



Project Coordination Plan

Environmental Impact Statement

SH 68 from IH-2/US 83 to IH-69C/US 281

CSJs: 3629-01-001, -002, -003

Hidalgo County, Texas

Texas Department of Transportation – Pharr District

January 2017 (VERSION 8)

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated December 16, 2014, and executed by FHWA and TxDOT.

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1.0 PURPOSE OF THE COORDINATION PLAN

In accordance with 23 U.S. Code § 139(g), TxDOT (as lead agency) has prepared this coordination plan for the proposed State Highway (SH) 68 project in Hidalgo County. This plan is intended to establish a schedule and process for coordinating public and agency participation and comment during the environmental review process. The coordination plan is developed early in the environmental and planning process and will be adjusted and updated as input is received from cooperating and participating agencies and as the complexity of potential environmental issues is identified.

2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 Project Location

The proposed SH 68 project would consist of a four-lane divided rural highway facility with future main lanes and overpasses in Hidalgo County between Interstate Highway (IH)-2/United State Highway (US) 83 and IH-69C/US 281. Areas within the project study area include the cities of Alamo, Pharr, Donna, Edinburg, San Juan, and San Carlos.

2.2 Purpose and Need

The purpose of the project is to improve north/south mobility, increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic, and provide an alternate north-south evacuation route during emergency events. The project need is a lack of sufficient north/south mobility for local and regional traffic and for additional emergency evacuation routes, which are the result of historical and continuing growth in the region's population as well as continued growth of traffic in the region.

2.3 Project History

The significance of impacts for the proposed SH 68 project was initially uncertain, so the process began by preparing an environmental assessment (EA). Based on preliminary analysis and feedback from the public, it was determined that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) should be prepared. The EIS will incorporate information collected during the EA process; in addition, public input gathered during the development of the EA will be considered in the EIS process. The EIS will develop and evaluate a range of alternatives including “No-action” (the no-build alternative), Transportation System Management (TSM)/Transportation Demand Management (TDM), rapid transit and roadway build alternatives. The EIS will analyze potential direct, indirect and cumulative impacts from construction and operation of proposed corridor improvements including, but not limited to, the following: transportation impacts; air quality and noise impacts; water quality impacts including storm water runoff; impacts to waters of the United States including wetlands; impacts to floodplains; impacts to historic and archeological resources; impacts to threatened and endangered species; socioeconomic

impacts including environmental justice communities; impacts to and/or potential displacements of land use, vegetation, residents and businesses; and impacts to aesthetic and visual resources.

2.4 Projected Cost of Project

The projected construction related cost in 2014 dollars of the ultimate facility described in the current Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is currently estimated at \$507,300,000.

3.0 AGENCY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Lead Agency:

TxDOT will serve as the lead agency for the proposed project. The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated December 16, 2014, and executed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and TxDOT. TxDOT will develop the environmental documents in accordance with 23 CFR 771 and 40 CFR 1500-1508.

The lead agency will:

- Identify and involve cooperating and participating agencies in the environmental review process;
- Develop coordination plans;
- Solicit input from the public and participating agencies on the project's purpose and need;
- Finalize the purpose and need statement;
- Provide opportunities for the public and agencies to provide input on refined alternatives;
- Ensure environmental commitments are completed; and
- Manage the environmental review process and assist in addressing/resolving any potential issues.

3.2 Participating Agencies:

Federal, State, tribal, regional, and local government agencies that may have an interest in the project were invited to serve as participating agencies. **Appendix A** contains copies of the invitation letters to participating and Section 106 participating agencies.

The roles and responsibilities of participating agencies include, but are not limited to:

- Participating in the scoping process;
- Participating in the NEPA process with regard to development of the purpose and need statement, range of alternatives, and evaluation methodologies and criteria; and
- Identifying and providing early input on issues of concern regarding the project's potential environmental or socioeconomic impacts.

Accepting a role as a participating agency does not imply that an agency supports the project or has jurisdiction or special expertise with respect to the evaluation of the project.

3.3 Cooperating Agencies:

Cooperating agencies are federal participating agencies which have either jurisdiction by law regarding aspect(s) of the proposed project or special expertise pertaining to the proposed project. TxDOT, as the lead agency, invited potential cooperating agencies to participate as such. Cooperating agencies will assist in the preparation, coordination, and review of the EIS. If a Federal agency chooses to decline the invitation to become a cooperating agency, their response letter (electronic or hard copy) must state that the agency has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the project, or has no expertise or information relevant to the project, and does not intend to submit comments on the project. If the Federal agency's response does not state the agency's position in these terms, then the agency should be treated as a participating agency. See **Appendix A** for copies of the cooperating agency invitation letters.

Table 1 summarizes the roles and responsibilities of participating and cooperating agencies identified to date.

Table 1. Cooperating and Participating Agencies

Agency	Roles		Response	Responsibility (need input from agencies about their roles and responsibilities before finalizing)
	Cooperating	Participating		
United States Fish and Wildlife Service	X		Cooperating agency invitation mailed on October 2, 2015. Response received on February 26, 2016, accepting Cooperating Agency status	<p>Provide input on potential threatened and endangered species within the study area.</p> <p>Provide input on designated critical habitat within the study area.</p> <p>Ensure compliance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.</p> <p>Provide input on potential impacts to wildlife refuges within the project area.</p> <p>Ensure compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.</p> <p>Ensure compliance with the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.</p> <p>Ensure compliance with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act.</p>
United States Army Corps of Engineers		X	Cooperating agency invitation mailed on October 2, 2015. No response received; default to Participating Agency	<p>Ensure compliance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.</p> <p>Ensure compliance with Section 10 of the General Bridge Act of 1946.</p>
United States Department of Housing and Urban Development		X	Cooperating agency invitation mailed on October 2, 2015. Response received on January 6, 2016 declining Cooperation Agency status; default to Participating Agency	Ensure compliance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970.
Federal Transit Administration		X	No response received	

Table 1. Cooperating and Participating Agencies

Agency	Roles		Response	Responsibility (need input from agencies about their roles and responsibilities before finalizing)
	Cooperating	Participating		
Environmental Protection Agency		X	No response received	Ensure compliance with Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA) Ensure compliance with hazardous materials regulations.
United States Department of Agriculture		X	No response received	Ensure compliance with the Farmland Protection Policy Act.
Texas Secretary of State			Declined invitation to be a Participating Agency; does not intend to submit comments on the project	Provide information on colonias located within the project study area.
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department		X	Interested in acting as a Participating Agency in the SH 68 EIS process	Provide input on potential threatened and endangered species and habitat that could be impacted in the project area.
State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)/ Texas Historical Commission		X	No response received; remains Participating Agency under Section 106	Determine Section 106 compliance and eligibility. Ensure compliance with the Texas Antiquities Code. Ensure compliance with Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966. Ensure compliance with the TxDOT THC/SHPO programmatic agreement. Coordinate cultural resource consultations.
Texas Railroad Commission			No response received	
Texas General Land Office			No response received	

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Agency	Roles		Response	Responsibility (need input from agencies about their roles and responsibilities before finalizing)
	Cooperating	Participating		
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality		X	No response received; remains Participating Agency because of MOU	Ensure compliance with Section 401 of the Clean Water Act. Ensure compliance with state surface water quality standards. Evaluate Texas Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits. Assist EPA to determine conformity of air quality plans. Provide input on hazardous material sites.
Apache Tribe of Oklahoma			No response received; becomes interested party because of individual MOUs and coordination with TxDOT liaison	
Comanche Nation of Oklahoma			No response received; becomes interested party because of individual MOUs and coordination with TxDOT liaison	
Kiowa Indian Tribe of Oklahoma			No response received; becomes interested party because of individual MOUs and coordination with TxDOT liaison	

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Agency	Roles		Response	Responsibility (need input from agencies about their roles and responsibilities before finalizing)
	Cooperating	Participating		
Mescalero Apache Tribe			No response received; becomes interested party because of individual MOUs and coordination with TxDOT liaison	
Tonkawa Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma			No response received; becomes interested party because of individual MOUs and coordination with TxDOT liaison	
Hidalgo County Historical Commission			No response received; becomes interested party because of individual MOUs and coordination with TxDOT liaison	
Rio Grande Delta Archeological Society			No response received; becomes interested party because of individual MOUs and coordination with TxDOT liaison	

4.0 PROJECT COORDINATION

4.1 Agency Coordination:

TxDOT will facilitate the agency coordination process through the scheduling of agency scoping meetings to ensure meaningful participation during the project development process. **Table 2** identifies key agency coordination points throughout the project development and NEPA process. This list does not preclude additional coordination opportunities with these agencies during the EIS process.

Table 2. Agency Coordination

Agency Coordination Point	Timeframe
Publication of Notice of Intent (NOI)* in the Federal and Texas Register	August 28, 2015
Modal Alternatives Conference: Meeting with local agencies with an interest in additional modal alternatives to discuss: 1) multi-modal alternatives; 2) TDM/TSM/ITS strategies; 3) applicability and use of previous route alternatives developed during EA process; and 4) other issues as identified by TxDOT and project team.	January 22, 2016
Agency Scoping Meeting: Including participating and cooperating agencies to gather input on draft coordination plan, input on the project purpose and need, review preliminary alternatives, and identify potential resource issues or constraints.	March 29, 2016
Notice of Availability and DEIS Circulation	Summer 2017 (45-day public and agency review period)
FEIS/Record of Decision	Fall 2017
*A copy of the published NOI is included as Appendix B	

4.2 Public Involvement and Stakeholder Outreach:

Given the local and regional importance of the SH 68 Study, the public involvement activities planned for the SH 68 project will include a comprehensive public involvement program designed to proactively engage and encourage participation of all interested stakeholders. A copy of the Draft Public Involvement Plan (PIP) is included in **Appendix C**. The Draft PIP will be periodically updated as a result of ongoing public involvement and input. Additionally, issues specific to this project may require adjustments to the PIP to address communication obstacles encountered during public outreach efforts.

Table 3 identifies key public involvement and stakeholder outreach efforts that will be undertaken throughout the project development and NEPA process.

Table 3. Public Involvement/Stakeholder Outreach

Public Involvement/Stakeholder Outreach Point	Timeframe
<p>Establishing a Project Office: The SH 68 Project Office will be utilized throughout the EIS process and is located centrally to the study area. The office will house the latest project information, exhibits, and handouts, as well as information developed since the inception of the project.</p>	Spring 2016-Winter 2017
<p>Project Hotline: A local phone number will be established to serve as a project hotline. The number will be answered by bilingual staff Monday through Friday during normal business hours and until 8:00 PM on Tuesdays and Wednesday. The Engineer will also establish a toll free comment line where voice messages can be left 24 hours a day, 7 days per week.</p>	Spring 2016-Winter 2017
<p>Project Webpage: A project page on TxDOT's website will be established to provide updated project information to the public.</p>	Summer 2015-Winter 2017
<p>E-Newsletter: An e-newsletter will be developed and distributed to a targeted audience inform stakeholders about upcoming project milestones and public involvement opportunities. All information will be provided in both English and Spanish.</p>	Winter 2016-Winter 2017
<p>Stakeholder Meetings</p>	Winter 2016-Spring 2017
<p>Technical Work Group (TWG): May include TxDOT District and Division Staff, HCMPO, HCRMA, City and County elected officials and technical staff, and key stakeholders whose properties may be directly affected by the improvements under study and other special interest groups.</p> <p>The TWG will be responsible for reviewing and commenting on evaluation measures, conceptual alternatives, and the screening process. They shall also provide feedback on public participation activities, assist in the development of the stakeholder database, and serve as a liaison to their respective organizations. They may also be asked to give feedback to the team on the clarity and comprehension of the presentations to be made to the public.</p>	Summer 2015-Spring 2017
<p>Public Meetings: The Public Scoping Meeting will include presentation of the project history, draft purpose and need, project coordination plan, and preliminary alternative corridors for public consideration and comment.</p> <p>The subsequent Public Meeting will include presentation of refined alternatives and environmental constraints for public consideration and comment.</p>	<p>Public Scoping Meeting: March 15, 2016</p> <p>Public Meeting: January 3, 2017</p>
<p>A Public Hearing will be conducted after approval of the DEIS to present the recommended preferred alternative.</p>	Summer 2017

Objectives of the SH 68 public involvement process include:

- Fulfill NEPA and TxDOT requirements for public involvement;
- Ensure project involvement and public outreach with low income, limited English proficiency, and special needs populations within the study area;
- Use visually informative slides, exhibits, handouts, and presentations to help communicate technical concepts and retain public interest;
- Demonstrate to the public that their input is being incorporated in to the project development process.

5.0 PROJECT MILESTONES/SCHEDULE

5.1 Project Milestones

Major milestones and general timeframes are identified in **Table 4**. It is the intent of the lead agency to develop a schedule reflective of these milestones.

Table 4. Major Project Milestones

Milestone	Timeframe
Initiation of EIS process	Spring/Summer 2015
Draft Purpose and Need Traffic and Corridor Analysis	Spring/Summer 2015
Publish NOI in Federal and Texas Register	August 28, 2015
Develop preliminary universe of alternatives for Draft EIS (DEIS) and identify preliminary 600-foot corridors	Spring 2016
Public Scoping Meeting	March 15, 2016
Agency Scoping Meeting	March 29, 2016
Refine Alternatives and Screening Criteria	Spring/Summer 2016
Evaluate and refine alternatives to 350-foot diagrammatic to be evaluated in DEIS	Summer/Fall 2016
Public Meeting	January 3, 2017
DEIS preparation and identification of recommended preferred alternative and potential environmental impacts	Spring 2017
DEIS circulation	Summer 2017 (45-day agency and public comment period)
Public Hearing and presentation of recommended preferred alternative	Summer 2017
FEIS preparation	Fall 2017
Final decision on EIS and issuance of Record Of Decision	Fall 2017

5.2 Project Schedule

As the lead agency, TxDOT will develop a detailed project schedule for completion of the SH 68 EIS. The schedule will be developed taking the following factors into consideration:

- the responsibilities of participating agencies under applicable laws;
- the resources available to the cooperating agencies;
- the overall size and complexity of the project;
- the overall schedule for and cost of the project; and
- the sensitivity of the natural and historic resources that could be affected by the project.

Potential issues that may affect the schedule include the size and complexity of the project, community concerns, impacts to cultural resources (such as archeological sites and historic irrigation canals); and impacts to natural resources, (such as wetlands and potential threatened and endangered species habitat). The schedule may be extended pending unforeseen circumstances, but may only be shortened with the concurrence of affected cooperating agencies. The updated schedule reflecting major project milestones will be available at public and agency coordination meetings and on the TxDOT website.

6.0 REVISION HISTORY

Effective Date	Reason for and Description of Change
June 2015	Version 0. Preliminary draft version for TxDOT review and comment.
November 2015	Version 1. Updated to include NOI, Cooperating/Participating Agency Letters, and Project Schedule.
January - February 2016	Versions 2 through 5. Updates to address comments from Pharr District, Environmental Affairs Division, Office of Public Involvement, and the project team. Also changed I-2 and I-69C references to IH-2 and IH-69C.
March 2016	Version 6. Updates based on comments from Pharr District and Environmental Affairs Division. Table 2 (Agency Coordination) updated to reflect that USFWS accepted invitation to be a Cooperating Agency.
November 2016	Version 7. Removed Draft and line numbering. Changed order of US/I to I/US. Updated dates in Tables 2-4.
January 2017	Version 8. Revised PIP to reflect that name of the Office of Public Involvement changed to Public Involvement Section of the Transportation Planning and Programming Division.

APPENDIX A

Cooperating and Participating Agency

Invitation Letters



Texas Department of Transportation

125 EAST 11TH STREET | AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-2483 | (512) 416-2734 | WWW.TXDOT.GOV

October 2, 2015

Mr. Darren LeBlanc
Transportation Liaison
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Ecological Services Field Office
Compass Bank Building
10711 Burnet Road, Suite 200
Austin, Texas 78758

Re: SH 68 - Cooperating Agency Invitation Letter
Highway: State Highway (SH 68)
Project Limits: Interstate (I)-2/ United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/ US 281
County: Hidalgo County
District: Pharr District
CSJ: 3629-01-001

Dear Mr. LeBlanc:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is initiating an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the subject project. Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. TxDOT extends U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) an invitation to be a Cooperating Agency in the development of the EIS for the subject project. The purpose of the proposed project is to improve north/south mobility in the region, increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic, and provide alternate north-south evacuation routes during emergency events.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) dated December 16, 2014, and executed by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and TxDOT. Therefore, TxDOT is initiating this EIS in TxDOT's role as the lead federal agency under the MOU between TxDOT and FHWA. This MOU assigns to TxDOT, FHWA's responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act and other environmental laws.

Your agency has been identified as having specialized expertise and/or jurisdiction by law with regard to potential environmental effects related to the proposed project. Responsibilities of a Cooperating Agency include participating in the scoping process, developing information for the EIS, if applicable, and providing staff support for the timely review and preparation of the EIS.

Please respond to TxDOT in writing with an acceptance or denial of the invitation within two weeks from receipt of this letter. If your agency declines the invitation; in the response, please state the reason/reasons for declining the invitation. If you choose to decline, please specifically state in your response that your agency:

OUR GOALS

MAINTAIN A SAFE SYSTEM ▪ ADDRESS CONGESTION ▪ CONNECT TEXAS COMMUNITIES ▪ BEST IN CLASS STATE AGENCY

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- Has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the proposed project;
- Has no expertise or information relevant to the proposed project; or
- Does not intend to submit comments on the proposed project.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss in more detail the proposed project for SH 68 or your agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this EIS, please contact Robin Gelston, Environmental Coordinator, TxDOT-Pharr District, at (956) 702-6130.

Thank you for your cooperation and interest in this proposed project.

Sincerely,



Carlos Swonke, P.G.
Director of TxDOT Environmental Affairs Division

cc: Robin Gelston, Pharr District, TxDOT
Margil Maldonado Jr., P.E., Pharr District, TxDOT
Michael Chavez, Environmental Affairs Division, TxDOT
Nolan Nicholas, Pharr District, TxDOT
Rudy J. Rivera, P.E., RJ Rivera Associates, Inc.
Dean Tesmer, Blanton and Associates, Inc.



Texas Department of Transportation

125 EAST 11TH STREET | AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-2483 | (512) 416-2734 | WWW.TXDOT.GOV

October 2, 2015

Dr. Benjamin Tuggle, Ph.D.
Region 2 Administrator
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Southwest Region
P.O. Box 1306
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103-1306

Re: SH 68 - Cooperating Agency Invitation Letter
Highway: State Highway (SH 68)
Project Limits: Interstate (I)-2/ United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/ US 281
County: Hidalgo County
District: Pharr District
CSJ: 3629-01-001

Dear Dr. Tuggle:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is initiating an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the subject project. Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. TxDOT extends U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) an invitation to be a Cooperating Agency in the development of the EIS for the subject project. The purpose of the proposed project is to improve north/south mobility in the region, increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic, and provide alternate north-south evacuation routes during emergency events.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) dated December 16, 2014, and executed by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and TxDOT. Therefore, TxDOT is initiating this EIS in TxDOT's role as the lead federal agency under the MOU between TxDOT and FHWA. This MOU assigns to TxDOT, FHWA's responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act and other environmental laws.

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Please respond to TxDOT in writing with an acceptance or denial of the invitation within two weeks from receipt of this letter. If your agency declines the invitation; in the response, please state the reason/reasons for declining the invitation. If you choose to decline, please specifically state in your response that your agency:

- Has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the proposed project;

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Thank you for your cooperation and interest in this proposed project.

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October 2, 2015

Colonel Richard P. Pannell
District Engineer
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
Galveston District
P.O. Box 1229
Galveston, Texas 77553-1229

Re: SH 68 - Cooperating Agency Invitation Letter
Highway: State Highway (SH 68)
Project Limits: Interstate (I)-2/ United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/ US 281
County: Hidalgo County
District: Pharr District
CSJ: 3629-01-001

Dear Colonel Pannell:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is initiating an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the subject project. Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. TxDOT extends U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) an invitation to be a Cooperating Agency in the development of the EIS for the subject project. The purpose of the proposed project is to improve north/south mobility in the region, increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic, and provide alternate north-south evacuation routes during emergency events.

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Your agency has been identified as having specialized expertise and/or jurisdiction by law with regard to potential environmental effects related to the proposed project. Responsibilities of a Cooperating Agency include participating in the scoping process, developing information for the EIS, if applicable, and providing staff support for the timely review and preparation of the EIS.

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October 2, 2015

Ms. Barbara R. Britton
Director
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
Environmental Review Division
Room 7250, 451 7th Street SW
Washington, DC 20410

Re: SH 68 - Cooperating Agency Invitation Letter
Highway: State Highway (SH 68)
Project Limits: Interstate (I)-2/ United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/ US 281
County: Hidalgo County
District: Pharr District
CSJ: 3629-01-001

Dear Ms. Britton:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is initiating an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the subject project. Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. TxDOT extends U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) an invitation to be a Cooperating Agency in the development of the EIS for the subject project. The purpose of the proposed project is to improve north/south mobility in the region, increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic, and provide alternate north-south evacuation routes during emergency events.

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Michael Chavez, Environmental Affairs Division, TxDOT
Nolan Nicholas, Pharr District, TxDOT
Rudy J. Rivera, P.E., RJ Rivera Associates, Inc.
Dean Tesmer, Blanton and Associates, Inc.



Texas Department of Transportation

125 EAST 11TH STREET | AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-2483 | (512) 416-2734 | WWW.TXDOT.GOV

October 2, 2015

Mr. Robert Patrick
Regional Administrator
Federal Transit Administration, Region 6
819 Taylor Street, Room 8A36
Fort Worth, Texas 76102

Re: SH 68 - Participating Agency Invitation Letter
Highway: State Highway (SH 68)
Project Limits: Interstate (I)-2/ United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/ US 281
County: Hidalgo County
District: Pharr District
CSJ: 3629-01-001

Dear Mr. Patrick:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is initiating an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the subject project. Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. TxDOT extends Federal Transit Administration, Region 6 an invitation to be a Participating Agency in the development of the EIS for the subject project. The purpose of the proposed project is to improve north/south mobility in the region, increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic, and provide alternate north-south evacuation routes during emergency events.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) dated December 16, 2014, and executed by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and TxDOT. Therefore, TxDOT is initiating this EIS in TxDOT's role as the lead federal agency under the MOU between TxDOT and FHWA. This MOU assigns to TxDOT, FHWA's responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act and other environmental laws.

Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. Responsibilities of a Participating Agency include identifying, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the project's potential environmental or socioeconomic effects.

Please respond to TxDOT in writing with an acceptance or denial of the invitation within two weeks from receipt of this letter. If your agency declines the invitation; in the response, please state the reason/reasons for declining the invitation. If you choose to decline, please specifically state in your response that your agency:

- Has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the proposed project;
- Has no expertise or information relevant to the proposed project; or
- Does not intend to submit comments on the proposed project.

OUR GOALS

MAINTAIN A SAFE SYSTEM ▪ ADDRESS CONGESTION ▪ CONNECT TEXAS COMMUNITIES ▪ BEST IN CLASS STATE AGENCY

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If you have any questions or would like to discuss in more detail the proposed project for SH 68 or your agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this EIS, please contact Robin Gelston, Environmental Coordinator, TxDOT-Pharr District, at (956) 702-6130.

Thank you for your cooperation and interest in this proposed project.

Sincerely,



Carlos Swonke, P.G.
Director of TxDOT Environmental Affairs Division

cc: Robin Gelston, Pharr District, TxDOT
Margil Maldonado Jr., P.E., Pharr District, TxDOT
Michael Chavez, Environmental Affairs Division, TxDOT
Nolan Nicholas, Pharr District, TxDOT
Rudy J. Rivera, P.E., RJ Rivera Associates, Inc.
Dean Tesmer, Blanton and Associates



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October 2, 2015

Mr. Ron Curry
Regional Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Region 6
1445 Ross Avenue, Suite 1200, 6RA
Dallas, Texas 75202-2733

Re: SH 68 - Participating Agency Invitation Letter
Highway: State Highway (SH 68)
Project Limits: Interstate (I)-2/ United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/ US 281
County: Hidalgo County
District: Pharr District
CSJ: 3629-01-001

Dear Mr. Curry:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is initiating an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the subject project. Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. TxDOT extends U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) an invitation to be a Participating Agency in the development of the EIS for the subject project. The purpose of the proposed project is to improve north/south mobility in the region, increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic, and provide alternate north-south evacuation routes during emergency events.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) dated December 16, 2014, and executed by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and TxDOT. Therefore, TxDOT is initiating this EIS in TxDOT's role as the lead federal agency under the MOU between TxDOT and FHWA. This MOU assigns to TxDOT, FHWA's responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act and other environmental laws.

Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. Responsibilities of a Participating Agency include identifying, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the project's potential environmental or socioeconomic effects.

Please respond to TxDOT in writing with an acceptance or denial of the invitation within two weeks from receipt of this letter. If your agency declines the invitation; in the response, please state the reason/reasons for declining the invitation. If you choose to decline, please specifically state in your response that your agency:

- Has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the proposed project;
- Has no expertise or information relevant to the proposed project; or

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- Does not intend to submit comments on the proposed project.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss in more detail the proposed project for SH 68 or your agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this EIS, please contact Robin Gelston, Environmental Coordinator, TxDOT-Pharr District, at (956) 702-6130.

Thank you for your cooperation and interest in this proposed project.

Sincerely,



Carlos Swonke, P.G.
Director of TxDOT Environmental Affairs Division

cc: Robin Gelston, Pharr District, TxDOT
Margil Maldonado Jr., P.E., Pharr District, TxDOT
Michael Chavez, Environmental Affairs Division, TxDOT
Nolan Nicholas, Pharr District, TxDOT
Rudy J. Rivera, P.E., RJ Rivera Associates, Inc.
Dean Tesmer, Blanton and Associates



Texas Department of Transportation

125 EAST 11TH STREET | AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-2483 | (512) 416-2734 | WWW.TXDOT.GOV

October 2, 2015

Mr. Salvador Salinas
State Conservationist
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
101 South Main Street
Temple, Texas 76501

Re: SH 68 - Participating Agency Invitation Letter
Highway: State Highway (SH 68)
Project Limits: Interstate (I)-2/ United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/ US 281
County: Hidalgo County
District: Pharr District
CSJ: 3629-01-001

Dear Mr. Salinas:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is initiating an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the subject project. Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. TxDOT extends U.S. Department of Agriculture an invitation to be a Participating Agency in the development of the EIS for the subject project. The purpose of the proposed project is to improve north/south mobility in the region, increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic, and provide alternate north-south evacuation routes during emergency events.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) dated December 16, 2014, and executed by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and TxDOT. Therefore, TxDOT is initiating this EIS in TxDOT's role as the lead federal agency under the MOU between TxDOT and FHWA. This MOU assigns to TxDOT, FHWA's responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act and other environmental laws.

Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. Responsibilities of a Participating Agency include identifying, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the project's potential environmental or socioeconomic effects.

Please respond to TxDOT in writing with an acceptance or denial of the invitation within two weeks from receipt of this letter. If your agency declines the invitation; in the response, please state the reason/reasons for declining the invitation. If you choose to decline, please specifically state in your response that your agency:

- Has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the proposed project;
- Has no expertise or information relevant to the proposed project; or

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- Does not intend to submit comments on the proposed project.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss in more detail the proposed project for SH 68 or your agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this EIS, please contact Robin Gelston, Environmental Coordinator, TxDOT-Pharr District, at (956) 702-6130.

Thank you for your cooperation and interest in this proposed project.

Sincerely,



Carlos Swonke, P.G.
Director of TxDOT Environmental Affairs Division

cc: Robin Gelston, Pharr District, TxDOT
Margil Maldonado Jr., P.E., Pharr District, TxDOT
Michael Chavez, Environmental Affairs Division, TxDOT
Nolan Nicholas, Pharr District, TxDOT
Rudy J. Rivera, P.E., RJ Rivera Associates, Inc.
Dean Tesmer, Blanton and Associates



Texas Department of Transportation

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October 2, 2015

The Honorable Carlos Cascos
Texas Secretary of State
P.O. Box 12887
Austin, Texas 78711-2887

Re: SH 68 - Participating Agency Invitation Letter
Highway: State Highway (SH 68)
Project Limits: Interstate (I)-2/ United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/ US 281
County: Hidalgo County
District: Pharr District
CSJ: 3629-01-001

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is initiating an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the subject project. Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. TxDOT extends Texas Secretary of State an invitation to be a Participating Agency in the development of the EIS for the subject project. The purpose of the proposed project is to improve north/south mobility in the region, increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic, and provide alternate north-south evacuation routes during emergency events.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) dated December 16, 2014, and executed by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and TxDOT. Therefore, TxDOT is initiating this EIS in TxDOT's role as the lead federal agency under the MOU between TxDOT and FHWA. This MOU assigns to TxDOT, FHWA's responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act and other environmental laws.

Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. Responsibilities of a Participating Agency include identifying, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the project's potential environmental or socioeconomic effects.

Please respond to TxDOT in writing with an acceptance or denial of the invitation within two weeks from receipt of this letter. If your agency declines the invitation; in the response, please state the reason/reasons for declining the invitation. If you choose to decline, please specifically state in your response that your agency:

- Has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the proposed project;
- Has no expertise or information relevant to the proposed project; or
- Does not intend to submit comments on the proposed project.

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If you have any questions or would like to discuss in more detail the proposed project for SH 68 or your agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this EIS, please contact Robin Gelston, Environmental Coordinator, TxDOT-Pharr District, at (956) 702-6130.

Thank you for your cooperation and interest in this proposed project.

Sincerely,



Carlos Swonke, P.G.
Director of TxDOT Environmental Affairs Division

cc: Robin Gelston, Pharr District, TxDOT
Margil Maldonado Jr., P.E., Pharr District, TxDOT
Michael Chavez, Environmental Affairs Division, TxDOT
Nolan Nicholas, Pharr District, TxDOT
Rudy J. Rivera, P.E., RJ Rivera Associates, Inc.
Dean Tesmer, Blanton and Associates



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October 2, 2015

Mr. Carter Smith
Executive Director
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
4200 Smith School Road
Austin, Texas 78744-3291

Re: SH 68 - Participating Agency Invitation Letter
Highway: State Highway (SH 68)
Project Limits: Interstate (I)-2/ United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/ US 281
County: Hidalgo County
District: Pharr District
CSJ: 3629-01-001

Dear Mr. Smith:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is initiating an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the subject project. Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. TxDOT extends Texas Parks and Wildlife Department an invitation to be a Participating Agency in the development of the EIS for the subject project. The purpose of the proposed project is to improve north/south mobility in the region, increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic, and provide alternate north-south evacuation routes during emergency events.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) dated December 16, 2014, and executed by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and TxDOT. Therefore, TxDOT is initiating this EIS in TxDOT's role as the lead federal agency under the MOU between TxDOT and FHWA. This MOU assigns to TxDOT, FHWA's responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act and other environmental laws.

Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. Responsibilities of a Participating Agency include identifying, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the project's potential environmental or socioeconomic effects.

Please respond to TxDOT in writing with an acceptance or denial of the invitation within two weeks from receipt of this letter. If your agency declines the invitation; in the response, please state the reason/reasons for declining the invitation. If you choose to decline, please specifically state in your response that your agency:

- Has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the proposed project;
- Has no expertise or information relevant to the proposed project; or
- Does not intend to submit comments on the proposed project.

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If you have any questions or would like to discuss in more detail the proposed project for SH 68 or your agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this EIS, please contact Robin Gelston, Environmental Coordinator, TxDOT-Pharr District, at (956) 702-6130.

Thank you for your cooperation and interest in this proposed project.

Sincerely,



Carlos Swonke, P.G.
Director of TxDOT Environmental Affairs Division

cc: Robin Gelston, Pharr District, TxDOT
Margil Maldonado Jr., P.E., Pharr District, TxDOT
Michael Chavez, Environmental Affairs Division, TxDOT
Nolan Nicholas, Pharr District, TxDOT
Rudy J. Rivera, P.E., RJ Rivera Associates, Inc.
Dean Tesmer, Blanton and Associates



Texas Department of Transportation

125 EAST 11TH STREET | AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-2483 | (512) 416-2734 | WWW.TXDOT.GOV

October 2, 2015

Mr. Mark Wolfe
State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)/Executive Director
Texas Historical Commission
P.O. Box 12276
Austin, Texas 78711-2276

Re: SH 68 - Participating Agency Invitation Letter
Highway: State Highway (SH 68)
Project Limits: Interstate (I)-2/ United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/ US 281
County: Hidalgo County
District: Pharr District
CSJ: 3629-01-001

Dear Mr. Wolfe:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is initiating an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the subject project. Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. TxDOT extends Texas Historical Commission an invitation to be a Participating Agency in the development of the EIS for the subject project. The purpose of the proposed project is to improve north/south mobility in the region, increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic, and provide alternate north-south evacuation routes during emergency events.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) dated December 16, 2014, and executed by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and TxDOT. Therefore, TxDOT is initiating this EIS in TxDOT's role as the lead federal agency under the MOU between TxDOT and FHWA. This MOU assigns to TxDOT, FHWA's responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act and other environmental laws.

Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. Responsibilities of a Participating Agency include identifying, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the project's potential environmental or socioeconomic effects.

Please respond to TxDOT in writing with an acceptance or denial of the invitation within two weeks from receipt of this letter. If your agency declines the invitation; in the response, please state the reason/reasons for declining the invitation. If you choose to decline, please specifically state in your response that your agency:

- Has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the proposed project;
- Has no expertise or information relevant to the proposed project; or
- Does not intend to submit comments on the proposed project.

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If you have any questions or would like to discuss in more detail the proposed project for SH 68 or your agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this EIS, please contact Robin Gelston, Environmental Coordinator, TxDOT-Pharr District, at (956) 702-6130.

Thank you for your cooperation and interest in this proposed project.

Sincerely,



Carlos Swonke, P.G.
Director of TxDOT Environmental Affairs Division

cc: Robin Gelston, Pharr District, TxDOT
Margil Maldonado Jr., P.E., Pharr District, TxDOT
Michael Chavez, Environmental Affairs Division, TxDOT
Nolan Nicholas, Pharr District, TxDOT
Rudy J. Rivera, P.E., RJ Rivera Associates, Inc.
Dean Tesmer, Blanton and Associates



Texas Department of Transportation

125 EAST 11TH STREET | AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-2483 | (512) 416-2734 | WWW.TXDOT.GOV

October 2, 2015

Mr. Lindil Fowler
Interim Executive Director
Texas Railroad Commission
P.O. Box 12967
Austin, Texas 78711-2967

Re: SH 68 - Participating Agency Invitation Letter
Highway: State Highway (SH 68)
Project Limits: Interstate (I)-2/ United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/ US 281
County: Hidalgo County
District: Pharr District
CSJ: 3629-01-001

Dear Mr. Fowler:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is initiating an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the subject project. Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. TxDOT extends Texas Railroad Commission an invitation to be a Participating Agency in the development of the EIS for the subject project. The purpose of the proposed project is to improve north/south mobility in the region, increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic, and provide alternate north-south evacuation routes during emergency events.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) dated December 16, 2014, and executed by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and TxDOT. Therefore, TxDOT is initiating this EIS in TxDOT's role as the lead federal agency under the MOU between TxDOT and FHWA. This MOU assigns to TxDOT, FHWA's responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act and other environmental laws.

Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. Responsibilities of a Participating Agency include identifying, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the project's potential environmental or socioeconomic effects.

Please respond to TxDOT in writing with an acceptance or denial of the invitation within two weeks from receipt of this letter. If your agency declines the invitation; in the response, please state the reason/reasons for declining the invitation. If you choose to decline, please specifically state in your response that your agency:

- Has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the proposed project;
- Has no expertise or information relevant to the proposed project; or
- Does not intend to submit comments on the proposed project.

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If you have any questions or would like to discuss in more detail the proposed project for SH 68 or your agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this EIS, please contact Robin Gelston, Environmental Coordinator, TxDOT-Pharr District, at (956) 702-6130.

Thank you for your cooperation and interest in this proposed project.

Sincerely,



Carlos Swonke, P.G.
Director of TxDOT Environmental Affairs Division

cc: Robin Gelston, Pharr District, TxDOT
Margil Maldonado Jr., P.E., Pharr District, TxDOT
Michael Chavez, Environmental Affairs Division, TxDOT
Nolan Nicholas, Pharr District, TxDOT
Rudy J. Rivera, P.E., RJ Rivera Associates, Inc.
Dean Tesmer, Blanton and Associates



Texas Department of Transportation

125 EAST 11TH STREET | AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-2483 | (512) 416-2734 | WWW.TXDOT.GOV

October 2, 2015

Mr. Greg Pollock
Director
Texas General Land Office
P.O. Box 12873
Austin, Texas 78711-2873

Re: SH 68 - Participating Agency Invitation Letter
Highway: State Highway (SH 68)
Project Limits: Interstate (I)-2/ United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/ US 281
County: Hidalgo County
District: Pharr District
CSJ: 3629-01-001

Dear Mr. Pollock:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is initiating an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the subject project. Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. TxDOT extends Texas General Land Office an invitation to be a Participating Agency in the development of the EIS for the subject project. The purpose of the proposed project is to improve north/south mobility in the region, increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic, and provide alternate north-south evacuation routes during emergency events.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) dated December 16, 2014, and executed by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and TxDOT. Therefore, TxDOT is initiating this EIS in TxDOT's role as the lead federal agency under the MOU between TxDOT and FHWA. This MOU assigns to TxDOT, FHWA's responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act and other environmental laws.

Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. Responsibilities of a Participating Agency include identifying, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the project's potential environmental or socioeconomic effects.

Please respond to TxDOT in writing with an acceptance or denial of the invitation within two weeks from receipt of this letter. If your agency declines the invitation; in the response, please state the reason/reasons for declining the invitation. If you choose to decline, please specifically state in your response that your agency:

- Has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the proposed project;
- Has no expertise or information relevant to the proposed project; or
- Does not intend to submit comments on the proposed project.

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If you have any questions or would like to discuss in more detail the proposed project for SH 68 or your agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this EIS, please contact Robin Gelston, Environmental Coordinator, TxDOT-Pharr District, at (956) 702-6130.

Thank you for your cooperation and interest in this proposed project.

Sincerely,



Carlos Swonke, P.G.
Director of TxDOT Environmental Affairs Division

cc: Robin Gelston, Pharr District, TxDOT
Margil Maldonado Jr., P.E., Pharr District, TxDOT
Michael Chavez, Environmental Affairs Division, TxDOT
Nolan Nicholas, Pharr District, TxDOT
Rudy J. Rivera, P.E., RJ Rivera Associates, Inc.
Dean Tesmer, Blanton and Associates



Texas Department of Transportation

125 EAST 11TH STREET | AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-2483 | (512) 416-2734 | WWW.TXDOT.GOV

October 2, 2015

Mr. Richard Hyde, P.E.
Executive Director
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
P.O. Box 13087
Austin, Texas 78711-3087

Re: SH 68 - Participating Agency Invitation Letter
Highway: State Highway (SH 68)
Project Limits: Interstate (I)-2/ United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/ US 281
County: Hidalgo County
District: Pharr District
CSJ: 3629-01-001

Dear Mr. Hyde, P.E.:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is initiating an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the subject project. Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. TxDOT extends Texas Commission on Environmental Quality an invitation to be a Participating Agency in the development of the EIS for the subject project. The purpose of the proposed project is to improve north/south mobility in the region, increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic, and provide alternate north-south evacuation routes during emergency events.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) dated December 16, 2014, and executed by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and TxDOT. Therefore, TxDOT is initiating this EIS in TxDOT's role as the lead federal agency under the MOU between TxDOT and FHWA. This MOU assigns to TxDOT, FHWA's responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act and other environmental laws.

Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. Responsibilities of a Participating Agency include identifying, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the project's potential environmental or socioeconomic effects.

Please respond to TxDOT in writing with an acceptance or denial of the invitation within two weeks from receipt of this letter. If your agency declines the invitation; in the response, please state the reason/reasons for declining the invitation. If you choose to decline, please specifically state in your response that your agency:

- Has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the proposed project;
- Has no expertise or information relevant to the proposed project; or
- Does not intend to submit comments on the proposed project.

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If you have any questions or would like to discuss in more detail the proposed project for SH 68 or your agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this EIS, please contact Robin Gelston, Environmental Coordinator, TxDOT-Pharr District, at (956) 702-6130.

Thank you for your cooperation and interest in this proposed project.

Sincerely,



Carlos Swonke, P.G.
Director of TxDOT Environmental Affairs Division

cc: Robin Gelston, Pharr District, TxDOT
Margil Maldonado Jr., P.E., Pharr District, TxDOT
Michael Chavez, Environmental Affairs Division, TxDOT
Nolan Nicholas, Pharr District, TxDOT
Rudy J. Rivera, P.E., RJ Rivera Associates, Inc.
Dean Tesmer, Blanton and Associates



125 EAST 11TH STREET | AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-2483 | (512) 416-2734 | WWW.TXDOT.GOV

October 2, 2015

Mr. Lyman Guy
Chairman
Apache Tribe of Oklahoma
P.O. Box 1330
Anadarko, Oklahoma 73005

Re: SH 68 - Section 106 Participating Agency Invitation Letter
Highway: State Highway (SH 68)
Project Limits: Interstate (I)-2/ United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/ US 281
County: Hidalgo County
District: Pharr District
CSJ: 3629-01-001

Dear Mr. Guy:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is initiating an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the subject project. Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. TxDOT extends Apache Tribe of Oklahoma an invitation to be a Participating Agency in the development of the EIS for the subject project. The purpose of the proposed project is to improve north/south mobility in the region, increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic, and provide alternate north-south evacuation routes during emergency events.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) dated December 16, 2014, and executed by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and TxDOT. Therefore, TxDOT is initiating this EIS in TxDOT's role as the lead federal agency under the MOU between TxDOT and FHWA. This MOU assigns to TxDOT, FHWA's responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act and other environmental laws.

As a participating agency, you have the right to:

- Provide meaningful and early input on defining the purpose and need, determining the range of alternatives to be considered, and then methodologies and the level of detail required in the alternatives analysis.
- Participate in coordination meetings and joint field reviews as appropriate.
- Timely review and comment on the pre-draft or pre-final environmental documents to reflect the views and concerns of your organization/tribe on the adequacy of the document, alternatives considered, and the anticipated impacts and mitigation.

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Participating agencies are responsible to identify, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the project's potential environmental or socioeconomic impacts. Declining our invitation to be a participating agency does not diminish the Apache Tribe of Oklahoma's right to meaningful government-to-government consultation.

Please respond to TxDOT in writing with an acceptance or denial of the invitation within two weeks from receipt of this letter. If your agency declines the invitation; in the response, please state the reason/reasons for declining the invitation. If you choose to decline, please specifically state in your response that your agency:

- Has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the proposed project;
- Has no expertise or information relevant to the proposed project; or
- Does not intend to submit comments on the proposed project.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss in more detail the proposed project for SH 68 or your agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this EIS, please contact Robin Gelston, Environmental Coordinator, TxDOT-Pharr District, at (956) 702-6130.

Thank you for your cooperation and interest in this proposed project.

Sincerely,



Carlos Swonke, P.G.
Director of TxDOT Environmental Affairs Division

cc: Robin Gelston, Pharr District, TxDOT
Margil Maldonado Jr., P.E., Pharr District, TxDOT
Michael Chavez, Environmental Affairs Division, TxDOT
Nolan Nicholas, Pharr District, TxDOT
Rudy J. Rivera, P.E., RJ Rivera Associates, Inc.
Dean Tesmer, Blanton and Associates, Inc.



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October 2, 2015

Mr. Wallace Coffey
Chairman
Comanche Nation of Oklahoma
P.O. Box 908
Lawton, Oklahoma 73502

Re: SH 68 - Section 106 Participating Agency Invitation Letter
Highway: State Highway (SH 68)
Project Limits: Interstate (I)-2/ United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/ US 281
County: Hidalgo County
District: Pharr District
CSJ: 3629-01-001

Dear Mr. Coffey:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is initiating an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the subject project. Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. TxDOT extends Comanche Nation of Oklahoma an invitation to be a Participating Agency in the development of the EIS for the subject project. The purpose of the proposed project is to improve north/south mobility in the region, increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic, and provide alternate north-south evacuation routes during emergency events.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) dated December 16, 2014, and executed by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and TxDOT. Therefore, TxDOT is initiating this EIS in TxDOT's role as the lead federal agency under the MOU between TxDOT and FHWA. This MOU assigns to TxDOT, FHWA's responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act and other environmental laws.

As a participating agency, you have the right to:

- Provide meaningful and early input on defining the purpose and need, determining the range of alternatives to be considered, and then methodologies and the level of detail required in the alternatives analysis.
- Participate in coordination meetings and joint field reviews as appropriate.
- Timely review and comment on the pre-draft or pre-final environmental documents to reflect the views and concerns of your organization/tribe on the adequacy of the document, alternatives considered, and the anticipated impacts and mitigation.

OUR GOALS

MAINTAIN A SAFE SYSTEM ▪ ADDRESS CONGESTION ▪ CONNECT TEXAS COMMUNITIES ▪ BEST IN CLASS STATE AGENCY

An Equal Opportunity Employer

Participating agencies are responsible to identify, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the project's potential environmental or socioeconomic impacts. Declining our invitation to be a participating agency does not diminish the Comanche Nation of Oklahoma's right to meaningful government-to-government consultation.

Please respond to TxDOT in writing with an acceptance or denial of the invitation within two weeks from receipt of this letter. If your agency declines the invitation; in the response, please state the reason/reasons for declining the invitation. If you choose to decline, please specifically state in your response that your agency:

- Has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the proposed project;
- Has no expertise or information relevant to the proposed project; or
- Does not intend to submit comments on the proposed project.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss in more detail the proposed project for SH 68 or your agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this EIS, please contact Robin Gelston, Environmental Coordinator, TxDOT-Pharr District, at (956) 702-6130.

Thank you for your cooperation and interest in this proposed project.

Sincerely,



Carlos Swonke, P.G.
Director of TxDOT Environmental Affairs Division

cc: Robin Gelston, Pharr District, TxDOT
Margil Maldonado Jr., P.E., Pharr District, TxDOT
Michael Chavez, Environmental Affairs Division, TxDOT
Nolan Nicholas, Pharr District, TxDOT
Rudy J. Rivera, P.E., RJ Rivera Associates, Inc.
Dean Tesmer, Blanton and Associates, Inc.



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October 2, 2015

Ms. Amber Toppah
Chairperson
Kiowa Indian Tribe of Oklahoma
P.O. Box 369
Carnegie, Oklahoma 73015

Re: SH 68 - Section 106 Participating Agency Invitation Letter
Highway: State Highway (SH 68)
Project Limits: Interstate (I)-2/ United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/ US 281
County: Hidalgo County
District: Pharr District
CSJ: 3629-01-001

Dear Ms. Toppah:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is initiating an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the subject project. Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. TxDOT extends Kiowa Indian Tribe of Oklahoma an invitation to be a Participating Agency in the development of the EIS for the subject project. The purpose of the proposed project is to improve north/south mobility in the region, increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic, and provide alternate north-south evacuation routes during emergency events.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) dated December 16, 2014, and executed by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and TxDOT. Therefore, TxDOT is initiating this EIS in TxDOT's role as the lead federal agency under the MOU between TxDOT and FHWA. This MOU assigns to TxDOT, FHWA's responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act and other environmental laws.

As a participating agency, you have the right to:

- Provide meaningful and early input on defining the purpose and need, determining the range of alternatives to be considered, and then methodologies and the level of detail required in the alternatives analysis.
- Participate in coordination meetings and joint field reviews as appropriate.
- Timely review and comment on the pre-draft or pre-final environmental documents to reflect the views and concerns of your organization/tribe on the adequacy of the document, alternatives considered, and the anticipated impacts and mitigation.

OUR GOALS

MAINTAIN A SAFE SYSTEM ▪ ADDRESS CONGESTION ▪ CONNECT TEXAS COMMUNITIES ▪ BEST IN CLASS STATE AGENCY

An Equal Opportunity Employer

Participating agencies are responsible to identify, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the project's potential environmental or socioeconomic impacts. Declining our invitation to be a participating agency does not diminish the Kiowa Indian Tribe of Oklahoma's right to meaningful government-to-government consultation.

Please respond to TxDOT in writing with an acceptance or denial of the invitation within two weeks from receipt of this letter. If your agency declines the invitation; in the response, please state the reason/reasons for declining the invitation. If you choose to decline, please specifically state in your response that your agency:

- Has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the proposed project;
- Has no expertise or information relevant to the proposed project; or
- Does not intend to submit comments on the proposed project.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss in more detail the proposed project for SH 68 or your agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this EIS, please contact Robin Gelston, Environmental Coordinator, TxDOT-Pharr District, at (956) 702-6130.

Thank you for your cooperation and interest in this proposed project.

Sincerely,



Carlos Swonke, P.G.
Director of TxDOT Environmental Affairs Division

cc: Robin Gelston, Pharr District, TxDOT
Margil Maldonado Jr., P.E., Pharr District, TxDOT
Michael Chavez, Environmental Affairs Division, TxDOT
Nolan Nicholas, Pharr District, TxDOT
Rudy J. Rivera, P.E., RJ Rivera Associates, Inc.
Dean Tesmer, Blanton and Associates, Inc.



Texas Department of Transportation

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October 2, 2015

Mr. Danny Breuninger Sr.
President
Mescalero Apache Tribe
P.O. Box 227
Mescalero, New Mexico 88340

Re: SH 68 - Section 106 Participating Agency Invitation Letter
Highway: State Highway (SH 68)
Project Limits: Interstate (I)-2/ United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/ US 281
County: Hidalgo County
District: Pharr District
CSJ: 3629-01-001

Dear Mr. Breuninger:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is initiating an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the subject project. Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. TxDOT extends Mescalero Apache Tribe an invitation to be a Participating Agency in the development of the EIS for the subject project. The purpose of the proposed project is to improve north/south mobility in the region, increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic, and provide alternate north-south evacuation routes during emergency events.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) dated December 16, 2014, and executed by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and TxDOT. Therefore, TxDOT is initiating this EIS in TxDOT's role as the lead federal agency under the MOU between TxDOT and FHWA. This MOU assigns to TxDOT, FHWA's responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act and other environmental laws.

As a participating agency, you have the right to:

- Provide meaningful and early input on defining the purpose and need, determining the range of alternatives to be considered, and then methodologies and the level of detail required in the alternatives analysis.
- Participate in coordination meetings and joint field reviews as appropriate.
- Timely review and comment on the pre-draft or pre-final environmental documents to reflect the views and concerns of your organization/tribe on the adequacy of the document, alternatives considered, and the anticipated impacts and mitigation.

OUR GOALS

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Participating agencies are responsible to identify, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the project's potential environmental or socioeconomic impacts. Declining our invitation to be a participating agency does not diminish the Mescalero Apache Tribe's right to meaningful government-to-government consultation.

Please respond to TxDOT in writing with an acceptance or denial of the invitation within two weeks from receipt of this letter. If your agency declines the invitation; in the response, please state the reason/reasons for declining the invitation. If you choose to decline, please specifically state in your response that your agency:

- Has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the proposed project;
- Has no expertise or information relevant to the proposed project; or
- Does not intend to submit comments on the proposed project.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss in more detail the proposed project for SH 68 or your agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this EIS, please contact Robin Gelston, Environmental Coordinator, TxDOT-Pharr District, at (956) 702-6130.

Thank you for your cooperation and interest in this proposed project.

Sincerely,



Carlos Swonke, P.G.
Director of TxDOT Environmental Affairs Division

cc: Robin Gelston, Pharr District, TxDOT
Margil Maldonado Jr., P.E., Pharr District, TxDOT
Michael Chavez, Environmental Affairs Division, TxDOT
Nolan Nicholas, Pharr District, TxDOT
Rudy J. Rivera, P.E., RJ Rivera Associates, Inc.
Dean Tesmer, Blanton and Associates, Inc.



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October 2, 2015

Mr. Don Patterson
President
Tonkawa Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma
1 Rush Buffalo Rd
Tonkawa, Oklahoma 74653

Re: SH 68 - Section 106 Participating Agency Invitation Letter
Highway: State Highway (SH 68)
Project Limits: Interstate (I)-2/ United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/ US 281
County: Hidalgo County
District: Pharr District
CSJ: 3629-01-001

Dear Mr. Patterson:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is initiating an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the subject project. Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. TxDOT extends Tonkawa Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma an invitation to be a Participating Agency in the development of the EIS for the subject project. The purpose of the proposed project is to improve north/south mobility in the region, increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic, and provide alternate north-south evacuation routes during emergency events.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) dated December 16, 2014, and executed by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and TxDOT. Therefore, TxDOT is initiating this EIS in TxDOT's role as the lead federal agency under the MOU between TxDOT and FHWA. This MOU assigns to TxDOT, FHWA's responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act and other environmental laws.

As a participating agency, you have the right to:

- Provide meaningful and early input on defining the purpose and need, determining the range of alternatives to be considered, and then methodologies and the level of detail required in the alternatives analysis.
- Participate in coordination meetings and joint field reviews as appropriate.
- Timely review and comment on the pre-draft or pre-final environmental documents to reflect the views and concerns of your organization/tribe on the adequacy of the document, alternatives considered, and the anticipated impacts and mitigation.

OUR GOALS

MAINTAIN A SAFE SYSTEM ▪ ADDRESS CONGESTION ▪ CONNECT TEXAS COMMUNITIES ▪ BEST IN CLASS STATE AGENCY

An Equal Opportunity Employer

Participating agencies are responsible to identify, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the project's potential environmental or socioeconomic impacts. Declining our invitation to be a participating agency does not diminish the Tonkawa Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma's right to meaningful government-to-government consultation.

Please respond to TxDOT in writing with an acceptance or denial of the invitation within two weeks from receipt of this letter. If your agency declines the invitation; in the response, please state the reason/reasons for declining the invitation. If you choose to decline, please specifically state in your response that your agency:

- Has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the proposed project;
- Has no expertise or information relevant to the proposed project; or
- Does not intend to submit comments on the proposed project.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss in more detail the proposed project for SH 68 or your agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this EIS, please contact Robin Gelston, Environmental Coordinator, TxDOT-Pharr District, at (956) 702-6130.

Thank you for your cooperation and interest in this proposed project.

Sincerely,



Carlos Swonke, P.G.
Director of TxDOT Environmental Affairs Division

cc: Robin Gelston, Pharr District, TxDOT
Margil Maldonado Jr., P.E., Pharr District, TxDOT
Michael Chavez, Environmental Affairs Division, TxDOT
Nolan Nicholas, Pharr District, TxDOT
Rudy J. Rivera, P.E., RJ Rivera Associates, Inc.
Dean Tesmer, Blanton and Associates, Inc.



Texas Department of Transportation

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October 2, 2015

Ms. Adella Ortega
President
Hidalgo County Historical Commission
1310 N. Francisco Avenue
Mission, Texas 78572

Re: SH 68 - Section 106 Participating Agency Invitation Letter
Highway: State Highway (SH 68)
Project Limits: Interstate (I)-2/ United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/ US 281
County: Hidalgo County
District: Pharr District
CSJ: 3629-01-001

Dear Ms. Ortega:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is initiating an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the subject project. Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. TxDOT extends Hidalgo County Historical Commission an invitation to be a Participating Agency in the development of the EIS for the subject project. The purpose of the proposed project is to improve north/south mobility in the region, increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic, and provide alternate north-south evacuation routes during emergency events.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) dated December 16, 2014, and executed by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and TxDOT. Therefore, TxDOT is initiating this EIS in TxDOT's role as the lead federal agency under the MOU between TxDOT and FHWA. This MOU assigns to TxDOT, FHWA's responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act and other environmental laws.

As a participating agency, you have the right to:

- Provide meaningful and early input on defining the purpose and need, determining the range of alternatives to be considered, and then methodologies and the level of detail required in the alternatives analysis.
- Participate in coordination meetings and joint field reviews as appropriate.
- Timely review and comment on the pre-draft or pre-final environmental documents to reflect the views and concerns of your organization/tribe on the adequacy of the document, alternatives considered, and the anticipated impacts and mitigation.

OUR GOALS

MAINTAIN A SAFE SYSTEM ▪ ADDRESS CONGESTION ▪ CONNECT TEXAS COMMUNITIES ▪ BEST IN CLASS STATE AGENCY

An Equal Opportunity Employer

Participating agencies are responsible to identify, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the project's potential environmental or socioeconomic impacts. Declining our invitation to be a participating agency does not diminish the Hidalgo County Historical Commission's right to meaningful government-to-government consultation.

Please respond to TxDOT in writing with an acceptance or denial of the invitation within two weeks from receipt of this letter. If your agency declines the invitation; in the response, please state the reason/reasons for declining the invitation. If you choose to decline, please specifically state in your response that your agency:

- Has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the proposed project;
- Has no expertise or information relevant to the proposed project; or
- Does not intend to submit comments on the proposed project.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss in more detail the proposed project for SH 68 or your agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this EIS, please contact Robin Gelston, Environmental Coordinator, TxDOT-Pharr District, at (956) 702-6130.

Thank you for your cooperation and interest in this proposed project.

Sincerely,



Carlos Swonke, P.G.
Director of TxDOT Environmental Affairs Division

cc: Robin Gelston, Pharr District, TxDOT
Margil Maldonado Jr., P.E., Pharr District, TxDOT
Michael Chavez, Environmental Affairs Division, TxDOT
Nolan Nicholas, Pharr District, TxDOT
Rudy J. Rivera, P.E., RJ Rivera Associates, Inc.
Dean Tesmer, Blanton and Associates, Inc.



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October 2, 2015

Ms. Jennie Galvan
Director
Rio Grande Delta Archeological Society
8801 Boca Chica
Brownsville, Texas 78521

Re: SH 68 - Section 106 Participating Agency Invitation Letter
Highway: State Highway (SH 68)
Project Limits: Interstate (I)-2/ United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/ US 281
County: Hidalgo County
District: Pharr District
CSJ: 3629-01-001

Dear Ms. Galvan:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is initiating an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the subject project. Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project. TxDOT extends Rio Grande Delta Archeological Society an invitation to be a Participating Agency in the development of the EIS for the subject project. The purpose of the proposed project is to improve north/south mobility in the region, increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic, and provide alternate north-south evacuation routes during emergency events.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) dated December 16, 2014, and executed by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and TxDOT. Therefore, TxDOT is initiating this EIS in TxDOT's role as the lead federal agency under the MOU between TxDOT and FHWA. This MOU assigns to TxDOT, FHWA's responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act and other environmental laws.

As a participating agency, you have the right to:

- Provide meaningful and early input on defining the purpose and need, determining the range of alternatives to be considered, and then methodologies and the level of detail required in the alternatives analysis.
- Participate in coordination meetings and joint field reviews as appropriate.
- Timely review and comment on the pre-draft or pre-final environmental documents to reflect the views and concerns of your organization/tribe on the adequacy of the document, alternatives considered, and the anticipated impacts and mitigation.

OUR GOALS

MAINTAIN A SAFE SYSTEM ▪ ADDRESS CONGESTION ▪ CONNECT TEXAS COMMUNITIES ▪ BEST IN CLASS STATE AGENCY

An Equal Opportunity Employer

Participating agencies are responsible to identify, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the project's potential environmental or socioeconomic impacts. Declining our invitation to be a participating agency does not diminish the Rio Grande Delta Archeological Society's right to meaningful government-to-government consultation.

Please respond to TxDOT in writing with an acceptance or denial of the invitation within two weeks from receipt of this letter. If your agency declines the invitation; in the response, please state the reason/reasons for declining the invitation. If you choose to decline, please specifically state in your response that your agency:

- Has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the proposed project;
- Has no expertise or information relevant to the proposed project; or
- Does not intend to submit comments on the proposed project.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss in more detail the proposed project for SH 68 or your agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this EIS, please contact Robin Gelston, Environmental Coordinator, TxDOT-Pharr District, at (956) 702-6130.

Thank you for your cooperation and interest in this proposed project.

Sincerely,



Carlos Swonke, P.G.
Director of TxDOT Environmental Affairs Division

cc: Robin Gelston, Pharr District, TxDOT
Margil Maldonado Jr., P.E., Pharr District, TxDOT
Michael Chavez, Environmental Affairs Division, TxDOT
Nolan Nicholas, Pharr District, TxDOT
Rudy J. Rivera, P.E., RJ Rivera Associates, Inc.
Dean Tesmer, Blanton and Associates, Inc.

APPENDIX B

Notice of Intent

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

**Environmental Impact Statement:
Hidalgo County, Texas**

AGENCY: Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Department of Transportation.

ACTION: Federal notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

SUMMARY: Pursuant to 40 CFR 1508.22, FHWA, on behalf of TxDOT, is issuing this notice to advise the public that an EIS will be prepared for a proposed transportation project to construct State Highway (SH) 68 from Interstate (I)-2/ United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/US 281 in Hidalgo County, Texas. Areas within the study area include the cities of Alamo, Pharr, Donna, Edinburg, San Juan, and San Carlos.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Homer Bazan, Jr., P.E., Director of Transportation Planning and Development—TxDOT Pharr District, 600 W. Interstate 2, Pharr, Texas, 78577; telephone: 956-702-6100; email: Homer.Bazan@txdot.gov. TxDOT's normal business hours are 8:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated December 16, 2014, and executed by FHWA and TxDOT. TxDOT will prepare an EIS for the proposed SH 68 from I-2/US 83 to I-69C/US 281, listed in the 2015–2040 Hidalgo County Metropolitan Transportation Plan as a 4-lane divided rural highway facility with the potential for main lanes and overpasses. There is no existing facility; therefore, the project is proposed on new location.

The purpose of the project is to improve north/south mobility, increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic, and provide an alternate north-south evacuation routes during emergency events. The project need is a lack of sufficient north/south mobility for local and regional traffic and for additional emergency evacuation routes, which are the result of historical and continuing growth in the region's population as well as continued growth of traffic in the region.

The significance of impacts for the proposed SH 68 project was initially uncertain, so the process began by preparing an environmental assessment (EA). Based on preliminary analysis and feedback from the public, it was determined that an EIS should be prepared. The EIS will incorporate information collected during the EA process; in addition, public input gathered during the development of the EA will be considered in the EIS process. The EIS will develop and evaluate a range of alternatives including "No-action" (the no-build alternative), Transportation System Management (TSM)/Transportation Demand Management (TDM), rapid transit and roadway build alternatives. The EIS will analyze potential direct, indirect and cumulative impacts from construction and operation of proposed corridor improvements including, but not limited to, the following: transportation impacts; air quality and noise impacts; water quality impacts including storm water runoff; impacts to waters of the United States including

wetlands; impacts to floodplains; impacts to historic and archeological resources; impacts to threatened and endangered species; socioeconomic impacts including environmental justice communities; impacts to and/or potential displacements of land use, vegetation, residents and businesses; and impacts to aesthetic and visual resources.

Public involvement is a critical component of the project development process and will occur throughout the planning and study phases. Letters describing the proposed action including a request for comments will be sent to appropriate Federal, State, and local agencies and to private organizations and citizens who have previously expressed or are known to have interest in this proposal. Agency and public scoping meetings are planned for late 2015. The purpose of the public scoping meetings is to identify significant and other relevant issues related to SH 68 mobility improvements as part of the National Environmental Policy Act process. The scoping meetings will provide opportunities for participating agencies, cooperating agencies, and the public to be involved in review and comment on the draft coordination plan, defining the need and purpose for the proposed project, and the range of alternatives to be considered in the EIS. In addition to the agency and public scoping meetings, a public hearing will be held. Public notice will be given of the time and place of the meetings and hearing. To ensure that the full range of issues related to this proposed action is addressed and all significant issues are identified, comments and suggestions are invited from all interested parties. Such comments or questions concerning this proposed action should be directed to TxDOT at the address provided above.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program Number 20.205, Highway Planning and Construction. The regulations implementing Executive Order 12372 regarding intergovernmental consultation on Federal programs and activities apply to this program.)

Issued on: August 19, 2015.

Michael T. Leary,

*Director, Planning and Program Development,
Federal Highway Administration.*

[FR Doc. 2015-20968 Filed 8-27-15; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-22-P

◆ ◆ ◆

Texas Department of Transportation

Notice of Intent - State Highway (SH) 68, Hidalgo County,
Texas

Pursuant to 43 TAC §2.102(b), the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is issuing this notice to advise the public that an environmental impact statement (EIS) will be prepared for a proposed transportation project to construct State Highway (SH) 68 from Interstate (I) 2/ United States Highway (US) 83 to I69C/ US 281 in Hidalgo County, Texas. Areas within the study area include the cities of Alamo, Pharr, Donna, Edinburg, San Juan, and San Carlos. The proposed SH 68 from I2/US83 to I69C/US 281 is listed in the 2015- 2040 Hidalgo County Metropolitan Transportation Plan as a 4-lane divided rural highway facility with the potential for main lanes and overpass. There is no existing facility; therefore, the project is proposed on new location.

The purpose of the project is to improve north/south mobility, increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic, and provide an alternate north-south evacuation route during emergency events. The project need is a lack of sufficient north/south mobility for local and regional traffic and for additional emergency evacuation routes, which are the result of historical and continuing growth in the region's population as well as continued growth of traffic in the region.

The significance of impacts for the proposed SH 68 project was initially uncertain, so the process began by preparing an environmental assessment (EA). Based on preliminary analysis and feedback from the public, it was determined that an EIS should be prepared. The EIS will incorporate information collected during the EA process; in addition, public input gathered during the development of the EA will be considered in the EIS process. The EIS will develop and evaluate a range of alternatives including "No-action" (the no-build alternative), Transportation System Management (TSM)/Transportation Demand Management (TDM), rapid transit and roadway build alternatives. The EIS will analyze potential direct, indirect and cumulative impacts from construction and operation of proposed corridor improvements including, but not limited to, the following: transportation impacts; air quality and noise impacts; water quality impacts including storm water runoff; impacts to waters of the United States including wetlands; impacts to floodplains; impacts to historic and archeological resources; impacts to threatened and endangered species; socioeconomic impacts including environmental justice communities; impacts to and/or potential displacements of land use, vegetation, residents and businesses; and impacts to aesthetic and visual resources.

The project may require the following approvals by the federal government: United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Section 404; Section 401 Water Quality Certification; National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES); and Section 4(f) determination. The actual approvals required may change after TxDOT completes field surveys and selects the alignment for the project.

Public involvement is a critical component of the project development process and will occur throughout the planning and study phases. Letters describing the proposed action including a request for comments will be sent to appropriate Federal, State, and local agencies and to private organizations and citizens who have previously expressed or are known to have interest in this proposal. Agency and public scoping meetings are planned for late 2015. The purpose of the public scoping meetings is to identify significant and other relevant issues related to

SH 68 mobility improvements as part of the National Environmental Policy Act process. The scoping meetings will provide opportunities for participating agencies, cooperating agencies, and the public to be involved in review and comment on the draft coordination plan, defining the need and purpose for the proposed project, and the range of alternatives to be considered in the EIS. In addition to the agency and public scoping meetings, a public hearing will be held. Public notice will be given of the time and place of the meetings and hearing. To ensure that the full range of issues related to this proposed action is addressed and all significant issues are identified, comments and suggestions are invited from all interested parties. Such comments or questions concerning this proposed action should be directed to TxDOT at the address provided below.

TxDOT Contact: Homer Bazan, Jr., P.E., Director of Transportation Planning and Development - TxDOT Pharr District, Texas Department of Transportation, 600 W. Interstate 2, Pharr, Texas 78577; telephone: (956) 702-6100; email: Homer.Bazan@txdot.gov.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by the department pursuant to 23 U.S.C. §327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated December 16, 2014, and executed by FHWA and the department.

TRD-201503223

Angie Parker

Associate General Counsel

Texas Department of Transportation

Filed: August 19, 2015



APPENDIX C

Public Involvement Plan



Public Involvement Plan

SH 68 from IH-2/US 83 to IH-69C/US 281

CSJs: 3629-01-001, 3629-01-002,

3629-01-003

Hidalgo County, Texas

Texas Department of Transportation - Pharr District

January 2017

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated December 16, 2014, and executed by FHWA and TxDOT.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Public Involvement Plan (PIP) will be implemented for the State Highway (SH) 68 Project using transparent interaction with Potential Affected Parties (PAPs) to achieve informed consent, which is an acceptance by all parties to a course of action regarding various issues that must be addressed during development of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This process will ensure the project team develops an effective, efficient, and responsible approach to development of the proposed project while considering the needs, concerns, and input of the community.

Guiding principles of the plan include:

- No preconceived notions about the ultimate outcome of the process;
- Transparent and honest interaction with all PAPs;
- Listen to and value the input of all PAPs;
- Engage in meaningful, constructive, and open dialogue with all PAPs; and
- Collaborate with all PAPs to ensure Informed Consent is achieved.

This plan will be periodically updated as a result of ongoing public involvement and input. Additionally, issues specific to this project may require adjustments to the PIP to address communication obstacles encountered during public outreach efforts.

1.1 Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives of the PIP are to:

- Establish and maintain interactive communication with all PAPs;
- Ensure public access to information on the environmental study process;
- Ensure information and messages for the public are consistent;
- Ensure all PAPs are identified and have the opportunity to participate;
- Sincerely consider all reasonable input from PAPs;
- Ensure all PAPs have the opportunity to be fully engaged and informed at all stages of development of the EIS; and
- Achieve informed consent with all PAPs.

2.0 PROJECT TEAM AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Implementing this PIP will be a combined effort with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Pharr District (PHR), TxDOT Environmental Affairs Division (ENV), TxDOT Public Involvement Section of the Transportation Planning and Programming Division (TPP), the TxDOT consultant and sub-consultants on the project – also referred to in this document as the “SH 68 Project Team” or “project team.”

Given the importance of the SH 68 Project, public involvement activities will seek to involve as much of the public with special attention to individuals who live, work and drive through the project area. Communicating early and continuously with the public and stakeholders is necessary for the SH 68 Project. Members of the public as well as participating agencies will have the opportunity to shape this PIP as part of the EIS process. For this reason, the project team will implement a proactive bilingual approach that offers the public many opportunities to participate in the project.

3.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

The PIP is designed to be flexible and resilient. Flexibility is required because public reaction to the proposed project is unknown. Resilience is needed because it is almost certain that the success of the outlined communication strategies will vary given what is typically an ever-changing desire for depth, breadth and frequency of information by a variety of stakeholders.

3.1 Project Database

Develop and maintain a comprehensive PAP database. The database will include elected officials, local, regional, state, and federal agencies, environmental justice populations (i.e. low-income and minority populations), stakeholders, and other interested members of the public. This database will also be used to formulate invitation mailing lists and email invitation/notification list for the public meetings/hearing.

Once the Notice of Intent for the EIS is released, a direct mail piece will be sent out to a broad group of regional residents advising them of the start of the study. The direct mail piece will encourage PAPs to sign up and receive communication regarding the study. A link will be set up on the project webpage and sign-up sheets will be made available at the SH 68 Project Office, all project events, and meetings so PAPs can sign up to receive project communication.

The project team will use information collected through the EIS process along with a previously developed database of PAPs to establish and maintain a comprehensive contact list for the study. The list will be used to disseminate project information, including project newsletters, project updates, and notices for public meetings, workshops, and hearings. The database will

be updated throughout the duration of the study and revised following each public meeting, workshop, and hearing based on the attendees list or other requests for inclusion.

3.2 Public Information Materials

Public information outreach material will be developed for the intended audience. As such, they will be designed so that they are interesting and easy to read. The writing will use simple, non-technical language and graphics. All materials will be bilingual in English and Spanish. All material will use [TxDOT Brand Guidelines](#) and templates. Public information materials will be developed by the consultant and sub-consultants for the SH 68 Project and include:

- documents for the project webpage on txdot.gov;
- presentations;
- project fact sheet;
- newsletters;
- frequently asked questions document;
- graphical depictions/renderings; and
- conceptual animations.

3.3 Public Meetings/Hearing

Two (2) public meetings and one (1) public hearing will be held at key project milestones. The primary purpose of each of these public meetings is to inform the public that the study is an EIS, that the study area has expanded, and receive public input on the new study area, preliminary alternatives and alternatives evaluation criteria. The public hearing will present a Draft EIS and preferred alternative to the public, and receive public input on the Draft EIS and preferred alternative. The general structure for implementing the public meeting and hearing is outlined as follows:

- For each meeting/hearing, an appropriate venue will be identified near, but preferably within the study area.
- Prior notification of both public meetings and hearing will be available to PAPs and the public through various communication channels. These channels shall include the project webpage, the meetings and hearings page on txdot.gov, e-mail, Twitter, newspaper ads, mailed notices, the SH 68 Project Office and media releases. Each

required public meeting will be advertised in English and Spanish at least 14 days in advance in accordance with the Texas Administrative Code.

- Each public hearing will be advertised in English and Spanish at least 30 days prior and ten days prior to the deadline for submitting a written request to hold a public hearing.
- Additional ads outside of the public meeting and hearing notices are encouraged to best inform the public about upcoming meetings. Portable message boards announcing the meetings will also be setup along the TxDOT right-of-way prior to each meeting. Agencies and public officials will be notified in advance of each meeting. Event notices and announcements will include the use of a distribution process that takes advantage of social media and electronic information. Coordination with local neighborhood associations, community groups, local businesses, chambers of commerce, economic development corporations, and other professional associations will be reached out to promote to promote the public meetings/hearing.
- Prior to each public meeting and hearing, an internal mock-meeting/hearing will be attended by the SH 68 Project Team. For this meeting and the actual public meetings and hearings, The TxDOT Consultant will facilitate the staffing, setting up, facilitation of, and breaking down the public meetings/hearing.
- As necessary, court reporters, audio/visual, and security services (if needed) will be provided for each meeting. The development of meeting materials including agendas, sign-in sheets, comments cards, presentation materials, and other exhibits will be available at the public meetings and hearing. Additionally, reasonable accommodations for disabled participants will be provided should such accommodations be requested or required. Simultaneous translation services and bilingual staff will be provided. After each public meeting and the public hearing, The consultant and sub-consultants will prepare summary documents for the public meetings/hearing including: comment and response report, summary and verbatim public hearing transcript.
- Comments received as part of each public meeting will be summarized and considered in project development. Comments received during the public hearing process and responses to those comments will be summarized in the Final EIS.

3.4 **Media Relations**

The TxDOT-PHR's Public Information Officer will establish and maintain a responsible, comprehensive, and proactive media relations program to enhance public awareness and

participation in the environmental study process for SH 68. Public outreach and media activities and messages will be consistent and complementary of one another.

3.5 **TxDOT Project Web Page**

The Internet and social media provide convenient opportunities to broaden public involvement in the SH 68 environmental study process. A project webpage on [txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov) (<http://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/projects/studies/pharr/sh68.html>) has been developed and will serve as a primary tool for sharing up-to-date project information, including an overview of the study process, answers to frequently asked questions, public involvement opportunities, project mailings/meeting materials and EIS documents. The project team will also post conceptual graphics and animated videos. The web page will provide a mechanism for feedback that will be included in the administrative record by providing an opportunity for email comments. The webpage address, keyword search, and QR code will be included in public outreach materials.

3.6 **Social Media**

Twitter (@TxDOTPharr) and Facebook will be used to enhance communication about the SH 68 environmental study. The Pharr District PIO will use these social media tools to provide updates and information about the study and public involvement opportunities. Facebook may also be used for Sponsored Ads to announce public meetings and hearings.

3.7 **Face-to-Face Involvement**

The project team will proactively reach out to PAPs in the region to give briefings and presentations on the project that discuss all aspects of the process, receive input, and to answer questions. Local neighborhood and community groups, organizations, area employers, chambers of commerce, interested citizens, and other groups will be able to request briefings directly through TxDOT, the project office, project hotline, and the project website.

PAP meetings will be held throughout the SH 68 environmental process. PAP meetings will be held with targeted groups including: elected officials; neighborhood associations; business associations; known interest groups, or any other group that requests a meeting.

Briefings, presentations, and PAP meetings will be a substantial part of this public involvement program. All briefings, presentations, and meetings will be documented in meeting minutes or meeting reports and include the project team member who staffed the meeting, name of the group or PAP, location, date, number in attendance, brief summary of the meeting, and summary of the questions and comments received and responses to questions and comments.

3.8 **State Highway 68 Project Office and Hotline**

A project office has been established where interested parties can meet with the project team. Materials related to the project are also available at the SH 68 Project Office. The project office is located at **4711 Alamo Rd., Suite 106, Edinburg, Texas 78542**. The project office is open from **11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday and at other times by appointment** to accommodate the public and PAPs who are interested in the project. The project team is also available by contacting the project office hotline at **(956) 460-9299**.

3.9 **Public Feedback**

Feedback from participants is integrated into the tools used to inform the public. Opportunities to provide feedback include:

- “Contact Us” Link: The project team will maintain a “Contact Us” link on the project web page. Individuals will be able to submit informal inquiries and questions via the “Contact Us” link at any time. The project team will respond to all informal inquiries in a timely manner and will maintain a record of all general inquiries received. This link will also be used during the “Official Comment” period following a public meeting or public hearing, to submit a comment for the administrative record. Those comments will be combined with all other “Official Comments” and documented in the Summary and Analysis Report as part of the Administrative Record.
- Comments captured on comment forms distributed at each public meeting and hearing
- Comments captured on comment forms distributed at briefings, presentations, and PAP meetings
- E-mail: SH68@rjrivera.com
- Postal mail: TxDOT Pharr District, Attn: SH 68, 600 W. IH-2, Pharr, Texas, 78577
- SH 68 Project Office and Hotline

4.0 **EVALUATION AND MODIFICATION OF THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN**

The effectiveness of the tools and techniques outlined in PIP will be continually evaluated to ensure that proposed strategies and techniques aid decision-making. Modifications to this plan will be considered as needed in order to achieve the objective of this plan. Public involvement strategies to be evaluated are:

- Number of public meetings and hearings conducted

- Number of briefings, presentations, PAP meetings conducted
- Number of informational materials (flyers, fact sheets, newsletters, etc.) distributed
- Frequency of updating and distributing newsletter and other updates
- Frequency of updating stakeholder address list
- Evaluation of how citizen comments were used in environmental process
- Number of citizen recommendations used in project development

5.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Implementing this PIP will be a combined effort with the SH 68 Project Team. These tasks capture what has been accomplished in the Environmental Assessment (EA) process, and tasks to be completed in the EIS process.

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



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