

freeway TODAY

Granite gets bid for first freeway project

California-based Granite Construction Company was recently awarded the contract for the first phase of the Marsha Sharp Freeway. The Texas Department of Transportation Commission approved the bid award at today's meeting in Austin. Granite came in low bidder at \$46.5 million and 640 working days. The freeway contract was awarded under an accelerated construction provision based on the cost plus the number of working days.

Plans for the 8-mile freeway are divided into four projects, the first one a \$46.5 million endeavor that will begin this spring at the west end. The second project, construction of the freeway from Salem Avenue to Avenue L, will cost \$103 million and is scheduled to let sometime in the next 12 to 18 months. Projects three and four are scheduled to go to bid sometime after the year 2007, depending on availability of funds.

This \$46.5 million job is one of the largest projects to let in the history of the Lubbock District. The largest award was an interstate project in the 1980s that bid out at \$49 million, said Steve Warren, the district's director of transportation planning and development.

Today marks a milestone for the Marsha Sharp Freeway project, Warren explained. "We passed the torch from planning and development to the construction office," he added. "It's a great feeling to finally take this important step."

The first project will include widening West Loop 289 from four to six lanes

from 34th Street to Slide Road, rebuilding the frontage road system, the construction of the 50th Street overpass and extending 50th Street to Frankford Avenue.

Lubbock Mayor Marc McDougal added that the Marsha Sharp Freeway will be an important asset to Lubbock's overall transportation network as our city continues to grow and develop.

"I applaud the City of Lubbock and TxDOT's cooperative partnership which has enabled us to get to this point in the project. I anticipate further progress as we continue our efforts," he said.

The concept of an east-west access is not a new one. The idea was first introduced in the 1964 Lubbock Urban Transportation Plan, a document created to address future traffic growth and transportation needs beyond the year 1985. A second volume in 1969 suggested "heavy improvements" on U.S. 82 from Loop 289 to Avenue A. A 1975 volume continued to call for substantial improvements to U.S. 82 while proposing a freeway somewhere between 32nd and 38th Street.

It was later determined that this location was not appropriate for freeway traffic, and the focus shifted to US 82. The idea of building the freeway along U.S. 82 was presented to the public in 1989 at four public meetings held at Saint Luke's United Methodist Church, Ramirez Elementary School, and the Civic Center.

A public hearing in 1993 drew more than 1,000 participants. Public comments extended into the wee hours of the morning. But, that was a major milestone in project development, Warren noted.

"From there, we moved ahead, completing the environmental document and addressing issues such as the relocation of businesses and residences, noise levels, and impacts to land uses," he said.

It took three and a half years for the state to complete the three-volume 1,100-page environmental document. The FHWA, TxDOT Environmental Division and the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) signed the document in April of 1995. And, in July of that year, the FHWA signed the Record of Decision completing the environmental process and giving the Lubbock District the authority to begin developing plans and buying right-of-way.

Right of Way Summary

Parcels	354
Appraisals ordered	354
Appraisals received	354
Approved appraisals	354
Offers made	354
Offers accepted	302
Checks requested	297
Final offer letters sent	50
Condemnations requested	50
Hearings set or held	46
Closed parcels	339
Approved appraisal values	\$130,987,852.00
Approved values closed	\$87,724,469.00
Amount of offers accepted	\$77,298,687.00

Project #1

- \$46.5 million
- Construction starts this spring
- Widening of South Loop 289 from four to six lanes from 34th Street to Slide Road.
- Rebuilding frontage road system under the main lanes.
- Building the 50th Street overpass and extending 50th Street to Frankford.

Project #2

- \$103 million
- Lets in FY 2003
- Building total freeway from Salem Avenue to Avenue L.
- Building 19th St., Quaker Avenue, Fourth Street and Avenue Q interchanges
- 16 bridges and 4 pedestrian overpasses—three at Texas Tech and one at Avenue U

Project #3

- \$54 million
- Lets in FY 2007
- Building 34th Street and Slide Road interchanges
- Build main lanes from Salem to outside West Loop 289, just east of the waterpark
- 8 bridges

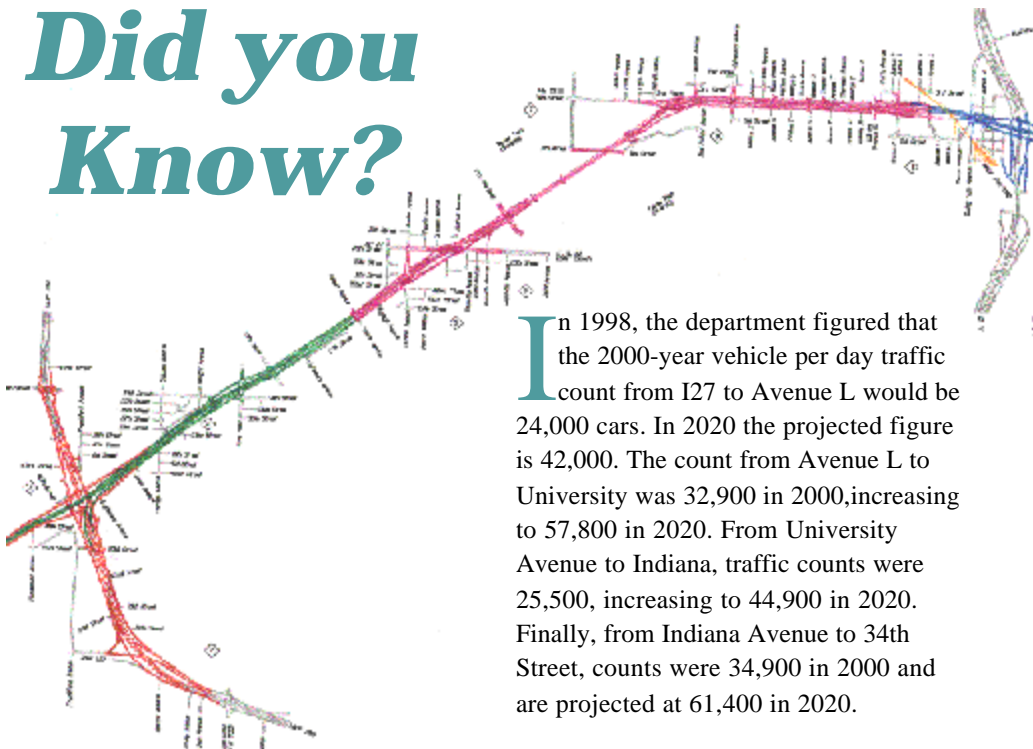
Project #4

- \$63 million
- Lets in FY 2010
- Building I27 interchange.

For questions concerning right-of-way acquisition, call Claude Kneisley at **806 748-4417**. For construction questions, call Frank Phillips, P.E. at **806 748-4574**. Construction questions should be addressed to Ron Baker, TxDOT area engineer, **806 748-4308**.



Did you Know?



In 1998, the department figured that the 2000-year vehicle per day traffic count from I27 to Avenue L would be 24,000 cars. In 2020 the projected figure is 42,000. The count from Avenue L to University was 32,900 in 2000, increasing to 57,800 in 2020. From University Avenue to Indiana, traffic counts were 25,500, increasing to 44,900 in 2020. Finally, from Indiana Avenue to 34th Street, counts were 34,900 in 2000 and are projected at 61,400 in 2020.

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TxDOT Environmental Specialists Joslyn Tomlinson and Davis Melton inspect grasses at the location where the third freeway storm sewer system will be built. There are four systems that will accommodate water flow from the Marsha Sharp Freeway. Three of these are already in place.



Natural drainage a goal for freeway

A crucial aspect of designing any highway is the drainage system. It's important to address, in the initial design, how the runoff will be handled.

At the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), engineers decided a long time ago that a natural system would be the best way to address drainage on the new Marsha Sharp Freeway scheduled to go to construction this year. In other words, instead of a complicated and expensive pump system, engineers elected to let gravity do the job.

"TxDOT decided a long time ago not to build or maintain a pump system," said Davis Melton, environmental specialist for TxDOT's Lubbock District. "We did build a storm sewer system on a portion of the freeway to handle the runoff. But, we're still relying on nature to get the water to that system."

The drainage system for the freeway is divided into four segments. The first segment runs from just southwest of West Loop 289 to 19th Street

Water from this segment will drain as it always has, via the streets in curb and gutter into area playa lakes.

Runoff water from 19th Street to Avenue U will drain down Avenue U to the city's canyon lakes system. The drainage will follow a new underground storm water sewer system built several

years ago at a cost of \$7 million.

"We still have some work to complete this project," he said.

Work came to a halt several years ago when contractors discovered gasoline contaminated soil and groundwater just 700 feet east of University.

"The Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission (TNRCC) has been working to clean up the site so we can get back in and finish the project," said Melton.

When work resumes, the storm sewer line will extend past University Avenue to 19th Street. In addition to draining water from the freeway, the new system will intercept rising groundwater before it can spill over onto freeway main lanes.

"The design includes a porous system with a special overflow to allow rising ground water to drain into the canyon," he said.

The third drainage system runs just east of Avenue U to Buddy Holly Avenue and down Buddy Holly Avenue to Atzlan Park. This particular drainage project was added later when consultants, after reevaluating water flow from the freeway, decided that the current capacity would not be enough to handle the amount of water draining into the Yellowhouse Canyon. TxDOT will install a new drainage pipe to handle the overflow.

However, not all the water will drain

into the Yellowhouse Canyon, said Melton. A portion will follow a designated route from just east of Buddy Holly Avenue to Mckenzie Park. This fourth and final project is designed so water will enter the North Fork of the Double Mountain Fork of the Brazos River just upstream from where it merges with Blackwater Draw.

In addition, not all of the drainage projects are approved, however. Drainage projects one, two and four were approved in the original Environmental Impact Statement, but project three has yet to receive approval from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). That approval is necessary before the new design can be incorporated into the final freeway plans.

"The department is working on an environmental reevaluation document that includes all the changes that we've made on freeway design since 1995," said Melton. "Hopefully, the FHWA will move quickly on this. We're ready to build the freeway."