaned from public meetings and inform decision making processes while prioritizing community needs, the following strategies and tactics will be integrated into the NHHIP public engagement efforts:

### What's Next

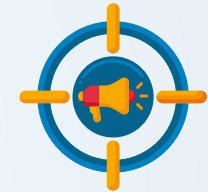
#### Enhanced Communication Channels

Continuously utilize virtual meetings and chat room functions to efficiently address questions and concerns from attendees. The Customer Relations Management tool will remain an integral part of these meetings, facilitating streamlined communication and minimizing interference.



#### Targeted Information Dissemination

Recognizing the significant inquiries regarding right of way acquisition, a tailored approach to providing information to affected property owners will be adopted. Utilizing prior communication data, responses will be customized to ensure clarity and accuracy in addressing concerns.



#### Active Engagement Opportunities

Promote active engagement among attendees by offering opportunities for them to share opinions and feedback on design changes, such as those in Segment 3B and the freeway caps. Cultivate an environment where participants feel empowered to contribute meaningfully to the project's development.



#### Environmental Concerns Integration

Acknowledging and addressing environmental concerns raised by attendees, particularly regarding air and noise pollution, greenspace preservation, and connectivity for pedestrians, cyclists, and public transportation, will be prioritized. These considerations will be seamlessly integrated into the project's planning and design phases, fostering sustainability and community well-being.



What's Next

### Incorporating Public Preferences

Utilize survey data, such as "The Art of the Possible - Freeway Caps Survey" and "The Art of the Possible - Bridges Survey," to inform decision making processes effectively. Pay meticulous attention to public preferences for amenities, landscaping options, public art installations, and economic activities on freeway caps and bridges. This ensures that project decisions are in harmony with community desires and values, enhancing overall acceptance and satisfaction.



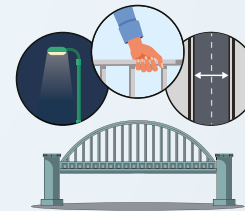
### Community-Centered Design

Highlight the significance of community input in the design process for freeway caps and bridges. Prioritize features that not only enhance connectivity but also promote public engagement and contribute to the area's overall livability and attractiveness. By involving the community in the design phase, the project becomes more tailored to local needs and aspirations, fostering a sense of ownership among residents.



### Safety and Accessibility

Integrate robust safety features, including railings, lighting, and spacious walkways into the design of arch bridges to enhance the pedestrian experience. Ensure that pedestrian infrastructure prioritizes safety, accessibility, and comfort for users of all ages and abilities. By prioritizing safety and accessibility, the project creates inclusive spaces that cater to the diverse needs of the community.



### Transparent Decision Making

Maintain a commitment to transparency throughout the project's development by providing regular updates to the public and incorporating feedback into decision making processes. Clearly communicate how public input influences project outcomes, demonstrating a dedication to responsiveness and accountability. This transparent approach fosters trust and confidence in the planning and implementation phases, ensuring that the project reflects the community's interests and concerns.



**By implementing these strategies and tactics, transportation planners can effectively move projects forward.**







I-45 North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP)

## December 2023 Public Meeting Series Documentation

# Public Comments Summary

*two-page sample to follow*



[Click Here to View the Complete Comments Summary Report](https://www.txdot.gov/content/dam/project-sites/nhhip/docs/december-2023-public-meeting-series-public-comment-summary.pdf)

**or visit:** <https://www.txdot.gov/content/dam/project-sites/nhhip/docs/december-2023-public-meeting-series-public-comment-summary.pdf>



# Public Comments Summary



Throughout the public meeting series, a multitude of channels for feedback, comments and questions were provided. The comment matrix is a reflection of the comments, questions and feedback received and responses provided. A link to the comment matrix can be found [here](#). These two pages provide sample of the content contained within the matrix.

#	Source	Date	First Name	Last Name	Comment Topic/Question	Response
37	Segment 3B Reevaluation Comments	12/6/2023 0:00	Abdul Haleem	Muhammad PhD	Do all that is economically feasible, environmentally sound, safe, and secure during this process to produce an outcome that results in the appropriate distribution of benefits and burden now and in the future. This is the working definition of "Equity."	Thank you for completing the 3B Reevaluation Comment Form. TxDOT is required by the FHWA to consider adverse impacts and to mitigate them and to consider environmental justice concerns. TxDOT has proactively engaged with the community to ensure positive outcomes associated with relocation. Participation goals are set on all federal funded projects to encourage contracting with DBE-certified small business.
10	Segment 3B Reevaluation Comments	2/14/2024 0:00	Algenita	Scott Davis	The proposed design changes resulted from hundreds of meetings with community stakeholders. Several changes enhance connectivity and reverse negative impacts from TxDOT construction during the 60's thru 80's.	Thank you for completing the 3B Reevaluation Comment Form. With this project, TxDOT has listened carefully and gathered numerous ideas and requests regarding the project design, and we would like to inform you that these ideas will be taken into consideration.

Throughout the public meeting series, a multitude of channels for feedback, comments and questions were provided. The comment matrix is a reflection of the comments, questions and feedback received and responses provided. A link to the comment matrix can be found [here](#): These two pages provide sample of the content contained within the matrix.

#	Source	Date	First Name	Last Name	Comment Topic/Question	Response
285	TxDOT HOU-PIO Email	1/11/2024 0:00	Sherwin	De Peralta	Hello, I would like to find out: Plans call for Segments 1 and 2 Design and traffic model as a new alternative (or other options that meet the goals we set out). Conduct a comprehensive study of freight movement through the region Continue Public input, make a decision following study, use design-bid-build for Segments 1 and 2 What is the construction cost/budget? When will construction begin? Who is the engineer and/or architect?	As noted in our presentations, the reductions in ROW are being evaluated in accordance with the VRA. Assessment must still meet the project purpose and need as stated in the Record of Decision; no design exceptions; no reduction in capacity; no elevated MaX lanes; and must account for bicycle/pedestrian facilities. Design refinements including braided ramp concepts, reduced widths between the mainlanes and frontage roads and two-lane frontage roads with auxiliary lanes are being evaluated as considerations to reduce the footprint. Design-bid-build is planned as a delivery method for all five Segment 1 and 2 construction projects.





I-45 North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP)

## December 2023 Public Meeting Series Documentation

# Public Engagement Approach

### A. Overview

1. Introduction
2. Methods for Meaningful Public Engagement
3. Specific Examples of Public Engagement & Involvement
4. Project Website
5. Public Engagement Meetings





[Public Engagement Approach](#) > [Overview](#)

## Introduction

### Strategies for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision Making

TxDOT remains committed to actively involving the public and relevant stakeholders throughout the progression and execution of the NHHIP. Our strategic objectives aim to establish transparent communication channels, solicit input from diverse stakeholders, provide clear information, ensure inclusiveness, foster collaboration, and continuously improve the public involvement process.

#### Key Strategic Objectives:

- 1. Transparent Communication:** Establishing transparent and bidirectional communication avenues to foster open dialogues between decision makers and the public.
- 2. Stakeholder Engagement:** Soliciting input from all stakeholders, especially those directly impacted by the project, including residents, business proprietors, property holders, commuters, and community leaders.
- 3. Clear Information Dissemination:** Providing clear and easily understandable information regarding the NHHIP to empower the public to contribute constructively to decisions.
- 4. Inclusiveness:** Actively involving a diverse array of perspectives and voices in the decision making process, including representatives from traditionally marginalized communities.
- 5. Collaboration and Partnership:** Leveraging collaboration and partnership with grassroots community groups, advocacy organizations, and other stakeholders to tap into collective knowledge and expertise.
- 6. Continuous Improvement:** Proactively seeking input on the public involvement process itself to consistently enhance future decision making endeavors.



## Methods for Meaningful Public Engagement

TxDOT employs a diverse array of activities to foster meaningful public engagement, including:

- **Public Meetings**  
Convening gatherings to facilitate discussions, information sharing, and feedback collection from the community.
- **Stakeholder Engagements**  
Facilitating targeted interactions with key stakeholders to ensure their perspectives and concerns are considered.
- **One-on-One Interactions**  
Engaging in individual conversations with community members to address specific questions and gather personalized input.
- **Briefings**  
Delivering concise presentations to inform the public and stakeholders about project updates and relevant information.
- **Workshops/Charrettes**  
Organizing interactive workshops where participants collaboratively explore project challenges and contribute ideas.
- **Town Hall Styled Sessions**  
Hosting or participating in inclusive sessions that mirror town hall meetings, enabling broader participation and discussion of various project aspects.
- **Online Platforms**  
Leveraging dedicated web platforms and mobile apps to provide access to project information and feedback mechanisms.
- **Surveys**  
Conducting structured surveys to gather quantitative and qualitative insights from participants.
- **Social Media Engagement**  
Utilizing social media channels to share updates, engage the community, and facilitate discussions on the project.



## Specific Examples of Public Engagement

TxDOT hosts monthly Multi-Agency Meetings where community leaders discuss project progress and key topics such as drainage improvements and construction staging. These meetings serve as a platform for expanding outreach, vetting information, and providing direct feedback.

Additionally, TxDOT utilizes elected official briefings, agency/organization meetings, focus groups, and media briefings to ensure stakeholders are updated on progress and information is conveyed in a timely manner.

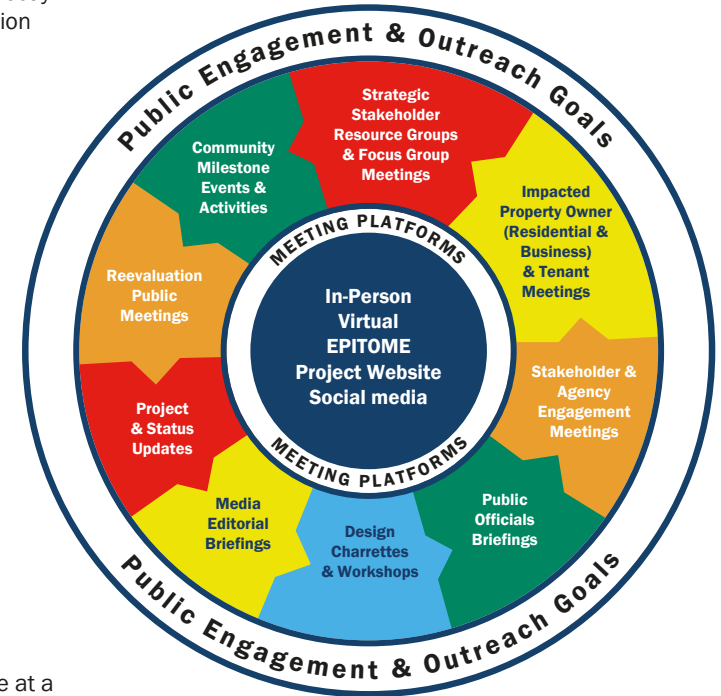
By integrating these methods into our engagement approach, we strive to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive process that builds trust, awareness, and collaborative solutions, reflecting our commitment to transparent, effective, and impactful public involvement.

## Examples of the Public Involvement

Restoring regular meetings with the NHHIP Housing and Community Focus Group was one of the first tasks after the execution of the VRA. This group was created to engage community leaders and agencies from the directly affected communities to provide input on strategies and mitigation specific to the project's effects on affordable housing stock, displacements, and cumulative community cohesiveness. The Focus Group's most recent meeting was August 2024.

Additionally, TxDOT has previously established the Traffic Management Steering Committee to support the exploration, planning, advancement, and execution of strategies to support traffic management initiatives during construction. The primary goal is to explore, plan, and execute strategies to support innovative and proactive traffic management initiatives during NHHIP construction to minimize adverse impacts to the community. The Committee features a Steering Committee and four subcommittees: Traffic Flow; Strategic Communications; Changing Modes of Transportation; and Stakeholder Engagement. TxDOT anticipates resuscitating engagement with the steering committee this fall, with a meeting planned to be scheduled in the October/November time frame.

The primary objective in all these outreach efforts is to ensure that the right groups are engaged at the right time. This may require multiple meetings with different meeting groups to arrive at a decision. The Public Engagement & Outreach Goals wheel illustrates the multiple types of stakeholder and group meetings being utilized and the various types of meeting platforms to maximize engagement and input opportunities. The multiple platforms maximize opportunity for different groups to access information and to provide feedback that is captured and can be evaluated for incorporation into the specific projects.





## Project Website

TxDOT has established a robust project website at <https://www.txdot.gov/nhhp> to provide both historical and up to date information and will continue to use this site with applicable links throughout all phases of the NHHIP development. TxDOT will also continue to leverage various social media platforms including X and Facebook among others to highlight availability of new information and to note upcoming public engagement meetings.

The website offers translation options. Users can easily translate the content into Spanish by selecting it from the dropdown menu in the top menu bar. This allows Spanish-speaking residents to access the information and resources provided on the website in their native language. Additionally, other languages can be accessed through the web browser settings. Individuals requiring translation for specific embedded graphics, images, or PDFs can request it by using the provided link.

Moreover, the website acknowledges the needs of residents with low literacy levels. Efforts are made to use simple and straightforward language that is easy to understand. The content is written in a concise and clear manner, avoiding jargon and technical terms whenever possible. This ensures that the information is accessible to individuals with limited reading or comprehension skills.

Additionally, TxDOT recognizes that some residents, particularly seniors, may not have access to the internet. To reach out to these individuals, alternative communication channels are employed. Printed materials, such as brochures or informational pamphlets, may be distributed. This allows seniors and those without internet access to obtain important information and stay informed about the services and resources provided by the project.

A NHHIP public website serves as a platform to provide information about ongoing activities of the projects to the general public. It aims to enhance transparency and keep the public informed about the progress, updates, and impacts of the NHHIP. The website includes details such as project purpose and need, timeline, funding sources, environmental assessments, public involvement opportunities, and contact information. It helps residents, commuters, businesses, and other stakeholders stay updated on project developments, potential disruptions, and any required feedback or participation in the project.

In addition to providing updates on the project, the website offers interactive maps and tools that allow users to explore the project's planned routes or proposed changes to existing

infrastructure. This can help individuals visualize how the ultimate project provides solutions. During construction the website will also include information to minimize the inherent inconveniences of construction by including road closure details, alternative transportation options, and temporary detours during construction periods to minimize disruptions for travelers.

Overall, the project website aims to create an inclusive and accessible platform by utilizing different languages and employing various communication strategies. These efforts ensure that residents with diverse backgrounds, low literacy levels, seniors, and individuals without internet access can all benefit from the information and services offered by TxDOT.

Materials produced for use in public engagement are reviewed for compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Section 255 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996.



## Public Engagement Meetings

Annually, TxDOT will hold up to six public engagement meetings, two meetings per project segment that is in design and construction phase. These meetings will provide an update on overall NHHIP progress and updates for detailed design progress on Segments 3A, 3B-1, and 3B-2, and to provide an open forum for the community to provide feedback, raise issues, and ask questions about the NHHIP as well as TxDOT's compliance with the VRA. Detailed design is currently in process for the first three projects in Segment 3 and preliminary design efforts are in process for the remainder of Segment 3 and for Segments 1 and 2. The public meetings, in accordance with VRA Article IV.2.q, will consist of an in-person meeting in each segment and a separate virtual meeting in each segment. TxDOT is currently coordinating potential venues to host the meetings within each segment.

Meetings will be conducted in English and Spanish with availability for other languages to accommodate requests from persons with LEP according to TxDOT's LEP SOP.

### The meeting notifications will follow this process:

- Meeting notices will be provided in English and Spanish stating that language accommodation can be requested prior to meetings. Currently these languages are English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Somali, Swahili, Vietnamese, Mandarin Chinese, and Kinyarwanda.
- Meeting notices will be mailed and emailed to project database subscribers including stakeholders and adjacent property owners, posted online, and advertised via social media and local publications to assure optimal demographic saturation.
- Notices will be distributed at least 15 days prior to scheduled meeting dates and will include follow-up reminders as the meeting dates approach.
- Notices will be posted to the project webpage on the TxDOT website.
- Flyers advertising the meeting will be posted in community centers, schools, libraries, and other places where people gather in the project area.
- Meetings will be advertised on TxDOT fixed and portable signs in the project area for 48 hours before the meetings.

[Public Engagement Approach](#) > [Overview](#) > **Public Engagement Meetings****The meeting content will comply with the following objectives:**

- Corridor-wide project updates and segment-specific content unique to the applicable segment such as status of known design modification requests, decision making process and next steps:
  - General overview of the project (live or pre-recorded)
  - Segment specific design and construction updates
  - Construction phasing detail
  - Project delivery information
  - Requested design refinement
  - Review of design progress
  - Decision making processes (studies, NEPA re-evaluations, VRA and MOU commitments)
  - Opportunities for public involvement and next steps
- Meeting content and handouts will be prepared in English and Spanish. Notifications will allow for accommodation in other languages and/or by interpreter by request if made within three days prior to the meeting.
- All meeting collaterals will be posted to the project website.

Subsequent VRA reports will contain information on meetings held in accordance with VRA during the applicable reporting period noting project segment, meeting location, and number of attendees, as well as summarize key issues and feedback received.

Additionally, and as noted in Figure 2-1, TxDOT will provide public engagement meetings in accordance with the VRA Article IV.2.q as discussed in this report and will host public meetings for applicable environmental reevaluations for proposed design changes. For instance, there will be public meetings for proposed design changes such as extension of Cleburne Street over IH 69 and reconfiguration of the local street grid along Chenevert Street and Jackson Street as discussed in Section 1 of this report. The reevaluation meetings will be held in accordance with TxDOT's FHWA-approved Environmental Handbook for Public Involvement and meeting notices will follow the same process as noted in Section 2.4.2 of this report for public engagement meetings.





I-45 North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP)

## December 2023 Public Meeting Series Documentation

# Appendix



[Click Here to View the Full Appendix](https://www.txdot.gov/content/dam/project-sites/nhhip/docs/december-2023-public-meeting-series-appendix.pdf)

**or visit:** <https://www.txdot.gov/content/dam/project-sites/nhhip/docs/december-2023-public-meeting-series-appendix.pdf>



