



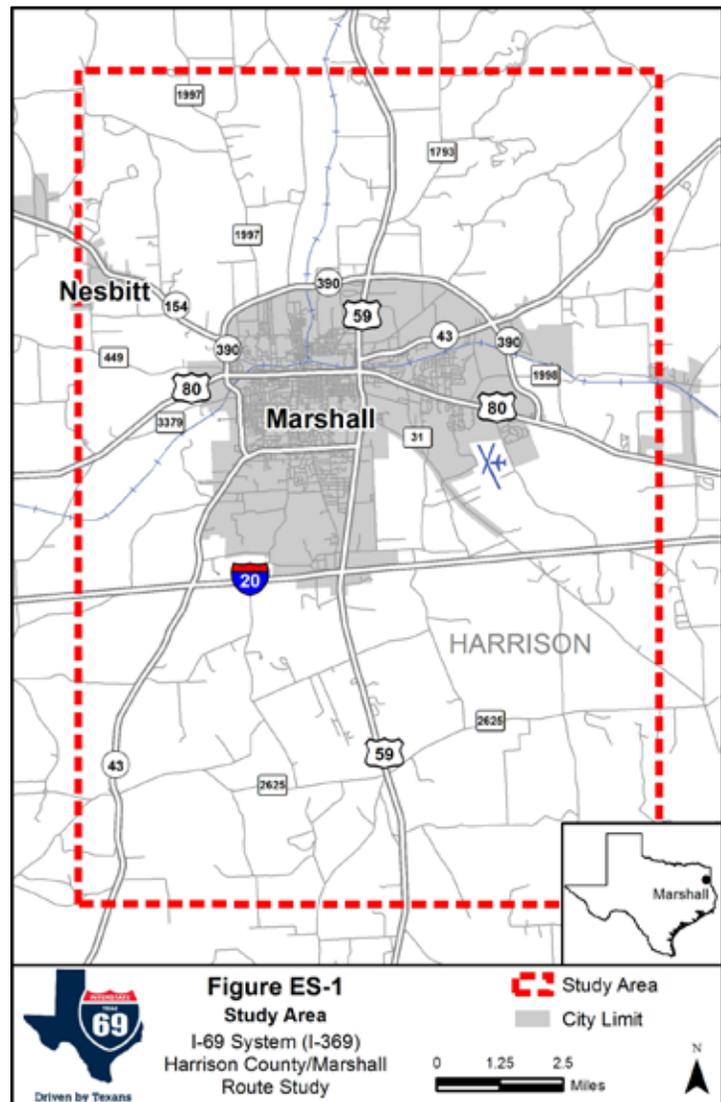
I-69 System (I-369) Harrison County/Marshall Route Study

*Working Group
Recommendation Report*

December 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The I-69 Advisory Committee and five I-69 Segment Committees were created by the Texas Transportation Commission in 2008 as a way to increase citizen and community input in planning for I-69 Texas. With input from citizens in their area, the I-69 Segment One Committee, which included Harrison County, decided that a US 59 relief route at Marshall was a recommended priority. As a follow-up to that recommendation, an I-69 System (I-369) Harrison County/Marshall Route Study ("Route Study") was conducted to develop and evaluate options for the advancement of I-369 in the Marshall area, with the eventual goal of constructing, designating, and signing US 59 as I-369. US 59, the proposed Interstate 369 (I-369) route through Marshall, does not currently meet Interstate standards. Additionally, as traffic volumes in the area increase, traffic congestion through Marshall will increase to unacceptable levels. The development of I-69 in Texas would relieve traffic congestion caused by a growing population, provide safer travel through the state, improve emergency evacuation routes, and support economic development. The Route Study was led by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), with extensive participation and input from the I-69 System (I-369) Harrison County/Marshall Working Group ("Working Group"). The study area for the Route Study is shown as Figure ES-1.



The Working Group was actively engaged from February 2014 through December 2014 and has accomplished the following:

- Identified goals for establishing I-369 in the Marshall area related to traffic and safety, connectivity, and community impacts.
- Identified 13 potential Interstate route options.
- Identified an Interstate route option preliminary recommendation.
- Conducted public outreach activities to present the Interstate route option preliminary recommendation to local citizens to learn about any concerns and issues.

- Identified a final Interstate route option recommendation to be studied in detail as part of the environmental process.

Working Group members participated in a robust public outreach process including 11 presentations at community and civic group meetings and a public open house on October 28, 2014 in Marshall. Additionally, Working Group members set up two ongoing information displays, sent informational emails, and posted numerous Facebook and Twitter updates. In addition to the Working Group efforts, TxDOT implemented an online survey, maintained a project webpage with Route Study information, posted updates on Facebook and Twitter, mailed postcards, and prepared public service announcements, displays ads, and news releases advertising the open house.

Public input was an important part of the Working Group’s determination of their final recommendation and all comments will be considered as part of any future environmental activities. Many written comments received suggested modifications to the route option or the use of other route options. Working Group members concluded that concerns about the northern and southern tie-in points, moving farther east, and the no-action alternative would be considered in any future environmental studies.

Additionally, the Working Group was in agreement that because of the mining areas, west of US 59 would be the least suitable location to construct a roadway. It was also reiterated that moving the route option farther east may pose a financial strain on the City of Marshall to provide utility services for future development.

In conclusion, based on the results of the Route Study and public outreach process, the Working Group members concurred to carry their Interstate route option preliminary recommendation forward as a final recommendation (Figure ES-2) to TxDOT to be studied in detail as part of the environmental process, should the project progress.



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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---------------|--|
| AASHTO | American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials |
| FAQs | frequently asked questions |
| FM | Farm-to-Market Road |
| I-20 | Interstate 20 |
| I-69 | Interstate 69 |
| LOS | level of service |
| PSAs | public service announcements |
| Route Study | I-69 System (I-369) Harrison County/Marshall Route Study |
| ROW | right-of-way |
| TRZ | Transportation Reinvestment Zone |
| TxDOT | Texas Department of Transportation |
| US 59 | United States Highway 59 |
| Working Group | I-69 System (I-369) Harrison County/Marshall Working Group |

INTRODUCTION

Federal legislation has authorized the development of the Interstate 69 (I-69) System in Texas along specified U.S. routes including United States Highway 59 (US 59). The development of I-69 in Texas would relieve traffic congestion caused by a growing population, provide safer travel through the state, improve emergency evacuation routes, and support economic development.

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is working to find the most appropriate means to develop the I-69 System from Texarkana and the Louisiana state line to the Mexico border in the Lower Rio Grande Valley and Laredo. This effort includes evaluation and development of upgrades to existing highways and new location relief routes that would meet current Interstate design standards.

US 59, the proposed Interstate 369 (I-369) route through Marshall, does not currently meet Interstate standards (for example, local driveways and cross roads intersect the mainlanes). As such, TxDOT is undertaking an I-69 System (I-369) Harrison County/Marshall Route Study ("Route Study") to develop and evaluate options for the advancement of I-369 in the Marshall area, with the eventual goal of constructing, designating, and signing US 59 as I-369.

As a continuation of the citizen-led I-69 development effort, an I-69 System (I-369) Harrison County/Marshall Working Group ("Working Group") was created to provide input to the Route Study, the Interstate route options to be considered, and the merits of those options. Considering local citizen input, the Working Group worked to make a recommendation to guide TxDOT on the I-369 project development in the Marshall area. The study area for the I-69 System (I-369) Harrison County/Marshall Route Study is shown on Figure 1.

This report highlights the steps and activities undertaken to identify a Working Group Interstate route option recommendation for advancing I-369 in the Marshall area.

I-69 System (I-369) Harrison County/Marshall Route Study Purpose

The purpose of the Route Study is to (1) provide information to the Working Group on the different options for developing I-369 in the Marshall area, and (2) support the Working Group's outreach efforts to present the Interstate route options to local citizens to learn about any concerns and issues that may need to be addressed.

Two broad options for developing I-369 were originally considered. They include:

- § Upgrade of existing US 59 through Marshall to an Interstate highway (I-369), or
- § Construction of I-369/US 59 on a new location and conversion of existing US 59 through Marshall to Business 59.

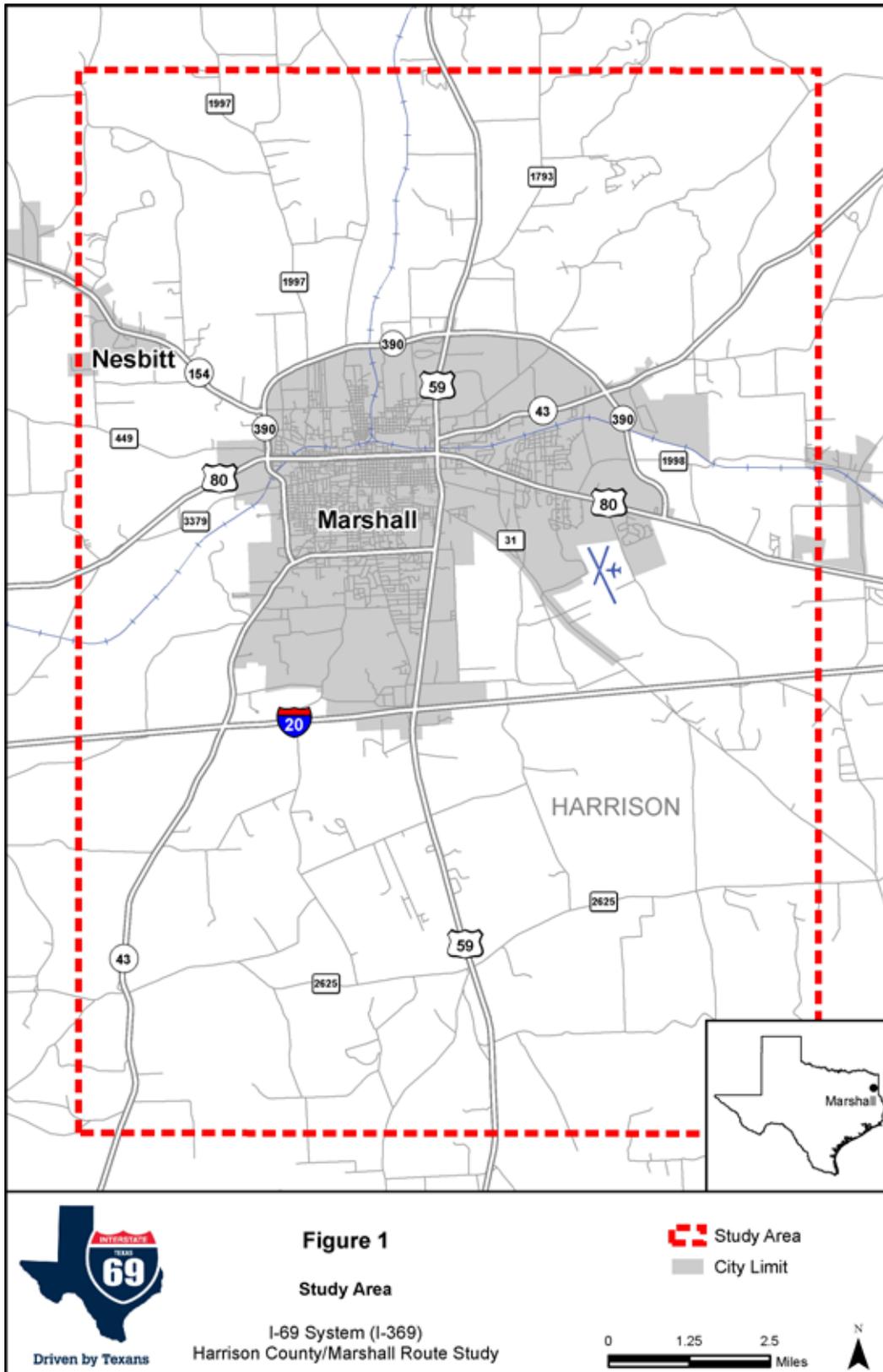


Figure 1. Study Area

Assessment of Existing US 59 in the Marshall Area

Roadway Characteristics

US 59 does not meet current Interstate standards in the Marshall area because it is not access controlled, which is a primary Interstate requirement. The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) establishes current Interstate design standards including the criteria to evaluate geometric features and conditions to determine if a highway meets the standards. According to the AASHTO Interstate design standards, the highway system must be access controlled. This is accomplished by allowing ingress and egress to the mainlanes only at selected locations via entrance and exit ramps. No driveways or cross street intersections are permitted on an Interstate highway.

Traffic Volumes and Capacity

TxDOT has determined that existing US 59 through Marshall (per U.S. Census, year 2010 Marshall population was estimated at 23,523) does not have the capacity to serve projected traffic volumes. The measure used to evaluate the effectiveness of a roadway system to provide adequate traffic capacity is a rating criterion called level of service (LOS). LOS describes the operating conditions of a roadway based on factors such as speed, travel time, maneuverability, delay, and safety. LOS varies from "A" to "F", with "A" being the best operating conditions and "F" representing the worst congested conditions.

US 59 in the Marshall area was operating at LOS C or better in the year 2012. However, between 2012 and 2057, traffic is expected to increase by 113 percent, on average, over the length of US 59, thus deteriorating the LOS. The LOS for portions of US 59 between Interstate 20 (I-20) and Loop 390 in 2057 would be E and F if no upgrades are made.

THE I-69 SYSTEM (I-369) HARRISON COUNTY/MARSHALL WORKING GROUP

Working Group Members

The Working Group is an entity of 15 volunteers consisting of city and county elected officials and technical staff, private business interests, and other community representatives. The Working Group is chaired by Harrison County Judge Hugh Taylor.

Table 1. Working Group Members

| Member Name | Affiliation |
|---------------------|---|
| Russ Collier | Good Shepherd Medical Center |
| Charley Ettinger | Sabine Mine |
| James Greer | Harrison County Commissioner |
| J.C. Hughes | City of Marshall - Public Works |
| John Paul Jones | Harrison County |
| Donna Maisel | Marshall Economic Development Corp. (MEDCO) |
| Jerri Medrano | City of Hallsville |
| Jesse Moore | City of Waskom |
| Leo Morris | At Large |
| Chris Paddie | Texas House of Representatives |
| Ed Smith | City of Marshall |
| Marc Smith | Marshall ISD |
| Haywood Strickland | Wiley College |
| Hugh Taylor (Chair) | Harrison County Commissioners Court |
| Connie Ware | At Large |

Working Group Activities

The Working Group has been actively engaged since February 2014 having participated in four meetings, all of which were advertised in local newspapers, were open to the public, and were attended by the public. One conference call/online meeting was also conducted on November 18, 2014. At these meetings, Working Group members discussed goals, objectives, potential Interstate route options, and public outreach activities. An overview of the Working Group activities since February 2014 is shown on Figure 2 and described below. Meeting memorandums are included in the Appendix.

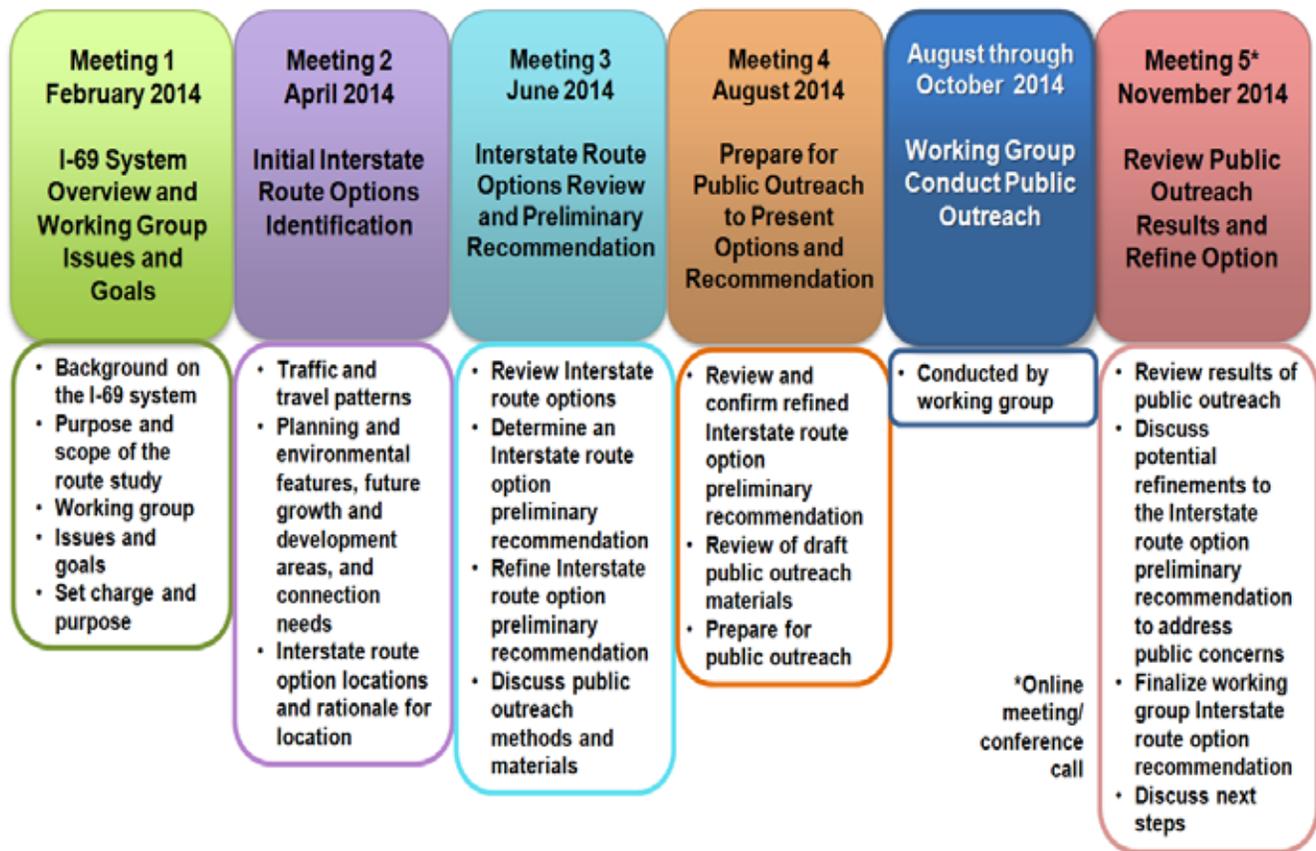


Figure 2. Working Group Schedule and Activities

INTERSTATE ROUTE OPTIONS DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION

Working Group Goals for Establishing I-369 in the Marshall Area

The first Working Group Meeting was conducted on February 25, 2014, and included a presentation on the background of I-69, a briefing on the Route Study purpose and activities, a brainstorming session on issues and goals to consider for establishing I-369 in the area, establishing a Working Group charge and purpose, and review of the Working Group schedule and activities. Prior to the meeting, a goals and objectives questionnaire was sent from TxDOT to Working Group members, and the results were presented and discussed at the meeting. The resulting goals identified by the Working Group are shown in the box at right.

Working Group Interstate Route Options Identification

In advance of meeting 2, TxDOT collected secondary source environmental and planning data, interviewed stakeholders who provided information on planned developments and environmental resources in the area, and documented the data on an aerial background, in the form of existing conditions/resource inventory maps east and west of Marshall.

WORKING GROUP GOALS FOR ESTABLISHING I-369 IN THE MARSHALL AREA

Traffic and Safety

- *Serve high traffic and truck volumes*
- *Serve expected traffic growth*
- *Address safety concerns*
- *Improve travel times*

Connectivity

- *Provide for multi-modal connections*
- *Provide connection and access to major transportation facilities in the area*

Community Impacts

- *Maximize the use of the existing US 59 footprint to the greatest extent possible while seeking to reduce program costs and impacts to private property*
- *Incorporate public input*
- *Support local economic development plans and goals (retail, industrial, and commercial) by providing access and connectivity to the regional roadway network*

The maps east and west of Marshall were presented to Working Group members at meeting 2 on April 15, 2014, for three key exercises:

- (1) Identification of additional planning and environmental features that could influence the development of route options;
- (2) Discussions regarding traffic patterns, access needs, future growth, and development areas that could influence the development of route options; and
- (3) Identification of preferences for route locations (i.e., east, west, through town) and rationale for location preferences.



*Study Area Map Review
April 15, 2014 Working Group Meeting*

The Working Group sketched route options on the maps which, when combined with the upgrade of US 59 option through Marshall and sharing the use of I-20, resulted in a total of 13 potential Interstate route options from south to north of Marshall.

Interstate Route Options Development

Following meeting 2, TxDOT developed the sketched route options in accordance with Interstate design standards. This was to serve as a visual tool for Working Group members to conceptualize what the Interstate route options would look like, provide a basis for quantifying potential effects, and estimating project costs. It should be noted that at this stage of planning, these route options do not fully take into account topography, drainage, and many other detailed design elements. The 13 potential Interstate route options (Figure 3) were divided into 19 different links (sections) because in many cases the route options overlapped. Table 2 presents the link combinations from Figure 3 that make up each of the route options.

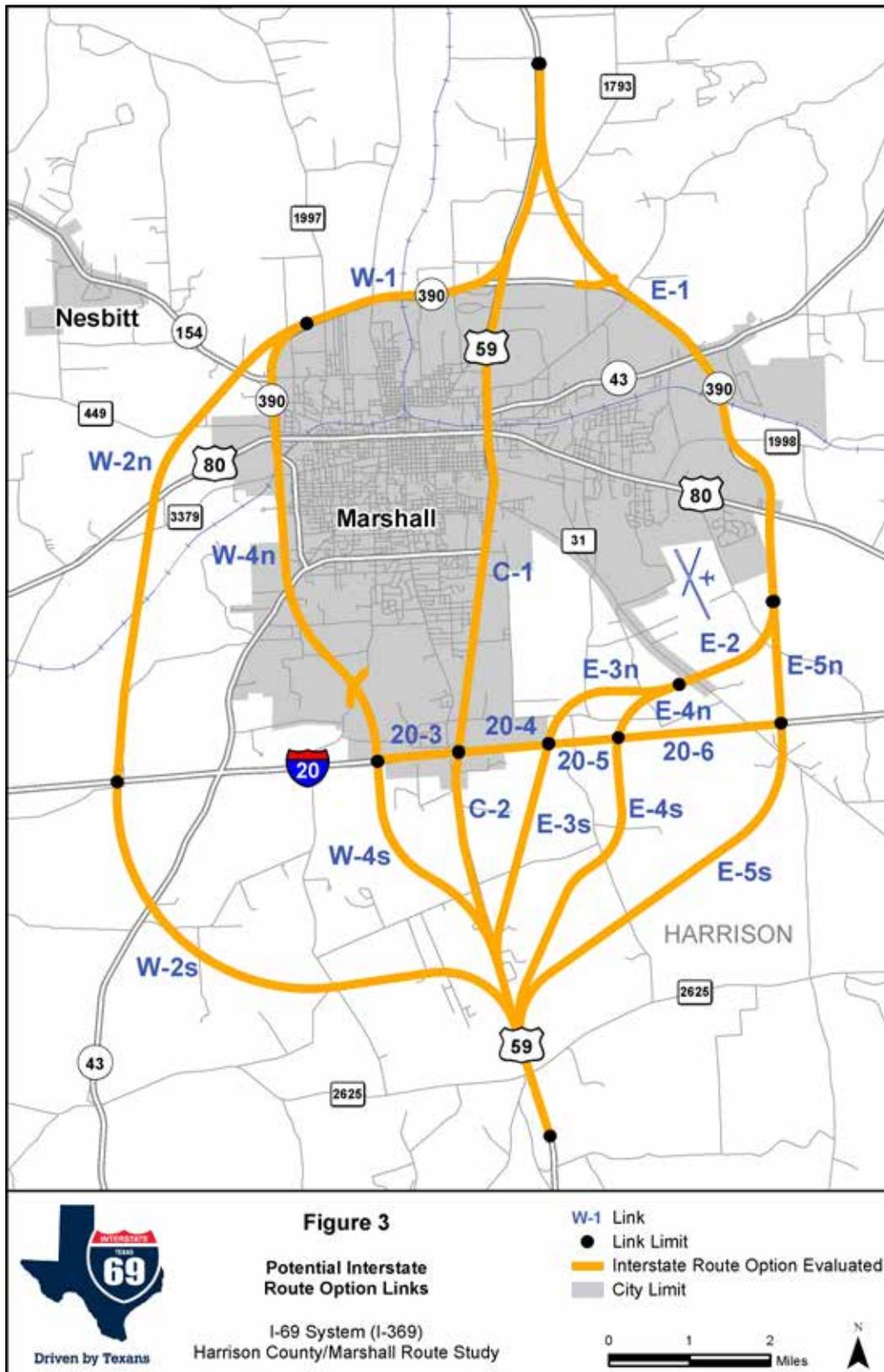


Figure 3. Potential Interstate Route Option Links

Table 2. Route Option Link Combinations

| Route Option | Route Option Link Combinations |
|--------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 | W1-W2n-W2s |
| 2 | W1-W4n-W4s |
| 3 | W1-W4n-20:3-C2 |
| 4 | C1-C2 (Upgrade Existing US 59) |
| 5 | E1-E2-E3n-20:4-C2 |
| 6 | E1-E2-E3n-E3s |
| 7 | E1-E2-E4n-20:5-20:4-C2 |
| 8 | E1-E2-E4n-20:5-E3s |
| 9 | E1-E2-E4n-E4s |
| 10 | E1-E5n-20:6-20:5-20:4-C2 |
| 11 | E1-E5n-20:6-20:5-E3s |
| 12 | E1-E5n-20:6-E4s |
| 13 | E1-E5n-E5s |

Interstate Route Options Prescreen and Evaluation

TxDOT compared the 13 potential Interstate route options to each other in a prescreening process to determine how effective they could be in addressing the goals established by the Working Group. Differentiating factors included traffic volumes, costs, potential residential and commercial displacements, and potential impacts to community features as follows:

- § Traffic Volumes – Reducing traffic and heavy truck volumes on existing US 59 is one of the goals established by the Working Group. Therefore, it is important that a large portion of through traffic divert from existing US 59 to use the proposed Interstate facility. The measure of diversion was calculated based on travel time savings for the new facility. Several of the route options were of considerably longer length than others. This increased the travel time and reduced the traffic diversion from existing US 59 for these options, thus not meeting one of the primary Working Group goals of providing traffic congestion relief. Route options 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 10 were the poorest performing based on this criteria.
- § Costs – Preliminary, planning-level cost estimates (including construction, right-of-way (ROW), utilities, environmental mitigation, project development, and construction oversight costs), in present day dollars, were computed for each of the route options for comparison purposes only. The cost estimates of all the route options were compared to the median cost value. Cost

estimates less than or equal to the median cost value were considered to meet the goal. Route options 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 were the poorest performing based on evaluation of cost.

§ Potential Residential and Commercial Displacements and Potential Impacts to Community Features – Minimizing residential and commercial displacements and potential impacts to community features were primary considerations in the development of the route options and in evaluating their performance in meeting the Working Group goals. No statistical analysis was necessary to determine a threshold for differentiation between the route options. Rather, professional judgment based on determining and computing the actual number of potential displacements in conjunction with Working Group input, influenced the decision as to which route options performed the best. Three route options met all of the community impact goals (reduce program costs, residential displacements, commercial displacements, and impacts to community features). In particular, route options 9, 12, and 13 had a distinctly lower number of potential residential displacements when compared to the other route options and thus performed best with respect to the goal.

Best Performing Interstate Route Options

The three best performing options (9, 12, and 13) were then compared to each other by TxDOT using planning data, including environmental and engineering factors that were quantified based on ROW and design elements. This comparison included quantifying potential impacts to schools, churches, cemeteries, development features, potential residential and commercial relocations, farmlands, historic and archeological resources, flood zones, streams, wetlands, water bodies, oil and gas wells, hazardous material sites, mine areas, pipelines, electric transmission lines and substations, communication towers, and public water wells. Engineering factors such as length, travel time, ROW, and cost were also compared. Figure 4 identifies the three best performing options resulting from the prescreen and evaluation exercises.

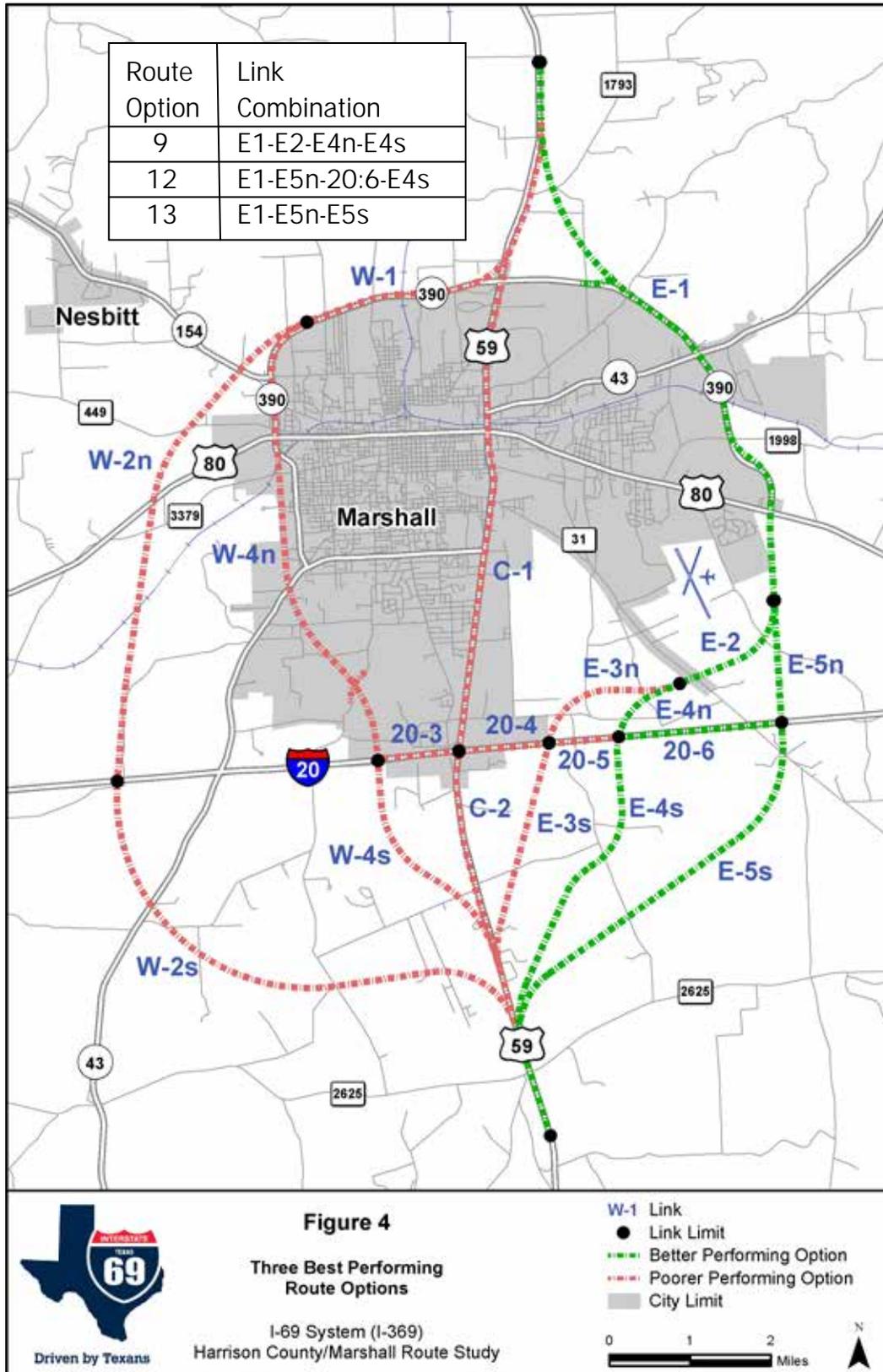


Figure 4. Three Best Performing Route Options

WORKING GROUP INTERSTATE ROUTE OPTION PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATION

At the third Working Group meeting held on June 10, 2014, TxDOT staff guided the Working Group through the prescreening process of the initial 13 options and then discussed the three best performing options (9, 12, and 13) shown as green on Figure 4. These options, which include two new location options and one option that shares lanes with I-20, were reviewed in more detail during the meeting on an aerial map, which included the identified environmental and planning features.

Rationale

The Working Group expressed concerns over potential traffic conflicts between I-20 through traffic and US 59 north-south traffic, which may occur with the shared use of I-20 associated with Route Option 12. The Working Group decided to eliminate this option from further consideration.

Additionally, they noted it would be costly to extend utilities to serve areas along the far east option, Route Option 13, to support development that may occur along the new route, which would be contrary to their economic development goal.

Preliminary Recommendation

The Working Group determined that based on the above concerns, their Interstate route option preliminary recommendation would be Route Option 9. This option would deviate from existing US 59 north of Farm-to-Market Road (FM) 2625, cross I-20 just east of the city wastewater treatment plant, pass south of the Harrison County airport, use the Loop 390 alignment to north of Marshall, and then connect back to US 59 north of FM 1793. The option would be nearly 16 miles in length and would include two 12-foot mainlanes in each direction. The cost effectiveness of purchasing access rights versus constructing access roads would be studied during the environmental process, if the project progresses.

Working Group members then requested the preliminary recommendation be refined to also include an interchange at N. Buck Sherrod Road to provide better traffic circulation, bringing the total number of interchanges to 11. The Working Group Interstate route option preliminary recommendation is shown on Figure 5.

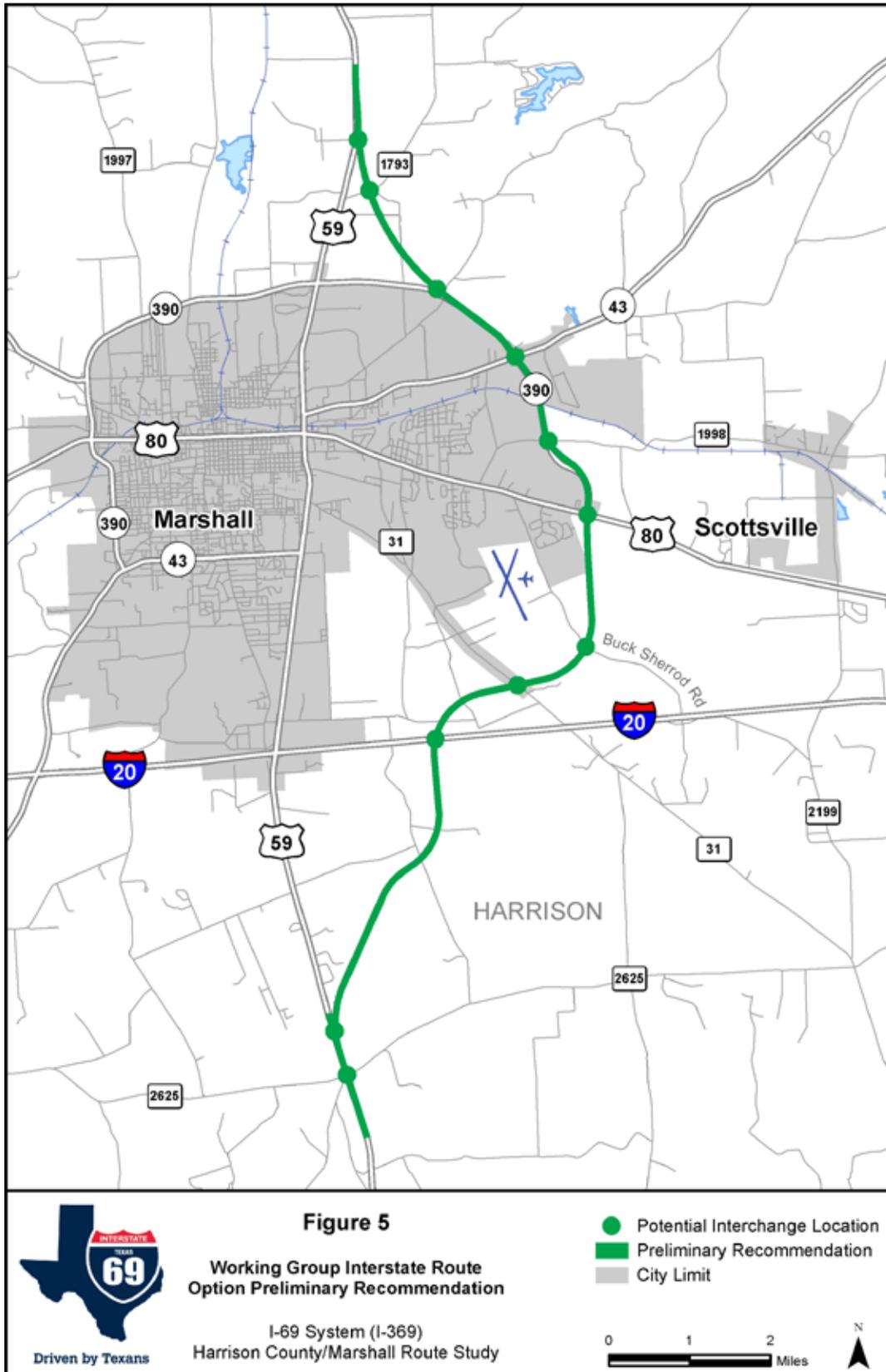


Figure 5. Working Group Interstate Route Option Preliminary Recommendation

WORKING GROUP PUBLIC OUTREACH PROCESS

As part of their charge and purpose, the Working Group was tasked with leading and conducting an extensive public outreach process to gather feedback on their Interstate route option preliminary recommendation.

Working Group members first identified the public outreach activities that would be effective in reaching the local citizens of the area. To support these activities, a variety of different tools were developed by TxDOT for possible use to educate, inform, and solicit citizen feedback on the Working Group Interstate route option preliminary recommendation. The Working Group members provided direction and approval during the August 12, 2014 Working Group meeting on which tools to use. The Working Group members utilized these selections as a part of their targeted outreach efforts. The types of tools included fact sheets; frequently asked questions (FAQs); comment form; narrated PowerPoint presentation; online survey; webpage updates; and figures, boards, and maps.

Public Outreach Activities

Working Group members participated in a robust public outreach process from August 18, 2014 through November 7, 2014, to inform local citizens of their Interstate route option preliminary recommendation and to solicit comments and input.

Working Group members' activities included:

- § Holding one-on-one meetings with local citizens;
- § Providing PowerPoint presentations at regularly scheduled local civic group and government meetings;
- § Distributing printed materials including fact sheets, FAQs, and comment forms;
- § Notifying citizens of an online survey and encouraging participation;
- § Notifying citizens of a webpage including Working Group information, study information, and comment tool;
- § Providing ongoing displays at public facilities;
- § Providing posts on social media outlets; and
- § Conducting a public open house.

Over 1,400 individuals were reached through the outreach activities. This number does not include those who viewed the ongoing displays, social media posts, or the webpage. Eleven presentations were made at community and civic group meetings, numerous emails were sent out, and numerous Facebook postings and Twitter tweets by Working Group members also occurred. Additionally, hyperlinks were posted on the Wiley College and Harrison County websites. Table 3 provides details on the formal presentations, emails, and ongoing displays provided by the Working Group members.

Table 3: Presentations, Emails, and Ongoing Displays by Working Group Members

| Organization/Group | Presenter | Date | Public Reached |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Marshall City Commission | Ed Smith | October 23 | 25 |
| Marshall Lions Club | Hugh Taylor | September 30 | 25 |
| City of Hallsville City Council | Jerri Medrano | August 19 | 50 |
| Harrison County Commissioner's Court | Hugh Taylor | September 8 | 29 |
| Hallsville High School | Hugh Taylor | October 6 | 11 |
| Historic Courthouse | Hugh Taylor | September 25 | 3 |
| Harrison County Main Courthouse | Hugh Taylor | ongoing display | Unknown |
| NAACP/American Legion Post 878 | Leo Morris | October 7 | 16 |
| Waskom City Council | Jesse Moore | September 9 | 13 |
| Waskom National Night Out | Jesse Moore | October 7 | 300 |
| Texas Municipal League – Longview | Jerri Medrano | September 3 | 60 |
| Manufacturing Council | Donna Maisel | September 17 | 22 |
| Road & Bridge Office | John Paul Jones | ongoing display | Unknown |
| Email to Manufacturing Council | Donna Maisel | September 17 | 26 |
| Email to Wiley College Community | Haywood Strickland and Ivan White | September 8 and October 6 | 600 |
| Public Open House | NA | October 28 | 269 |

A public open house was held on October 28, 2014, at the Marshall Civic Center, and 269 members of the public signed in. The open house provided an opportunity for the public to gather information on the Route Study, Working Group activities, Working Group Interstate route option preliminary recommendation; talk with Working Group members, TxDOT staff, and consultants; and provide comments and concerns regarding the options under study and any other issues that needed to be addressed, and take the online survey.

In addition to the Working Group efforts, TxDOT used social media sites Facebook and Twitter to provide information regarding the study, and mailed over 12,000 open house invitation postcards that included the Route Study webpage address. TxDOT also prepared public service announcements (PSAs), displays ads, and news releases advertising the open house.

Public Input

Online Survey Results

The online survey included 105 responses. Over 50 percent “strongly agreed” with the preliminary Interstate route option recommendation. Additionally, over 18 percent “agreed” which makes those in agreement with the Interstate route option preliminary recommendation totaling nearly 70 percent. Figure 6 shows the results of the survey in answer to the question “the Working Group’s preliminary recommended Interstate route option should be moved forward into the environmental process for further study.”

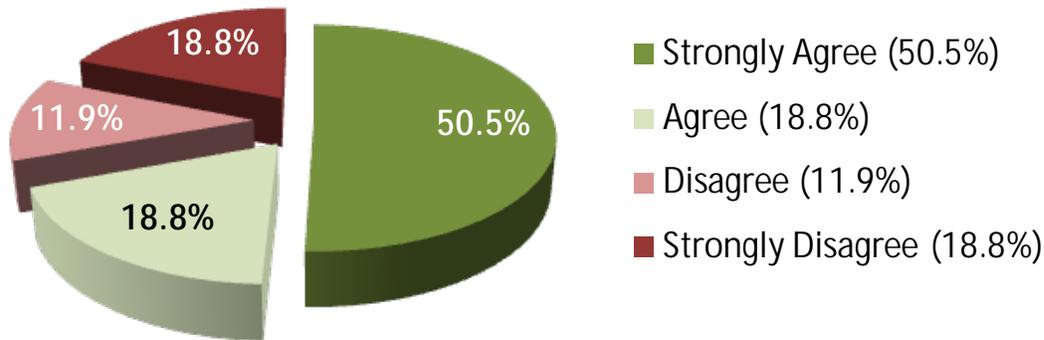


Figure 6. Survey Results

Written Comments

Input was formally received by means of written comments gathered from the open house, one-on-one meetings, through email and mail, and through an input box within the online survey. A total of 122 written comments were received.

Comments were summarized and provided to Working Group members in preparation for their fifth meeting. All comments were reviewed and categorized into eight categories: (1) cost/schedule; (2) economic development/business related; (3) personal property concerns; (4) access/travel time/traffic; (5) potential impacts/environmental impacts; (6) route location; (7) map comments; and (8) other/general that included other comments not relevant to the previous categories. It was noted that the comments were typical of comments traditionally received during a project planning phase, and no new information on existing conditions that would warrant a substantive change to the route study and options was expressed. The comments will be considered in the environmental process, should the project progress.

Additionally route location themes that resulted from the comments were summarized as follows:

- North connection area – The residential neighborhood between US 59 and Fern Lake was the subject of several comments. Some comments suggested going east of Fern Lake and the water holding area, or going farther along Loop 390 before turning north, or tying in farther to the north to avoid Stage Coach House and Karma Farms.

- Middle area near I-20 – There were comments suggesting a preference for (1) the E-5 option, (2) to go farther east near Scottsville, (3) to extend Loop 390 as originally planned, or (4) to have a joint-use section on I-20, and that the E-4 option is circuitous. (See Figure 3 for location of E-5 and E-4.)
- South connection area – Several comments regarding the southern connection point suggested moving the tie-in point to US 59 farther to the north to avoid Union Church, the properties behind the church, and the Southfield Estates neighborhood.
- Other – The upgrade of existing US 59 and the construction of a “skyway” or elevated freeway along the existing US 59 ROW were suggested, as well as going west of Marshall through the mining area.

Conclusion

Working Group Final Recommendation

During Working Group meeting 5 on November 18, 2014, it was concluded that concerns about the northern and southern tie-in points, moving east, and the No Action Alternative would be considered in any future environmental studies. Additionally, the Working Group was in agreement that going west through the mining areas would be difficult because of ground settlement, making it the least suitable location to construct a roadway. It was also reiterated that moving the route option farther east may pose a financial strain on the City of Marshall to provide utility services for future development.

Subsequent to Working Group meeting 5, it was further recommended that the existing US 59/ Loop 390 intersection be included as the potential northern tie-in point interchange and be included in the future environmental studies.

The Working Group members concurred to carry their Interstate route option preliminary recommendation (Figure 5) forward as a final recommendation to TxDOT to be studied in detail as part of the environmental process, should the project progress.

The Next Steps

The I-69 System (I-369) Harrison County/Marshall Working Group has performed an important function by developing an Interstate route option preliminary recommendation, vetting it with local citizens, and determining an Interstate route option final recommendation. The key next steps in advancing I-369 in the Marshall area are listed below.

Identify Funding Sources

Environmental evaluation, design, and construction funding has not been identified for any portion of the Interstate route option. TxDOT will work with local officials to develop a long-term strategy to identify funding for advancing projects in the Marshall area. This may include federal, state, and local resources as well as innovative financing tools such as tolls, local participation in ROW costs, ROW donations from local landowners, and the establishment of a Transportation Reinvestment Zone (TRZ). A TRZ is a funding tool where the local governing body designates a zone in which it will

promote a transportation project. Once the zone is created, a base year is established, and the incremental increase in property tax revenue collected inside the zone is used to finance the project in the zone.

Complete the Environmental and Schematic Design Process

Once funding has been identified, TxDOT will carry the results of this study into the environmental and schematic design process for the entire I-369 route or for individual sections of the route that would have logical termini and independent utility. It is not known at this time when the project will be developed.

The Working Group's final recommendation, combined with public sentiment endorsing the Interstate route option, is evidence that this new location route should be studied in further detail in the environmental process. During this effort more data would be gathered, additional public involvement would occur, and further refinements would likely be made to reduce effects to residential properties, commercial properties, and environmental features.

This report was written on behalf of the Texas Department of Transportation by
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