

**PUBLIC HEARING
SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS
AND
COMMENT RESPONSE REPORT**

**The Texas Department of Transportation
El Paso District**

**Loop 375 Border Highway West Extension Project
From Racetrack Drive to US 54
El Paso County
CSJ: 2552-04-027**

**Summary of
Public Hearing**

Hearing Date: November 15, 2012

University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP)
El Paso Natural Gas Conference Center
Wiggins Road, El Paso, TX 79968

Prepared: January 2013

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Section 1

Summary of Public Hearing

Section 1 Summary of Public Hearing

DISTRICT / COUNTY: El Paso District / El Paso County

HIGHWAY / LIMITS: Loop 375 / US 85 (Paisano Dr.) from Racetrack Drive to US 54

CSJ / PROJECT NUMBER: 2552-04-027

PROJECT BACKGROUND: The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is developing the Loop 375 Border Highway West Extension, a project which extends Loop 375 from Racetrack Drive (near Doniphan Road and New Mexico (NM) 273 west of downtown) to United States (US) 54 (east of downtown El Paso). The project is located in the City of El Paso, El Paso County, Texas.

STATE PROJECT; DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT LIMITS: The proposed project was originally envisioned as being federally funded and began in September 2007. TxDOT restarted the planning studies in 2010 with only state funds. The proposed project limits were shortened from the original limits (State Highway (SH) 20 to US 54) to Loop 375/US 85 (Paisano Drive) from Racetrack Drive to Park Street. After considering input given at the second public scoping meeting in December 2011, TxDOT further revised the project limits to Racetrack Drive near Doniphan Road and NM 273 to US 54 east of downtown for the purpose of addressing concerns about access to the downtown area. These revised limits were presented at the third scoping meeting on June 20, 2012 and are the current limits for the project.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE; PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS: Input received at the third scoping meeting led TxDOT to select Alternative 2 (Rail Yard B and Border A) as the Preferred Alternative, revise the Coles Street Interchange to reduce property impacts and improve traffic flow, and revise the project design to maintain access between NM 273 and US 85.

The proposed project is a four-lane controlled-access toll facility within a 120 feet (ft) right of way (ROW) that would begin at Racetrack Drive near Doniphan Road and NM 273, west of downtown, to US 54 east of downtown, a distance of approximately nine miles, of which approximately seven miles would be tolled. All existing non-tolled lanes would remain non-tolled; only newly constructed lanes would be tolled. The proposed improvements would close the Loop 375 gap that currently exists along the border in the downtown El Paso area and would create an alternate route to Interstate Highway 10 (I-10). These improvements would increase system capacity and reliability and regional system linkage, improving mobility for the El Paso region. This alternative avoids impacts to the Rio Grande, existing utilities and minimizes impacts to the Chihuahuita community and floodplains. The preferred alternative as presented at the hearing showed two residential and 42 commercial displacements as well as impacts to 0.2 acres of parkland from the Chihuahuita Park. The proposed impacts to the park have been coordinated with the city of El Paso, the agency with jurisdictional authority. Slight changes to

the preferred alternative following the public hearing results in three residential and 32 commercial displacements; parkland impacts remain the same.

PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED: The purpose and need is a key factor in determining the range of alternatives considered in an environmental document and, ultimately, the selection of the preferred alternative. The need for the Loop 375 Border Highway West Extension Project includes:

1. **Insufficient system capacity** – Need to provide additional infrastructure to accommodate future growth
2. **Insufficient reliability** – Need to provide a reliable alternate east-west route for incident management
3. **Insufficient regional system linkage** – Need to complete Loop 375 to provide better connectivity around the city and improve access to the university, downtown, and medical centers

The purpose of the proposed project is to provide an alternate route to I-10 to accommodate projected growth in regional east-west traffic and to improve east-west regional reliability and continuity such as during incidents, maintenance activities, and programmed reconstruction. The forecasted growth in the study area demonstrates the need for expanded transportation infrastructure. Other than I-10, there is no other continuous high speed east-west highway through El Paso. The only other major highways that serve east-west traffic are US 85 (Paisano Drive) and Loop 375. However, US 85 has numerous signalized intersections and heavy pedestrian activity, and Loop 375 terminates at Santa Fe Street, south of downtown. The project would close the gap on Loop 375 that currently exists from Santa Fe Street downtown to US 85.

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT: In coordination with federal, state, and local agencies, TxDOT is preparing a State-level Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to identify and evaluate the impacts of the various proposed solutions for the project. Through the evaluation process, a broad range of environmental issues are being studied and the findings reported, such as water quality, air quality, cultural resources, biological resources, socioeconomic conditions, community cohesion, noise, and more.

Public involvement for this project includes three public scoping meetings (held in October 2007, December 2011, and June 2012) and a public hearing (held November 2012). In addition, the project team is utilizing the Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) process to ensure that the design of the proposed project will fit into its physical setting and will preserve scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility.

The remainder of this report provides the details of the public hearing held in November 2012, the comments received and the responses to those comments. The public hearing certification can be found in **Appendix A**.

PURPOSE OF PUBLIC HEARING: The purpose of the hearing was to discuss the findings of the Draft EIS (DEIS), including the preferred alternative identified, and provide an opportunity for the public to comment on the proposed project. The access refinements in the Western Terminus and the Revised Coles Street Interchange were also presented.

DATE OF PUBLIC HEARING: Thursday, November 15, 2012

HEARING LOCATION: University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), El Paso Natural Gas Conference Center, Wiggins Road, El Paso, TX 79968

NOTICE OF HEARING: Notices were published in the following local newspapers: *El Paso Times* (English) – Friday, September 28, 2012; Saturday, October 27, 2012; Thursday, November 1, 2012; and Thursday November 8, 2012; *El Diario de El Paso* (Spanish) – Friday, September 28, 2012; Thursday, October 25, 2012; Thursday, November 1, 2012; and Thursday November 8, 2012. Copies of these notices are included in **Appendix B**.

Media coverage requests and announcements for the hearing included a *Media Advisory* in both English and Spanish and a *News Release* in both English and Spanish, which were also distributed at the public hearing to the media who attended. Copies of these notices are also included in **Appendix A**.

LETTERS TO ELECTED OFFICIALS; NOTICES TO STAKEHOLDERS AND PROPERTY OWNERS:

On October 2, 2012, the TxDOT – El Paso District mailed out hearing invitation letters to El Paso area federal, state, and local elected and non-elected officials as well as the cooperating and participating agency contacts.

On October 15, 2012, a project newsletter, that included a public hearing notice, was sent to 473 property owners in the project study area and approximately 482 project stakeholders, including nearby educational and medical facilities, neighborhood associations, community organizations, local officials, and attendees of previous scoping meetings.

Copies of the letters to elected officials are included in **Attachment C**, as well as a copy of the newsletter.

ATTENDANCE: A total of 79 people registered their attendance at the public hearing. Of these, four were representatives of elected officials; 69 were property owners, residents, and business owners; and six were representatives of the media. Additionally, 38 project team representatives were in attendance. Copies of sign-in sheets are provided in **Appendix D**.

FORMAT: The public hearing began with an open house session from 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. During this time, the DEIS, displays of the proposed alternatives, and other project information were available for viewing. Project team members were available during this time to answer questions. The open house format was utilized to allow attendees to move freely between the displayed exhibits and to discuss project details with the project team and other stakeholders.

Two certified Spanish interpreters were available during the open house to accommodate the communication needs of Spanish-speaking individuals. All exhibits were presented in both English and Spanish. Bilingual information packets were also available at the sign-in table.

At 6:30 p.m., a technical presentation was given. The technical presentation included details of the public hearing format, an overview of the proposed project, a description of the project purpose and need, notice of DEIS availability and locations, the public involvement and CSS process overview, a review of the alternatives analysis phase of the project, an overview of the results of the environmental studies, a review of the preferred alternative selected, an overview of construction costs for the project, and a brief explanation of the ROW acquisition process and the relocation assistance program. The hearing concluded with a public comment period. A certified court reporter recorded all public comments verbatim. In addition, a certified Spanish interpreter provided simultaneous translation of the hearing's proceedings to those who requested it.

Photos of the hearing are included in **Appendix E**. The certified transcript of the public hearing is provided in **Appendix F**.

CONDUCTED BY:

Welcome & Introductions

*Robert M. Bielek, DPA, P.E., TxDOT El Paso District
District Engineer and Public Hearing Officer*

Technical Presentation

*Darrin Willer, P.E., HNTB Corporation
Debbie Taylor, HNTB Corporation*

Next Steps

Robert M. Bielek, DPA, P.E., TxDOT El Paso District

Public Comment Session

Robert M. Bielek, DPA, P.E., TxDOT El Paso District

HANDOUTS: Bilingual information packets were distributed at the hearing. Each packet contained a welcome guide, agenda, project fact sheet, an EIS process and schedule handout, a comment form, and a speaker card. Copies of the handouts provided at the public hearing are included in **Appendix G**.

Media packets were also made available to members of the media present at the hearing. The media packet included the English and Spanish press releases, a handout packet, and print out copies of key exhibits. It also included a CD containing the electronic copies of the exhibits and the full handout packet as well as a DVD containing a 3D animation of the project.

EXHIBITS: Exhibits were displayed on easels and tables throughout the room, and are provided in **Appendix H**. In addition to the sign-in table, a welcome board, and a TxDOT station, the following exhibits and stations were displayed during the hearing:

STEP ONE: Overview

- “What’s New?”
- “Closing the Gap” Map
- Study Area Map
- Purpose and Need

STEP TWO: Yesterday

- Project Timeline
- Public Scoping Meeting #1 – October 2007
- Public Scoping Meeting #2 – December 2011
- Public Scoping Meeting #3 – June 2012

STEP THREE: Today

- EIS Process and Schedule
- A document review table, featuring copies of the DEIS
- Recommended Reasonable Alternatives - Segments Map
- Decision Matrix and overview exhibits of Reasonable Alternatives 1-4
- Alternatives Evaluation Process
- Reasonable and Preferred Build Alternatives Tolled Concepts
- Focus on Western Terminus, Doniphan Extension and New Mexico 273 Maps
- Focus on Downtown Access Map
- Focus on Revised Coles Street Interchange Map
- A ROW table, including ROW materials

STEP FOUR: Context Sensitive Solutions Process

- Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) Overview

STEP FIVE: Tomorrow

- Next Steps
- Two (2) Written Comments tables
- Certified Court Reporter

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC COMMENT: The public was invited to submit written and/or verbal comments during the hearing. Verbal comments could be given during the formal public comment session, transcribed by a court reporter, or given to the court reporter stationed in the open house area.

All attendees were informed that written comments could also be submitted after the hearing by the end of the DEIS public comment period (Monday, November 26, 2012) via mail or email. Contact information was provided at the hearing and in the newspaper ads that ran leading up to the hearing.

COMMENTS RECEIVED: The deadline for public comment was Monday, November 26, 2012. A total of twenty-seven (27) public comments were received; of those sixteen (16) comments were written and eleven (11) were verbal. Responses to these comments are provided in Section 2 of this report. Copies of all written and verbal comments received within the public hearing comment period are provided in **Appendix I**.

Attendees were generally in support of the proposed project and its schedule. Positive feedback was received on the need to address congestion, the project's goal of providing improved access along the south side of downtown, and praise for inclusion of the public in the project process. Several attendees were concerned with plans in the downtown area as it pertained to limited access routes, specifically the proposed closure of Santa Fe Street having a negative impact on businesses. Concerns about increased congestion on Paisano Drive and on the international bridge were also expressed. Others were concerned about impacts to the United States International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) properties, impact to historic neighborhoods and property sales being affected by the project. Some concerns were also raised regarding lighting and the amount of public outreach.

Section 2

Public Hearing Comment and Response Report

PUBLIC HEARING COMMENT AND RESPONSE REPORT

Loop 375 Border Highway West Extension Project

November 15, 2012

#	Name	Verbal/ Written Comments	TxDOT Response
1	Richard Dayoub	<p>Good evening Mr. Bielek. I'm Richard Dayoub. For the record, it's spelled D, as in David, A-Y-O-U-B. I'm the CEO of the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce. I'd like to thank you all for this opportunity to address this body. In the interest of time, I will not read our resolution into the record but provide you with written copies. On October 23rd, our governing board unanimously approved the aforementioned resolution. El Paso remains the only major metro area without a completed outer loop. I-10 congestion continues to increase both in frequency and severity. Our growing population, both civilian and military, are critical to our economy and our future economic prosperity. So, too, is our ability to manage the growth and to mitigate the congestion that is inherent with this growth. El Paso continues to offer its citizens an exceptional quality of life environment but our quality of life is being threatened by our increasing traffic congestion and related air quality. To the efforts of TxDOT Commissioner Chairman Houghton we have a rare window of opportunity to complete our loop during an era I might add of dwindling transportation funding both across the State of Texas and across the nation. The greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce remains committed to this project and will do everything within our ability to support this initiative to its conclusion. I thank you for this opportunity.</p> <p><i>[Note: Resolution is included as Comment #19]</i></p>	Comment Noted.
2	Dennis Melonas	<p>Good evening Bob. I'm Dennis Melonas, M-E-L-O-N-A-S. I represent the Central Business Association as executive director. We are a business league of over 300 retailers. The Border Highway Loop 375 Extension Project as planned cannot proceed without TxDOT taking into account the needs of the neighborhood. We were informed by you fine folks a great months ago that all the access -- accesses as we currently know them from downtown to the proposed Border Highway would disappear. Literally all of the eastbound accesses to and from downtown to the pro-- proposed Border Highway would no longer exist. Only one ingress at Campbell Street and one egress at Mesa Street would be drawn into the model as the project unfolded. Our members depend on the livelihood - our members' livelihoods depend on the traffic from Border Highway. The closure and the -- the -- the less ramps would create</p>	As a result of comments received at the Public Hearing held November 15, 2012 and subsequent coordination with the City of El Paso (a participating agency on the project), TxDOT has revised the westbound access between Park Street and Santa Fe St. After further evaluation of traffic circulation and other future planned downtown projects such as the City of El Paso Streetcar project, a collaborative solution has been developed to best serve the overall downtown access needs. The revised plans include providing

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#	Name	Verbal/ Written Comments	TxDOT Response
		<p>major traffic congestion problem for residents and businesses alike. At this time we have hand reading of traffic that seems short sighted at this point given downtown's reinvigoration plans. We recommend two ingress points and one egress points to ensure that the downtown shopping district, a district that receives over 18,000 shoppers per week, a district that generates over \$400 million of sales tax to Austin every year and that it stays alive and continues to serve El Pasoans, Juarences and the entire region with a vibrant, unique open style of open air, shopper friendly, walker -- walker friendly atmosphere. Please keep in mind that we're only talking about westbound traffic on the Border Highway. Eastbound traffic would not be able to directly enter downtown unless they exit at Schuster Street and the newly proposed Coles Street. That's over two -- that's over two miles away. We urge TxDOT to please help and join our community to make El Paso a first-world -- a first class city without cutting the limits of its business epicenter. The -- our partners at the downtown management district, our partners at the economic development at City Hall, they've given a lot of incentives for redevelopment. This would make a huge -- a huge injury to these businesses not to mention our 18,000 retailers and we have to change our method of thinking in this particular project as it pertains to the downtown access. Thank you.</p>	<p>access to the westbound lanes of Loop 375 via an entrance and exit at Campbell St. and an entrance only into downtown at Oregon Street from Loop 375. The addition of an auxiliary lane between these two streets will be added to allow for merging movements. Existing sidewalks from Santa Fe St. to Campbell St. will be removed to allow for the additional auxiliary lane.</p>
3	Veronica R. Soto	<p>Good evening. Buenas tardes. My name is Veronica Soto, S-O-T-O. I am the executive director of the downtown management district. The downtown management district has already sent public comment regarding this project for a presentation provided to us earlier in the month. The DMD is overall supportive of the project for the region; however, representing the downtown area, the DMD is very concerned about the limited access that the project, as it is presented tonight, represents for the downtown area. Consideration of additional access points to the downtown area directly rather than a mile away at UTEP or at Bowie High School is what the DMD urges the project coordinators to consider. It would be very important to have this access for the downtown area. As the downtown area really takes off there are a lot of efforts underway to continue to revitalize our area downtown and to have the -- the center of our city be the regional epicenter and so designing this project that will have an impact for over the life of our community and so we urge the project engineers</p>	<p>See response to Comment 2.</p>

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#	Name	Verbal/ Written Comments	TxDOT Response
		<p>and TxDOT to reconsider the access points to the downtown area because we do need that lifeline to continue as we continue to redevelop downtown. Overall the DMD is supportive for the region of this project, but we want to make sure that this important project is done right. And the only way to do it right is to continue to have good access to our downtown area for both the shopping and the entertainment that is there and the additional shopping and entertainment that is soon to come. Thank you.</p> <p><i>[Note: DMD letter/comment is included as Comment #20]</i></p>	
4	Frank Hernandez	<p>Yes. Good evening. My name is Frank Hernandez, H-E-R-N-A-N-D-E-Z. I'm here from the Carousel Convenience Store on the Highway 273 as you enter McNutt Road into New Mexico. We're located in Texas. The west side is the New Mexico line. My -- I like the design. Everything looks good to me as -- as where we're at. But my concern, you know, when construction starts I'm wondering how it's going to affect us with the traffic flow and, you know, if the bridge is closed on us. We've -- we've had two major closures on the street when -- I can't recall the year, but they resurfaced Paisano Road and the bridge was closed like for around seven or eight months if I remember correctly. In 2003, 2004 they knocked down the bridge to rebuild the new one and we were down again. And, you know, our business depends on the traffic going back and forth to the store. It's not the community of Sunland Park or Anapra, New Mexico, because our business depends on the traffic flow back and forth. So my concern is if there is going to be some shutting down, you know, on the road leading to our store if it's minimized because it really -- it really hurts us really bad. And, like I said, I -- I like the way everything looks and I just hope you take this into attention that -- that we are there. Thank you.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>The existing access to NM 273/McNutt Road will be maintained with the proposed project.</p> <p>Periodic and temporary closures during construction may be needed for some activities such as hanging bridge beams and other various activities; however, TxDOT will work to minimize impacts to the adjacent area.</p> <p>It is TxDOT's policy to maintain ingress/egress at all times during construction to adjacent businesses and property owners.</p>
5	Miguel A. Rodriguez	<p>Good evening. My name is Miguel Rodriguez. I'm from the Chihuahuita community. I'm part of the association -- also a member of the association and I'm here in support of the current proposal that you have right now from Santa Fe to Schuster. After 40 years, you know, we finally got an answer. And, actually, the damage is going to be minimal. We're going to be losing two houses by the -- the park and relieving the traffic from Santa Fe. We thank you and thank you for your support. We have been working with you guys for the</p>	<p>Comment Noted.</p>

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#	Name	Verbal/ Written Comments	TxDOT Response
		<p>past five years being in -- involved in the -- in the advisory boards and going to all the meetings. So thank you for your strive trying to help us out.</p>	
6	Miguel A. Rodriguez	<p>We're in favor of the plan that is right now. Just our concern and our question is that something that came up about the unit -- the 42 units, the apartments. We understand that you were trying to buy one unit only but the property owner, they didn't want to sell just part of it. They want to sell the whole property. Our concern is after you finish, do you think that something can be built, either houses or apartments after if you need to demolish all of them? That's a concern. We understand that we're going to be losing two houses and part of the community park. But the apartments is something new. And we in favor of closing Santa Fe because it's going to help us, you know, for the seniors, for the community, because actually, you know, the traffic is getting real heavy. And I guess that's it. You know, I mean, we're content. After 40 years, I mean, of waiting, you know, we're happy -- we got what we wanted. I mean, we're going to be losing some houses but at least we're not going to be separated from the community, isolated. Because if they would go the other way, you know, part of the community was going to be isolated and only with one ingress. So I guess -- I mean, we got most of it, you know.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>The current preferred alternative, Alternative 2, does not require the displacement of any apartments in the Chihuahuita area.</p>
7	James Johnson	<p>I don't know what they're -- they were asking me to -- just wanted my name and address. I think this is going to help to alleviate traffic, the traffic flow coming off of North Mesa down Executive onto I-10 and Paisano and people coming down Paisano. I think it is going to be a big help. El Paso keeps growing and the streets, they're still the same. They get repaved, they get redone but not -- it's not really explaining much. The east side, the Loop out there off of -- what is it - - Spur 601 and Loop 375, all that area is -- I mean, that's a great area but they already have problems with it, the exit at 601 when they're going northbound. I don't know. Are you from El Paso? Have you seen how it is the congestion in the mornings on the TV? It's always a mess. I drove through there in the mornings and it -- I don't know if you've been through there but when you're coming, I guess, northbound on Loop 375, I've been stuck in traffic since right around Pebble Hills before you get to Montana and it's stop-and-go traffic, stop-and-go traffic all the way to 601. But my comments on this expansion, I think it will be a great help. It's not going to affect my mom's property in any way.</p>	<p>Comment Noted.</p>

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#	Name	Verbal/ Written Comments	TxDOT Response
		<p>She's the one that wanted me to come out here and find out what's going on. And it's -- I think it is going to be a big help to alleviate traffic in the mornings, especially people coming down off of Mesa. Like I said, El Paso keeps growing and the highways are still the same. That's all.</p>	
8	Sergio Tinajero	<p>Okay. The -- I guess the comment that we have is that one of the proposed location of the freeway or interchange goes through a property that is for sale, it's on the market, and it's really affecting the sale of this property because the buyers are looking at this or they're trying to back out. We have a sale of -- that's \$1,250,000 under contract with the title company and with a possibility of building a gas station and a restaurant with -- and some retail. And because of this project, it's really affecting this transaction. So that you guys are not -- don't know how long is this going to take, how much is going to be the -- I mean, once you do an appraisal so if we're losing money -- we're not but at this point, I mean, you're putting the -- this transaction in jeopardy because of the proposed interchange. I guess that's -- I mean, what else can I tell the -- the buyers -- the total investment between the construction and land probably looking about two -- between two and a half million dollars and three million dollars. You're affecting the buyer, you're affecting the seller and you're affecting the real estate company as well. I think that's it.</p>	<p>TxDOT is not able to proceed with right-of-way appraisal or acquisition until the project receives environmental clearance (Record of Decision). This is currently anticipated in May/June 2013.</p> <p>There is a process for consideration of an advance acquisition if the property owner situation qualifies as an economic hardship.</p>
9	Pastor Edwin Gros	<p>I guess we feel this deeply because we're in -- I'm the pastor and I have -- all of the people who live in the Chihuahuita area are my parishioners, and I'm just very concerned about displacement of fam- -- them losing their property or anything which is going to ultimately change their lives. And I understand that one of the alternatives, the alternative which I think has the highway going furthest -- closest to the canal and further south is a possibility, and I just want to put my vote in for that alternative because I want the least amount of disruption to the lives of these people who have lived there for over a hundred years. And I just feel that they need someone to speak up for them because they're -- most of them are poor and don't have a lot of political clout, but I feel as their pastor I have to express my voice.</p>	<p>Comment Noted.</p> <p>The preferred Alternative, Alternative 2, would be located south of Chihuahuita and would minimize disruption to the community. Planning efforts have been conducted with the understanding of the sensitivity and community cohesion of Chihuahuita. TxDOT has also worked closely with the City of El Paso and the Chihuahuita representatives in the planning and development of the proposed project.</p>

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#	Name	Verbal/ Written Comments	TxDOT Response
10	Eduardo Castorena	<p>I'm Eduardo Castorena, and I'm the development director at Sacred Heart Church. And I am also concerned about the people in the Chihuahuita neighborhood and about their being displaced. And I'm glad to hear that an alternative route is being considered to route the Border Highway around the -- right on the border along the canal or over the canal and that maybe it will not displace anybody from the Chihuahuita neighborhood. And if it does, I very strongly feel that we need to be sure that they are provided proper assistance and remuneration for the displacement, for the cost of their property, because they've lived there for ages. The other concern is that a lot of our parishioners also happen to be businessmen in the south El Paso area, and there's some concern about the exits to that area in that at this point they may be limited exits from the Border Highway to south El Paso and hope they make some adjustments to that because it would deeply hurt their businesses downtown in that area as well as not only the business right along the border but anybody that's wishing to come from the Lower Valley of El Paso to the new stadium we're going to be erecting there. And so, you know, what are we really thinking when we talk about renovating the downtown area if we're not even considering the traffic that would bring business and visitors to that area? So twofold concerns. One, the people that live in that area, the Chihuahuita district, and then the other is the business one that have their businesses in that area. So we pray that they keep all of this in mind.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>See response to Comments 2 and 9.</p> <p>TxDOT would provide relocation advisory assistance to any person, business, or nonprofit organization displaced as a result of the acquisition of real property for public use. Acquisition of property would be carried out in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act (The Uniform Act) of 1970, as amended. In the cases where sufficient comparable replacement housing may not be available, TxDOT is committed to implementing last resort housing practices. Consistent with the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) policy, as mandated by The Uniform Act, TxDOT would provide relocation resources (including any applicable special provisions or programs) to all displaced persons without discrimination. The available structures must also be open to persons regardless of race, color, religion, or nationality, and be within the financial means of those individuals affected. All property owners from whom property is needed are entitled to receive just compensation for their land and property. Just compensation is based upon the fair market value of the property.</p>

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#	Name	Verbal/ Written Comments	TxDOT Response
11	Dennis Melonas	<p>This is a letter that we gave to Mayor John Cook and the City Council on November 12th, 2012. Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with us this past Wednesday on such short notice. We share your enthusiasm in bringing El Paso forward and are reaching out for your hand to make sure that the -- that includes the city's core center of business, downtown El Paso. The downtown shopping district is a bustling marketplace with over 18,000 shoppers a week, your vein of over 90 percent minority-owned enterprises representing commerce, community and business, infusing hundreds of millions of dollars from taxpayers. We ask for your leadership to preserve the most continuously used and traffic shopped district inherently rooted in both the city's history and soon our future. The Border Highway 375 Loop Extension West Project as planned cannot proceed without the City of El Paso and TxDOT taking into account the needs of the neighborhood. We were informed by TxDOT over eight months ago that all of the accesses as we currently know them for downtown to the proposed Border Highway would disappear. Literally all of the eastbound accesses to and from downtown to the proposed Border Highway would no longer exist. Only one ingress at Campbell and one egress at Mesa would be drawn into the model as the project unfolded. Our livelihoods depend on traffic from Border Highway. This would create major traffic congestion problems for residents and businesses alike. Hand ringing traffic seems shortsighted given downtown's reinvigoration plans. Consequently we strongly recommend two ingress points and one egress point to ensure the downtown shopping district stays alive and continues to serve El Pasoans, Juarences and the entire region with this vibrant unique style of open air, shopper friendly, walker friendly atmosphere. Please keep in mind that we're only talking about westbound traffic on the Border Highway. Eastbound traffic would not be able to enter -- directly enter downtown unless they exited Schuster, which is west of downtown, or the newly proposed Cole exit east. Both are two miles away from downtown El Paso. Please help and join our community to make El Paso a first-world city without cutting off the limbs of its business epicenter. Choose to keep Oregon and Kansas as ingresses from the Border Highway into the downtown shopping district. Respectfully -- you have my name.</p>	See response to Comment 2.

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#	Name	Verbal/ Written Comments	TxDOT Response
12	Luis Silva	The main point of El Paso history and shopping is in downtown south of Paisano. Limited access will blow away our local retailers that have been here for generations. Let us put this in perspective while block our history that has fed our city. If this is the case why not eliminate our historic buildings along with this proposal. This is not possible so we need more access to keep our epicenter alive.	See response to Comment 2.
13	Osvaldo Velez	Please help us (Southside Neighborhood Association) to remove a park located between Ochoa & Florence on 9th Street. We don't want to feel box in. Like other communities. Great idea leaving Campbell & Mesa open.	This park is not within the study area of this project and not within the jurisdiction of TxDOT. Removal of a city park would be under the jurisdiction of the City of El Paso.
14	Jorge Hernandez	<p>I, Jorge Hernandez, am not opposed to Loop 375 Border Highway West Extension Project. However I am opposed to limited access to Downtown from Loop 375. I ask that TxDOT be considerate and careful not to affect commerce in the Downtown Shopping District that is worth hundreds of millions of dollars annually. The Downtown Shopping District is the oldest continuously used commercial area in the city, and as such, is important to El Paso's History. If vehicles are limited to the Campbell access it will be difficult for them to make their way west due to congestion that already exists on Stanton and Paisano. There are hundreds of businesses that provide employment to hundreds of people in Downtown. A Downtown Annual El Paso Report shows that a third own their own building and a majority did not plan to relocate their business in the next year. And the number one reason for visiting Downtown is shopping. Limiting access to Downtown from Loop 375 on Campbell only, will have a negative economic impact to this area. I ask that TxDOT reconsider Downtown Access Points. Attachment: Alternative Downtown Access</p> <p><i>[Note: Attachment can be found in Appendix I]</i></p>	<p>See response to Comment 2.</p> <p>The socio-economic impacts will continue to be studied in the development of the Final Environmental Impact Statement, as well as a study of indirect and cumulative impacts, including both positive and negative impacts. Additional access to downtown is now being provided as a result of public hearing input received.</p>
15	Noe Moreno	The 79901 zip code quadrupled the sales tax revenue compared to the 79835 (outlet shops). I point is there needs to be a downtown exit off loop 375.	See response to Comment 2.

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16	Sir Harry Page	In an area that is landlocked - DEIS Chihuahuita - we submit that the loss of even 2 homes and 42 stores and .2 acres is unacceptable. Further tweaking of the plan is necessary. Further - consideration and implementation to as many exits as possible to the downtown, H to S Streets especially onto Paisano Street, are essential to the wellbeing of south El Paso commerce - else it will die.	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>See response to Comments 2, 9 and 10. Changes to proposed right-of-way following the public hearing result in three residential displacements (one additional since public hearing) and 32 commercial displacements (10 less than presented at the public hearing) as well as the previously stated 0.2 acres of parkland from the Chihuahuita Park.</p>
17	Not submitted	The proposal has looked at a large number of problems from past proposals. The only remaining question I have is the lights downtown after the ending of the loop and the travel on Paisano. The lights are not timed and if traffic flow increases then this could cause major problems in the route design. The video was fantastic and the people accepting questions were very kind and knowledgeable. Thanks much.	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>The timing of lights on city streets in the downtown area will be the responsibility of the City of El Paso.</p>
18	Steven Ayers	As a student at UTEP and a member of the community, I feel that there should be more of an outreach to the community to inform them/us when events such as this one and other public hearings are going to occur. To have such a small representation of the El Paso community is counterproductive of what a public hearing is supposed to do. More efforts to inform the public are needed to provide a better turnout and gather a better consensus of the public. Media and other outlets need to be taken advantage of. More representation means better consensus which means more publically approved results.	<p>Comment noted.</p> <p>Public notice for the Public Hearing included:</p> <p>Notices were published in the following local newspapers: El Paso Times (English) – Friday, September 28, 2012; Saturday, October 27, 2012; Thursday, November 1, 2012; and Thursday November 8, 2012; El Diario de El Paso (Spanish) – Friday, September 28, 2012; Thursday, October 25, 2012; Thursday, November 1, 2012; and Thursday, November 8, 2012. The notices were half to full page ads in visible sections of these newspapers.</p> <p>Media coverage requests and announcements for the hearing were distributed to various</p>

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			<p>media outlets prior to the hearing and included a Media Advisory in both English and Spanish and a News Release in both English and Spanish.</p> <p>On October 2, 2012, TxDOT – El Paso District mailed out hearing invitation letters to El Paso area federal, state, and local elected and non-elected officials as well as the cooperating and participating agency contacts.</p> <p>On October 15, 2012, a project newsletter, that included a public hearing notice, was sent to 473 property owners in the project study area and approximately 482 project stakeholders, including: nearby educational and medical facilities, neighborhood associations, community organizations, local officials, and attendees of previous scoping meetings.</p>
19	<p>Chuck Harre, 2012 Chair; Kathleen Walker, GRD Chair 2012; Jack Chapman, Transportation Chair; Richard E. Dayoub, President & CEO</p>	<p>Resolution. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), El Paso District, will conduct the Public Hearing for the proposed Loop 375 Border Highway West Extension Project (the BHW Project) and State Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on Thursday, November 15, 2012 at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), El Paso Natural Gas Conference Center. The purpose of the hearing is to discuss the findings of the DEIS, including the preferred alternative identified by TxDOT for the BHW Project and to provide an opportunity for the public to provide comments on the proposed project. The proposed BHW Project is a four-lane controlled access toll facility that would begin at Racetrack Drive near Doniphan Road and New Mexico 273, and end at United States Highway (US) 54 east of downtown El Paso, a distance of approximately nine miles, of which approximately seven miles would be tolled. All existing lanes in the project footprint would remain non-tolled. The estimated proposed project</p>	<p>Comment Noted.</p>

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		<p>construction cost is approximately \$500 million, with construction anticipated to begin in 2015. The proposed BHW Project is a cooperative effort among TxDOT, the Camino Real Regional Mobility Authority, the City of El Paso, the Metropolitan Planning Organization and other participating agencies and is the result of previous studies which have identified a critical need for an alternative route for I-10 traffic to address needed improvements to system capacity, reliability, and regional system linkage for the El Paso metropolitan area. The Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce has been a strong advocate for this essential component of our Metropolitan Transportation Plan as well as other critical components of our transportation infrastructure for several years. Therefore be it resolved, the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce is in full support of the BHW Project. Approved by the Transportation Committee of the GEPCC on October 18, 2012, Government Relations Division of GEPCC on October 23, 2012; approved by the Executive Committee of the GEPCC's Governing Board on October 23, 2012, and by GEPCC's Governing Board on October 30, 2012. Respectfully Submitted, Chuck Harre, 2012 Chair; Kathleen Walker, GRD Chair 2012; Jack Chapman, Transportation Chair; Richard E. Dayoub, President & CEO</p>	
20	Veronica R. Soto	<p>Dear Mr. Bielek: This letter is to express concerns about the proposed design of the Loop 375 - Border Highway West Extension project by the Downtown Management District (DMD) Board of Directors. A special Board meeting of the DMD was called on October 2, 2012 to hear a presentation on the project; Mr. Eduardo Calvo, TXDOT, provided the presentation. The project was a discussion item at the Regular Board meeting of October 19. At that meeting, the Board directed me to send you this letter expressing serious concerns about the project's impact on downtown. While the Board is supportive of the project for the region, the Board wishes to have the design - particularly ingress and egress - consider how it can accommodate downtown for increased mobility options to include well-designed access to serve the downtown area, particularly the Downtown Shopping District. In that area, Board members encourage looking at Oregon Street as an additional option for access. These are the issues of concern with the project as presented to the Board: *Limited access- proposed design schematics with limited or no access to Downtown from the east and</p>	<p>Comment noted. See response to Comment 2 and 14.</p>

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		<p>west sides of El Paso can negatively affect Downtown's future economic growth *Increased congestion on Paisano - Traffic levels on Paisano Avenue, the proposed main artery between the spurs, I-10 and the Loop, are already heavy; adding additional traffic will discourage additional visits into Downtown so adding traffic without adding capacity or other improvements is a great concern *International Bridge congestion - North-south traffic on Stanton at peak hours related to the international bridge causes a lot of congestion which affect side streets with residential and commercial uses, in and near Downtown, another factor that could hinder Downtown's further growth *Access to the Downtown business and entertainment districts - Nearest access points from both east and west side are at UTEP or near Bowie High School, both too far from the core of Downtown and its Shopping District, a further deterrent for visits to eat, shop and play Downtown *The latest project newsletter does not show alternatives shared at the October 2 meeting and if a viable alternative is not under consideration that is also a concern. The DMD Board requests that TxDOT review the proposed access into downtown and that additional access be included in the final design. In particular, the downtown shopping and entertainment districts within Downtown need to be considered, perhaps by making Oregon Street and the western-most section of downtown accessible to vehicles coming in from the eastside. A project of this magnitude necessitates the best design potentially hinder the economic viability of the Downtown area, especially after the great community support shown for projects that enhance both the quality of life and economic development of our community. You can be assured that a DMD representative will attend the next public meeting to raise these concerns. Should you have any questions, please contact me. Sincerely, Veronica R. Soto, AICP, Executive Director</p>	
21	Gilbert Anaya	<p>Dear Project Coordinator: The International Boundary and Water Commission, United States Section (USIBWC) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the State DEIS for the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Loop 375 Border Highway West Extension Project. The project addresses the needed improvements to system capacity and reliability, and regional system linkage for the El Paso Metropolitan Area. The USIBWC has reviewed the DEIS, and the project alternatives are likely to impact USIBWC properties and will require</p>	<p>Comment noted. TxDOT has been coordinating with the IBWC, a cooperating agency in the EIS process and is in the process of on-going coordination regarding the licensing and permitting needs for the proposed project within the</p>

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		<p>further coordination with the USIBWC through the license program. The USIBWC supports the Preferred Alternative, Alternative 2, as it minimizes impacts to USIBWC jurisdictional properties. However, a portion of the proposed project would have a longitudinal encroachment on the Rio Grande floodplain within the USIBWC Rectification and Canalization Projects, with potential impacts to USIBWC properties in the reach between Santa Fe Street International Bridge and Yandell Drive/Spur 1966 (Border A) and the reach between Executive Center Boulevard and Racetrack Drive (Rail yard B). The proposed project will require a license from the USIBWC; items listed on the Permits and License Checklist will be required for review and license approval including resource agency correspondence and HEC-RAS modeling which compare before and after construction conditions showing all obstructions within the floodplain. The USIBWC would like to offer the following additional comments for the DEIS: (1) Page 2-14: Table 2-4 lists alternative 13g as Rail yard B. It should be listed as Rail yard A. (2) 3-5: Consider revising the sentence under Table 3-4 to remove historic resources as individual historic resources were not listed in this section. (3) Page 3-45: Please pluralize hydroelectric generating plants in IBWC activity #5 as there are several plants along the Rio Grande under the IBWC management. (4) Sections 3.9.5.1-3: The USIBWC has documented resident Southwestern Willow Flycatcher and Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo in the Rio Grande reach just north of Sunland Park Drive. Coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may be required for these endangered/candidate species. (5) Section 3.11: Heavy metals contamination is not limited to ASARCO property. Heavy metals from ASARCO fall-out have been identified on USIBWC managed properties within the study area/project limits. Data can be provided upon request. Thank you again for the opportunity to review and comment on the project. If you have any questions, please call me at (915) 832-4702 or Rebecca Little Owl at (915) 832-4734. Sincerely, Gilbert Anaya, Division Chief, Environmental Management Division.</p>	<p>jurisdictional areas of the IBWC. The project team has reviewed the checklist referenced and will continue to coordinate to meet the requirements of the process.</p> <p>Recommended revisions 1) -3) will be included in the FEIS as applicable.</p> <p>4) TxDOT circulated a copy of the DEIS to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and they responded by letter that their review is complete and they have no further comments or concerns regarding impacts to species.</p> <p>Regarding the comment on heavy metals contamination not being limited to ASARCO property – a preliminary records search has been conducted to meet ASTM E 1527-05 standards; however, further investigations and testing will be conducted as needed to determine the potential for hazardous materials that may impact the proposed project construction.</p>
22	Joseph J. Ayoub	Congratulations!!!	Comment Noted.

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23	Michael Medina	Dear Mr. Calvo, The MPO has reviewed the DEIS for Loop 375 Border Highway West Extension Project. This proposed project is described in various chapters/sections to be fully incorporated in the project list or development of the Horizon 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). The Horizon 2040 MTP is due for completion on or about July 2013. Please clarify if this project is planned in and to be environmentally clear with the Amended Mission 2035 MTP planning documents. Sincerely, Michael Medina	The proposed Loop 375 Border Highway West Extension project is included in the amendments to the Amended Mission 2035 MTP that the El Paso MPO Transportation Policy Board adopted on December 7, 2012. Once the Transportation Conformity determination approval by FHWA for these amendments is received, the BHW project will be a part of the MPO's conforming long range plan, which is a requirement to receive environmental clearance. Concurrent to the amendments to the Mission 2035 MTP, The El Paso MPO is developing the Horizon 2040 MTP, which will also include the BHW project.
24	James Inzer	To Whom It May Concern, I believe El Paso is overdue for an alternate route from I-10 and Mesa between Downtown and West El Paso. The proposed extension will complete Loop 375 and give El Paso drivers relief from any long needed repair work on I-10 as well as reduce commute times during rush hour traffic. J.S. Inzer, El Paso, Texas	Comment Noted.
25	Cortney Niland	Mr. Calvo: I wanted to send you a letter of support of the proposed route of the Loop 375 West. Given its impact on most of the district I represent, I am very pleased TXDOT took into consideration all the concerns of my constituents. I look forward to the completion of this much needed roadway. Therefore, I wholeheartedly support the project loop 375 west. Best, CN	Comment Noted.
26	Ricardo Dominguez, Jr.	Dear Mr. Calvo, On behalf of the City of Sunland Park, New Mexico (SLP), I am writing in response to the Loop 375 Border Highway West Extension (BHW) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Public comments are due to your Office on the BHW DEIS Project by November 26, 2012, according to your Department's documents. The following are SLPs comments: (1) I didn't see any analysis, environmental or the other required sections of the National Environmental Policy Act on 1969 (NEPA) process, on any potential impacts to the residents of SLP and in particular to the Anapra Community of SLP. (2) The BHW Project Impact Boundary needs to be expanded to cover SLP from	Comment Noted. 1) Environmental impacts to Sunland Park and the Anapra Community were not included since they are not located within the state of Texas and access to New Mexico is being maintained with the current plan.

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		<p>Racetrack Drive (NM 498) when visually extended from I-10 to McNutt Rd (NM 273); then 100 yards south of McNutt Road on the south and finally along Paisano Dr. (US 85) El Paso, TX to I-10 on the east and northerly portions. (3) NM 273 access to Paisano Drive must be maintained and preferably improved. (4) The DEIS mentions that Paisano Dr. will be extended as an overpass and connect to Doniphan Dr. El Paso. That is an excellent idea but what will the effect be on businesses along Doniphan Dr.? (5) The BHW project needs to make provisions to improve the turning movements on intersection of Racetrack Dr. (NM 498 extended but a City of El Paso road facility) and Doniphan Dr. The intersection will be impacted with the improved connection of the proposed Paisano/Doniphan overpass. The City's Sunland Park new non-commercial Port of Entry that is proposed to start construction by 2014 at the earliest crossers may also use this intersection. (6) SLP has an approved City Master Plan that wasn't mention on the Projects DEIS. (7) SLP is in attainment for Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards in regards to all pollutants caused by vehicles. How, if any, will the BHW Project affect the EPA standards? (8) I didn't see any analysis related to Environmental Justice in regards to SLP. (9) I didn't read any mention of the EPA Superfund site located somewhere between McNutt Rd. and the EP Brick Plant. I don't expect the site to be a problem but there may be a concern when road building begins and the soil is disturbed. (10) I also didn't see any mention of the dinosaur tracts site in what is known as the Insights Property. In closing, the City greatly appreciates the opportunity to comment on this regionally and internationally important road facility. I would like the opportunity to visit with you or any TxDOT staff to review the BHW connections to SLP. The City also notes that its comments will be address by the TxDOT at an appropriate time, "Saludos". Sincerely, Ricardo Dominguez Jr., City Planner CC: Mayor Javier Perea Councilor Christina Lira Councilor Carmen Rodriguez Councilor Annette Diaz Councilor Sergio Carrillo Councilor and Mayor Pro-Tem Isabel Santos Councilor Jessica Avila Linda Vazquez</p>	<p>2) The study area was determined to terminate at the Texas State Line since the project is state funded and the access to NM 273 will be maintained.</p> <p>3) The proposed project will maintain access to NM 273.</p> <p>4) Regarding the affect to businesses with the extension and connection to Doniphan Dr. – the indirect and cumulative impacts of the proposed project were addressed for several alternatives in the DEIS and will be further addressed for the Preferred Alternative 2 in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).</p> <p>5) The intersection of Racetrack Drive and NM 498 is not within the study area. Any improvements to the intersection would be proposed by others.</p> <p>6) The City of Sunland Park Master Plan was not mentioned in DEIS since the city is not within the study area.</p> <p>7) A qualitative analysis for air quality impacts at the project level will be conducted during the preparation of the FEIS that will demonstrate compliance to EPA standards. Also, the BHW project will be included in the El Paso MPO's Mission 2035 MTP, which will need to demonstrate conformance to EPA and</p>

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		<p>Director, Community Development Department Roberto Diaz de Leon SLP POE Manger Dwaine Solana Building Official</p>	<p>TCEQ air quality standards at the regional level.</p> <p>8) The City of Sunland Park is outside of the study area for the BHW project. The project level environmental justice analysis was only performed for the study area. However, the El Paso MPO's long range plan includes an environmental justice analysis for the MPO study area, which includes the City of Sunland Park.</p> <p>9) The hazardous materials database search did not disclose any record of an EPA superfund site between McNutt and the El Paso Brick plant; however, 2 regulated sites, including an industrial hazardous waste site, were present in the area. Further investigations will be conducted as needed to determine the potential impacts to construction.</p> <p>10) TxDOT has received an archeological agreement which has been approved by the Texas Historic Commission for the proposed Loop 375 Border Highway West Extension project. This would include any potential impacts to pre-historic resources.</p>

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27	Darren LeBlanc	The US Fish and Wildlife Service has reviewed the Draft EIS for the proposed Loop 375 Border Highway West Extension project in El Paso, Texas, dated October 2, 2012. Based on our review, we believe Draft EIS accurately reflects that the action alternative would have minimal effect on Service trust resources. Therefore, we have no concerns with, or comments on, the draft EIS. Thank you for requesting our input on the Draft EIS and please keep us informed of further developments with this project. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me using this email address or the phone numbers below. Thank you.	Comment Noted.