

Presentation

NORTH HOUSTON HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Environmental Impact Statement and
Preliminary Engineering

Public Scoping Meeting

Tuesday, November 15, 2011, Jefferson Davis High School

Thursday, November 17, 2011, Aldine Senior High School



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Welcome to the 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.

NORTH HOUSTON HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT



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The proposed North Houston Highway Improvement Project area includes the Interstate Highway 45 corridor from near downtown Houston to the North Sam Houston Tollway, also known as Beltway 8, the Hardy Toll Road corridor from Interstate Highway 610 (the North Loop) to the North Sam Houston Tollway, and US Highway 59 and Interstate Highway 10 near downtown Houston.

PURPOSE OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

- Initiate your early involvement
- Provide project history and background
- Explain the environmental review process
- Invite review and comment of two draft documents:
 - [Need and Purpose Statement](#)
 - [Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan](#)
- Discuss project with you and answer questions
- Gather information about the project area
- Request comments on the project
- Present the project timeline
- Encourage your continued involvement

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There are several reasons why this meeting is being held during the earliest stage of the project.

To initiate your early involvement,

To provide project history and background,

To explain the environmental review process,

To invite your review and comment on two draft documents:

the [Need and Purpose Statement](#), and the [Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan](#),

To discuss the project with you and answer questions,

To gather information about the project area,

To request comments on the project,

To present the project timeline,

And to encourage your continued involvement.

SCOPING MEETING MAIN OBJECTIVES

- Inform the public
- Solicit public input and comments on the
 - Draft Need and Purpose Statement
 - Draft Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan
- Identify areas of concern



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At this evening's meeting we are specifically asking for your comments on the project's draft Need and Purpose Statement and the draft Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan. Both documents are available at this meeting for your review. The Texas Department of Transportation (also known as TxDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (also known as FHWA) will consider your comments on these draft documents.

You have the opportunity to provide input and comments throughout the study process. Meetings like this are an opportunity to view project information, ask questions, and provide comments before you leave or during the provided comment period.

We also want your assistance in identifying areas of concern that should be considered by the project team during the development of alternatives for this project. Please see the "Project Area" exhibit displayed at this evening's meeting to provide information, or you may include this information in your comments.

Information on the history of the project and associated studies is available on the exhibits presented at this evening's meeting and is posted on the project website.

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

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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 on an exhibit in the open house area of this meeting, and the 2005 study for the Highway Component is available for viewing at this meeting and on the project website.

NORTH-HARDY CORRIDOR STUDIES

- **North Houston Highway Improvement 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 adverse effects on quality of life issues of 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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During the approval process for the Final report for the Highway Component, TxDOT agreed to the following goals for this phase of project planning.

- 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 adverse effects on quality of life issues of the residents and neighborhoods in the project area.
- Study Hardy Toll Road as an alternative route for additional lanes.

and

- Evaluate use of tunnels as an alternative in areas of constrained right-of-way.

STUDY ACTIVITIES

- Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
 - Multiple alternatives including the no-build alternative
 - Natural, built and social environment analysis
 - Preliminary engineering
 - Recommended alternative determined



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For this project, an Environmental Impact Statement, known as an EIS, will be prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, also known as NEPA. The EIS is the NEPA document for the project.

Any time a project requires a federal action, such as federal funding or a federal permit, a thorough environmental review is required by law.

The NEPA process is an environmental review process that considers alternative solutions to meet the need for and purpose of the project.

It also considers the no-build or no-action alternative, which would be to not implement the North Houston Highway Improvement Project.

These alternatives are identified, analyzed, evaluated, and documented, with regard to the potential impacts each would have on the natural, built and social environments.

This information, along with the preliminary engineering analysis for each alternative, is used to determine the recommended alternative which best meets the project's need and purpose.

Further information and an explanation of the EIS Process, including a flowchart with a project timeline, is available on the exhibits presented at this evening's meeting.

EARLY ACTION ITEMS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

- **Develop**
 - Need and Purpose Statement
 - Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan
- **Initiate**
 - Agency coordination
 - Cooperating Agencies
 - Participating Agencies
 - Public involvement



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An initial task in the very early stages of the NEPA process is to develop the Need and Purpose statement which clearly defines the reason for the proposed project. The purpose defines the problem to be solved, and the need provides data to support the problem statement, or the purpose.

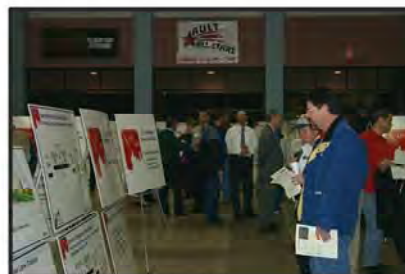
The Draft Need and Purpose statement has been approved for release by TxDOT and FHWA, and will be updated throughout the NEPA process. It is presented to you at tonight's meeting as a draft document and is also available for viewing on the project website. We encourage you to read it and provide your input and comments.

The Draft Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan was developed to facilitate and document TxDOT's and FHWA's interaction with the public and government agencies, and to inform the public and agencies on how coordination will be accomplished. TxDOT and FHWA have initiated coordination with agencies and invited them to provide their views and expertise for the project development and environmental review process. The draft Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan is available for your review at this evening's meeting and is also available for viewing on the project's website.

The approved Need and Purpose Statement and Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan documents will be presented at the next Public Meeting. Detailed information about agency participation in this project and their roles in the project may be found on the exhibits at tonight's meeting.

PROJECT NEED AND PURPOSE

- Draft Need and Purpose statement
- Exhibits
 - Traffic congestion
 - Road design safety
 - Hurricane evacuation
- Review, ask questions, provide comment



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Specific issues identified in the project Need and Purpose statement that are to be addressed by this project, such as traffic congestion, road design safety and hurricane evacuation, are also available for you to view on exhibits at this evening's meeting.

Information on the project's Need and Purpose is available in the Draft Need and Purpose statement.

Please review this information, ask questions and provide your comments.

OUTREACH PROGRAM

- **Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan**
 - How to find information
 - How to get involved
- **Meetings/Hearings**
 - Four Public Meetings
 - One Public Hearing
- **Newsletters**
- **Project Website:** www.IH45northandmore.com



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As previously mentioned, the Draft Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan provides detailed information on the public outreach program, how you may find information on the project, and how you may get involved.

Currently four Public Meetings, including this scoping meeting, and one Public Hearing are planned for this project to inform you throughout the study process.

The next meeting will be held in the Spring of 2012.

Upcoming meetings will be identified in project newsletters. The first newsletter will be published following this meeting.

Please visit the project website, www.IH45northandmore.com, for updated project information, including dates and locations of future meeting when they have been determined.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Environmental Process
- Environmental Constraints
- Environmental Considerations
- Public Involvement Process



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Additional information presented at this meeting includes an explanation of the environmental study process, environmental constraints and considerations, and finally, how you may be continuously involved in the project development and environmental review process.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Topography, Geology and Soils
- Hydrology and Drainage
- Floodplains
- Water Quality
- Hazardous Materials
- Air Quality
- Traffic Noise
- Public Health and Safety
- Waters of the United States and Wetlands
- Threatened and Endangered Species and their Habitat
- Historic Properties
- Archeological Resources
- Land Use, including Public Uses
- Community Resources
- Environmental Justice
- Socioeconomics
- Visual/Aesthetic Resources

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The National Environmental Policy Act requires the lead federal agency to conduct an early and open process for determining the scope of topics to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed project.

The topics listed here are some that will be considered during the environmental review process and documented in the Environmental Impact Statement, or EIS.

Input during this scoping meeting and other outreach opportunities provided to agencies and the public will assist the team in identifying additional areas of concern and determining what is important to consider for the proposed project.

We invite you to share your opinion regarding the topics that are important to you.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

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

www.IH45northandmore.com



www.IH45northandmore.com

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

1. Attend the public meetings
2. Inform family, friends, coworkers and neighbors
3. And discuss the project with elected officials

The website for this project will be routinely updated with project status and upcoming public participation opportunities.

HOW TO SUBMIT COMMENTS

- Submit comments by December 5, 2011



- 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
- Click "Comments/Contact Us"
- HOU-piowebmail@txdot.gov

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To provide written comments on this project you may use the comment box at tonight's meeting or mail them to TxDOT.

You may also submit them through email by going to the project Website www.IH45northandmore.com and clicking on the "Comments/Contact Us" tab, or you may send them to the email address on this slide.

All addresses presented here are also provided on the meeting handout.

For your comments to be included as part of the official record for this meeting, please email by December 5th, or if mailing, have postmarked by this date.



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



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Thank you for attending tonight'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
2:00 minutes



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