

# NORTH HOUSTON HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

## Environmental Impact Statement and Preliminary Engineering

2<sup>nd</sup> Public Scoping Meeting

Tuesday, October 9, 2012, Jefferson Davis High School

Thursday, October 11, 2012, Aldine Ninth Grade School



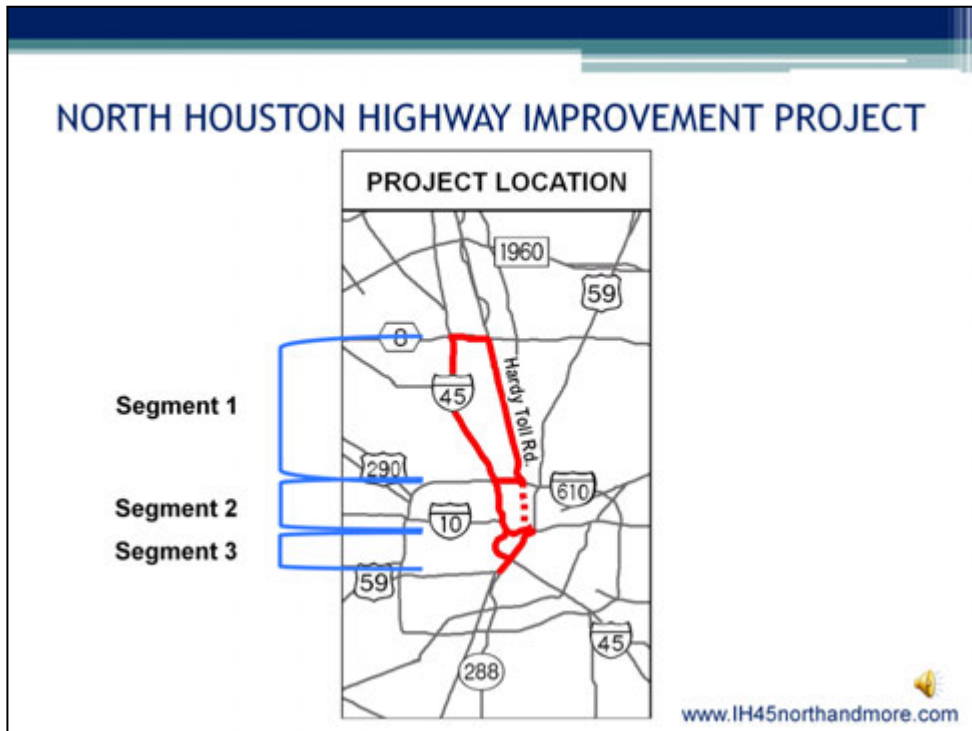
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Welcome to the Second Public Scoping Meeting for the North Houston Highway Improvement Project, located in Harris County, Texas.

This evening's meeting is an integral part of the Environmental Impact Statement process and Preliminary Engineering for this project.

We greatly appreciate your participation.

Detailed information about opportunities for public involvement will be provided at this evening's meeting.



To assist in the design and analysis of alternatives, the project area has been divided into three segments:

- SEGMENT 1 is from Beltway 8 to Interstate Highway 610,
- SEGMENT 2 is from Interstate Highway 610 to Interstate Highway 10, and
- SEGMENT 3 is the Downtown Loop System

## PURPOSE OF 2<sup>nd</sup> PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

- Present and gather your input on the Alternatives Evaluation Process, the Universe of Alternatives, and the Six Preliminary Alternatives
- Present the two updated and approved documents:
  - Need and Purpose Statement
  - Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan
- Discuss project with you and answer questions
- Present the project timeline, history, and background
- Encourage your continued involvement

  
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The purpose of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Public Scoping Meeting is

- To present and gather your input on the Alternatives Evaluation Process, the Universe of Alternatives, and the Six Preliminary Alternatives
- To present the two updated and approved documents: the Need and Purpose Statement and the Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan
- To discuss the project with you and answer questions
- To present the project timeline, history, and background
- And to encourage your continued involvement

## 2<sup>nd</sup> SCOPING MEETING MAIN OBJECTIVES

- Gather public input on the:
  - Alternatives Evaluation Screening Process
  - Six Preliminary Alternatives
- Present the updated and approved:
  - Need and Purpose Statement
  - Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan



At this evening's meeting we are asking for your comments on the alternatives evaluation screening process, and the six preliminary alternatives.

We are also presenting the updated Need and Purpose Statement and the Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan, which have been updated to include more recent data and input from the public and agencies from the 1<sup>st</sup> Scoping Meetings. These documents have been approved by the Federal Highway Administration (also known as FHWA).

Detailed information on the project alternatives developed to date and the Alternatives Evaluation Process is available on the exhibits presented at this evening's meeting, and will also be posted on the project website.

## PROJECT HISTORY AND GOALS

### **PROJECT HISTORY: NORTH-HARDY CORRIDOR STUDIES**

- 2003 - North-Hardy Corridor Alternatives Analysis Report
- 2004 - North-Hardy Corridor Planning Studies, Alternatives Analysis Report (Transit Component)
- 2005 - North-Hardy Planning Studies, Alternatives Analysis Report (Highway Component)  
Recommended Highway Alternative from downtown Houston to Beltway 8 North is to add four managed lanes to the IH 45/Hardy Toll Road corridor

### **PROJECT GOALS**

- Stay within the existing IH 45 right-of-way between Quitman Street and Cavalcade Street, except at intersections where turn lanes may be needed.
- Minimize effects on quality of life issues for the residents and neighborhoods in the project area.
- Study Hardy Toll Road as an alternative route for additional lanes.
- Evaluate use of tunnels as an alternative in areas of constrained right-of-way.

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Transportation needs, and alternatives to address the needs for transit and highway improvements in the North Houston area were evaluated in prior studies.

Information about these studies is presented on an exhibit in the open house area of this meeting. The 2005 Highway Component report of the North Hardy Planning Studies is available for viewing at this meeting, and on the project website.

During the approval process for the Highway Component final report, the Texas Department of Transportation agreed to the following goals for this phase of project planning:

- Stay within the existing Interstate Highway 45 right-of-way between Quitman Street and Cavalcade Street, except at intersections where turn lanes may be needed,
- Minimize effects on quality of life issues for the residents and neighborhoods in the project area,
- Study Hardy Toll Road as an alternative route for additional lanes,
- And evaluate the use of tunnels as an alternative in areas of constrained right-of-way.

## SINCE THE 1<sup>ST</sup> SCOPING MEETING

- Documented, compiled, and reviewed
  - Public and Agency Comments
  - Public's Identified Areas of Concern
- Updated the
  - Need and Purpose Statement
  - Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan
- Prepared the Scoping Meeting Summary Report

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Since the 1<sup>st</sup> Public and Agency Scoping meetings, the project team has completed the following:

- Documented and compiled the Public and Agency Comments and the Public's Identified Areas of Concern from the 1<sup>st</sup> Scoping Meeting, which took place in November 2011
- Updated the Need and Purpose Statement, and the Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan documents.
- Prepared the Scoping Meeting Summary Report

## SINCE THE 1st SCOPING MEETING

- Developed the Universe of Alternatives
  - Project Need and Purpose and Project Goals
  - Public and agency feedback
  - Engineering and Environmental Constraints
- Evaluated the Universe of Alternatives
- Identified Six Preliminary Alternatives



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Developed the Universe of Alternatives with consideration of the Project Need and Purpose, the Project Goals, public and agency feedback from the 1<sup>st</sup> scoping meeting, and Engineering and Environmental Constraints that apply to this project, and evaluated the Universe of Alternatives, using a screening process to identify the Six Preliminary Alternatives that are presented at this evening's meeting.

## INPUT FROM 1<sup>st</sup> SCOPING MEETING

- **Suggested Alternatives**
  - Elevated roadway / depressed (below grade) roadway / tunnels
  - Hardy Toll Road only / IH 45 only
  - Tolls / No Tolls
  - HOV only / No HOV
  - No construction / Construct ASAP
- **Identified Areas of Concern**
  - Residential and business impacts (property value, pollution, visual, noise, traffic, ROW)
  - Parks and community green space
  - Cultural, historic, and archeological resources
  - Cemeteries



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Public input from the 1<sup>st</sup> scoping meeting provided a number of good suggestions for alternatives and gave the project team a better idea of what was important to residents and business owners in the area.

Suggestions and concerns were considered and included in the project planning process.

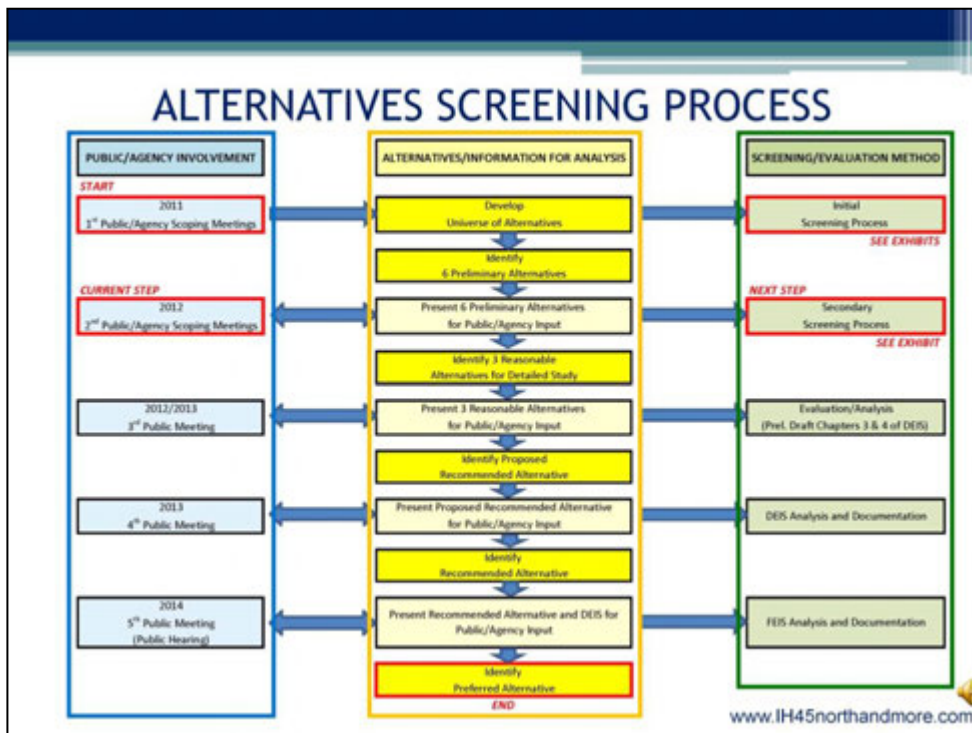
The most frequently suggested alternatives are listed on this slide in no particular order, and include:

- Elevated roadways, depressed (or below grade) roadways, and tunnels
- Improvements to Hardy Toll Road only, and improvements to Interstate Highway 45 only
- Tolled roadways, and roadways with no tolls
- High Occupancy Vehicle lanes only, and No High Occupancy Vehicle lanes
- Requests to not construct the project at all, and requests to construct the project as soon as possible

Identified areas of concern (again, in no particular order) were primarily:

- Impacts to residences and businesses in the area (including property value, pollution, visual effects, noise, traffic, and additional right-of-way)
- Impacts to area parks and green space
- Impacts to cultural, historic and archeological resources
- And impacts to cemeteries





The diagram on this slide shows the alternative evaluation process that will be followed throughout the development of this project. It is being presented here at this evening's meeting for your review and comment.

- On the left, in blue, shows how and when your input contributes to the selection process.
- On the right, in green, shows the method of screening and analysis the project team will use for each group of alternatives.
- The center part, in yellow, shows what the project team will do to develop the project alternatives, and at what stages during the process these alternatives will be presented for your review and comment.

The goal at the end of this process will be to identify one preferred alternative for each segment.

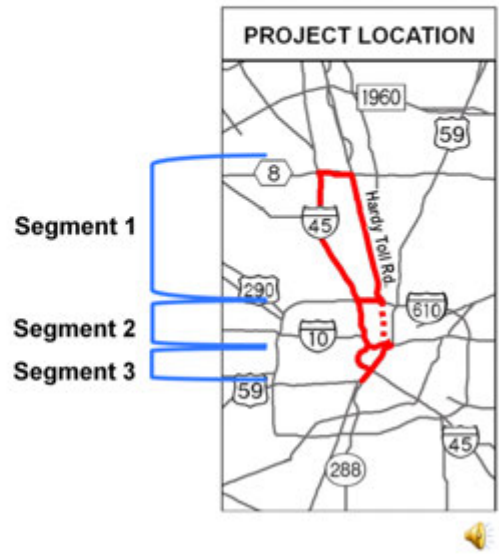
This diagram is also available for you to view as an exhibit in the open house area at this evening's meeting, and on the project website.

## PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES

Project divided into 3

### Segments

- Segment 1 – BW 8 to IH 610
- Segment 2 – IH 610 to IH 10
- Segment 3 – Downtown Loop System
- Six alternatives for each segment
- See exhibits in the open house area for maps, diagrams, and details



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As mentioned in the beginning of this presentation, to assist in the design and analysis of alternatives, the project area has been divided into three segments.

Six preliminary design alternatives have been developed for each segment.

These six preliminary alternatives were selected as the best alternatives from the universe of alternatives that included a full range of reasonable and feasible alternatives.

Details on these alternatives are available for you to view as exhibits in the open house area at this evening's meeting. They are also available on the project website.

## INITIAL SCREENING PROCESS EVALUATION CRITERIA

- Project Need and Purpose
- Project Goals
- “Incurable” or “Permanent” Obstacles
  - Engineering
    - Safety
    - Additional Right-of-Way
  - Traffic
  - Environmental
    - Land Use
    - Cultural Resources



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For the alternatives evaluation, the Initial Screening Process was used to narrow the Universe of Alternatives to six Preliminary Alternatives.

The Universe of Alternatives included ideas from the project team, the public, and participating and cooperating agencies.

The evaluation criteria for the Initial Screening Process was developed using the project need and purpose statement, the project goals, and the feedback received from the agencies and public at the 1<sup>st</sup> Scoping Meeting, and during the comment period.

Initial screening criteria include: Does the Alternative meet the Need for the project, the Purpose of the project, and the specific project goals? Does the alternative present “incurable” or “permanent” engineering, traffic, or environmental obstacles (such as differentiating between fatal and non-fatal flaws)?

# INITIAL SCREENING PROCESS MATRIX

**DRAFT**

SEGMENT #	Alternative Type	Description	EVALUATION CRITERIA						
			Initial Screening of Universe of Alternatives						
			Engineering		Traffic	Environmental			
			Meets Need and Purpose and Project Goals (Yes/No)	Meets Current Design Criteria (Yes/No)	Additional ROW - Canal/cade to Gulfman (Yes/No)	Traffic/Mobility Improvements* (High/Medium/Low)	Land Use and Cultural Resources within the Right-of-Way		
				Community Parks (Yes/No)	Cemeteries (Yes/No)	National Register of Historic Places (Yes/No)	Recorded Archeological Sites (Yes/No)		
Alternative #									
Alternative #									
Alternative #									
Alternative #									
Alternative #									
Alternative #									
Alternative #									

*SEE EXHIBITS FOR COMPLETED MATRIX*

\*Traffic/Mobility Improvements is a rating determined using outputs from the travel demand models. The model provides information on how many drivers will use the highway if improved, how this compares among various alternative improvements, and how many hours drivers can expect to save traveling on the highway if improved, also known as Vehicle-Hours Traveled (VHT).

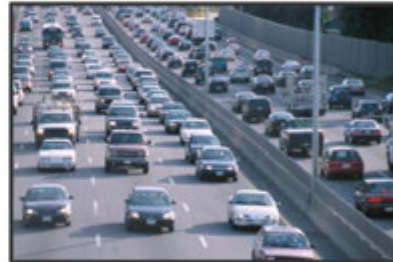
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This slide shows an example of the evaluation matrix that has been completed for each of the three study segments.

A completed matrix for each of the three segments is available for you to view as an exhibit in the open house area at this evening's meeting. It is also available on the project website.

## SECONDARY SCREENING PROCESS EVALUATION CRITERIA

- Project Need and Purpose
- Project Goals
- “Incurable” or “Permanent” Obstacles
  - Engineering
  - Traffic
  - Environmental
    - Land Use
    - Cultural and Natural Resources
    - Air Quality
    - Noise
    - Socioeconomic
    - Hazardous Materials



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A Secondary Screening Process will be used to narrow the six Preliminary Alternatives to the three Reasonable Alternatives, which will be presented at the next round of public meetings.

In this process, additional evaluation criteria will be considered.

The process will take into consideration:

- The Project’s Need and Purpose, and Specific Goals
- “Incurable” or “Permanent” Obstacles to Engineering, Traffic, and the Environment
- Environmental considerations will include Land Use, Cultural and Natural Resources, Air Quality, Noise, Socioeconomics, and Hazardous Materials

An evaluation matrix will again be completed for each of the three segments showing the specifics of each alternative, and will be made available for you to view at the next project meetings, and on the project website.

# SECONDARY SCREENING PROCESS MATRIX

EVALUATION CRITERIA												
Secondary Screening Process of Preliminary Alternatives												
Segment 1 Preliminary Alternative	Alternative Type	Description	Environmental									
			Engineering	Traffic	Land Use	Cultural Resources	Natural Resources			Air	Noise	Socioeconomics
Alt. 3	Alt. 4	Alt. 5	Alt. 6	Alt. 7	Alt. 8	Alt. 9	Alt. 10	Alt. 11	Alt. 12	Alt. 13	Alt. 14	
<b>MATRIX TO BE COMPLETED DURING THE NEXT STEP OF THE EIS PROCESS</b>												
<small>*Traffic/Mobility Improvements is a rating determined using outputs from the Ispat Demand Model. The model provides information on how many drivers will use the highway if improved, how this compares among various alternative improvements, and how many hours drivers can expect to save traveling on the highway if improved, also known as Vehicle-Hours Traveled (VHT).</small>												

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This slide shows the proposed evaluation matrix that would be completed for each of the three segments during the secondary screening process.

At this evening’s meeting, an example of the proposed Secondary Screening Evaluation matrix is available as an exhibit in the open house area for you to view and provide your comments. It is also available on the project website.

## NEXT STEPS

- Document and compile Public and Agency Comments
- Determine if any adjustments are needed
- Evaluate alternatives - Secondary Screening Process
- Evaluate each alternative with regard to the engineering, traffic, and environmental criteria
- Identify three reasonable alternatives for each segment
- Present to the public and agencies in 2013



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After the second scoping meetings, the project team will:

- Document and compile the Public and Agency Comments provided at these meetings
- Determine if any adjustments are needed to the evaluation process, the preliminary alternatives, or any other information presented
- Evaluate alternatives using the Secondary Screening Process
- Evaluate each alternative with regard to the engineering, traffic, and environmental criteria discussed earlier
- Identify three reasonable alternatives for each segment, and
- Present information for review and comment at the next public and agency meetings in 2013

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- Attend public meetings
- Inform family, friends, coworkers, neighbors
- Discuss with elected officials
- Visit the project website:

[www.IH45northandmore.com](http://www.IH45northandmore.com)



[www.IH45northandmore.com](http://www.IH45northandmore.com)

To get involved in the project development and environmental review process, you may

- Attend the public meetings
- Inform family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors
- And discuss the project with elected officials

The project website will be updated during the evaluation process with project status and upcoming public participation opportunities.



## HOW TO SUBMIT COMMENTS

- Submit comments by Friday, October 26, 2012



- Written
  - Comment box at this meeting



- Mail

Director of Project Development  
Texas Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 1386  
Houston, Texas 77251-1386



- Email

- Website: [www.IH45northandmore.com](http://www.IH45northandmore.com)
  - Click "Comments/Contact Us"
- [HOU-piowebmail@txdot.gov](mailto:HOU-piowebmail@txdot.gov)



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To provide written comments on this project, you may use the comment box at this evening's meeting, or you can mail them to the Texas Department of Transportation.

You may also submit comments through email by going to the project website and selecting the "Comments/Contact Us" tab, or you may send them to the email address on this slide.

The addresses presented on this slide are also provided in the meeting handout.

For your comments to be included as part of the official record for this meeting, please submit emails by Friday, October 26th, 2012, or if mailing, comments must be postmarked by this date.

**THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING!  
PLEASE VISIT THE OPEN HOUSE AREA**

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Thank you for attending this evening's meeting and providing your feedback.

Please proceed to the open house area to view the exhibits and discuss the project with the project team.

# INTERMISSION



This presentation  
will restart  
in 2 minutes



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This presentation will restart in two minutes.