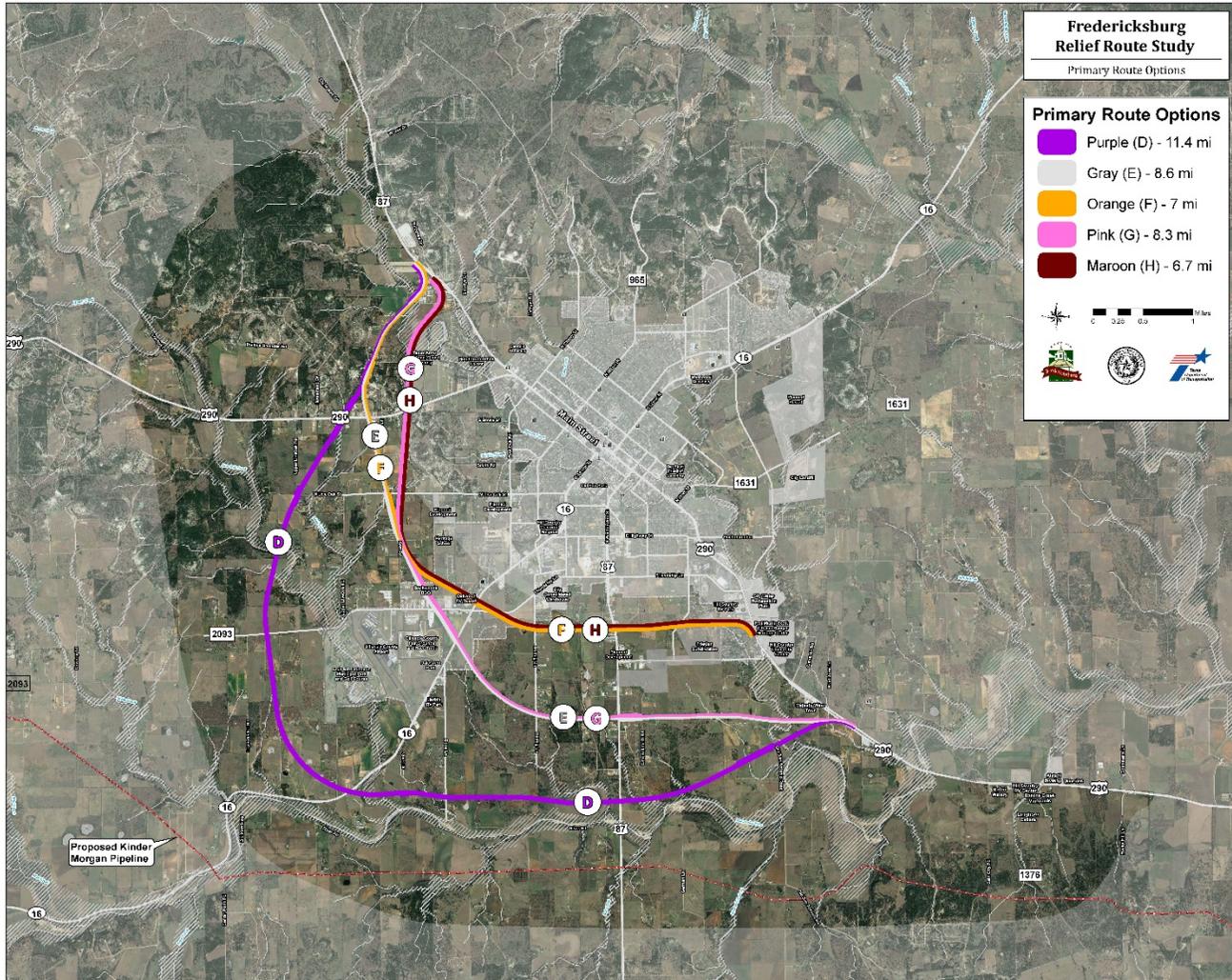


# Fredericksburg Relief Route Study

## Frequently Asked Questions



NOTE: The Primary Route Options, shown above, are not final. These options are subject to modification and refinement as the Relief Route Study progresses.

The Fredericksburg Relief Route Study, overseen by the Gillespie County Relief Route Task Force, is exploring the feasibility of a potential US 290 relief route around Fredericksburg. Support for the study is provided by the City of Fredericksburg, Gillespie County and the Texas Department of Transportation. The relief route would give people the option to travel around, rather than directly through, the City.

US 290 is an east-west highway that passes through downtown Fredericksburg and its Main Street tourist area. Discussions about a possible relief route have been ongoing in the Gillespie County area for many years. As traffic volumes and congestion continue to increase, the need for a relief route has become an important safety and quality-of-life issue for the community.

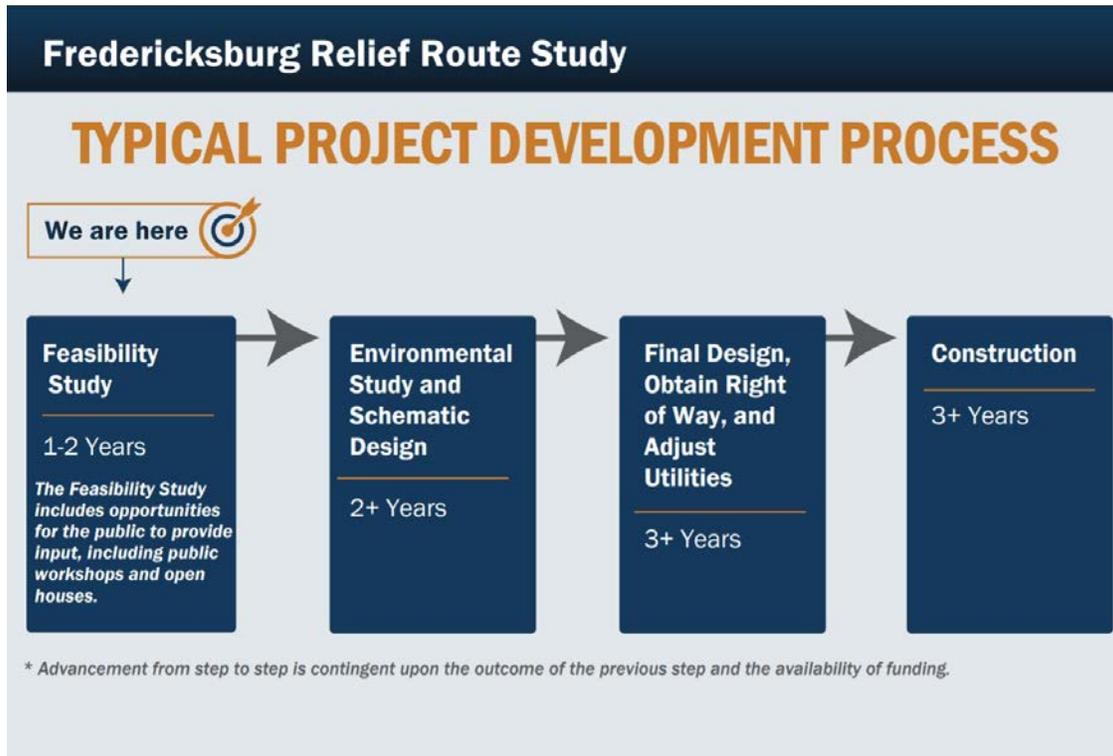
To date, three public workshops have been held (May 2018, September 2018, and January 2019). Public input received in response to the workshops was used, along with engineering criteria and environmental considerations, to identify, refine, and evaluate route options. Over the last several months, the number of route options was reduced. The five remaining options (the “Primary Route Options”) will be presented at the July 23 Open House for public review and comment.

Throughout the extensive public involvement process, the study team has received many questions from the public. With the goal of keeping the community up to date and informed, these Frequently Asked Questions answer some of those questions and will be updated as the study progresses. For more information on the study visit [txdot.gov](http://txdot.gov) and search keyword “Fredericksburg.”

## 1. What is the purpose of the Fredericksburg Relief Route Study (Relief Route Study)?

The City of Fredericksburg and Gillespie County requested assistance from TxDOT to address congestion problems on US 290 (Main Street) in Fredericksburg. The Fredericksburg Relief Route Study was initiated in response to the community’s request. The purpose of the study is to determine if there is a viable and publicly-supported route option that addresses Main Street traffic concerns.

It should be noted that if the study indicates that the relief route is supported by the community and a locally-preferred option is identified, that option would become the starting point for future phases of project development. Future phases would include detailed environmental studies (conducted in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969), schematic development and final design. The diagram, below, depicts the typical project development process.



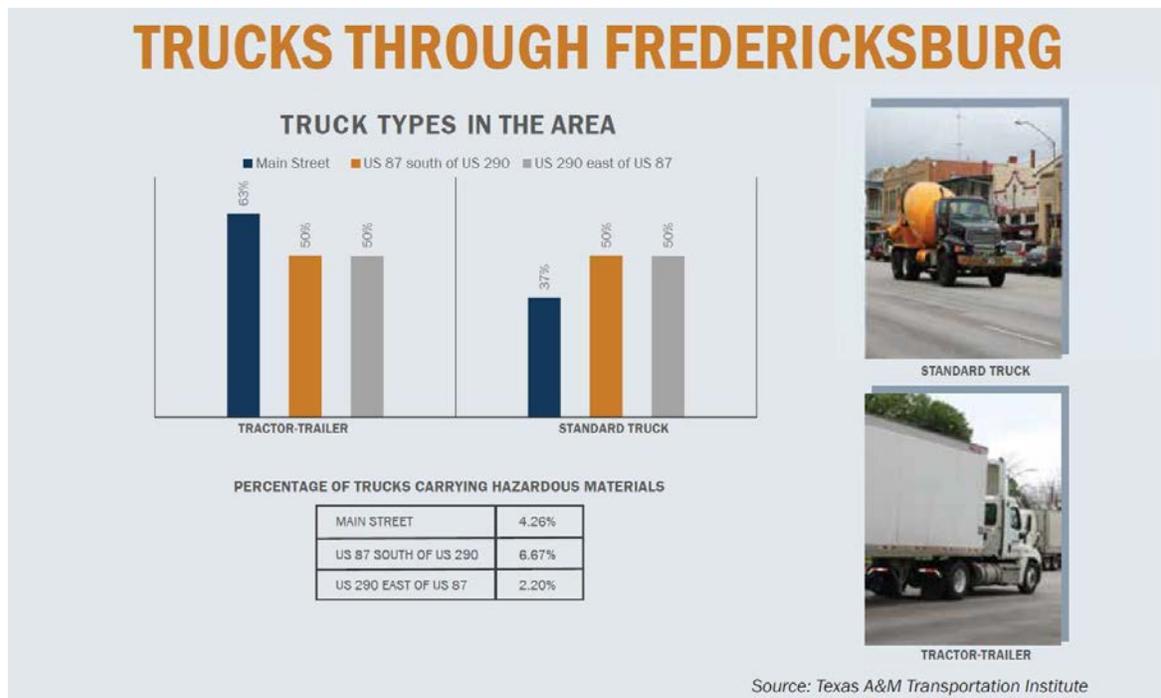
During each phase, the relief route would continue to evolve and be refined. The exact location and right-of-way footprint would not be established until after environmental studies are conducted and the design is complete.

**2. Why does the study area go south of Fredericksburg?**

A preliminary computer-based traffic analysis conducted in early 2018 showed that twice as many vehicles would use a relief route connecting US 87 north of Fredericksburg to US 290 east of Fredericksburg if the route is located south (rather than north) of town; thus, a southern route would provide the most relief for Main Street traffic.

**3. Why do we need to relieve Main Street?**

Main Street through the City of Fredericksburg is plagued by congestion. Some of this congestion is made up of cars and trucks that are just trying to get through Fredericksburg. Preliminary traffic analysis conducted last year showed that approximately 6,500 vehicles per day would use a southern relief route, rather than Main Street, if a relief route was available. One-thousand of those vehicles would be trucks. This accounts for approximately 60% of the existing truck traffic. If we don't do anything, the number of cars and trucks using Main Street will continue to increase.



**4. Why are we studying routes so far outside the City limits?**

The Fredericksburg Relief Route Study is evaluating multiple routes at a high-level for viability, mobility benefit, and impact avoidance. Lady Bird Johnson Municipal Park, the Gillespie County Fairgrounds, and the airport are major constraints that need to be avoided.

A large study area was developed to allow flexibility to consider routes on either side of these important community landmarks. The southern limit of the study area reflects the approximate point at which it would become less efficient (due to longer drive time) to travel on the relief route than remain on existing US 290 and contend with the traffic, lights, and congestion on Main Street. In other words, routes outside the study area would be so long that they would no longer be an effective alternative to Main Street and the benefit is lost. Before a locally-preferred route option is identified, a more detailed traffic analysis will be conducted to assess and compare mobility benefits of the final route options.

**5. Shouldn't TxDOT first determine where the trucks on Main Street are headed before determining a relief route?**

At the beginning of the Fredericksburg Relief Route Study, a preliminary traffic analysis was conducted using Bluetooth technology. The data shows where vehicles come into the City and where they leave the City. The data also showed how long they stayed in the City.

A southern study area was established because the traffic data indicated that twice as many vehicles would use a relief route connecting US 87 north of Fredericksburg to US 290 east of Fredericksburg if it was located to the south (rather than to the north) side of the City. The traffic analysis showed that a relief route would divert approximately 6,500 vehicles away from Main Street per day. Of the 6,500 vehicles, 1,000 are trucks which accounts for about 60% of existing truck traffic.

**6. Can TxDOT require trucks to detour around Fredericksburg?**

No. TxDOT does not have the legal authority to prohibit the use of any highway by any class of vehicle (such as trucks), provided the vehicle complies with weight and size limits, and other provisions established by law.

**7. Who will pay for the construction of the relief route?**

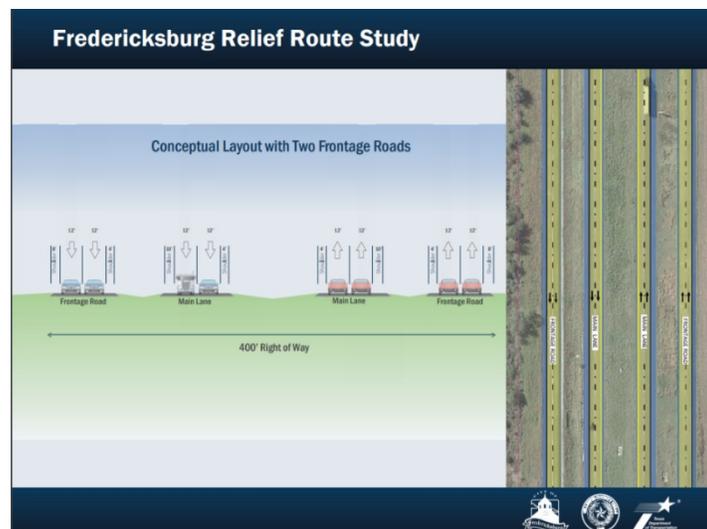
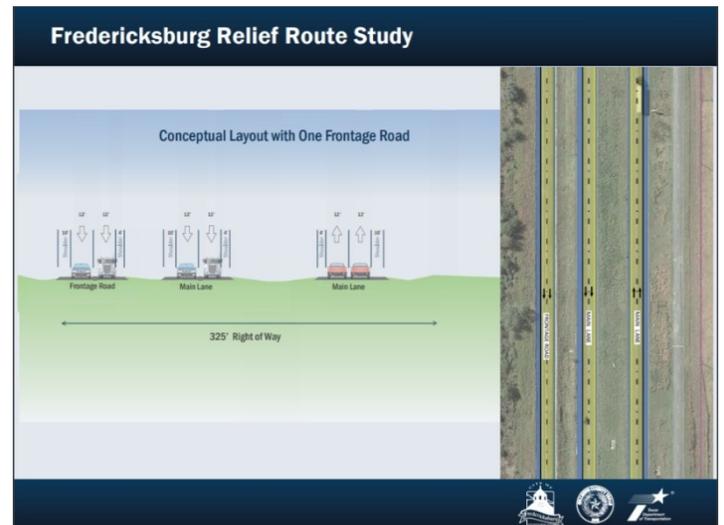
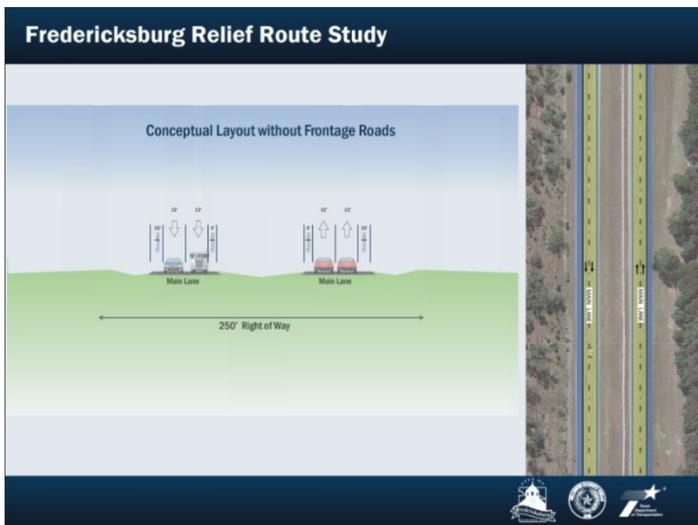
Prior to initiating the current Relief Route Study, TxDOT, the City of Fredericksburg and Gillespie County agreed upon a set of conditions to guide the planning effort (assuming the project advances beyond the current study and ultimately comes to fruition). One of the agreed upon conditions is that the City and County will provide 100% of any needed right-of-way. In addition, the City and County will contribute toward the cost of construction. Preliminary construction cost estimates were developed. Cost was one of the factors considered when identifying the Primary Route Options. The cost of the relief route will be refined, over time, as more detail about the design and construction is developed. In the future, when a more final construction estimate is developed, TxDOT, the City and the County will develop a plan for funding the project and establishing the local (City and County) contributions.

**8. Why do we need 400 foot of Right-of-Way?**

The relief route must meet federally required criteria for a multi-lane, rural highway. A rural four-lane divided highway should include 12-foot wide travel lanes, 4-foot wide inside shoulders and 10-foot wide outside shoulders for a total pavement width of 38 feet in each direction of travel. A desirable design also includes a wide grassy median for increased safety and to accommodate slopes for elevation differences between the directions of travel. Studies indicate that wider medians between directions of travel reduce the occurrence of head-on crashes and the severity of such crashes. Wider medians also reduce the effect that headlights have on the vision of drivers in the opposing direction. TxDOT design criteria call for a desirable median width of 76 feet for divided rural highways.

In addition, the highway would require frontage roads where needed for local access. Each frontage road would typically consist of two 12-foot lanes, a 4-foot inside shoulder and an 8-foot outside shoulder. Separation of 50 feet or more between the main lanes and frontage roads would be provided for increased safety and to accommodate access ramps to connect the main lanes to the frontage roads. Additional width of 30 to 40 feet would accommodate drainage ditches and slopes for elevation differences between the pavement and adjacent existing ground. The combination of these various components of the proposed highway facility results in a right-of-way planning width of about 400 feet.

Although a 400-foot right-of-way was initially assumed for planning purposes, it is always TxDOT's goal to minimize project-related impacts. To that end, the study team recently completed an initial assessment of frontage road and access needs for each of the route options. The goal of that assessment was to identify those locations where frontage roads would be anticipated due for access and connectivity with the local roadway network. Right-of-way assumptions for each route option were then adjusted accordingly. In areas where frontage roads are anticipated on both sides of the roadway, a 400-foot right-of-way is assumed. In areas where frontage roads are only required on one side, a 325-foot right of way is assumed. In areas where frontage roads are not anticipated, the right-of-way was reduced to 250-feet.



## 9. Will there be access off the relief route?

It is anticipated that portions of the route would have frontage roads with access ramps from the frontage roads to the main lanes. In areas without frontage roads, connections would be provided from some cross streets to the relief route. In some cases, access may be provided to individual properties.

It is important to note that if a frontage road is required to maintain or provide access to adjacent properties, the amount of right-of-way required is affected. In areas that do not require frontage roads, less right-of-way would be required.

Toward the end of the Relief Route Study process, a project layout (called a “preliminary schematic”) will be developed. The preliminary schematic will reflect access needs as (tentatively) identified during the Relief Route Study. Final decisions regarding access would be made during development of the final schematic and the environmental process (which are not part of the current study).

**10. Why is cost not a consideration for the relief route at this juncture?**

Since the January 2019 Public Workshop, preliminary construction estimates were developed for each of the eight Preliminary Route Options presented at the workshop. The preliminary cost estimates are one of the factors considered as the Preliminary Route Options were evaluated and the Primary Route Options were identified.

The alternatives evaluation process is being conducted in two steps. The first step is now complete. During the first step, a wide range of factors was considered and the impacts of each of the Preliminary Route Options were compared. Factors considered during the initial evaluation included cost, environmental impacts, the amount of right-of-way required, the number of creek/river crossings, and the number of anticipated displacements. This initial evaluation led to identification of the five Primary Route Options.

The second step of the evaluation process will focus on the five Primary Route Options and will include detailed traffic and operational analyses of each of the remaining options and historic survey results. With this additional information, the five remaining routes will once again be compared and the results used to identify the locally-preferred route option.

**11. Will the cost of constructing over hills and building bridges over streams be a factor in selecting the locally-preferred route option?**

Yes. When developing the initial route options, efforts were made to avoid the most difficult terrain, but in the hill country, hills and streams cannot be entirely avoided. The preliminary construction cost estimates prepared for the Preliminary Route Options reflect the need for bridges and other terrain-related costs. The cost estimates, which were considered during the recently-completed evaluation of the Preliminary Route Options, will be presented at the July 23 Open House.

**12. Will you consider noise and light pollution in the feasibility study?**

No. Noise studies and consideration of light impacts are not within the scope of the current Relief Route Study. The purpose of the current study is to identify a locally-preferred route option that will address the traffic and safety issues on Main Street. If the community and TxDOT decide to take the locally-preferred route option to the next phase of project development, then noise and light issues will be reviewed and addressed as part of the federal environmental study. Although noise and lighting issues will not be evaluated in the current study, the number of residences located within 250 feet of a route is one of the criteria that was used to evaluate the Preliminary Route Options and identify the five Primary Route Options that will be shown at the July Open House for public review and comment. The number of residences located within 250 feet of a route provides an indication of the number of homes that could potentially be impacted by noise, light and other conditions associated with being close to the roadway.

**13. Why must the relief route be built to accommodate 60 mph?**

US 290 is part of the United States highway network and therefore must meet federally required criteria for a multi-lane, rural highway. These criteria require a minimum 60 mph design speed, but establish 70 mph as the desirable design speed for this roadway type. During the planning process, the study team uses the higher desirable design speed to allow for flexibility to provide for the best design possible later in the detailed environmental study and schematic design phase. The design speed for the Fredericksburg Relief Route Study is 70 mph.

**14. Who are the members of the Gillespie County Relief Route Task Force (Task Force)?**

The Task Force is comprised of individuals representing the following entities: City of Fredericksburg, Gillespie County, Fredericksburg Chamber of Commerce, Gillespie County Economic Development Commission, and the general public. The members include:

**Farm Bureau Appointee:**

Peggy Matli

**Chamber Appointee:**

Jim Jarreau

**County Appointees:**

County Commissioner Donnie Schuch  
County Commissioner Charles Olfers  
Cord Switzer

**Gillespie County Economic Development Commission Appointee**

Tim Lehmborg

**City Appointees:**

Kory Keller, Chairman  
Linda Langerhans, Fredericksburg  
Mayor Kent Myers, City Manager  
Clinton Bailey, Assistant City  
Manager Bobby Watson

**Fredericksburg Convention and Visitor Bureau Appointee:**

Larry Jackson

**15. What constitutes a historic property?**

“Historic property” means any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places maintained by the Secretary of the Interior (National Park Service).

To date, efforts to identify potentially-historic properties in the study area have included reviewing records maintained by the Texas Historical Commission to identify study area properties currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, information from TxDOT’s files (collected through previous historic resources surveys conducted in or near Fredericksburg) has been reviewed to identify properties within the study area that have been determined eligible for listing on the National Register, but which are not currently listed. A comprehensive Historic Resource Survey would normally be conducted as part of the future environmental study should the relief route advance beyond the current study phase; however, because of the number of potentially-historic properties in the study area and the level of public interest in those properties, TxDOT decided to conduct an historic resource survey in conjunction with the current study. The historic resource survey is now underway.

**16. Under what circumstances will TxDOT use eminent domain?**

First and foremost, the City and County are years away from talking to property owners about purchasing their property for a relief route. Generally, right-of-way acquisition does not occur until after required environmental studies are complete and “environmental clearance” is secured.

At this time, the study team anticipates identification of a locally-preferred route option and completion of the Relief Route Study in late 2019 or early 2020. Upon completion of the study, TxDOT and the community will determine if and when to initiate the required environmental study. Once started, it is expected that the environmental process (which will include additional opportunities for the public to provide input) will take two to three years to complete. During the environmental study, the route may be further refined and modified. Not until the environmental study is complete will the City and County know what property will be needed to construct the relief route.

The goal would be to reach an agreement with affected landowners. Acquisition of right-of-way through the eminent domain process would be a last resort when an agreement cannot be reached. The City and County would be responsible for providing the needed right-of-way.

For more information, visit [txdot.gov](http://txdot.gov) and search keyword “**Fredericksburg.**”

To receive emailed updates about the the Fredericksburg Relief Route Study, email requests to: [fredericksburgreliefroute@gmail.com](mailto:fredericksburgreliefroute@gmail.com).