



I-45 NHHIP Voluntary Resolution Agreement (VRA)

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WHAT IS THE VRA?

- This Voluntary Resolution Agreement (VRA) is an understanding by and between the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT).
- The purpose of the VRA is to resolve the FHWA investigation of TxDOT regarding the North Houston Highway Improvement Project (Project) under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) by setting forth specific mitigation actions for the Project.
 - Lifts pause
 - No Title VI violations identified in VRA
 - TxDOT to resume all project development activities.
- The VRA provides specific, enforceable timelines and monitoring by FHWA to ensure that TxDOT carries out the Project consistent with the requirements of Title VI.

"This portion of I-45 was built in stages in the 1950s and 1960s and the design remained essentially the same while the area population has doubled," stated Marc Williams, TxDOT executive director. "The reconstruction of I-45 will address mobility needs for people and freight, while also improving safety and a number of environmental mitigations that include critical measures to improve storm water drainage. Considering the recently executed agreements with Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner, Harris County, and now the FHWA, we are excited to get this critical infrastructure project moving with our partnering agencies."

"This agreement moves forward an important project, responds to community concerns, and improves the North Houston Highway Improvement Project in ways that will make a real difference in people's lives. Through this agreement the community will have a greater voice in the design and throughout the project's life cycle," said Federal Highway Administrator Shailen Bhatt. "We have lifted the pause, and with FHWA oversight, TxDOT may proceed with design and construction."

- FHWA has concluded review of TxDOT's responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) also with no findings.

VRA COMMITMENTS

The actions in the VRA will be performed in addition to and/or in compliance with the mitigation actions already committed to by TxDOT, as contained within the Record of Decision (ROD), including:

REDUCING FOOTPRINT DURING DETAILED DESIGN TxDOT continues to look for opportunities to reduce the footprint as final design progresses. SEGMENT 3 These projects along the I-69 corridor in the southern part of Segment 3 are actively being designed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-use of street grid connectivity to restore the street grid network. Improved mobility and safety. Potential surplus property north of Chenoweth Street to Johnson Street. Identified ROW reductions in various locations, including in 10 Eastbound Frontage Road, Mainstreet, Downtown Connections, and access control points. Eliminating structure impacts and acquisition for several parcels. SEGMENTS 1 AND 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collection underway for preliminary analysis. Results will be reported in future VRA reports. Segment 2 evaluation includes efforts to include a northbound entrance and eastbound exit ramp to North Main Street per stakeholder requests. 	PARKS, OPEN SPACE, TRAILS, & PEDESTRIAN/BICYCLE FACILITIES TxDOT will work with third parties to identify funding to design and construct trail links outside of the state's right-of-way. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reconnect Andrews Street over the Downtown Connection in North West with a pedestrian-bike only crossing. Maintain the Chisholm Street connector across I-69 in North West (design changes to be included in a future re-evaluation). Fund, design and construct the NHHIP pedestrian/bike trails on all trail areas that cross either over or under a highway facility of the NHHIP. Assist with efforts to develop the Emancipation Trail and evaluate the feasibility of accommodating trail links within the state's right of way within the project limits. 	DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS TO REDUCE FLOODING TxDOT will use Area 14 rainfall data to complete drainage studies. Such drainage studies will rely on the state of practice HEC-RAS 2D model approach, to the extent NOAA publishes a subsequent version to Area 14 to account for variations in climate conditions. TxDOT will incorporate such updates. TxDOT performed detailed drainage studies for Segment 1. See More about the Drainage Study at the Segments 1 & 2 Design Refinement Station. Commitment to assure design-build projects are held to same standards. Commitment to work collaboratively with Harris County Flood Control District and the City of Houston on drainage system designs, maintenance and future recommendations. TxDOT will provide \$20 million to the City for the design and construction of the north canal project in addition to TxDOT funding the south canal.	PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT Meetings are to be held twice each calendar year in each segment while segment final design and construction is ongoing. AIR QUALITY MONITORING TxDOT is clearing one air monitor to each I-45 North Houston Highway Improvement Project (NHHIP) segment one year in advance of the start of construction on the corresponding project segment. The first air monitor has been put in place in Segment 1. Data collected is published on the NHHIP website.
STRUCTURAL CAPS NHHIP recommended alternative provides for structural caps in four areas of the project. The structural caps provide an exciting opportunity for third-party collaboration with TxDOT. TxDOT will design, fund, construct and maintain the core structural elements. TxDOT will work with 3rd parties to design, fund, construct and maintain amenities to be integrated into the structural caps. "The Art of the Possible with Structural Caps." VRA provided detailed parameters of the coordination and collaboration with 3rd party entities for the development and delivery of amenities for the structural caps.	COMMUNITY ACCESS TxDOT is committed to ensuring safe access to activities and reducing impacts to public transit, pedestrians, and bike access within the project area throughout the construction phase. TxDOT will develop plans during the detailed design phase for traffic control detours of pedestrian and bicycle movements along the locations of activities adjacent to the project footprint, existing routes traveled by citizens to these activities. TxDOT will obtain METRO's review and comment of the construction work planning and sequencing of light rail facilities and operations that are impacted by construction.	DISPLACEMENTS, RELOCATIONS, HOUSING AND OTHER COMMUNITY IMPACTS During final design of each segment of the NHHIP, TxDOT will evaluate changes to the project that would reduce the right-of-way needed and displacement impacts. TxDOT agreed to cancel an additional \$3 million, for a total of \$30 million, to affordable housing entities. More details are available regarding commitments and benefits extended to impacted property owners, residents and businesses available at the Right of Way Station.	MEANINGFUL ACCESS FOR PERSONS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (LEP) TxDOT is committed to communicating clearly and thoroughly with all affected individuals with LEP who need or request language assistance services, which include interpretation and translation. TxDOT commits to ensuring that individuals with LEP are provided with timely language assistance services throughout the full design acquisition and relocation process for the NHHIP.

VRA - THE INITIAL REPORTING DELIVERABLES

DAY 0 ✓ VRA Signed March 6, 2023	DAY 30 ✓ TxDOT Establishes Publicly Available Project-Specific Website Site is multilingual and immediately accessible in English, Spanish, and requested languages such as French, Arabic, Somali, Swahili, and Kinyarwanda.	DAY 45 ✓ TxDOT Provides Draft Standard Operating Procedure for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Resource Providers for FHWA Review	DAY 60 ✓ TxDOT Provides Draft Survey of Displaced Individuals to FHWA ✓ FHWA Provides Comments on TxDOT Draft Standard Operating Procedure for LEP Resource Providers	DAY 75 ✓ FHWA Provides Comments to TxDOT on Displaced Individuals Draft Survey	DAY 90 ✓ Complete Survey on Non-Residential Displaced Entities ✓ TxDOT Finalizes Survey of Displaced Individuals ✓ TxDOT and FHWA Finalize Standard Operating Procedure for LEP Resource Providers	DAY 120 ✓ TxDOT Develops and Provides LEP Training to Relevant Staff, Contractors, etc. ✓ TxDOT issues LEP Survey to Displaced Residents As of December 2023 TxDOT has received a total of 39 responses.	DAY 150 ✓ TxDOT Provides Relocation Services to Non-Residential Entities Requesting Such Services Following Survey No requests for additional services were made ✓ TxDOT Provides First Compliance Report With LEP Survey of Displaced Individuals	DAY 180 ✓ Progress Report on Overall VRA Implementation of Required TxDOT Actions	DAY 210 ✓ TxDOT Provides Supplemental LEP Resources to Those Displaced Residents and Businesses Who Requested Supplemental LEP Services No requests have been submitted
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