



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



NECHES RIVER BRIDGE

Public Hearing

Public Hearing Agenda

Public Hearing for Neches River Bridge Environmental Assessment

Thursday, August 25, 2016, Beaumont Civic Center,
701 Main Street, Beaumont, TX 77701

AGENDA

5:30 PM – Displays available for viewing

6:30 PM – Formal hearing commences

- Welcome and Introductions
- Technical Presentation
- Verbal Comments*



*The comment portion of the hearing will remain open until all speakers have been heard.

Provide Us Your Comments

- Present verbal comments during the hearing.
- See the court reporter to leave a verbal comment.
- Leave a comment form in the comment box tonight.
- Email comments to: gil.wilson@txdot.gov
- Mail comments to:

Mr. Gil Wilson, Rail Programs Section Director
Texas Department of Transportation
125 East 11th Street
Austin, TX 78701-2483

Comments must be received on or before
Friday, September 9, 2016
to be part of the official public hearing record.



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Technical Presentation

- Project Overview
- Environmental Process and Schedule
- Public and Stakeholder Engagement
- Alternatives Analysis
- Environmental Assessment



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Project Overview

Local, Regional and National Importance

- Location of the existing single railroad track at the Neches River Bridge crossing area in Beaumont, is the number two choke point in the state (after Tower 55 before the recent improvements).



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Project Overview - Continued

Purpose of the Project

- Improve rail operations through the Beaumont area by providing a second rail crossing of the Neches River.
- Support and enhance industrial facilities that use rail, marine, and highway services.



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Project Overview - Continued

Need for the Project

- Existing rail operations are affected by track capacity, track switching, industrial service access, and bridge openings for marine vessel traffic.
- Future rail traffic across the Neches River is expected to increase with both through traffic along this national corridor, as well as local rail traffic serving the region's existing and expanding industrial facilities.
- Without improvements, operations will deteriorate in the future with increased rail traffic.



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Environmental Process and Project Schedule

	2015				2016				2017
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Purpose and Need	█								
Alternative Development	█								
Environmental Surveys	█								
Public Meeting				★ 10/21/2015					
Schematic Design				█	█				
Draft EA				█	█	█			
Public Hearing							★ WE ARE HERE 8/25/2016		
Final EA							█		
Secure Funding							█	█	
Decision									█
Stakeholder Involvement	█								

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Public/Stakeholder Engagement

■ Stakeholder Engagement

- Five joint stakeholder meetings with railroads, local public agencies, and key resource agencies.
- Individual stakeholder meetings with Kansas City Southern, Union Pacific Railroad, BNSF Railway, local public agencies (Port of Beaumont, Jefferson County, City of Beaumont, Southeast Texas Regional Planning Commission), Sabine-Neches Navigation District, and U.S. Coast Guard.
- Coordination with APAC-Texas, Inc., BOMAC Contractors, Ltd., Chicago Bridge & Iron and Jefferson Energy Companies, and resource agencies.
- October 21, 2015 Public Open House – Comments from the City of Beaumont, APAC, Parkwood Land Company, Slamback, Amelia Neighborhood and Beaumont Housing Authority, Dowlen West Neighborhood Association, Port of Beaumont, and other individuals.



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Alternatives Analysis

■ No Build Alternative

- Includes preservation of the existing rail network and other programmed improvements.
- The No Build Alternative is included as a baseline against which the Build Alternative is compared to in regards to environmental impacts.
- 69.7 train delay hours in year 2035.



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Alternatives Analysis - Continued

Phased Approach to Develop and Screen Build Alternatives



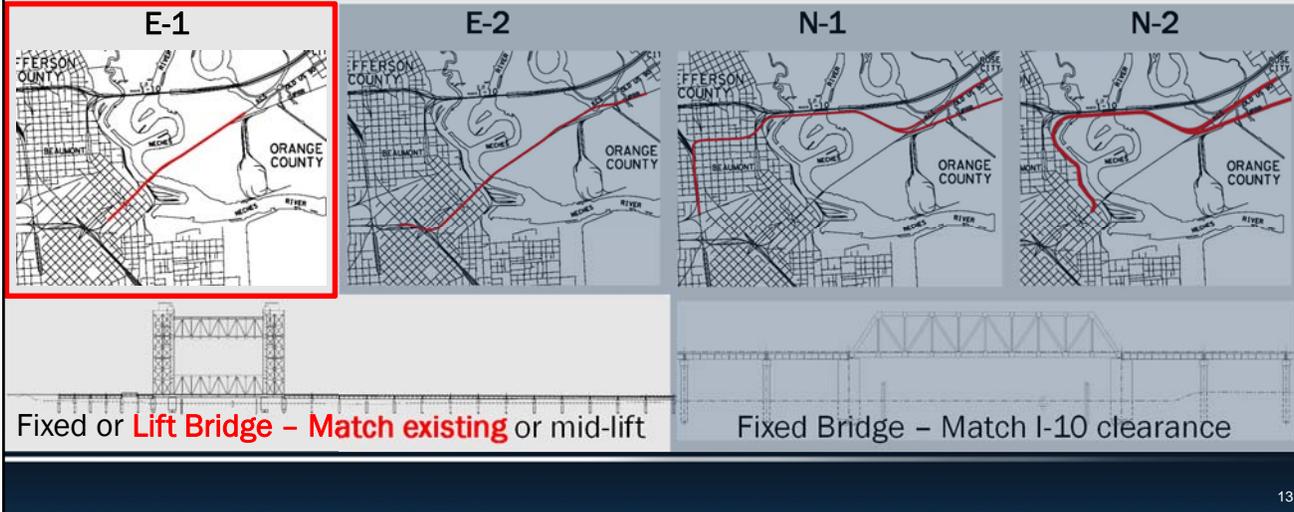
Alternatives Analysis - Continued

Phase 1: Completed During the TxDOT Neches River Bridge Feasibility Study in 2013



Alternatives Analysis - Continued

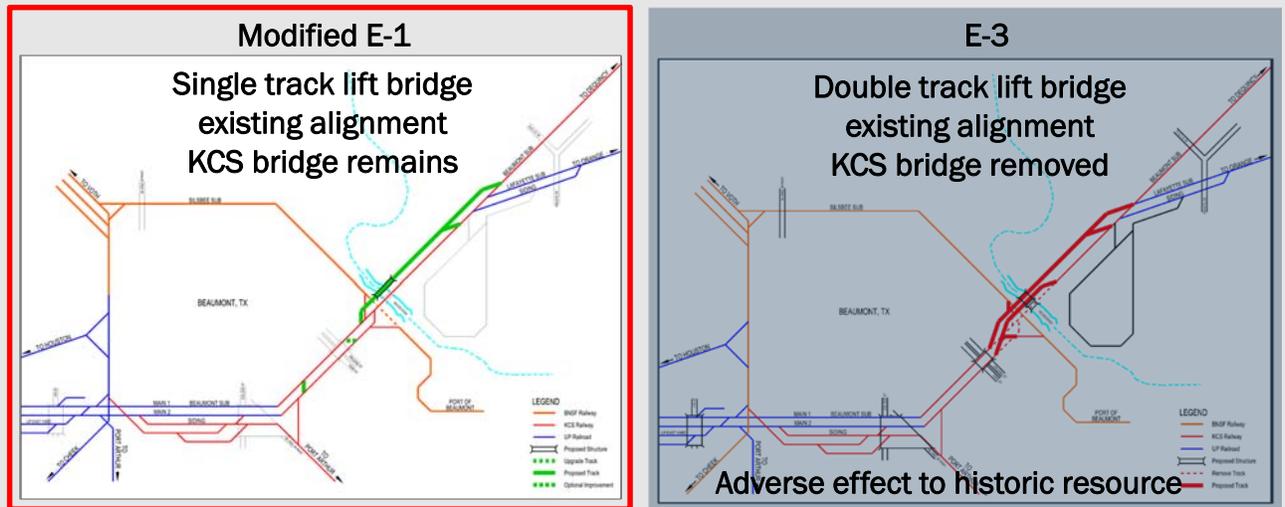
- Phase 2 – Conceptual Alternative Alignments and Bridge Options (10% Design)



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Alternatives Analysis - Continued

- Phase 3: Added Alternative Requested by U.S. Coast Guard

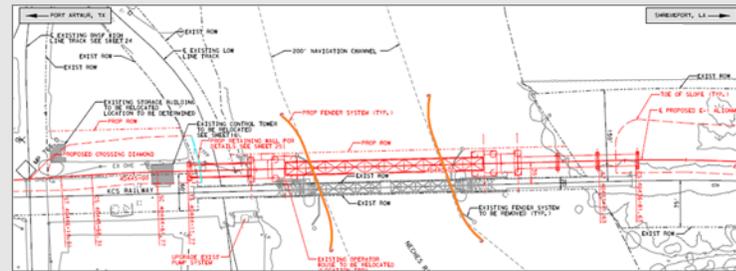


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Alternatives Analysis - Continued

■ Recommended Preferred Alternative

- Build Alternative E-1 with a lift bridge matching existing KCS lift bridge vertical and horizontal clearances in the locked and up positions.
- 30% Design - Impacts avoided or minimized by shifting centerline closer to the existing bridge.
- 23.4 trail delay hours in year 2035.



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Environmental Assessment

■ Draft Environmental Assessment

- Consists of purpose and need, alternatives analysis, impact assessments, proposed mitigation for unavoidable adverse impacts, and summary of coordination.
- No Build Alternative is included as a baseline against which the Build Alternative is compared in the identification of environmental impacts.
- Recommends the Build Alternative as the Preferred Alternative.
- Available for agency and public review/comment.



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Environmental Assessment - Continued

Water and Wetlands

- Individual Section 404 Permit – Up to 12.29 acres of impacts to waters of the U.S. Pineywoods Mitigation Bank provides opportunity for mitigation.
- U.S. Coast Guard Bridge Permit – Meets navigational requirements.
- Special Flood Hazard Area – No increase in water surface elevations during base 100-year flood event.
- Section 303(d) – Does not contribute to elevated levels of bacteria and PCBs in the Neches River.
- Texas Pollution Discharge Elimination System Construction General Permit – Best management practices to be used to control pollutants from construction.



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Environmental Assessment - Continued

Biological Resources

- Texas Parks & Wildlife Department has requested non-regulatory mitigation be considered for impacts to the Chenier Plain - Mixed Live Oak forest and riparian habitat.
- Impacts to essential fish habitat include the loss of 0.14 acres of unvegetated substrate.
- Modified construction techniques like “soft start” pile driving and bubble curtains would minimize impacts to fish during construction of the bridge.



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Environmental Assessment - Continued

Historic

- No Effect to 905 Orleans Street and 967 Orleans Street.
- No Adverse Effect to Neches River Bridge and 255 College Street (Beaumont Police Department).



Archeology

- No Effect for areas surveyed or mapped as wetlands.
- An additional 9 acres to be surveyed once right-of-entry and ground conditions permit to finalize determination of potential effects.

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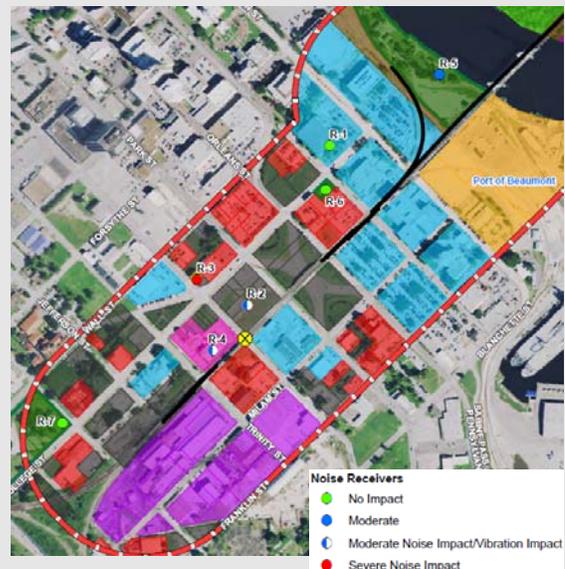
Environmental Assessment - Continued

Air

- Project benefits air quality by reducing idle emissions by 9.1 annual tons per year over the No Build Alternative.
- Temporary increases in particulate matter and Mobile Source Air Toxics emissions may occur during construction.

Noise and Vibration

- Existing noise levels exceed 70 dBA.
- Build Alternative impacts include:
 - 3 moderate and 1 severe noise impact.
 - 2 moderate vibration impacts (noticeable but not anticipated to cause property damage).

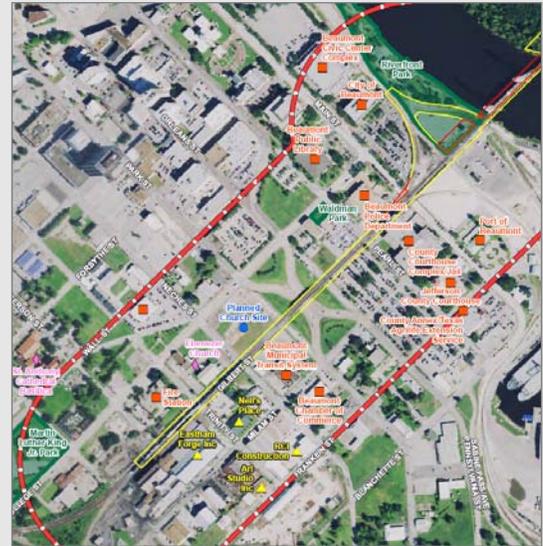


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Environmental Assessment - Continued

■ Socioeconomic

- Economic conditions positively impacted through more efficient movement of goods and services.
- Acquisition of 2 acres from the City of Beaumont and Port of Beaumont. No relocations.
- No changes in travel patterns.
- No disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects.
- No long-term public health risks. Fencing is used to minimize potential for conflicts with objects or persons.
- Hazardous material sites have a low potential for impacts.

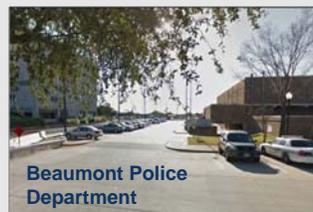


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Environmental Assessment - Continued

■ Section 4(f)/6(f) and Chapter 26 Resources

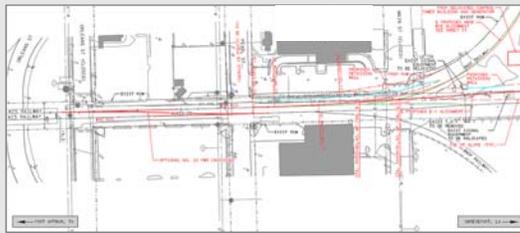
- Section 4(f) of the US Department of Transportation Act – A *de minimis* finding is anticipated for minor property takes from **Beaumont Police Department** and **Riverfront Park**.
- Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act – Applies to **Riverfront Park**.
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Code, Title 3, Chapter 26 – Applies to **Riverfront Park**.



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Next Steps

- 1) Receive agency and public comments on the Draft Environmental Assessment.
- 2) Complete final Environmental Assessment reflecting input received on the draft Environmental Assessment.
- 3) Determine funding strategy.
- 4) Obtain environmental decision.



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Thank You

- This concludes the technical presentation.
- The verbal comment portion of the formal hearing will begin shortly.



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