Appendix A
Newspaper Articles/Notices & Affidavits

- **El Paso Times Articles & Affidavits**
- **El Diario de El Paso Articles & Affidavits**
- **Blogs**

El Paso Times Articles & Affidavits

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE
Loop 375 Transmountain Road Project
I-10 to east of the Franklin Mountains State Park Entrance
El Paso County, Texas

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) will conduct a public hearing on Tuesday, March 22, 2011 for the proposed improvements to Loop 375 (Woodrow Bean/Transmountain Road) from Interstate 10 (I-10) to east of the Franklin Mountains State Park entrance in the northwestern portion of the City of El Paso, El Paso County, Texas. The Public Hearing will be held at the Canutillo High School cafeteria. Canutillo High School is located at 6675 South Desert Blvd., El Paso Texas, 79912. The hearing will consist of an Open House followed by a formal presentation. The Open House will begin at 6:00 pm. to allow for questions and review of project exhibits. The formal presentation will begin at 7:00 p.m., followed by a public comment period. TxDOT and consultant personnel will be available at the public hearing to answer any project related questions.

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Please join us to discuss the design, construction, and environmental aspects of the proposed project. The environmental document and maps showing the proposed project location and design will be displayed at the public hearing. A tentative construction schedule and project information are on file and available for inspection and copying at the TxDOT El Paso District Office, located at 13301 Gateway Boulevard West in El Paso, Texas. Maps and/or drawings showing the project location and geometric design are also on file with the City of El Paso at the offices of Ms. Jane Shang, Deputy City Manager for Mobility Services at 2 Civic Center Plaza, El Paso, Texas 79901. The environmental document may also be accessed online at www.txdot.gov click on Hearing & Meetings or at www.elpasotexas.gov

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PUBLISHERS AFFIDAVIT

STATE OF TEXAS
COUNTY OF EL PASO

Before me, a Notary Public in and for El Paso County, State of Texas, on this day personally appeared _Stephanie MdDowell_ who states upon oath that she is the __Consolidated Regional Inside Sales Center Manager, of The El Paso Times daily newspaper published in the City of El Paso , State of Texas , which is a newspaper of general circulation and which has been continuously and regularly published for the period of not less than one year in the said City of El Paso , and that she was such upon the dates herein mentioned:

That the _Retail advertisement_____ copy was published in The El Paso Times for _one day_____.The dates of such publication being as follows, to witness __February 20th, 2011 .

Subscribed and sworn to before me, Signed SMcDowell

This the 2nd day of March 2011.

Belia Duran

BELIA DURAN
Notary Public, State of Texas
My Commission Expires
March 19

Luna County seeks share of water, money from settlement

DEMING — Luna County commissioners approved a resolution encouraging the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission to remember the area in deciding what to do with 14,000 acre-feet of water from the Gila and San Francisco rivers and related funding of up to $62 million under the Arizona Water Settlements Act of 2004.

Associated Press

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

Dr AB. A. BAKR, MD, P.A.:
Is announcing his retirement from Private Practice of Neurology, effective (April 30, 2011). For Information regarding Medical Records or any other questions, please call this Tel # (915-532-8197).

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El Paso Times
elpasotimes.com

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STATE OF TEXAS
COUNTY OF EL PASO

Before me, a Notary Public in and for El Paso County, State of Texas, on this day personally appeared Stephanie McDowell who states upon oath that she is the Regional Sales Manager in the Advertising Department of the El Paso Times, daily newspaper published in the City and County of El Paso, State of Texas, newspapers of general circulation and which have been continuously and regularly published for the period of not less than one year in the said County of El Paso.

That Entech Civil Engineeers "Public Hearing Notice Loop 375 Transmountain Road Project" was published in the El Paso Times. The date of such publication being on March 12th and March 20th, 2011 .

Stephanie McDowell
Regional Sales Manager

Subscribed and sworn to before me,
March 29th, 2011

Notary Public, State of Texas
My Commission Expires
March 19, 2012

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in and for the State of Texas

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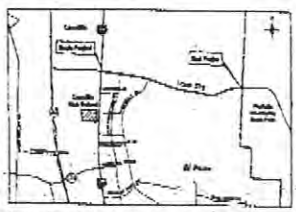

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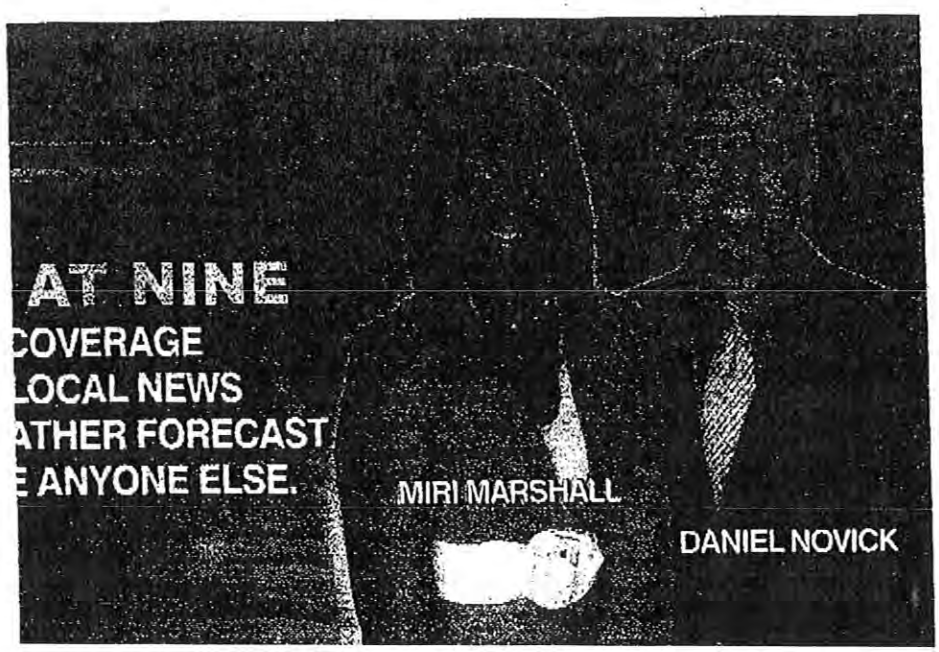

City Council backs Trans Mtn. plan by 7-1 vote

By Diana Washington Valdez \ El Paso Times
Posted: 03/30/2011 12:00:00 AM MDT

Trans Mountain highway vote

The El Paso City Council voted 7-1 on Tuesday in favor of the Texas Department of Transportation's proposed Trans Mountain West project.

City Rep. Susie Byrd, who had questions about traffic volume projections and pedestrian safety, cast the vote against it.

"I'm really brokenhearted," Byrd said after the meeting. "It's unfortunate for our city. From the very beginning, I believe that TxDOT decided to build this freeway a certain way and this is how they wanted to do it.

"I believe TxDOT used misleading and outdated (traffic projection) numbers as the basis for the West Loop 375 expansion. Then it became 'We either build this road or none at all.' "

During the City Council session, Chuck Berry, district engineer of TxDOT in El Paso, and Roy Gilyard, executive director of the Metropolitan Planning Organization, discussed why their traffic volume projections for Trans Mountain West differed.

Gilyard said the MPO's two different sets of figures and methodologies reflect regional planning approaches and a project-specific approach. The city's transportation department met recently with the MPO to go over the differences.

Byrd and City Rep. Beto O'Rourke said they were concerned that the TxDOT project lacks a safe access to the Tom Mays Section of Franklin Mountains State Park. Once the expansion is finished, motorists are likely to travel on Trans Mountain at high speeds, making it difficult for eastbound travelers to turn into the park entrance.

Berry said that the TxDOT staff is looking at how to fix the park entrance problem later, and that it could be done after the freeway expansion is finished.

Under TxDOT's current plans, the road will be four lanes along its entire length, although only the far western reaches will resemble a typical freeway. One of the other questions

raised at the City Council meeting was where to locate the Paseo del Norte extension that would intersect the Trans Mountain freeway.

In a March 25 letter to the City Council, El Paso County Judge Veronica Escobar said she supported the Trans Mountain West improvement but was concerned about the current proposal's approach to the expansion.

"What concerns me, however, is the Paseo del Norte overpass and its relationship to future development in the open space adjacent to it," Escobar said in the letter. "The Paseo del Norte overpass will help provide connectivity to and traffic distribution for future development, especially in the acreage now owned by the people of El Paso (via the Public Service Board) but slated for development in the PSB's Northwest Master Plan."

Escobar said she agreed with a member of the public's view that if the area within the Northwest Master Plan were to remain undeveloped -- preserved as open space -- "there probably would be no need for the final overpass."

Environmentalists criticized the potential loss of the Franklin Mountains' scenic views and the project's impacts on wildlife.

Others urged city officials to consider the traffic congestion created by El Paso's rapid growth and the possibility of losing $85 million in state money for the freeway project.

Charlie Wakeem, chairman of the El Paso Open Space Advisory Board, was among the residents who waited more than eight hours to address the council. He said the open space board opposes the project as TxDOT has proposed it.

The Open Space Advisory Board favors preserving the Franklin Mountains' scenic views and is opposed to overpasses and other structures that obstruct those views.

Richard Dayoub, CEO of the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce, urged the council members to support the project.

Bill Addington, who represents the El Paso Regional Sierra Club and opposes the project, said the freeway "started as a $17 million project less than two years ago, and it ballooned at the request of developers to an $85 million project."

Tom Thomas, the secretary of the Army's civilian aide for West Texas, said the recently completed Spur 601 project in Northeast El Paso and other efforts by the community to accommodate growth at Fort Bliss, have not gone unnoticed.

"The Pentagon uses El Paso as a model," said Thomas, who also recommended that the city approve the Trans Mountain Road expansion.

TxDOT officials said proposed improvements will include:

• Expanding the current two-lane undivided roadway to a four-lane divided highway with two-lane frontage roads.
• Grade separated intersections at Northwestern Drive, Resler Drive, Plexxar Drive and Paseo del Norte Drive.
• Two direct connectors from Trans Mountain-Loop 375 west to Interstate 10 east and from I-10 west to Loop 375 east.

Berry said Friday is the deadline for the public to submit comments for the project. He also said the city's resolution will carry considerable weight among the rest of the public comments TxDOT receives.

Public comment
Comment on the Trans Mountain West (Loop 375) expansion:

• Written comments may be sent to Texas Department of Transportation-Loop 375 (Trans Mountain West) Public Hearing, Attn: Mr. Antonio Uribe Jr., P.E., District Design, 13301 Gateway West, El Paso, TX 79928.

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Bill Hammond: Texas must build new roads to progress

by Bill Hammond \ Guest columnist
Posted: 03/06/2011 12:00:00 AM MST

State Sen. Tommy Williams, chairman of the Texas Senate Transportation and Homeland Security Committee, recently stated that as of 2012, Texas will have no new money to build new roads or highways.

Because we are the fastest- growing state in the nation, I would say this lack of funding for transportation infrastructure constitutes a crisis.

It is time for Texas to take a closer look at the public-private partnership model that led to the construction of the LBJ Express, DFW Connector, North Tarrant Express and State Highway 130.

In Texas, over the last 20 years, our population has increased an average of 2 percent per year.

The number of vehicles on Texas roads over that same 20-year span increased about 2.6 percent a year. Texans are spending more time in those vehicles, too, with annual miles driven increasing by 3.5 percent a year.

Meanwhile, Texas road construction just can't keep pace. Over the same 20-year period, the number of state-maintained miles increased only a half-percent a year.

While Texas leads the nation in job creation and recession recovery (six of the top 21 recession-proof metro areas are in Texas), we will not remain a viable option for new businesses without the critical infrastructure that makes Texas so attractive to businesses looking to invest or relocate.

In fact, the Texas Transportation Institute recently estimated that Texas would lose 288,000 jobs by 2035 if we keep transportation spending at currently planned levels.

Additionally, if we do nothing to address near and long-term demand for roads, you can expect to sit in your vehicle almost 140 hours a year by 2035, and we will pay more than $5,400 a year per household in costs caused by these delays.

From the Texas Capitol to the White House, much of the recent debate over our transportation needs centers on how necessary roads should be built and financed -- be it state or federal tax dollars, tolls or other public-private financing mechanisms.

The advantages of utilizing public-private partnerships to address our country's infrastructure needs are well documented.

For example, the Federal Highway Administration estimates that for every $1 billion invested in roadway construction, 28,000 direct and indirect jobs are created.

Here in Texas, unique public-private partnerships drive transportation projects like those mentioned above, creating Texas jobs for Texans -- a projected 175,000 direct and indirect employment opportunities over the next five years for these central and north Texas projects alone.

Additionally, road building, no matter how it's financed, can spur job creation and bring tax revenue to local and state governments along the way.

At a time when we must encourage private-sector investment for a sustained, meaningful recovery, it would be wise to ensure we do all we can to create a legislative, regulatory and business climate that encourages infrastructure development.

By alleviating roadway congestion and commuter headaches, we're putting people to work and infusing local tax coffers with much-needed revenue, which I think we can all agree is a good return on investment -- especially when most of the investment comes from private-sector partners.

An international economy like ours demands world-class transportation solutions. As lawmakers in Austin debate transportation spending, it is fair to ask them, if roads are not a priority for you, then how about job creation?

Bill Hammond is president and CEO of the Texas Association of Business. Online at www.txbiz.org or Twitter.com/txbiz.

Trans Mountain: Development there inevitable

El Paso Times Editorial Board
Posted: 03/05/2011 12:00:00 AM MST

Growth on the western side of trans Mountain Road is inevitable -- already bought and paid for by developers. Now is the time to ensure there's good infrasturcture to handle traffic on that important link between the growing Northeast and the growing Northwest.

It's time to accept the Texas Department of Transportation's plan to add lanes and directly link Trans Mountain Road to Interstate 10.

It appears there is a majority on City Council who think the TxDOT plan is the best way to ease what's now ever-increasing congestion. Coming downward from four lanes into just two lanes of traffic near I-10 has proved dangerous. Accident data bear that out.

Opponents cite that construction of on- and off-ramps and other infrastructure will interfere with what's now a good view of the Franklin Mountains. But we think that's negated to an extent in that the TxDOT plan calls for extensive, eye-pleasing, natural landscaping up and down the hill.

Note, too, that there was no outcry when the big-box warehouse-type buildings went up in the immediate area between I-10 and the view of the mountains.

But, more than anything, this area has long been planned out for residential and commercial. So deals were cut years ago regarding just how far building could go up the foothills. And we feel there is an adequate buffer zone already mandated. Also taken into consideration is that private land owners have donated strips of their land in order for TxDOT to not only build a four-lane highway, but to build gateways, including bike and hike paths, along each side of the roadway.

Trans Mountain Road has long been part of our desire for a nonstop route -- Loop 375 -- completely around our city. Much of Trans Mountain is already four lanes. This is just another segment of the overall plan.

And plans already in place -- major development plans -- will inevitably change the whole picture on the downward slope of that roadway.

This is an $80-plus-million project using state highway funds. Let's not allow this project to stall amid objections from a few.

We need the Trans Mountain project because it's good for all of El Paso.

Council may see freeway petitions soon

By David Crowder

On the same day that City Council heard about the draft environmental assessment for the proposed $80-million Transmountain freeway, environmentalist Jim Tolbert submitted two petitions calling for the preservation of 700 acres of city land on both sides of the road.

Tolbert needed the validated signatures of 1,547 registered voters to put his ordinance-style measures before the council. He said the petitions he submitted each has about 1,900 more signatures than needed.

The measures are virtually identical. One states that the city "shall preserve, in its natural state and in perpetuity, all of the acreage" in the survey that describes the 700-acre parcel controlled by the El Paso Public Service Board adjacent to the Franklin Mountains State Park boundary. The rectangular parcel is bisected by Transmountain Road.

The second petition contains the same language, but adds, "The city shall take all steps necessary to preserve this land and to prevent it from being developed with either private development or major public roadways."

Tolbert said the added language is intended to ensure that Paseo del Norte Drive, the extension of Artcraft Road, does not cross the land to its planned intersection with Transmountain.

The municipal clerk's office may be able to validate enough signatures this week to allow the introduction of the petitions as proposed ordinances to City Council.

Tolbert said he doesn't expect the council to approve either one. But their rejection would allow a second petition drive to put one of them on the ballot in November.

He said he and the petition supporters will decide which measure to circulate in the second petition drive.

Chuck Berry, the Texas Department of Transportation's El Paso district engineer, has said he's not sure whether setting aside the 700 acres known as the Trans Mountain scenic corridor would affect the $80-million project.

But, he said, the Federal Highway Administration would have to review the project again, if the city is forced to reroute Paseo del Norte from the easternmost intersection with Transmountain westward to the planned Plexxar intersection and overpass.

Last Tuesday, Berry told City Council that the Federal Highway Administration had cleared the draft environmental assessment for the Transmountain project for presentation to the public.

That draft assessment found the project would have no significant environmental impact, but construction cannot go forward until public comments have been heard and addressed.

Then, if the highway administration approves the final assessment, construction of the 300-foot wide, 3.6-mile-long freeway with four lanes, four overpasses, frontage roads and hike and bike trails could begin.

TxDOT will conduct the only public comment meeting at 6 p.m. March 22 at Canutillo High School. The public comment period starts at 7 p.m.

---------- POST SCRIPT: Had to take a short trip to Phoenix -- and found New Mexico's recent addition of a third lane to Interstate-10 from the Texas-El Paso state line to Las Cruces -- aided traffic flow in that area. In addition, the highway widening through Tucson aided traffic flow thought that city. Was able to zip through both cities at 65-MPH.

TXDoT to present Trans Mountain plan

by Chris Roberts \ El Paso Times
Posted: 03/01/2011 12:00:00 AM MST

State transportation officials are scheduled to present a plan for widening Trans Mountain Road during this morning's El Paso City Council meeting.

City staff also will explain a traffic impact analysis for the project at the meeting, which is scheduled to start at 8:30 a.m.

The environmental assessment used by the Texas Department of Transportation does not consider the benefits of alternative development styles such as the city's SmartCode, said Mathew McElroy, deputy director of the city's Planning and Economic Development Division.

SmartCode concentrates population in neighborhoods with mixed residential and business uses intended to minimize the need for driving. It also potentially leaves more room for open space.

Sprawl development is associated with traffic jams, pollution and safety hazards, McElroy said.

Based on the criteria used in the environmental assessment, the Department of Transportation "will never build anything but highways of this exact kind," McElroy said.

The type of design proposed, he said, also invites extra driving because residents must use their vehicles to reach businesses, schools and other destinations.

"The faster the roadway, the faster capacity is going to be eaten up," McElroy said. "There is no mention of that in the environmental assessment."

Some community members have expressed concern that traditional sprawl development along the road will block a unique view of the Franklin Mountains. They called for land bordering the road -- about 800 acres, which is part of the 1,800-acre Northwest El Paso master plan -- be designated as natural open space. The land is owned by the city and managed by the Public Service Board.

In January, City Council rejected open-space designation for that land.

Open-space advocates are expected to present two petitions to the council this morning that would force a public vote on the issue.

Zoning regulations for private land bordering Trans Mountain near Interstate 10 go into effect today. Based on the traditional development style, the zoning is mostly commercial and could be the site of big-box stores, McElroy said. Those regulations have been in place for about 10 years and were part of an agreement with property owners who donated land to the project, he said. City Council members recently amended the regulations, but only to make setbacks, signage and other elements more consistent, he said.

"It's frustrating to me because I had argued from the beginning we shouldn't do anything until we had the information from the environmental assessment," city Rep. Susie Byrd said.

Chris Roberts may be reached at chrisr@elpasotimes.com; 546-6136.

Myrna Soto

From: Ray Dovalina [Ray.Dovalina@txdot.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, March 09, 2011 4:31 PM
To: Mimi Horn
Subject: Fwd: PSB approves plan to widen part of Trans Mountain into four-lane freeway

Mimi, I'm assuming that we need this in the public record for the project. Don't know what we would do. Can you check on this. Thanks Ray D

>>> Blanca Del Valle 3/9/2011 3:04 PM >>>

PSB approves plan to widen part of Trans Mountain into four-lane freeway

By Chris Roberts / EL PASO TIMES
Posted: 03/09/2011 01:05:40 PM MST

The Public Service Board today approved a state transportation department plan to widen the western reach of Trans Mountain Road into a four-lane freeway with ramps connecting it to Interstate 10.

Before the 5-2 vote supporting the plan, however, board members agreed to ask the Texas Department of Transportation to consider a safer method of entry into the Tom Mays Unit of the Franklin Mountains State Park. The current plan has a simple turnout that would require eastbound drivers to cut across oncoming traffic.

The resolution also supported the use of SmartCode, a community planning method designed to reduce the need for driving, in development planned for about 1,800 acres surrounding Trans Mountain in that area.

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$80 million project is poised to begin: First-ever toll road in El Paso to help combat congestion

by Aileen B. Flores \ El Paso Times
Posted: 03/22/2011 12:00:00 AM MDT

Cars and trucks drive on the Cesar Chavez Border Highway near... (Victor Calzada / El Paso Times)

The proposed toll lanes of the César Chávez Border Highway are a hot topic for those who live in the Lower Valley.

Some residents think the project represents a waste of time and money, while others believe the toll lanes can generate money to maintain the road.

Members of the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization voted unanimously in 2006 to adopt a mobility plan for the region that included the border highway toll project.

Five years later, the $80 million road project is about to start.

The project will include reconstruction of the four existing lanes of the César Chávez Border Highway and construction of two inside express toll lanes from Zaragoza Road to U.S. Highway 54. The toll road will be the first ever built in El Paso.

Ana Dueñez, president of the El Paso Lower Valley Association, said the group is working to stop creation of the express lanes.

She said the road is mainly used by Lower Valley residents. She said the Lower Valley is a poor area and people would rather use alternative routes than pay tolls.

"It is going to be a waste of money because people won't use it," Dueñez said.

According to the Texas Department of Transportation, the toll lanes are expected to be completed in 2013 and will serve as an alternative for East Side commuters who now use the congested Interstate 10 to get to and from Downtown.

Robert "Willie" Mays, member of the Thomas Manor Neighborhood Association, said the toll lanes "will not be to anybody's advantage" because people will keep using the freeway.

According to transportation officials, the freeway sees up to 200,000 vehicles a day. That number is expected to grow with an influx of soldiers and other residents into El Paso.

Robert Cloud, president of the Yucca Park Neighborhood Association that's also in the Lower Valley, said toll lanes would create funding to maintain the road. The problem, he said, is that "most people in El Paso can't afford it."

Texas highways are usually funded with gas taxes. But according to the Texas Department of Transportation, state and federal gas taxes are no longer enough to keep up with the cost of building new roads and maintaining the existing ones.

The transportation department said toll roads provide the money to build roads and relieve traffic congestion faster instead of waiting for funds to be available.

Public Hearing Will Be Held For Transmountain Road Project

Public Hearing For Transmountain Freeway Development

Posted: 3:05 am MDT March 22, 2011Updated: 6:53 am MDT March 22, 2011

EL PASO, Texas -- The options for Transmountain Road are build a freeway or a boulevard. TxDOT said a freeway is needed. However, some city leaders said keep the beautification and only make a boulevard or arterial road. The public is chiming in and they too are split, but after a presentation from TxDOT Tuesday residents will have a clearer picture of the proposed plan. "I've been traveling this road a lot of years, going up and down," said Tommy Garcia who grew up in Canutillo.

As El Paso continues to grow, changes are in the works. As KFOX 14 has reported, TxDOT officials said 17,000 trips are made everyday on Transmountain Road. By 2035, TxDOT predicts more than 70,000 trips will be made on that road. That number is still being debated, but TxDOT still has a clear picture of what they want seen built, a freeway, and some that travel the road agree.

"A few more lanes, so traffic can flow a little bit smoother. It won't be so crowded," said Gary Garcia, of west El Paso.

Not everyone is seeing that same demand.

"I've never seen any problems. I think it's flowing real good as of right now," said Tommy Garcia.
With less demand a boulevard or arterial road would suit the travel and road. That is how some city leaders see it. Some say a boulevard would open up a different kind of town feeling with store fronts that would accommodate the pedestrians and bicyclist on the road. They also said it would do less damage to the mountains.

"It's a nice scenic drive and I think it should stay the way it is," said Tommy Garcia.

People like Gary and Tommy Garcia will get to have their say in a public meeting Tuesday night. TxDot officials will be explaining the plan at Canutillo High School in the cafeteria starting at 6 p.m. Some residents say are already sold without seeing the presentation.

"A freeway would be fine. I think it'll be better," said Gary Garcia

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Myrna Soto

From: Mimi Horn [Mimi.Horn@txdot.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, March 29, 2011 11:34 AM
To: lp375@entechhou.com
Cc: jgardner@blantonassociates.com; kjohnson@blantonassociates.com; Blanca Serrano-Rivera
Subject: Fwd: News
Attachments: News (142 KB)

FYI

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Wishing on a four-leaf clover to help beautify Texas roads? Check out TxDOT's Adopt-a-Highway Program at www.dot.state.tx.us/trv/aah/ and help make that wish come true.

Media Coverage

Myrna Soto

From: Blanca Del Valle [Blanca.DelValle@txdot.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, March 23, 2011 9:42 AM
To: Antonio Santana; Armida Sagaribay; Art Estrada; Barty Diaz; Becky Najera; Blanca Del Valle; Blanca Serrano-Rivera; Christine Barraza; Chuck Berry; Cindy Lucero; David Head; Edgar Fino; Eduardo Calvo; Efrain Esparza; Gerardo Leos; Godwin Ubanyionwu; Gus Sanchez; Horacio Fernandez; Ismael Hernandez; Javier Cordova; Jesus Heredia; Jim Dobbins; Jonathan Concha; Jorge Oregel; Laura Robles; Leo Betancourt; Liz Reyes; Margie Cedillo; Maricruz Saenz; Marty Boyd; Mary Telles-Goins; Mimi Horn; Monica O'Kane; Nancy Herrera; Oscar Pilhoefer; Raul Ortega; Ray Dovalina; Rebecca Pinto; Ricardo Romero; Rudy Romo; Sandra De La Canal; Sandra Sierra; Sergio Garcia; Tim Twomey; Tony Cereceres; Tony Uribe; Veronica Barela; Veronica Ramos
Cc: jgardner@blantonassociates.com; kjohnson@blantonassociates.com; tgelacio@entechhou.com
Subject: Media Coverage
Attachments: 300 divided.Times.March23.doc; Residents Voice Opinions.ABC7.March23.doc; Rechazan Proyecto.Diario.23marzo11.tif; Audiencia.Telemundo.23marzo.doc

Here is what was reported on last night's meeting.

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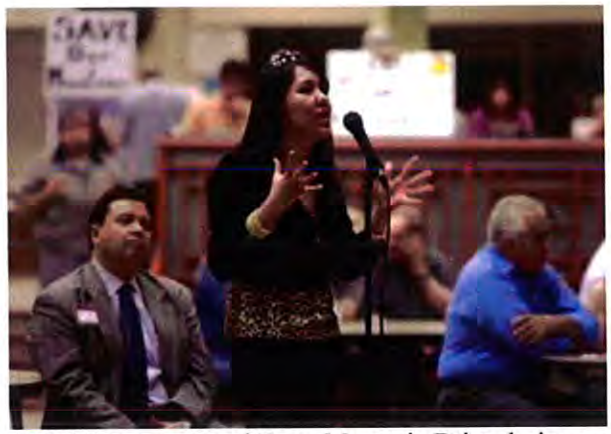
Follow us on Twitter: www.twitter.com/TxDOTELP

300 divided over Trans Mountain freeway

By Chris Roberts / EL PASO TIMES
Posted: 03/23/2011 12:15:29 AM MDT



El Pasoan Stephanie Sotelo pleaded with TxDOT to not expand Trans Mountain Drive during a public meeting Tuesday night at Canutillo High School. (Mark Lambie/El Paso Times)

Nearly everyone in a group of about 300 people who gathered Tuesday evening to comment on a state plan for the western reach of Trans Mountain Road agreed the road needs to be widened.

After that, opinions ranged from leaving the entire area as open space to building a limited-access freeway. The Texas Department of Transportation, which sponsored the meeting at Canutillo High School, has recommended the freeway concept.

Opponents of the freeway proposal applauded city Rep. Susie Byrd, who has advocated for a boulevard-style project meant to avoid the sprawl development found on El Paso's East Side with its cul-de-sacs and strip malls.

Proponents, however, said that growth inevitably will happen in the area and that preparing for high traffic flow now is the responsible approach to a regional problem.

Trans Mountain is supposed to provide a loop around the city, relieving congestion on Interstate 10 and other major city highways.

"This project is long overdue," said Richard Armijo, an El Paso native who said he drives Trans Mountain every day. "We'd all like to keep a small-town image, but we're going to grow, too."

Jennifer Barr, who works as a landscaper in El Paso, was filling out a comment form before the public comment period.

"I think (the state Transportation Department's) solution for everything that doesn't work is to build it bigger," Barr said. "If (Trans Mountain) is developed, it should be minimal impact."

Some opponents suggested that hen developers and other businessmen saw there was profit to be made, the project suddenly ballooned from a relatively simple $17 million widening to a full-blown $85 million freeway.

Others complained that Transportation Department officials have threatened to withdraw the state construction money if there are delays in the project. Richard Dayoub, El Paso Chamber of Commerce president, said it is a matter of billions in unmet needs statewide, which creates competition for funding.

"I think this thing needs to happen and we need to stop dragging our feet," Dayoub said.

The widening of Trans Mountain Road's western reach has been at the center of a debate on what future development in El Paso should look like.

The recently completed Transportation Department environmental analysis recommended a limited-access freeway with sweeping ramps partly connecting it to Interstate 10. The ramps would only handle traffic heading into and out of El Paso.

Open-space advocates, including El Paso Open Space Advisory Board Chairman Charlie Wakeem, proposed keeping nearly 800 acres running along both sides of Trans Mountain as open space. They wanted to preserve wildlife corridors, arroyos and expansive views of the Franklin Mountains' peaks.

El Paso City Council members rejected that option, but they asked city staff to use something called SmartCode to guide development in an 1,800-acre parcel that included the proposed open space. The land is owned by the city and managed by the Public Service Board, which will sell it to developers.

SmartCode includes a higher-density development style mixing commercial and residential uses as a way to reduce driving and preserve open space. The Public Service Board voted earlier this month to support both the state highway department's freeway plan and the city's use of SmartCode.

Last week, Byrd asked the state highway department to explain why it used an old traffic-volume analysis in its study endorsing the freeway concept. A new traffic analysis, which a state official said was not available for the department's study, shows that Trans Mountain in coming decades would carry about half the traffic estimated in the old analysis.

Although the main reasons for recommending the freeway concept were traffic volumes, state highway officials said limited access and overpasses also minimize points where traffic and pedestrians cross. Those points, they said, are where accidents happen.

Nonetheless, the department agreed to do a quick analysis of other concepts for widening the road using the new numbers. Tuesday night, Byrd again asked for that analysis.

TxDOT Trans Mountain proposal

Do you agree with TxDOT s freeway proposal for Trans Mountain Road?

- Yes, traffic needs to be eased in the area.
- Yes, it will help El Paso progress.
- No, the traffic will be less then they claim.
- No, we need to save open space.

Residents Voice Opinions About Transmountain Project Proposal

By ABC-7 Reporter Veronique Masterson
POSTED: 11:50 pm MDT March 22, 2011
UPDATED: 1:45 am MDT March 23, 2011

ENLARGE

EL PASO, Texas -- It's rush hour in the Sun City. Even after a draining day at work, many traveling through west El Paso can't ignore the warm purple and orange tones that seem to set the Franklin mountains ablaze, transforming the scenery as the sun goes down.

A different kind of transformation was discussed Tuesday night at Canutillo High School. A project to change Transmountain Road and they wanted the public's opinion about the proposal.

The Texas Department of Transportation is proposing to add an elevated freeway that would connect Interstate 10 to the entrance of Tom Mays Park. The proposal also suggests frontage roads along with bicycle and hiking trails. TxDot officials said the $79 million project is necessary to accommodate population growth and alleviate traffic congestion in that area.

At the public hearing, dozens showed up to see just what engineers had in mind. A long map covered several tables and videos showed renderings of how the project would look.

Amid the discussions of concern and intrigue, Scott Cutler examined the proposal. "It's how it's proposed to be widened that I have problems with," he said.

Many thought the same. Several people held signs with 'Save Our Mountain' written on them, opposed to changing the scenery. Others explained more lanes were necessary, but said the solution TxDot was proposing wasn't what they had in mind.

"I think it would be far better and more prudent to take this money and go over and use it for the Anthony Gap," said Lynn Fitzgerald. "The Anthony Gap is a logical way to go. We need an alternative. We need to get traffic, especially trucks, out of the city," he continued.

Concern also surrounded a left-hand turn from west Transmountain Road into Tom Mays Park. "People making a left turn to go into the park are going to have to make a left turn across two lanes of oncoming traffic, which sounds pretty dangerous to me," Cutler said.

But transportation officials assured the turn would be safe. "The new design would accommodate a lot more room, a lot more sight distance to be able to make those movements. It is a limited amount of movements on the park road, but still, we need to provide for it," said district engineer Chuck Berry.

During public commentary, one man suggested an overpass in that area so drivers would have a safe way to get to the state park. One after another, about 30 people gave TxDot officials feedback.

As many expressed their concern with the proposed project, others said construction couldn't start soon enough. "I'm definitely in favor of the proposal improvements to Loop 375," said Ester Harrison, who suggested this project should have been proposed 10 years ago. She said she often uses Transmountain Road to get from northeast El Paso to the west side and back.

"In the long run, it'll greatly benefit everyone. Even the people who are trying to get to the northeast, to hike, they're going to benefit as well from the improvements," Harrison said. "I don't think TxDot is trying to build a huge spaghetti bowl in the middle of the Franklin Mountains State Park."

Transportation officials said they would evaluate the public feedback and decide what the next step would be for the project. TxDot has previously stated if a decision isn't made soon, said project funding could be lost.

Toll roads: As money dries up, proposal looks better

El Paso Times Editorial Board
Posted: 03/27/2011 12:00:00 AM MDT

El Pasoans want roads. Roads cost money, both for building and upkeep. But there isn't much money available for roads. In the midst of money woes, the option of toll roads is getting more attention. Gas taxes, the usual funding method for Texas roads, are drying up.

So toll roads are getting a fresh look, and we think that's the right thing to do.

Toll roads are nothing new in Texas. A Texas Department of Transportation website shows that currently, there are 14 toll-road systems throughout Texas, with Dallas having six and Austin four. There are also three |managed-lane systems, one each in Dallas, Fort Worth and Houston.

According to TxDOT, "... managed lanes within freeway corridors keep traffic moving at a faster, more reliable speed by adjusting toll rates up or down on the managed lanes as the number of vehicles increase or decrease."

That's what El Paso is going to have within the existing four lanes of the part of Loop 375 known as the César Chavez Border Highway -- approximately nine miles. Existing lanes will be refurbished and the new tolled lanes would be built in the center of the corridor.

This project goes to bid early in April.

The toll road is seen as an alternative for motorists trying to avoid congestion on Inter state 10 or the César Chavez Highway. While that seems a noble goal, it's not without controversy.

Toll fees have raised millions of dollars in other parts of Texas, and there's no doubt we could use a new revenue stream in El Paso.

But that revenue stream would come from the pockets of El Pasoans.

Robert Cloud, president of the Yucca Park Neighborhood Association, said the problem is "... most people in El Paso can't afford it."

Others maintain that people will just ignore the toll road and just keep using the freeway.

The objections are noted and could well impact the toll road.

But the bottom line is the bottom line. A toll road seems one of the few remaining options for raising money to be used for roads and maintenance.

And people will have a choice.

As Transportation Commissioner Ted Houghton said recently, "That will be your first managed-lane toll road. If you don't like the Interstate 10 highway, then you have the alternate route, and that alternate route is the toll road, if you want to take it."

Weighing the options

PRO

- Existing roads would not be tolled.
- Tolls raise money that might not otherwise be available.
- Drivers have a choice. If they don't want to pay tolls, they can use other roads.
- It's a user fee -- people who use the toll roads are the ones who pay for them.
- Toll roads can help reduce air pollution by minimizing slow-moving or idling vehicles.
- Raising gasoline taxes at this time would be political suicide, so tolls are a viable option.

CON

- Tolls tend to stick around or even increase after the tolled road is paid for.
- Tolls hit hard at those who can least afford to pay them.
- Toll amounts would be controlled by a tolling authority, and the public would have little or no input in toll increases.
- A toll is just another tax, and one thing we don't need is more taxes.
- There must be strict accountability to ensure no favoritism in awarding contracts and misuse of political, business or financial influence in toll-road systems.

Historic highway designation would bring back Alameda's glory days

by Aileen B. Flores \ El Paso Times
Posted: 03/29/2011 12:00:00 AM MDT

State Representative Naomi Gonzalez is proposing to designate... (Mark Lambie / El Paso Times)

Longtime Lower Valley residents have seen how the image of Alameda Avenue has faded over a number of years.

Deteriorated shopping centers and corner stores, used-car lots, auto repair shops, trailer homes and a couple of public schools can be seen along the road.

For many residents, especially those who have lived in this area for decades, Alameda went from being one of El Paso's most beautiful thoroughfares to an unsightly one.

Lower Valley resident Raul "Chico" Dominguez was raised here and remembers when trees and grass used to adorn Alameda. He said it was pleasant to just pass by the road.

"I would like to see businesses that we could walk to (in the neighborhood)," Dominguez said. "Alameda is not made for car dealers. It looks congested."

State Rep. Naomi Gonzalez recently introduced a bill to designate State Highway 20 as a historical highway.

Gonzalez said this will be "a small step into the right direction" to change the feel of Alameda, part of State Highway 20.

The highway runs from Anthony, N.M., to McNary, a small town about 20 miles west Sierra Blanca. It is called Alameda Avenue from Central El Paso all the way through McNary.

Gonzalez is concentrating her efforts on the Central and Lower Valley sections of Alameda.

Even though the historic designation would not impact zoning of existing businesses along the road, Gonzalez said it will bring community pride and help potential beautification efforts along Alameda.

Gonzalez said she hopes that, one day, Alameda Avenue could be known for its history.

According to the Texas Department of Transportation, about a dozen buildings are within the 9000 block of Alameda, known as the Ysleta Commercial Block, that carry historical significance. Most of them were built between 1925 and 1940.

If the bill is approved, State Highway 20 may be the first historic road in the El Paso area, according to Jim Dobbins of TxDOT's Advance Transportation Planning Department.

Dobbins said there are roads within historical districts, but he is unaware of any road with such designation in El Paso.

City Reps. Emma Acosta and Steve Ortega, whose districts include parts of Alameda Avenue, support Gonzalez's idea.

Ortega said he's glad that Gonzalez is moving toward rehabilitating Alameda.

"At this point, what is missing from the equation is a good chunk of financing for the beautification," he said.

For the past three years, the city government has discussed designing plans toward Alameda's economic development.

Ortega said the bus transit along Alameda will contribute to its rehabilitation but there is not a focused theme or project right now.

The historic designation would allow TxDOT to apply for federal funds, Gonzalez said.

"Alameda is not what it used to be. I want to bring Alameda back to where it once was," Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez said change is not going to happen from one day to another, but the historic designation will be a good start. She's asking the community to get involved in making Alameda a historic road.

The bill was presented to the Transportation Committee last week and it may take action on it sometime this week, Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez is asking neighborhood associations and community members to send letters of support to the capitol office.

Information: Rep. Gonzalez's office phone number, 512-463-0622.

Alameda Avenue

Should Alameda Avenue be declared a historical highway?

- Yes.
- No.
- Unsure.

When traffic is good for business
Construction to start at crowded intersection

By Robert Gray

A project in Far East El Paso, designed to alleviate gridlock at one of the city's most accident-prone intersections, has provoked the ire of local businesses. It will go out to bid in the next few weeks.

"We have run out of options. We have been told as late as this week the flyover is being built," Adam Frank, president of River Oaks Properties, wrote in an e-mail interview last week. The El Paso company, founded in 1968, owns three major shopping centers that will be affected by the project.

"There will be major business interruptions during and after the construction," Frank says.

According to TxDOT, work will begin at the end of this year and be completed in 2013. During that time, lanes will stay open most of the time and detours will happen only at night.

Ray Dovalina, TxDOT's deputy district engineer for El Paso, calls it a compromise for business owners.

"You want to have some level of traffic to get customers. We are just trying to alleviate some of the congestion in that area," Dovalina says.

The $32.5-million project will construct two flyovers bisecting El Mercado Plaza, which is anchored by JCPenney, and the center anchored by Home Depot, both owned by River Oaks Properties. Next door, River Oaks also owns El Paseo Marketplace, where Super Target is the anchor tenant.

One flyover will whisk drivers heading north on Loop 375 to Zaragosa, in a northeast direction. The other flyover will take drivers heading southwest on Zaragosa to Loop 375, in a southward direction toward I-10. The flyovers meet Zaragosa at Sun Fire Boulevard.

Turn lanes will also be added to provide more room for cars turning from Montwood Drive onto the Loop 375 frontage roads.

Dangerous intersections

The flyovers will allow drivers heading north on the Loop to avoid one of the most congested intersections in El Paso – Montwood and Loop 375 – identified by the El Paso Police Department as one of the likeliest places to get in an accident last year and again in January, according to the department's latest numbers.

TxDOT has accommodated some of River Oaks' requests, Dovalina says. Like adding a way for drivers heading southwest on Zaragosa to turn left into the Home Depot parking lot.

"TxDOT has made revisions to their original plan in order to accommodate our developments to some degree. They are helping on some and making it worse for others," Frank says.

River Oaks points out that the flyovers only impact traffic flowing one way on the Loop and will do little for drivers coming from the fast-growing area north of the intersection.

Traffic going both ways on the Loop's frontage roads is projected by TxDOT to surge in the next 20 years. The average daily traffic is projected to increase from 12,300 cars in 2015, to 20,800 cars in 2035 south of Montwood, and from 16,600 cars to 28,100 cars north of Zaragosa, according to the impact study.

Frank with River Oaks Properties says the flyovers are not the right solution. That has been the argument the company and its engineers have made to TxDOT for the past few years.

"The flyover is not necessary and TxDOT should focus on other transportation issues throughout the city," Frank says.

Like the often gridlocked intersection of Montwood and Zaragosa just down the street.

Once they survive the intersection at Montwood and Loop 375, a little further west, drivers are faced with even more gridlock at the intersection of Montwood and Zaragosa. It takes fourth place in the police department's most dangerous intersection list for 2010.

Eminent domain?
TxDOT says the flyovers will do nothing to alleviate congestion there, but its engineers are talking with the City about making modest changes that could improve things.

That would be a separate project and, if it gets any traction, could include anything from restriping, tweaking the traffic signals or possibly adding a third lane, Dovalina with TxDOT says.

TxDOT engineers say they already own most of the property needed for the Zaragosa flyover project and don't anticipate too many problems acquiring the four acres of additional right-of-way needed.

That's despite the fact that most, if not all, of the property TxDOT needs to acquire is now owned by River Oaks Properties.

"We are going to pay fair market value and will follow the letter of the law," Dovalina says.

The use of eminent domain would be a last resort, as it is with any project, he says.

The project is part of the slew of road upgrades and beautification projects across El Paso called for in the $1-billion Comprehensive Mobility Plan adopted in 2008, adding insult to injury, Frank says.

"These projects are being constructed as part of the (Transportation Reinvestment Zone Bond) that was passed to fund transportation projects," he says. "What this means is a project that River Oaks is opposed to is being funded with the increase in taxes paid by us."

City Council backs Trans Mtn. plan by 7-1 vote

By Diana Washington Valdez \ El Paso Times
Posted: 03/30/2011 12:00:00 AM MDT

Trans Mountain highway vote

The El Paso City Council voted 7-1 on Tuesday in favor of the Texas Department of Transportation's proposed Trans Mountain West project.

City Rep. Susie Byrd, who had questions about traffic volume projections and pedestrian safety, cast the vote against it.

"I'm really brokenhearted," Byrd said after the meeting. "It's unfortunate for our city. From the very beginning, I believe that TxDOT decided to build this freeway a certain way and this is how they wanted to do it.

"I believe TxDOT used misleading and outdated (traffic projection) numbers as the basis for the West Loop 375 expansion. Then it became 'We either build this road or none at all.' "

During the City Council session, Chuck Berry, district engineer of TxDOT in El Paso, and Roy Gilyard, executive director of the Metropolitan Planning Organization, discussed why their traffic volume projections for Trans Mountain West differed.

Gilyard said the MPO's two different sets of figures and methodologies reflect regional planning approaches and a project-specific approach. The city's transportation department met recently with the MPO to go over the differences.

Byrd and City Rep. Beto O'Rourke said they were concerned that the TxDOT project lacks a safe access to the Tom Mays Section of Franklin Mountains State Park. Once the expansion is finished, motorists are likely to travel on Trans Mountain at high speeds, making it difficult for eastbound travelers to turn into the park entrance.

Berry said that the TxDOT staff is looking at how to fix the park entrance problem later, and that it could be done after the freeway expansion is finished.

Under TxDOT's current plans, the road will be four lanes along its entire length, although only the far western reaches will resemble a typical freeway. One of the other questions

raised at the City Council meeting was where to locate the Paseo del Norte extension that would intersect the Trans Mountain freeway.

In a March 25 letter to the City Council, El Paso County Judge Veronica Escobar said she supported the Trans Mountain West improvement but was concerned about the current proposal's approach to the expansion.

"What concerns me, however, is the Paseo del Norte overpass and its relationship to future development in the open space adjacent to it," Escobar said in the letter. "The Paseo del Norte overpass will help provide connectivity to and traffic distribution for future development, especially in the acreage now owned by the people of El Paso (via the Public Service Board) but slated for development in the PSB's Northwest Master Plan."

Escobar said she agreed with a member of the public's view that if the area within the Northwest Master Plan were to remain undeveloped -- preserved as open space -- "there probably would be no need for the final overpass."

Environmentalists criticized the potential loss of the Franklin Mountains' scenic views and the project's impacts on wildlife.

Others urged city officials to consider the traffic congestion created by El Paso's rapid growth and the possibility of losing $85 million in state money for the freeway project.

Charlie Wakeem, chairman of the El Paso Open Space Advisory Board, was among the residents who waited more than eight hours to address the council. He said the open space board opposes the project as TxDOT has proposed it.

The Open Space Advisory Board favors preserving the Franklin Mountains' scenic views and is opposed to overpasses and other structures that obstruct those views.

Richard Dayoub, CEO of the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce, urged the council members to support the project.

Bill Addington, who represents the El Paso Regional Sierra Club and opposes the project, said the freeway "started as a $17 million project less than two years ago, and it ballooned at the request of developers to an $85 million project."

Tom Thomas, the secretary of the Army's civilian aide for West Texas, said the recently completed Spur 601 project in Northeast El Paso and other efforts by the community to accommodate growth at Fort Bliss, have not gone unnoticed.

"The Pentagon uses El Paso as a model," said Thomas, who also recommended that the city approve the Trans Mountain Road expansion.

TxDOT officials said proposed improvements will include:

• Expanding the current two-lane undivided roadway to a four-lane divided highway with two-lane frontage roads.
• Grade separated intersections at Northwestern Drive, Resler Drive, Plexxar Drive and Paseo del Norte Drive.
• Two direct connectors from Trans Mountain-Loop 375 west to Interstate 10 east and from I-10 west to Loop 375 east.

Berry said Friday is the deadline for the public to submit comments for the project. He also said the city's resolution will carry considerable weight among the rest of the public comments TxDOT receives.

Public comment
Comment on the Trans Mountain West (Loop 375) expansion:

• Written comments may be sent to Texas Department of Transportation-Loop 375 (Trans Mountain West) Public Hearing, Attn: Mr. Antonio Uribe Jr., P.E., District Design, 13301 Gateway West, El Paso, TX 79928.

• By email to ELP_Loop375West@txdot.gov.

• Written comments may be hand-delivered or postmarked on or before April 1 to be included as part of the official public record.

El Diario De El Paso Articles & Affidavits

AVISO DE AUDIENCIA PÚBLICA
Proyecto de Loop 375 (Camino Transmountain)
I-10 al este de la Entrada del Parque Estatal Franklin Mountains
En el Condado de El Paso, El Paso, Texas

El Departamento de Transporte de Texas (TxDOT, por sus siglas en inglés) llevará a cabo una audiencia pública el martes 22 de marzo de 2011 para presentar el proyecto de mejoras al Loop 375 (Woodrow Bean/Transmountain Rd.), desde la Interestatal 10 (I-10) hasta el este de la entrada del Parque Estatal Franklin Mountains, en la zona noroeste de la ciudad de El Paso, en el condado de El Paso, Texas. La Audiencia Pública se llevará a cabo en la cafetería de la Preparatoria Canutillo (Canutillo High School). La Preparatoria Canutillo está ubicada en 6675 South Desert Blvd., El Paso, TX, 79912. La audiencia consistirá de una sesión abierta seguida por una presentación formal. La sesión abierta iniciará a las 6:00 p.m. para ofrecer la oportunidad de hacer preguntas y revisar expuestas del proyecto. La presentación formal iniciará a las 7:00 p.m., seguida por una sesión de comentarios del público. Personal de TxDOT y su equipo de consultores estarán disponibles en la audiencia pública para contestar preguntas relacionadas al proyecto.

El propósito de la audiencia es de presentar información tocante a las mejoras propuestas a Loop 375, desde I-10 hasta el este de la entrada del Parque Estatal Franklin Mountains, que incluye aproximadamente 3.6 millas de carriles principales y aproximadamente 2.10 millas de vías laterales de acceso (desde la Calle Northwestern hasta la Calle Paseo Del Norte). Las mejoras propuestas consisten de la ampliación del camino actual de dos carriles no dividido a un camino dividido de cuatro carriles con vías laterales de doble carril. Las mejoras también incluyen pasos a desnivel en las intersecciones de Northwestern Drive, Resler Drive, Plexxar Drive, y Paseo del Norte Drive así como dos conexiones superiores directas que conectarán los carriles de Loop 375 en sentido poniente con I-10 en sentido oriente, y los carriles de I-10 en sentido poniente con los de Loop 375 en sentido oriente. Como parte de este proyecto se construirán vías compartidas de ciclistas y peatones contiguas a la carretera, cerca del derecho de vía de Loop 375, en el tramo entre Northwestern Drive y Paseo del Norte Drive. Acceso a los carriles principales de Loop 375, así como a las vías laterales será por medio de rampas de entrada y salida en varios puntos entre las intersecciones. La huella del derecho de vía y el diseño geométrico provee para expansión a seis carriles principales desde Northwestern Drive hasta el este de Paseo Del Norte Drive. Debido a la ampliación y pasos a desnivel propuestos, aproximadamente 46.5 acres de derechos de vía serán adquiridos. El derecho de vía existente es de aproximadamente 200-pies y la anchura usual propuesta es de aproximadamente 370-pies. Aunque se requieren derechos de vía adicionales, no se desplazará a ningún negocio o residencia. Información referente a los servicios y beneficios a los que tienen derecho los propietarios afectados e información sobre el calendario tentativo para la adquisición de derechos de vía se puede obtener en las oficinas de Distrito de TxDOT. Un representante del Distrito estará disponible en la audiencia pública para asistir a los propietarios afectados con preguntas relacionadas a la adquisición de derechos de vía.

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Acompáñenos a revisar el diseño, construcción, y aspectos ambientales del proyecto. El documento ambiental, además de mapas ilustrando la ubicación y diseño del proyecto, estarán a la disposición del público durante la audiencia pública. La información relacionada al proyecto, al igual que el calendario tentativo de construcción, se encuentran disponibles para consulta y copiado, en las oficinas del distrito de TxDOT en El Paso, ubicadas en 13301 Gateway Boulevard West. Esta información también está disponible en la oficina de Jane Shang, Gerente Adjunta de Servicios de Movilidad de la Ciudad de El Paso, ubicada en 2 Civic Center Plaza, El Paso, Texas 79901. El documento ambiental también está disponible en www.txdot.gov haga click en Hearings & Meetings o www.elpasotexas.gov

A las personas con necesidades especiales interesadas en asistir, se les pide que contacten a Blanca M. Del Valle, Directora de Relaciones Públicas, al teléfono (915) 790-4200 al menos dos días hábiles antes de la audiencia. La audiencia pública será conducida en inglés y se proveerá traducción simultánea en español. Solicitudes para intérpretes de lenguaje o necesidades especiales de comunicación también deben ser hechas al menos dos días antes de la audiencia pública. TxDOT hará todo esfuerzo razonable para cubrir estas necesidades.

Comentarios verbales o escritos relativos al proyecto pueden ser presentados durante la audiencia. Posterior a la audiencia comentarios por escrito pueden ser enviados por correo a: Texas Department of Transportation–Loop 375 (Transmountain Road), Audiencia Pública, Attn: Sr. Antonio Uribe, Jr., P.E., District Design, 13301 Gateway Blvd. West, El Paso, Texas 79928, correo electrónico: ELP_Loop375West@txdot.gov. Comentarios por escrito deberán ser recibidos ó enviarse por correo con fecha de envió marcada con sello postal a más tardar el viernes 1ro de abril de 2011 para ser incluidos en el registro público.

ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGE AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION

STATE OF TEXAS § El Paso
COUNTY OF _____ §

Before me, the undersigned authority, on this day personally appeared Gerardo Lopez, who being by me duly sworn,
(name of newspaper representative)

deposes and says that (s)he is the marketing representative
(title of newspaper representative)

of El Diario; that said newspaper is generally

circulated in El Paso
(in the same County as the proposed facility)

that the attached notice was published in said newspaper on the following date (s):
Sunday February 20th 2011.

_____
(Newspaper Representative's Signature)

Subscribe and sworn to before me this the 9th day of March, 2011.

to certify witness my hand and seal of office.

(Seal)

NOTARY PUBLIC STATE OF TEXAS
Silvia Diaz
My Commission Expires
12/13/2014

_____
Notary Public in and for the State of Texas

Silvia Diaz
_____
Print of Type Name of Notary Public

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I-10 al este de la Entrada del Parque Estatal Franklin Mountains
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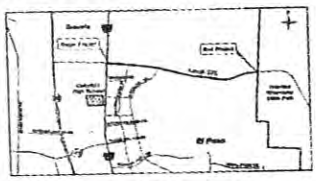

COMENTARIO PÚBLICO DE SE
EL 23 DE FEBRER

Bajo los auspicios del Departamento de Estado de Servic
Dept. of State Health Services), el Centro Regional de M
la Agencia Administrativa de Servicios de VIH (AA)
servicio del VIH: Ryan White Parte B, Servicios del Estac
para las personas con SIDA (HOPWA por sus siglas en ir
la Agencia Administrativa es administrar los fondos y la

ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGE AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION FOR AIR PERMITTING

STATE OF TEXAS §

COUNTY OF El Paso §

Before me, the undersigned authority, on this day personally appeared

Gerardo Lopez, who being by me duly sworn, deposes
(name of newspaper or publication representative)

and says that (s)he is the Marketing Manager
(title of newspaper or publication representative)

of the El Diario; that said newspaper or publication is
(name of newspaper or publication)

generally circulated in El Paso, Texas;
(municipality in which the site or proposed site is located)

that the attached notice was published in said newspaper or publication on the following date(s):

Saturday March 12th 2011.

(newspaper or publication representative's signature)

Subscribed and sworn to before me this the 16 day of March, 2011,

to certify which witness my hand and seal of office.

Notary Public in and for the State of Texas

(Seal)

NOTARY PUBLIC STATE OF TEXAS
Silvia Diaz
My Commission Expires
12/13/2014

Silvia Diaz
Print or Type Name of Notary Public

12/13/2014
My Commission Expires

incendio a finales del año pasado.

El acusado también robó dinero a un orfanato en ciudad de La Vega, en República Dominicana, haciéndose pasar por el embajador Roberto Saladín, de Nueva York.

El fraude, con el que Calcano llegó a ganar más de 15.000 dólares, incluyó solicitudes para ayudar a víctimas del terremoto que asoló Chile el año pasado y también para ayudar a gente de Honduras, aunque las autoridades no ofrecieron más detalles sobre esas dos supuestas estafas.

Una de las víctimas de Calcano fue el senador estatal Adriano Espaillat, quien sospechó que el dominicano era una estafador y avisó a las autoridades.

"Al acusado se le acusa de tomar ventaja deliberada de víctimas que tenían el deseo genuino o la buena voluntad de ayudar a personas en necesidad", dijo el fiscal del condado de Manhattan, Cyrus Vance, durante una rueda de prensa en español y en inglés.

Agencia Reforma

Washington— La Oficina de Aduanas y Control Migratorio de Estados Unidos (ICE, por sus siglas en inglés) afirmó este viernes que aumentará sus agentes desplegados en México hasta 40, a pesar del asesinato en febrero pasado de su agente Jaime Zapata.

Durante una audiencia en el Subcomité de Gastos de Seguridad Interna de la Cámara baja, el director de ICE, John Morton, enfatizó que reconocen un ambiente desafiante para sus agentes ante la violencia del crimen organizado en México.

"(México) es sin lugar a dudas un ambiente lleno de retos", dijo Morton, quien en su presentación inicial ante el Subcomité lamentó el ataque contra Zapata y su colega Víctor Ávila, quien quedó herido, al circular por una carretera de San Luis Potosí.

Según Morton, el aumento en el número de elementos convertirá a ICE se con más personal desplegado en México, sólo detrás de la Administración para el Control de Drogas (DEA, por sus siglas en inglés).

"Estamos duplicando en México pasando de 20 personas a 40 personas, como lo comenté. Será por mucho nuestra oficina más grande (en el exterior)", dijo Morton, destacando ante congresistas su labor en prevenir contrabando de distintos tipos.

Apenas en febrero, y justo después de la muerte del agente Zapata, la agencia había mencionado en un comunicado que el total de agentes desplegados en México ya alcanzaba los 30 por lo que restaría sólo una fracción para alcanzar el nuevo total anunciado.

Cuestionado por el congresista republicano por Texas, John Carter, sobre si con el nuevo aumento de personal se pensaría platicar con México para que puedan estos portar armas, Morton prefirió únicamente decir que ya tomaron otras medidas.

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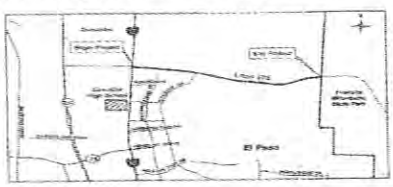

ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGE AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION FOR AIR PERMITTING

STATE OF TEXAS §

COUNTY OF El Paso §

Before me, the undersigned authority, on this day personally appeared

Gerardo Lopez, who being by me duly sworn, deposes
(name of newspaper or publication representative)

and says that (s)he is the Marketing Manager
(title of newspaper or publication representative)

of the El Diario; that said newspaper or publication is
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generally circulated in El Paso, Texas;
(municipality in which the site or proposed site is located)

that the attached notice was published in said newspaper or publication on the following date(s):
Sunday, March 20th 2011.

(newspaper or publication representative's signature)

Subscribed and sworn to before me this the 16 day of March, 2011,

to certify which witness my hand and seal of office.

Notary Public in and for the State of Texas

(Seal)

Silvia Diaz
Print or Type Name of Notary Public

12/13/2014
My Commission Expires

NOTARY PUBLIC STATE OF TEXAS
Silvia Diaz
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AVISO DE AUDIENCIA PÚBLICA
Proyecto de Loop 375 (Camino Transmountain)
I-10 al este de la Entrada del Parque Estatal Franklin Mountains
En el Condado de El Paso, El Paso, Texas

El Departamento de Transporte de Texas (TxDOT, por sus siglas en inglés) llevará a cabo una audiencia pública el martes 22 de marzo de 2011 para presentar el proyecto de mejoras al Loop 375 (Woodrow Bean/Transmountain Rd.), desde la Interestatal 10 (I-10) hasta el este de la entrada del Parque Estatal Franklin Mountains, en la zona noroeste de la ciudad de El Paso, en el condado de El Paso, Texas. La Audiencia Pública se llevará a cabo en la cafetería de la Preparatoria Canutillo (Canutillo High School). La Preparatoria Canutillo está ubicada en 6675 South Desert Blvd., El Paso, TX, 79912. La audiencia consistirá de una sesión abierta seguida por una presentación formal. La sesión abierta iniciará a las 6:00 p.m. para ofrecer la oportunidad de hacer preguntas y revisar expuestas del proyecto. La presentación formal iniciará a las 7:00 p.m., seguida por una sesión de comentarios del público. Personal de TxDOT y su equipo de consultores estarán disponibles en la audiencia pública para contestar preguntas relacionadas al proyecto.

El propósito de la audiencia es de presentar información tocante a las mejoras propuestas a Loop 375, desde I-10 hasta el este de la entrada del Parque Estatal Franklin Mountains, que incluye aproximadamente 3.6 millas de carriles principales y aproximadamente 2.10 millas de vías laterales de acceso (desde la Calle Northwestern hasta la Calle Paseo Del Norte). Las mejoras propuestas consisten de la ampliación del camino actual de dos carriles no dividido a un camino dividido de cuatro carriles con vías laterales de doble carril. Las mejoras también incluyen pasos a desnivel en las intersecciones de Northwestern Drive, Resler Drive, Plexxar Drive, y Paseo del Norte Drive así como dos conexiones superiores directas que conectarán los carriles de Loop 375 en sentido poniente con I-10 en sentido oriente, y los carriles de I-10 en sentido poniente con los de Loop 375 en sentido oriente. Como parte de este proyecto se construirán vías compartidas de ciclistas y peatones contiguas a la carretera, cerca del derecho de vía de Loop 375, en el tramo entre Northwestern Drive y Paseo del Norte Drive. Acceso a los carriles principales de Loop 375, así como a las vías laterales será por medio de rampas de entrada y salida en varios puntos entre las intersecciones. La huella del derecho de vía y el diseño geométrico provee para expansión a seis carriles principales desde Northwestern Drive hasta el este de Paseo Del Norte Drive. Debido a la ampliación y pasos a desnivel propuestos, aproximadamente 46.5 acres de derechos de vía serán adquiridos. El derecho de vía existente es de aproximadamente 200-pies y la anchura usual propuesta es de aproximadamente 370-pies. Aunque se requieren derechos de vía adicionales, no se desplazará a ningún negocio o residencia. Información referente a los servicios y beneficios a los que tienen derecho los propietarios afectados e información sobre el calendario tentativo para la adquisición de derechos de vía se puede obtener en las oficinas de Distrito de TxDOT. Un representante del Distrito estará disponible en la audiencia pública para asistir a los propietarios afectados con preguntas relacionadas a la adquisición de derechos de vía.

El proyecto propuesto requerirá relleno de la zona de inundación, pero no aumentará la elevación base de inundación a un nivel que viole regulaciones y ordenanzas aplicables a la zona de inundación. Se espera que la construcción propuesta en las Áreas de Drenaje 4 y 16 sea autorizada conforme al Permiso Nacional 14 del Cuerpo de Ingenieros del Ejército de Estados Unidos (USACE, por sus siglas en inglés), pero requerirá un Permiso de preconstrucción (PCN, por sus siglas en inglés) debido a impactos a las aguas de U.S. que excederá 0.10 acres en cada travesía. No habrá descarga en sitios acuáticos especiales.

Acompáñenos a revisar el diseño, construcción, y aspectos ambientales del proyecto. El documento ambiental, además de mapas ilustrando la ubicación y diseño del proyecto, estarán a la disposición del público durante la audiencia pública. La información relacionada al proyecto, al igual que el calendario tentativo de construcción, se encuentran disponibles para consulta y copiado, en las oficinas del distrito de TxDOT en El Paso, ubicadas en 13301 Gateway Boulevard West. Esta información también está disponible en la oficina de Jane Shang, Gerente Adjunta de Servicios de Movilidad de la Ciudad de El Paso, ubicada en 2 Civic Center Plaza, El Paso, Texas 79901. El documento ambiental también está disponible en www.txdot.gov haga click en Hearings & Meetings o www.elpasotexas.gov

A las personas con necesidades especiales interesadas en asistir, se les pide que contacten a Blanca M. Del Valle, Directora de Relaciones Públicas, al teléfono (915) 790-4200 al menos dos días hábiles antes de la audiencia. La audiencia pública será conducida en inglés y se proveerá traducción simultánea en español. Solicitudes para intérpretes de lenguaje o necesidades especiales de comunicación también deben ser hechas al menos dos días antes de la audiencia pública. TxDOT hará todo esfuerzo razonable para cubrir estas necesidades.

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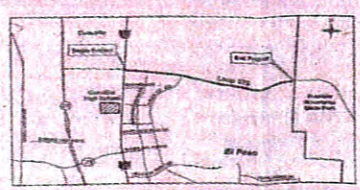

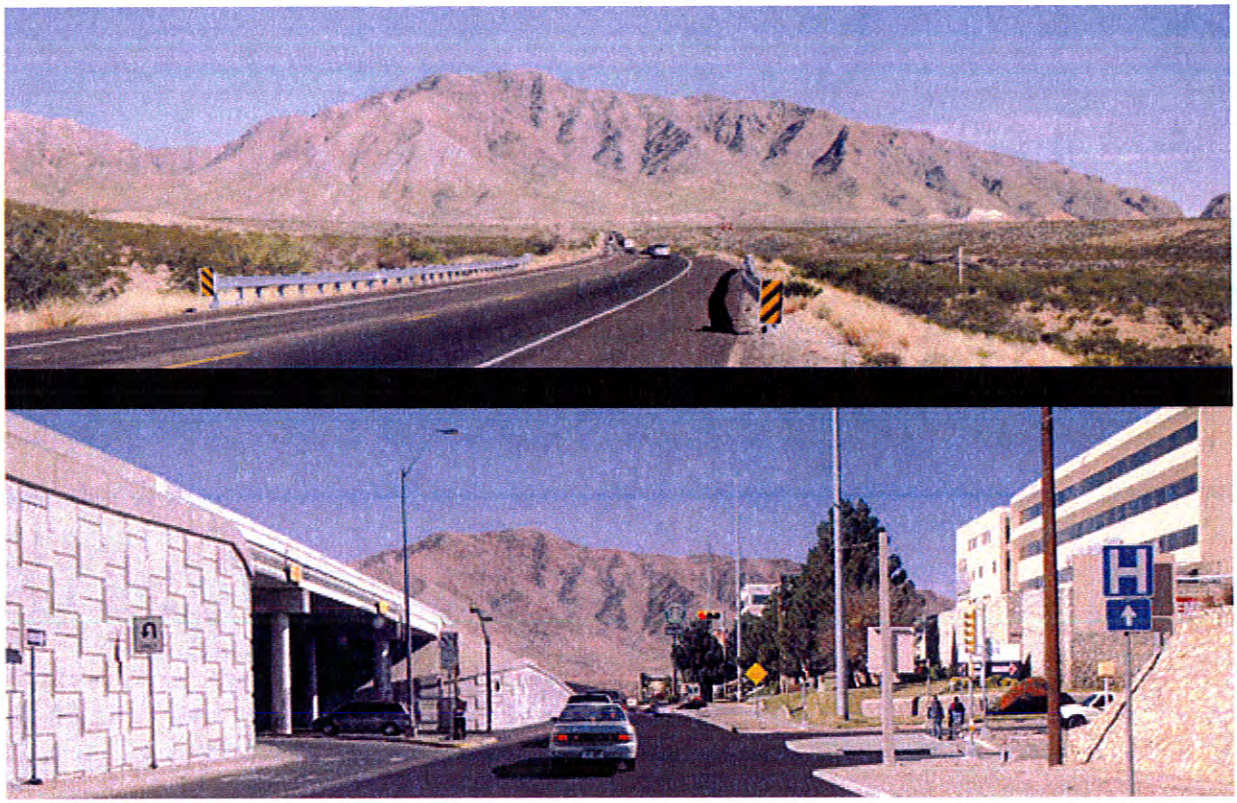

Foto: Cortesía, Después de 4 horas de debate, valida Cabildo construcción de un freeway de seis carriles y cuatro pasos a desnivel con un costo de $85 millones

Aprueban vía rápida en la Transmountain

Karla Guevara
El Diario | 30-03-2011 | 00:50

En una junta dominada por el debate y la frustración la Ciudad aprobó una resolución con la que da su apoyo incondicional a la construcción de una vía rápida de 3.6 millas de largo, cuatro pasos a desnivel y 85 millones de dólares de costo, vía que cambiará para siempre el paisaje de la Montaña Franklin.

Ann Morgan Lilly fue quien hizo la moción, la cual recibió siete votos a favor y sólo uno en contra proveniente de Susie Byrd.

Según el Departamento de Transporte de Texas (TXDoT), esto casi garantiza que la Administración Federal de Caminos dará la luz verde para la construcción del proyecto, después de que revise los comentarios de los paseños, la resolución se incluirá como la posición oficial del municipio.

"Es una gran oportunidad y debemos aprovecharla", dijo Lilly.

Pero para Charlie Wakeen, presidente del Comité de Espacios Abiertos, no es una oportunidad sino una etiqueta de precio.

"Sé que el temor de que el estado retire los 85 millones de dólares que va a dar para que se construya es muy grande; pero es una lástima perder esa belleza, es el precio que le están poniendo", dijo.

Comentario que fue secundado por Bill Addington, medioambientalista y presidente de El Paso Sierra Club.

"Es el principio del fin del parque de la Montaña Franklin, van a destruirlo, van a destruir a los animales que viven ahí y toda la tierra que rodea Transmountain se verá cubierta con negocios; va a lucir como se ve el área de Cielo Vista.

Pero no todos están en contra de la vía rápida, Richard Dayoub, presidente de la Cámara de Comercio de El Paso manifestó su apoyo al igual que David Osborne y Tom Thomas, quien informará al Pentágono de esta decisión.

"Actualmente Transmountain es peligroso para los conductores inexpertos, hemos tenido muchos accidentes y es muy bueno para los soldados que van a a llegar a la ciudad, estamos creciendo y necesitamos estas mejoras", dijo Osborne.

Pero para Richard Teschner, de la Coalición de la Montana Franklin el problema no es tanto la via rápida sino la construcción de uno de sus pasos a desnivel llamado Paseo Del Norte, que estará ubicado a 0.4 millas de la entrada al parque estatal. "Cuando los peatones quieran entrar al parque van a tener que atravesar la calle esperando que los autos que acaban de bajar de la vía rápida frenen, esto no es seguridad", dijo.

Por lo que O'Rourke se enfrentó a TxDoT y exigió que mejoraran la entrada al parque.

"Si espera que yo y mi familia crucemos así cuando se calcula que unos 70 mil carros van a transitar diariamente por ahí, no puedo votar a favor si no se justifica con el argumento de que la vía va a ofrecer seguridad, dígame cómo van a mejorar la entrada al parque", dijo.

De acuerdo a la evaluación ambiental que se hizo en este paso a desnivel, hay 18 puntos de conflicto donde los peatones o ciclistas corren el riesgo de sufrir un accidente cuando intenten cruzarlo, hay que recordar que el año pasado en Transmountain se registraron más de cien coaliciones y dos fatalidades.

Por lo que Chuck Berry, ingeniero de TXDoT, se comprometió regresar a la ciudad en seis meses con la propuesta de cómo se planeaba mejora la entrada al parque además de que trabaja de cerca con el estado, para lograr que dinero sobrante de la construcción de la obra sea usado para este propósito.

Sin embargo declaró que la construcción de la vía tomará dos años y que podría pasar un año más para que las mejoras a la entrada del parque se lleven a cabo".

Además O'Rourke pidió a la Ciudad acelerar el proceso de cambiar la zona de los acres que la ciudad posee a lo largo de Transmountain para designarlos cómo Código Inteligente. Esto significa que tanto casas como negocios pueden construirse en el área sin embargo esto debe de hacerse de sin dañar el medioambiente y respetando los arroyos.

Según la administradora de la Ciudad Joyce Wilson todo el proceso podría tomar seis meses sin embargo lo agilizarán para garantizar que el cambio sea efectivo antes de que nuevos miembros del cabildo asuman cargo en mayo de este año.

Finalmente la Ciudad también donó 12 acres al TXDoT para facilitar la construcción de la vía rápida; por su parte TXDoT afirmó que las personas tienen hasta este viernes para mandar sus comentarios respecto al proyecto al correo electrónico ELP_Loop375West@txdot.gov

Desata freeway en la Trans Mountain tormentas políticas

Karla Guevara
El Diario | 22-03-2011 | 01:00

El destino de Trans Mountain se decidirá este martes cuando se lleve a cabo la audiencia pública donde los paseños podrán expresar su opinión referente al proyecto de construir una vía rápida, de 3.6 millas de largo, seis carriles, cuatro pasos a desnivel y 85 millones de dólares de costo.

La audiencia, organizada por el Departamento de Transporte de Texas (TXDot) tendrá lugar en la cafetería de la preparatoria Canutillo ubicada en el 6675 sur del bulevar Desert a las 6 de la tarde.

Ahí personal de TXDot, explicará el proyecto, qué otras opciones de construcción se tienen y escucharán la opinión de la comunidad, todos estos comentarios se incluirán en la Evaluación Ambiental que será enviada a la Administración Federal de Caminos para que ellos tomen la decisión final sobre la obra.

"Lo comentarios de la gente son muy valiosos y van a tener un peso significativo en nuestra decisión, debemos asegurarnos que se construya algo que la gente realmente quiera y vaya a utilizar", expresó Dug Hecox, vocero de la Administración. Pero Trans Mountain no sólo será clave para facilitar la circulación vial entre el noreste y el oeste de la ciudad, sino para que los votantes decidan quién será el nuevo regidor que representará al Distrito 8 en el cabildo paseño en los comicios de mayo.

Ann Morgan Lilly es la actual regidora y busca reelegirse, pero para lograrlo debe de vencer a la abogada Lyda Ness, al maestro Manny Hinojosa, al enfermero Timothy Besco, al joven empresario Abraham Peinado y a los activistas Richard Schecter y Theresa Ann Ware Asbury.

Esta lucha promete ser encarnizada sobre todo porque Lilly ha votado a favor de la construcción de la vida rápida que tendrá rampas elevadas para conectare con al carretera Interestatal así como carriles especiales para peatones y ciclistas, mientras que todos sus oponentes están en contra.

"Tal vez una vía rápida no sea perfecta pero la necesitamos; el año pasado tuvimos cien accidentes ahí, diez de ellos muy serios, dos personas perdieron la vida, una mujer perdió una pierna; además no nos va a costar nada, todo el dinero lo va a poner el Estado", dijo Lilly.

Pero para Hinojosa el proyecto es un error. "Es destruir el más hermoso atractivo que tiene El Paso para beneficiar sólo a unos cuantos que desean desarrollar el área de forma comercial", dijo.

Este argumento es apoyado por Shector quien añadió que el motivo por el que los constructores aceptaron donar parte de sus terrenos a TXDoT para que se construya la obra es porque su realización incrementará el costo de las viviendas que planean construir en el área.

"Ese es el interés que hay detrás de Trans Mountain beneficiar a los constructores por ejemplo si TXDot construye la vía por debajo van a instalar tuberías de agua y drenaje y ellos sólo tendrán que conectarse a estas tuberías, esto les va a salir mucho más barato que si tuvieran que construir todo", dijo

Pero Abraham Peinado de 26 años y egresado de finanzas de la UTEP fue más allá y mencionó que está cansado de que el cabildo y Lilly cedan ante la presión de otras agencias como el Departamento de Transporte de Texas (TXDot) y no escuchen a los paseños.

"Así es como sucede todo en El Paso, llega TXDot y les dice 'tenemos estos fondos para hacer esto pero nos tienen que dar la autorización ahora si no, no hacemos nada' y entonces el cabildo cede", dijo Peinado quien tiene una compañía aseguradora.

"En los estudios que se hicieron se muestra que en diez años ese "freeway" no va a ser suficiente, es tiempo de escuchar a la gente y no votar por lo que un regidor quiere sino por lo que la comunidad desea", agrego.

Ness, quien es abogada, está de acuerdo y se muestra a favor del grupo de medioambientalistas que introdujeron una

petición pidiendo a la ciudad que no se construya uno de los pasos a desnivel de la obra que quedaría muy cerca de la entrada al parque estatal de la Montana Franklyn. Aunque la petición no tuvo las firmas necesarias, Ness afirma que muestra una clara oposición a la obra.

"Es triste que la gente tenga que recurrir a una petición porque sienten que su voz es ignorada; el gobierno debe ser para la gente, creo que se deben ver las otras opciones que hay y dejar que los paseños decidan cuál quieren", dijo.

Besco estuvo de acuerdo y agrego que para él "una ampliación a unos seis u ocho carriles sería lo mejor".

Asbury afirmo que antes de opinar cuál es la mejor opción desea ver las otras alternativas, sin embargo declaró que "los espacios abiertos deben respetarse".

Finalmente los comentarios de la gente también podrán presentarse por escrito en la audiencia, además pueden enviarse por correo electrónico a ELP_Loop375West@txdot.gov antes del viernes primero de abril.

Audiencia del Departamento de Transporte en Canutillo

El Departamento de Transporte se reunió con vecinos de Canutillo, Tx, para presentar avances del proyecto.

Marzo 23, 2011, 12:38 AM

Se registró una gran cantidad de asistentes de la localidad de Canutillo donde el Departamento de Transportes realiza audiencia para dar a conocer los avances en el proyecto de ampliación del Loop 375 y el 1-10 de Transmountain.

Durante la audiencia se revisó el diseño, la construcción, y aspectos ambientales del proyecto el cual tendrá un costo de 79 millones de dólares. Son dos los puntos básicos que dan origen al proyecto de Transmountain;uno es el factor seguridad, por la cuestión de los accidentes y el otro sin duda alguna es el de la congestión vehicular que tiene la zona.

La situación actual del Loop 375 y el 1-10 permite la circulación de unos 17000 vehículos diariamente, con la ampliación de este proyecto se espera que para el año 2035 transiten unos 35000 automóviles en esa región.

Las mejoras irán desde I-10 hasta la entrada del parque Franklin Mountain,que incluye aproximadamente 3.6 millas de carriles principales y 2.10 millas de vías laterales de acceso desde la calle Northwestern hasta la calle Paseo del Norte.

Todos estos comentarios se incluirán en la evaluación ambiental del proyecto, para que a su vez se hagan llegar los mismos a la Administración Federal de Caminos, para que sean ellos quienes tomen la decisión final sobre la obra.

Será a partir de la aprobación del proyecto que se abrirá el concurso para las constructoras,de ahí el Departamento de Transporte,señala que el proyecto tendría una duración de 24 meses aproximadamente.

Nick Alanis

From: Blanca Del Valle [Blanca.DelValle@txdot.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, March 29, 2011 11:02 AM
To: Antonio Santana; Armida Sagaribay; Art Estrada; Barty Diaz; Becky Najera; Blanca Del Valle; Blanca Serrano-Rivera; Christine Barraza; Chuck Berry; Cindy Lucero; David Head; Edgar Fino; Eduardo Calvo; Efrain Esparza; Gerardo Leos; Godwin Ubanyionwu; Gus Sanchez; Horacio Fernandez; Ismael Hernandez; Javier Cordova; Jesus Heredia; Jim Dobbins; Jonathan Concha; Jorge Oregel; Laura Robles; Leo Betancourt; Liz Reyes; Margie Cedillo; Maricruz Saenz; Marty Boyd; Mary Telles-Goins; Mimi Horn; Monica O'Kane; Nancy Herrera; Oscar Pilhoefer; Raul Ortega; Ray Dovalina; Rebecca Pinto; Ricardo Romero; Rudy Romo; Sandra De La Canal; Sandra Sierra; Sergio Garcia; Tim Twomey; Tony Cereceres; Tony Uribe; Veronica Barela; Veronica Ramos
Cc: Jorge Gomez
Subject: In the news.....
Attachments: Jueza Escobar pide proteger TM.Diario.28marzo2011.doc; Deciden destino de TM.Diario.28marzo01.tif; Exhorta juez Escoba proteger TM.Diario.28marzo2011.doc; Historic hwy designation.Times.March29-11.doc; Toll roads.Times.March27-11.doc; When traffic is good for business.INC.March2011.doc

Projects covered: Loop 375 from state park to I-10; Alameda; Loop 375-Border Highway; Zaragoza

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El Paso, TX 79928-5410
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Jueza Escobar pide a alcalde proteger paisaje de Trans Mountain

Karla Guevara
El Diario de El Paso | 28-03-2011 | 18:34

En una carta la jueza del Condado Verónica Escobar pidió al alcalde John Cook reconsiderar su postura y proteger el paisaje de Trans Mountain esto a un día de que el cabildo decida si aprueba o no una resolución que apoya la construcción de una vía rápida de seis carriles y cuatro pasos a desnivel.

La carta en poder de El Diario afirma que la preocupación es el paso a desnivel llamado Paseo Del Norte que estaría ubicado a 0.4 millas de la entrada al parque estatal de la Montaña Franklyn. de construirse este puente estaría en el área denominada como el corredor escénico de la Montaña Franklyn.

Según Escobar la tierra que rodea este puente ya fue declarada como residencial lo que facilita que en un futuro la ciudad la venda y se construyan desarrollos urbanos, por lo que suplico a Cook pensarlo dos veces y declarar el área como Espacio Natural Abierto, lo que impediría cualquier construcción.

"Si se construye ahí es verdad se van a recaudar más impuestos pero también se va incrementar la demanda por servicios e infraestructura que se pagará con el dinero de los contribuyentes y los más importante se va a extinguir una área que debe quedarse en su estado natural", dice la carta.

Aunque la decisión le corresponde por entero al cabildo, afirmo que "tendrá en cuenta el comentario de la jueza así como el de los paseños que se presenten a dar testimonio en la junta de mañana en su decisión final".

La resolución municipal sea a favor o en contra del proyecto será incluiría como parte de los comentarios que serán enviados a la Administración Federal de Caminos para que sean analizados juntos a los comentarios de la comunidad y determinen si la construcción de la vía rápida debe llevarse a cabo.

Según el Departamento de Transporte de Texas si la ciudad da su bendición es casi seguro que el proyecto se lleve a cabo, sin embargo una negativa podría ocasionar que los 85 millones de dólares que el estado dará para la construcción del proyecto sean enviados a otro municipio.

Exhorta la juez Escobar al alcalde proteger la Trans Mountain

Karla Guevara
El Diario | 28-03-2011 | 23:58

En una carta, la juez del Condado Verónica Escobar pidió al alcalde John Cook reconsiderar su postura y proteger el paisaje de Trans Mountain, esto a sólo horas de que el cabildo decida si aprueba o no una resolución que apoya la construcción de una vía rápida de seis carriles y cuatro pasos a desnivel.

La carta, en poder de El Diario, afirma que la preocupación es el paso a desnivel llamado Paseo Del Norte que estaría ubicado a 0.4 millas de la entrada al parque estatal de la Montaña Franklin y que Escobar teme sea el primer paso para urbanizar toda el área alrededor de Trans Mountain.

"No estoy en contra de la vía rápida, sé que es necesaria, pero sí me opongo a que se destruya este tesoro natural, por eso pido que esos mil 200 acres que están a lo largo de Trans Mountain y que son propiedad de la ciudad sean declarados como Espacios Naturales Abiertos", dijo Escobar.

Actualmente esta tierra es administrada por el Comité de Servicios Públicos (PSB) y recientemente la ciudad la declaró como zona residencial y comercial, lo que abre la puerta para que en el futuro el PSB la venda. "No estoy pidiendo que se elimine el paso a desnivel porque sé que podría ocasionar que el estado retire los 85 millones de dólares que va a dar para la construcción de la vía rápida, y no creo que ésto sea tan dañino como el permitir la construcción de fraccionamientos y tiendas en esa área", dijo.

Aunque la decisión le corresponde por entero al Cabildo, el alcalde John Cook afirmó que "tendrá en cuenta el comentario de la juez así como el de los paseños que se presenten a dar testimonio en la junta de mañana (hoy) en su decisión final"

Deciden mañana el destino de Trans Mountain

Karla Guevara
El Diario

El destino de Trans Mountain se decide este martes, cuando el cabildo paseño anuncie si apoyará o no la construcción de una vía rápida de seis carriles, cuatro pasos a desnivel y 85 millones de dólares de costo, vía que podría cambiar para siempre el paisaje de la Montaña Franklyn.

De acuerdo al Departamento de Transporte de Texas (TXDot) la aprobación de la ciudad es clave para la materialización de la obra y una negativa puede ocasionar que los 85 millones que dará el estado para su construcción sean enviados a otro municipio, pero hay serias dudas sobre si es la mejor opción.

"No creo que vaya a ser una decisión unánime, pero la mayoría va a votar a favor de una resolución donde damos nuestro apoyo a la construcción de la vía", dijo John Cook, alcalde de El Paso.

Pero la regidora Susie Byrd, principal opositora del proyecto, espera que otros miembros del Cabildo cambien de opinión y decidan proteger la Montaña Franklyn

La resolución municipal se incluiría como parte de los comentarios que serán enviados a la Administración Federal de Caminos para que sean analizados juntos a los comentarios de la comunidad y determinen si el proyecto debe ser declarado FONSI.

HAGA PLANES

- **Qué:** Junta de Cabildo
- **Hora:** 8:30 am inicia, pero el tema se discutirá después de las 11am
- **Dónde:** Segundo Piso, edificio del Cabildo

También este martes se presentará ante el cabildo un modelo que analiza como un bulevar y una ampliación a cuatro carriles manejarían el tráfico de Trans Mountain en un futuro.

Lunes 28 de marzo, 2011
El Paso, Texas.
Local 3A
El Diario de El Paso

Blogs

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Myrna Soto

From: Jim H. Tolbert [jimhtolbert@elp.rr.com]
Sent: Monday, March 21, 2011 6:29 PM
To: jimhtolbert@elp.rr.com
Subject: What's Wrong with the TxDOT EA

Please remember: Tomorrow, Tuesday, Mar. 22, 2011 TXDOT will hold a Public Hearing entitled "Loop 375 Transmountain Rd. Project I-10 to east of the Franklin Mountain State Park Entrance". The Open House starts at 6 p.m. and the Public Hearing starts at 7 p.m. The location is Canutillo High School Cafeteria, 6675 South Desert Blvd. El Paso, TX. ***They need to see droves of us***.

At the hearing, TxDOT will provide information about their Environmental Assessment of the Transmountain Road project from I-10 to the entrance of the State Park. This hearing is part of a process to receive a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The public will have until April 1 to comment. If FHWA finds that a further study is necessary, then an Environmental Impact Statement will be the culmination of the next step. That study could take over a year and it is what TxDOT, the PSB, developers, etc. fear the most. They don't want to lose the $85 million earmarked for this project even though that money is still there after TxDOT said that we would lose it if we didn't do something last fall.

Know one important thing: conserving/preserving land in the Scenic Transmountain Corridor (the 740 acre "toy" that Eddie Archuleta clutches in his fist and can't share) will not stop the road project. Most people who are for saving the Corridor, are also for widening Transmountain. However, TxDOT has not looked at all of the issues surrounding their plan nor have they provided alternatives based on good public input.

What's wrong with the current TxDOT plan:

1. There is no safe entrance to the State Park. In fact, it will get worse. Now you will have to make a left turn across two lanes of traffic going 70 mph off the mountain. Want to see how that works? See this video. (BTW, the video was part of a presentation that Dr. Rick Bonart wanted to give at a PSB meeting but was turned down because Maria Tehran thinks staff needs to approve anyone not bobbing his head; Richard Schoephoerster has a closed mind; and Robert Andron thinks that Dr. Bonart's presentation would have violated Open Meeting laws. Huh? See the story about the amazing dysfunctional PSB here.)

2. Do see the TxDOT project video. To City Council and the Open Space Advisory Board they touted how nice the mountain will look. Several problems:

    - The video shows no commercial or residential development. Of course, open space looks great! But the plan (especially if land isn't preserved in the Scenic Corridor won't look anything like this. See this picture of what that scene of the mountain will really look like.)

    - Note the flyover (like the one on the Patriot Freeway at Fred Wilson) at I-10. Did TxDOT ever say anything about this?

    - Yes you can see the mountains in their video since there camera isn't at road level but rather hovers above. Take a helicopter ride and you can see the mountains too once TxDOT is done and commercial and residential development takes off. Otherwise, enjoy the big box stores and the fast food joints.

    - Plexxar? Where did that come from? It wasn't on any earlier map of the Westside Master Plan. At OSAB, I asked Chuck Berry why Plexxar? He responded that it was there for "operational" requirements like Sumac

and i-10. Read, it is there for the company "Plexxar" to move their big trucks back and forth over the highway. Yes, taxpayer, you are giving Plexxar $8 million. They must be hurting.

- Finally, there is Paseo del Norte, slicing through deep arroyos and steep hills. Ask El Paso Engineering Department and they will tell you that moving Paseo to where Plexxar is will hurt the arroyos more. Really? By gas line those arroyos are narrow and almost done. Farther up, they are wide and deep. How do I know? I've hiked them. BTW, I've seen enough development plans to know that Paseo is on a trajectory to go right through the Scenic Corridor unless that path is changed NOW.

3. There is no wildlife crossing except possibly through proposed residential land. Okay, Mule Deer and Javelina, take a left at the first stop sign, run for your lives across Paseo del Norte and pop out on non-State Park land on the other side.

4. And there is the public desire to preserve open space – something "they" tell us will mean losing the entire project. 1900 people signed two referendum petitions. 2000 signed an earlier petition to preserve all the land in the Master Plan. Another 2100 joined that petition with an online response. Preserving the land won't mean losing the needed Transmountain expansion. It will mean reconfiguring where Paseo del Norte goes and, I'm telling you, that's the real rub in this ointment.

5. The proximity of Paseo to Plexxar violates transportation engineering standards. Congestion will be increased not decreased. It is simply better to move Paseo to Plexxar and eliminate that $8 million "operational boondoggle".

Do read Rep. Byrd's blog post "TxDOT to El Paso: 'My Way or the Highway'". Take the vote on her blog. Email her for the form to send to TxDOT ASAP or go here to print a copy of the form.

On Tuesday, March 29, 2011, City Council is set to meet to make their final recommendations.

Email your City Council representative and tell them that you want them to re-consider preserving the Scenic Corridor and preserve it in its natural state and you want Paseo del Norte moved to the west of the Corridor.

Finally, here are two ways to deal with all those plants that are dead or look dead since the big freeze:

Check out horticultural expert and landscaper Cheryl Garing's brand new blog: Bullet Proof Gardening which is "all about our plants in our community starting with what is going on with the great plant recovery (or death) after the freeze." I asked Cheryl about oleanders and here's what she told me:

> "The large oleanders will come back, and it would not hurt to cut them down by about 50%. However the dwarf oleanders are not as hardy as the big standard ones. Many of those may not come back. Unfortunately it is a waiting game. So, if everyone can wait about a month, it should be obvious; because, if they are going to get leaves, they should be sprouting out by the middle to end of April."

Also plan to join El Paso's foremost plant experts (including Cheryl) on March 31st at Keystone Heritage Park beginning at 5:30 p.m. The title of this free event says it all: ***Let's Talk Trees: What Happened to My Trees & What Can I Do Now?*** The event is sponsored by the West Texas Urban Forestry Council and Keystone Heritage Park.

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This is Volume 2 and Number 11 published on March 21, 2011

Myrna Soto

From: Jim H. Tolbert [jimhtolbert@elp.rr.com]
Sent: Friday, March 18, 2011 6:55 PM
To: jimhtolbert@elp.rr.com
Subject: Attend TxDOT Meeting on March 22 at Canutillo High School

Saving the Transmountain Scenic Corridor is still very much alive in spite of the Municipal Clerk ruling that neither petition had enough signatures. Reviewing the Clerk's notes, we are finding that a challenge to their ruling is very much a possibility and the next step will be to seek an attorney's counsel. It seems that the Clerk's office may be attempting to disenfranchise the voice of registered El Paso voters. And, no matter the case, 1900 people (a vast plurality in District 1) along with 2100 others online have stated their desire to see the scenic corridor preserved and roads such as Paseo del Norte moved to the west and out of the pristine land.

Two events are rapidly approaching and require your attention, active participation and response and attendance if at all possible.

On Tuesday, Mar. 22, 2011 TXDOT will hold a Public Hearing entitled "Loop 375 Transmountain Rd. Project I-10 to east of the Franklin Mountain State Park Entrance". The Open House starts at 6 p.m. and the Public Hearing starts at 7 p.m. The location is Canutillo High School Cafeteria, 6675 South Desert Blvd. El Paso, TX. They need to see droves of us.

On Tuesday, March 29, 2011, City Council is set to meet to make their final recommendations.

Here's what we need to do ***now***: read Rep. Byrd's blog post "TxDOT to El Paso: 'My Way or the Highway'". Take the vote on her blog. Email her for the form to send to TxDOT ASAP or go here to print a copy of the form.

Email your City Council representative and tell them that you want them to re-consider preserving the Scenic Corridor in its natural state and moving Paseo del Norte to the west of the Corridor.

Make no mistake. The Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce is lobbying hard for the flawed TxDOT plan and blanket opposition to preserving natural open space. They are pushing on their membership and City Council representatives. The Chamber message follows on the heels of a PSB resolution which voices the same opinion – destroy natural beauty and never consider options. Ed Archuleta and his staff have spent too much of their time lobbying against open space rather than doing what they are so highly paid to do.

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This is Volume 2 and Number 10 published on March 18, 2011

Myrna Soto

From: Jim H. Tolbert [jimhtolbert@elp.rr.com]
Sent: Tuesday, March 08, 2011 3:55 PM
To: jimhtolbert@elp.rr.com
Subject: PSB to Hear Resolution against Natural Open Space

Attend tomorrow's Public Service Board meeting. On the agenda is a resolution supporting TxDOT Transmountain proposal ***along with a blanket rejection of saving the Scenic Transmountain Corridor*** – the complete opposite of the petition efforts. The meeting begins at 9:00 a.m., Wednesday, March 9, 2011, in the 4th Floor Board Meeting Room at 1154 Hawkins Boulevard. Please plan to attend and to speak out against the resolution.

You can read the resolution here. It is Item #10 on the agenda but may get moved up. The resolution comes from the President/CEO, Ed Archuleta.

Elpasonaturally has learned that City Council Representative, Ann Morgan Lilly, plans to be at the PSB meeting to speak against the resolution.

Speaking about the petitions, it may be as early as this Thursday when the Municipal Clerk will let us know whether there are enough valid signatures of registered voters residing in the City of El Paso.

More and more there are reports of attempts to keep the Wyler Aerial Tramway running. There was a feature story in today's El Paso Times and a story last week in the Inc. It would be best if the Tramway stays in the State Park system. What must be shown is an interest on part of El Pasoans and El Paso businesses and other organizations to give it their support. Mr. Stanley Jobe of Jobe Materials has already pledged $10,000 to keep it open. His principal proposal is to buy tickets for schools and for children whose families might not be able to afford the cost. Other businesses and organizations will be asked to chip in as well. Tickets to the tram also make great gifts for employees, friends, out of town guests, business associates and so forth. At its first meeting of the year this Thursday, Celebration of Our Mountains will discuss making saving the Tramway one of its goals for 2011.

You can learn more about proposed cuts affecting the Tramway and other Parks, Wildlife and environmental programs in the State of Texas. Here are some ways to do so:

Read the current Sierra Club State Capitol Report.

State Wildlife programs are also at the mercy of Federal budget cuts. Our Wildlife Biologist, Lois Balin, shares information about how you can help.

Also, this note from Luke Metzger, Environment Texas Director:

> "You know those license plates with a bluebonnet or horned lizard on them?
>
> "Texans pay an extra $30 for these conservation plates to "help fund conservation efforts right here in Texas." Except, apparently, when the Legislature wants the money for something else—or so the fine print should read. **Because in the proposed state budget, half of those donations will go toward unrelated projects. And there's talk of shutting down seven state parks.** Tell Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst to stop raiding the dedicated parks funds."

Finally, a comment: It is remarkable that all four of the prominent 20th Century Christian British authors (J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams and Dorothy Sayers) portrayed evil as anti-nature. For example, Lewis' headless, talking Alcasan is a vivid symbol in his prophetic novel, *That Hideous Strength*. Most of us, however, either from the books and/or movies, know the powerful image in Tolkien's Lord of the Rings of the bestial Orcs who, under the spell of the

evil Sauron, rip out trees and entire forests to use as fuel to make their weapons of war. Totally opposite in character to the Orcs are the creatures closest to nature – the Hobbits. Just something to think about as we ponder resolutions and, on the other hand, petitions for natural open space.

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This is Volume 2 and Number 8 published on March 8, 2011

Myrna Soto

From: Jim H. Tolbert [jimhtolbert@elp.rr.com]
Sent: Monday, March 28, 2011 3:18 PM
To: jimhtolbert@elp.rr.com
Subject: Transmountain on City Council Agenda Tomorrow

A petition to save the Scenic Corridor is back on the streets! Everyone will recognize it as the same petition as before that had language prohibiting major roadways through that corridor. (By the way, the petition language gives specific land description which does not include Transmountain. Signers need to know that the petition deliberately does not seek to stop Transmountain from being widened through this area.)

Why try again with the petition? First, the Municipal Clerk's office did their job validating signatures and all are grateful to them for their hard work. Petition gatherers failed to correct some info which could have been corrected before submitting the petitions. Most importantly, you want to preserve the corridor and your voice should be heard. Also, since the petition never went before Council, there is nothing in the City Charter preventing its re-circulation.

If you can't gather signatures, please download the form, print it and send it to Jim Tolbert at 2701 Frankfort Avenue, 79930 ASAP. Time is of the essence. You must be a registered voter residing in El Paso. Please make sure that the information that you put on the petition is complete and exactly like that on your voter registration card even if you moved recently and have not updated your card with the County. If you want to gather signatures, then take a moment to read through the instructions.

If you can, it is very important to attend City Council tomorrow. Some time after 11 a.m. there will be discussion and action on the proposed West Transmountain Loop 375 Project by the Texas Department of Transportation and will include approving (or not) the current flawed TxDOT proposal, adding Plexxar to the Master Thoroughfare Plan, and removing the Paseo del Norte overpass from the Transmountain Freeway design. (Item 15 on the agenda.) It is important that you attend and make your presence known as those who want to improve Transmountain safely and to accommodate added traffic without destroying the Scenic Corridor. If you cannot, please email your representative. Elpasonaturally does not support the inclusion of Plexxar and wants Paseo del Norte moved to that location instead. See What's Wrong with TxDOT's EA.

You can still give public comment regarding TxDOT's proposal for the Transmountain West project and the Public Hearing on March 22nd. Email those comments to ELP_Loop375West@txdot.gov. I suggest that you copy on your email the Federal Highway Administration official overseeing the proposal. His name is Gregory Punske and his email address is Gregory.PUNSKE@dot.gov.

One huge disappointment at the public hearing was a letter read into the record by a staff member of Senator José Rodriguez. The letter gave full support for that "Ask No Questions" project. Rather than listening to those who elected him, the Senator chose to side with out-of-towners who would force their one-size-fits-all (McDonald's Arches-type) plan that ignores our love for our mountain to river corridor. The last time that I saw the Senator, he had not been elected and he was helping to pick-up trash along Transmountain west of the State Park. Apparently being seen meant more to him than "seeing". Email him and tell him that you want land preserved and a new roadway that respects the Scenic Corridor. His address is jrdjz@elp.rr.com.

You probably have been reading about the dysfunction at EPWU/PSB especially if you subscribe to the El Paso Inc. After a year of attempting to get the EPWU leadership to give information about contracts and put items onto the agenda, the "citizens advocate" member of the Public Service Board, Dr. Richard Bonart, discussed these issues with David Crowder at the El Paso Inc. Crowder's Taking on the PSB from inside is must-read. A good example of the Archuleta Autocracy that has no accountability to the people of El Paso and HIS Board members who merely bob their heads is the quick decision to hire the El Paso Council of Engineering Companies and Black and Veatch to investigate and report on failures and responses during the February freeze – the 60 hour event that led to dangerously low water levels, a call to the

public to boil water and refrain from using water. Both the CEC and Black and Veatch do business with the PSB. Why not hire an independent consultant as Dr. Bonart suggested? Their local claims Archuleta – even though contractor after contractor on projects come from out of town. When you are an Unaccountable Autocrat, you do what you want and expect everyone to tow the line.

Apparently, Mayor John Cook now supports the idea of having an independent consultant who does not have a conflict of interest. See Crowder's Mayor takes on utilities review/PSB member raises questions about how board is run.

Regarding Dr. Bonart's assertion that he has been denied documentation as a Board member (Board members do have fiduciary responsibility and are not just bobbing heads), his claim is matched by evidence. One piece of that evidence is that I have a copy of the EPWU's Emergency Response Plan (excluding supposedly sensitive Homeland Security information). Dr. Bonart asked for this document last year and still hasn't received it! (By the way, that plan says nothing about the need for the EPWU's Central Control room to be a "lights out" facility – one with the necessary back-up generators to work on its own even in the midst of a blackout. Wonder if Black and Veatch or the CEC would catch that "little" detail. The ERP is really pretty sketchy. It basically says that "In case of an Emergency, call Ed – or Nick Costanza" and now it appears EPWU is backing away from their claims about the threats from El Paso Electric.

One last comment: Jimmy Janacek's online post to Crowder's "Taking on the PSB" asks the perfect question – why aren't all the PSB members serving us – the owners of the EPWU:

> "According to PSB Rules and Regulations No. 11, Sec II (A)(1)(a), EPWU is owned by the citizens of El Paso. Yet EPWU finds it necessary to designate one board member as a "Citizens Advocate." EPWU is the only organization in this country that designates one board member as the owners advocate. Board members of all of the other organizations in this country are elected by the owners to advocate for the owners. These board members are criticized when they don't advocate for the owners but EPWU is the only organization in this country that will criticize a board member because he does advocate for the owners."

Perhaps other board members have their own agendas like Maria Tehran whose company profits from the kinds of construction projects PSB contracts to do or supports through its resolutions. You see, Ms. Tehran is owner, president and chief operating officer of Sierra Machinery, Inc. which sells, leases and services heavy construction equipment. Talk about a conflict of interest! It appears that the co-chairman of the PSB is not there for the owners – you and me.

Of course, the El Paso Electric Company has its own woes. For all their hot air about promoting alternative energy, they are really penalizing rate payers who install and use solar energy panels.

Finally, you will receive tomorrow an email "flyer" about the event: ***Let's Talk Trees: What Happened to My Trees & What Can I Do Now?*** Plan to join El Paso's foremost plant experts as they give tips about your yard plants especially after the severe freeze at the beginning of February. The program is free to the public and is sponsored by the West Texas Urban Forestry Council and Keystone Heritage Park. It happens this Thursday, March 31st, at Keystone Heritage Park beginning at 5:30 p.m.

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This is Volume 2 and Number 12 published on March 28, 2011