



# Documentation of Agency Scoping Meeting

## Project Location

Hidalgo County

SH 68

3629-01-001, 3629-01-002, 3629-01-003

## Project Limits

From IH-2/US 83 to IH-69C/US 281

## Meeting Location

Pharr District Conference Center

600 W. Interstate 2

Pharr, Texas 78577

## Meeting Date and Time

March 29, 2016 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

## Translation Services

N/A

## Presenters

Margil Maldonado, TxDOT

Rudy Rivera, RJ RIVERA Associates (RJRA)

Dean Tesmer, Blanton & Associates, Inc.

## Total Number of Attendees (approx.)

28 (in person and by WebEx)

## Total Number of Commenters

4

## Contents

- A. Comment/response matrix
- B. Notices
- C. Sign-in sheets
- D. Comments received
- E. Figures
- F. Project Coordination Plan

**Attachment A**  
**Comment/Response Matrix**

Committer Number	Agency	Committer Name	Date Received	Source	Comment Topic	Response
1	Housing and Urban Development (HUD)	Zach Carter	03/29/2016	Email	<p>Topic 1: Screening maps and alternative alignments file</p> <p>HUD requested a copy of the screening maps covering Land Use, Water Resources, and Socioeconomic factors, as well as a copy of the alternative alignments kmz file.</p>	TxDOT provided the requested alternative alignments kmz file and constraints maps to Mr. Carter on 4/1/2016.
					<p>Topic 2: Colonias</p> <p>HUD had a question on whether Colonias are considered under socioeconomic impact, residential land use impact, or both.</p>	In addition to considering the impact of the project on Colonias as residential land use, the socioeconomic impact will also be considered. The full response can be found in the email from 4/1/2016
					<p>Topic 3: HUD-assisted properties</p> <p>A follow-up email from HUD dated May 5, 2016 provided a list of HUD-assisted properties that may be affected by routes under construction. These included Albores Courts Public Housing and Kingswood Village located within the purple route (US 281).</p>	Information provided by HUD will be taken into consideration for the SH 68 alternative analysis.

Committer Number	Agency	Committer Name	Date Received	Source	Comment Topic	Response
2	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD)	Julie Wicker	04/11/2016	Email	<p>Topic 1: Topics to consider in alternatives analysis</p> <p>TPWD provided a list of topics to consider when choosing an alternative route and to study in detail in the EIS including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impacts to potential wildlife corridors due to documentation of an ocelot in the study area</li> <li>• Impacts to rare and protected species and their habitats</li> <li>• Impacts to remnant vegetation communities</li> <li>• Impacts to land used for wildlife habitat conservation</li> </ul>	Information provided by TPWD will be taken into consideration for the SH 68 alternative analysis.
3	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)	Kristie Brink	03/29/2016	Email	<p>Topic 1: Alternative corridors files</p> <p>USACE requested a copy of the alternative corridors KMZ file and shapefile.</p>	TxDOT provided the alternative corridors kmz file to Ms. Brink on 3/31/2016.
					<p>Topic 2: Wetland delineations</p> <p>USACE had a question on whether delineations had been done for each alternative.</p>	Wetland delineations will be completed when a preferred alternative is identified.
					<p>Topic 3: Permitting</p> <p>USACE asked when the project would be submitted for permitting, and what type of permitting is expected.</p>	Permitting, if necessary, will take place after a preferred alternative is identified and the design of the project is complete.

Committer Number	Agency	Committer Name	Date Received	Source	Comment Topic	Response
4	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Kimeka Price	04/20/2016	Email and mailed letter	<p>Topic 1: EPA Issues and recommendations</p> <p>EPA provided a list of issues and recommendations covering the following topics: Statement of Purpose and Need, Alternatives Analysis, Groundwater, Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Impacts, Stormwater Considerations, Impacts to Waters of the U.S., Biological Resources, Invasive Species, Air Quality, Climate Change, Hazardous Materials, Consultation and Coordination with Tribal Governments, National Historic Preservation Act and Executive Order 13007, Environmental Justice, Coordination with Land Use Planning Activities, Visual and Aesthetic Resources, Additional Right-of-way, and Noise. In addition, EPA provided recommendations on certain measures for fugitives dust sources, mobile and stationary sources, and administrative controls.</p>	TxDOT will consider and address topics listed by the EPA in the SH 68 environmental study, in compliance with NEPA and as applicable.

## **Attachment B**

### **Notices**

Agency Scoping Meeting Letter

Mailed to 13 people at 12 different agencies on March 4, 2016



## Texas Department of Transportation

600 W. Interstate 2 | Pharr, Texas 78577-1231 | (956) 702-6100 | [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov)

March 4, 2016

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

SH 68  
From Interstate (I)-2/United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/US 281  
CSJ: 3629-01-001, etc.  
District: Pharr  
County: Hidalgo

**RE: Agency Scoping Meeting for State Highway (SH) 68**

Dear Mr. Salinas:

In an October 2, 2015 letter to your agency, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) offered an invitation to your office to be a cooperating or participating agency in the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for SH 68 in Hidalgo County, Texas. As stated in the initial letter, the SH 68 project is being developed by TxDOT. The EIS will be developed in accordance with applicable rules and regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other environmental laws. 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.

This letter is to inform you that an agency scoping meeting with cooperating and participating agencies has been scheduled for March 29, 2016 from 10:00 AM to Noon at the TxDOT Pharr District conference center located at 600 W. Interstate 2, Pharr, TX 78577. This meeting will also be available via WebEx. Please contact [Robin.Gelston@txdot.gov](mailto:Robin.Gelston@txdot.gov) for access details. Drafts of the proposed study area, project purpose and need statement, coordination plan, and schedule will be provided at the agency scoping meeting and will also be available online on March 15, 2016 at [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov) keyword "SH 68".

We would appreciate your attendance to help us identify and refine potential environmental constraints, and to provide valuable input into the NEPA process. This will be the first of several proposed meetings for the SH 68 project with additional meetings planned throughout the duration of the EIS. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (956) 702-6130. Thank you in advance for your interest and participation in this project.

Sincerely,

Robin Gelston  
Environmental Coordinator



## Texas Department of Transportation

600 W. Interstate 2 | Pharr, Texas 78577-1231 | (956) 702-6100 | [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov)

March 4, 2016

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

SH 68  
From Interstate (I)-2/United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/US 281  
CSJ: 3629-01-001, etc.  
District: Pharr  
County: Hidalgo

**RE: Agency Scoping Meeting for State Highway (SH) 68**

Dear Mr. Curry:

In an October 2, 2015 letter to your agency, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) offered an invitation to your office to be a cooperating or participating agency in the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for SH 68 in Hidalgo County, Texas. As stated in the initial letter, the SH 68 project is being developed by TxDOT. The EIS will be developed in accordance with applicable rules and regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other environmental laws. 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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Sincerely,

Robin Gelston  
Environmental Coordinator  
TxDOT-Pharr District



## Texas Department of Transportation

600 W. Interstate 2 | Pharr, Texas 78577-1231 | (956) 702-6100 | [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov)

March 4, 2016

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

SH 68  
From Interstate (I)-2/United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/US 281  
CSJ: 3629-01-001, etc.  
District: Pharr  
County: Hidalgo

### RE: Agency Scoping Meeting for State Highway (SH) 68

Dear Mr. LaBlanc:

In an October 2, 2015 letter to your agency, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) offered an invitation to your office to be a cooperating or participating agency in the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for SH 68 in Hidalgo County, Texas. As stated in the initial letter, the SH 68 project is being developed by TxDOT. The EIS will be developed in accordance with applicable rules and regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other environmental laws. 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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We would appreciate your attendance to help us identify and refine potential environmental constraints, and to provide valuable input into the NEPA process. This will be the first of several proposed meetings for the SH 68 project with additional meetings planned throughout the duration of the EIS. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (956) 702-6130. Thank you in advance for your interest and participation in this project.

Sincerely,

Robin Gelston  
Environmental Coordinator  
TxDOT-Pharr District



## Texas Department of Transportation

600 W. Interstate 2 | Pharr, Texas 78577-1231 | (956) 702-6100 | [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov)

March 4, 2016

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

SH 68  
From Interstate (I)-2/United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/US 281  
CSJ: 3629-01-001, etc.  
District: Pharr  
County: Hidalgo

**RE: Agency Scoping Meeting for State Highway (SH) 68**

Dear Dr. Tuggle:

In an October 2, 2015 letter to your agency, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) offered an invitation to your office to be a cooperating or participating agency in the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for SH 68 in Hidalgo County, Texas. As stated in the initial letter, the SH 68 project is being developed by TxDOT. The EIS will be developed in accordance with applicable rules and regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other environmental laws. 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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Sincerely,

Robin Gelston

Environmental Coordinator

TxDOT-Pharr District



## Texas Department of Transportation

600 W. Interstate 2 | Pharr, Texas 78577-1231 | (956) 702-6100 | [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov)

March 4, 2016

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

SH 68  
From Interstate (I)-2/United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/US 281  
CSJ: 3629-01-001, etc.  
District: Pharr  
County: Hidalgo

**RE: Agency Scoping Meeting for State Highway (SH) 68**

Dear Colonel Pannell:

In an October 2, 2015 letter to your agency, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) offered an invitation to your office to be a cooperating or participating agency in the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for SH 68 in Hidalgo County, Texas. As stated in the initial letter, the SH 68 project is being developed by TxDOT. The EIS will be developed in accordance with applicable rules and regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other environmental laws. 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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Sincerely,

Robin Gelston  
Environmental Coordinator  
TxDOT-Pharr District



## Texas Department of Transportation

600 W. Interstate 2 | Pharr, Texas 78577-1231 | (956) 702-6100 | [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov)

March 4, 2016

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

SH 68  
From Interstate (I)-2/United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/US 281  
CSJ: 3629-01-001, etc.  
District: Pharr  
County: Hidalgo

**RE: Agency Scoping Meeting for State Highway (SH) 68**

Dear Ms. Britton:

In an October 2, 2015 letter to your agency, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) offered an invitation to your office to be a cooperating or participating agency in the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for SH 68 in Hidalgo County, Texas. As stated in the initial letter, the SH 68 project is being developed by TxDOT. The EIS will be developed in accordance with applicable rules and regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other environmental laws. 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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Sincerely,

Robin Gelston  
Environmental Coordinator  
TxDOT-Pharr District



## Texas Department of Transportation

600 W. Interstate 2 | Pharr, Texas 78577-1231 | (956) 702-6100 | [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov)

March 4, 2016

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

SH 68  
From Interstate (I)-2/United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/US 281  
CSJ: 3629-01-001, etc.  
District: Pharr  
County: Hidalgo

**RE: Agency Scoping Meeting for State Highway (SH) 68**

Dear Mr. Patrick:

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Sincerely,

Robin Gelston  
Environmental Coordinator  
TxDOT-Pharr District



## Texas Department of Transportation

600 W. Interstate 2 | Pharr, Texas 78577-1231 | (956) 702-6100 | [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov)

March 4, 2016

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

SH 68  
From Interstate (I)-2/United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/US 281  
CSJ: 3629-01-001, etc.  
District: Pharr  
County: Hidalgo

**RE: Agency Scoping Meeting for State Highway (SH) 68**

Dear Mr. Secretary:

In an October 2, 2015 letter to your agency, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) offered an invitation to your office to be a cooperating or participating agency in the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for SH 68 in Hidalgo County, Texas. As stated in the initial letter, the SH 68 project is being developed by TxDOT. The EIS will be developed in accordance with applicable rules and regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other environmental laws. 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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Sincerely,

Robin Gelston  
Environmental Coordinator

TxDOT-Pharr District



## Texas Department of Transportation

600 W. Interstate 2 | Pharr, Texas 78577-1231 | (956) 702-6100 | [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov)

March 4, 2016

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

SH 68  
From Interstate (I)-2/United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/US 281  
CSJ: 3629-01-001, etc.  
District: Pharr  
County: Hidalgo

**RE: Agency Scoping Meeting for State Highway (SH) 68**

Dear Mr. Smith:

In an October 2, 2015 letter to your agency, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) offered an invitation to your office to be a cooperating or participating agency in the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for SH 68 in Hidalgo County, Texas. As stated in the initial letter, the SH 68 project is being developed by TxDOT. The EIS will be developed in accordance with applicable rules and regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other environmental laws. 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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Sincerely,

Robin Gelston  
Environmental Coordinator  
TxDOT-Pharr District



## Texas Department of Transportation

600 W. Interstate 2 | Pharr, Texas 78577-1231 | (956) 702-6100 | [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov)

March 4, 2016

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

SH 68  
From Interstate (I)-2/United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/US 281  
CSJ: 3629-01-001, etc.  
District: Pharr  
County: Hidalgo

**RE: Agency Scoping Meeting for State Highway (SH) 68**

Dear Mr. Wolfe:

In an October 2, 2015 letter to your agency, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) offered an invitation to your office to be a cooperating or participating agency in the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for SH 68 in Hidalgo County, Texas. As stated in the initial letter, the SH 68 project is being developed by TxDOT. The EIS will be developed in accordance with applicable rules and regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other environmental laws. 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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Sincerely,

Robin Gelston  
Environmental Coordinator

TxDOT-Pharr District



## Texas Department of Transportation

600 W. Interstate 2 | Pharr, Texas 78577-1231 | (956) 702-6100 | [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov)

March 4, 2016

Ms. Kimberly Corley  
Executive Director  
Texas Railroad Commission  
P.O. Box 12967  
Austin, TX 78711-2967

SH 68  
From Interstate (I)-2/United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/US 281  
CSJ: 3629-01-001, etc.  
District: Pharr  
County: Hidalgo

**RE: Agency Scoping Meeting for State Highway (SH) 68**

Dear Ms. Corley:

In an October 2, 2015 letter to your agency, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) offered an invitation to your office to be a cooperating or participating agency in the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for SH 68 in Hidalgo County, Texas. As stated in the initial letter, the SH 68 project is being developed by TxDOT. The EIS will be developed in accordance with applicable rules and regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other environmental laws. 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.

This letter is to inform you that an agency scoping meeting with cooperating and participating agencies has been scheduled for March 29, 2016 from 10:00 AM to Noon at the TxDOT Pharr District conference center located at 600 W. Interstate 2, Pharr, TX 78577. This meeting will also be available via WebEx. Please contact [Robin.Gelston@txdot.gov](mailto:Robin.Gelston@txdot.gov) for access details. Drafts of the proposed study area, project purpose and need statement, coordination plan, and schedule will be provided at the agency scoping meeting and will also be available online on March 15, 2016 at [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov) keyword "SH 68".

We would appreciate your attendance to help us identify and refine potential environmental constraints, and to provide valuable input into the NEPA process. This will be the first of several proposed meetings for the SH 68 project with additional meetings planned throughout the duration of the EIS. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (956) 702-6130. Thank you in advance for your interest and participation in this project.

Sincerely,

Robin Gelston  
Environmental Coordinator  
TxDOT-Pharr District



## Texas Department of Transportation

600 W. Interstate 2 | Pharr, Texas 78577-1231 | (956) 702-6100 | [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov)

March 4, 2016

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

SH 68  
From Interstate (I)-2/United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/US 281  
CSJ: 3629-01-001, etc.  
District: Pharr  
County: Hidalgo

**RE: Agency Scoping Meeting for State Highway (SH) 68**

Dear Mr. Pollock:

In an October 2, 2015 letter to your agency, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) offered an invitation to your office to be a cooperating or participating agency in the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for SH 68 in Hidalgo County, Texas. As stated in the initial letter, the SH 68 project is being developed by TxDOT. The EIS will be developed in accordance with applicable rules and regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other environmental laws. 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.

This letter is to inform you that an agency scoping meeting with cooperating and participating agencies has been scheduled for March 29, 2016 from 10:00 AM to Noon at the TxDOT Pharr District conference center located at 600 W. Interstate 2, Pharr, TX 78577. This meeting will also be available via WebEx. Please contact [Robin.Gelston@txdot.gov](mailto:Robin.Gelston@txdot.gov) for access details. Drafts of the proposed study area, project purpose and need statement, coordination plan, and schedule will be provided at the agency scoping meeting and will also be available online on March 15, 2016 at [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov) keyword "SH 68".

We would appreciate your attendance to help us identify and refine potential environmental constraints, and to provide valuable input into the NEPA process. This will be the first of several proposed meetings for the SH 68 project with additional meetings planned throughout the duration of the EIS. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (956) 702-6130. Thank you in advance for your interest and participation in this project.

Sincerely,

Robin Gelston  
Environmental Coordinator  
TxDOT-Pharr District



## Texas Department of Transportation

600 W. Interstate 2 | Pharr, Texas 78577-1231 | (956) 702-6100 | [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov)

March 4, 2016

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

SH 68  
From Interstate (I)-2/United States Highway (US) 83 to I-69C/US 281  
CSJ: 3629-01-001, etc.  
District: Pharr  
County: Hidalgo

**RE: Agency Scoping Meeting for State Highway (SH) 68**

Dear Mr. Hyde:

In an October 2, 2015 letter to your agency, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) offered an invitation to your office to be a cooperating or participating agency in the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for SH 68 in Hidalgo County, Texas. As stated in the initial letter, the SH 68 project is being developed by TxDOT. The EIS will be developed in accordance with applicable rules and regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other environmental laws. 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.

This letter is to inform you that an agency scoping meeting with cooperating and participating agencies has been scheduled for March 29, 2016 from 10:00 AM to Noon at the TxDOT Pharr District conference center located at 600 W. Interstate 2, Pharr, TX 78577. This meeting will also be available via WebEx. Please contact [Robin.Gelston@txdot.gov](mailto:Robin.Gelston@txdot.gov) for access details. Drafts of the proposed study area, project purpose and need statement, coordination plan, and schedule will be provided at the agency scoping meeting and will also be available online on March 15, 2016 at [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov) keyword "SH 68".

We would appreciate your attendance to help us identify and refine potential environmental constraints, and to provide valuable input into the NEPA process. This will be the first of several proposed meetings for the SH 68 project with additional meetings planned throughout the duration of the EIS. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (956) 702-6130. Thank you in advance for your interest and participation in this project.

Sincerely,

Robin Gelston  
Environmental Coordinator  
TxDOT-Pharr District

## **Attachment C**

### **Sign-In Sheet**

#### **Attendance**

Total Attendance: 28 (14 in person, 14 by WebEx)

Number of Agencies: 5

TxDOT Personnel: 11

Project Consultants: 11



# SH 68 Agency Scoping Meeting

TxDOT Pharr District Office  
 600 W. Interstate 2, Pharr, TX 78577  
 Tuesday March 29, 2016  
 10am-12pm



## SIGN-IN SHEET (please print)

NAME	AGENCY / ADDRESS	PHONE	EMAIL	VIA WEB-EX?
Rebecca Wallisch	Blanton & Assoc. - Austin	512-264-1095	rebecca.wallisch@blantonassociates.com	
Mark Kainer	" " "	"	mkainer@blantonassociates.com	
Andi Burden	" "	"	andrea.burden@blantonassociates.com	
Jasmine Gardner	" " "	512-264-1095	jgardner@blantonassociates.com	
Raj Myrner	RS RIVERA - Austin	512-708-0167	rmyrner@rjrivera.com	
RUDY RIVERA	" " - San Antonio	512-422-1136	rivera@rjrivera.com	
Dean Tesmer	Blanton + Associates	5122641095	atesmer@blantonassociates.com	
Meredith Worthen	Blanton + Associates, Inc	512-264-1095	mworthen@blantonassociates.com	
Margil Maldonado Jr.	TxDOT	956 702 6134	Margil.Maldonado@txdot.gov	
Homero Bazzin Jr.	TxDOT	956-702-6214	Homero.Bazzin@txdot.gov	



# SH 68 Agency Scoping Meeting

TxDOT Pharr District Office  
600 W. Interstate 2, Pharr, TX 78577  
Tuesday March 29, 2016  
10am-12pm



## SIGN-IN SHEET (please print)

NAME	AGENCY / ADDRESS	PHONE	EMAIL	VIA WEB-EX?
NOLAN NICOLAS	TxDOT	936-702-6182	Nolan.Nicolas@txdot.gov	



# SH 68 Agency Scoping Meeting

TxDOT Pharr District Office  
 600 W. Interstate 2, Pharr, TX 78577  
 Tuesday March 29, 2016  
 10am-12pm



## SIGN-IN SHEET (please print)

NAME	AGENCY / ADDRESS	PHONE	EMAIL	VIA WEB-EX?
Jason Diamond	Half Associates	214-346-6395	jdiamond@half.com	
Ernesto Reyes	USFWS, 3325 Green Jay Rd Alamo, TX 78516	956-984-1560	Ernesto_Reyes@fws.gov	
Edd Paradise	TxDOT	702-6743	eparadise@txdot.gov	



## SH 68 Agency Scoping Meeting

TxDOT Pharr District Office  
 600 W. Interstate 2, Pharr, TX 78577  
 Tuesday March 29, 2016  
 10am-12pm



### SIGN-IN SHEET (please print)

NAME	AGENCY / ADDRESS	PHONE	EMAIL	VIA WEB-EX?
Mike Chavez	TxDOT Environmental Affairs (ENV)			X
Doug Booher	TxDOT ENV			X
Lindsey Kimmet	TxDOT ENV			X
Amy Redmond	TxDOT Office of Public Involvement (OPI)			X
Jefferson Grimes	TxDOT OPI			X
Nicolle Kord	TxDOT ENV			X
Sandra Chipley	TxDOT ENV			X
Matthew Kimmel	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) – Corpus Christi Regulatory Field Office			X
Zach Carter	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)			X

Office of Environment and Energy



## SH 68 Agency Scoping Meeting

TxDOT Pharr District Office  
 600 W. Interstate 2, Pharr, TX 78577  
 Tuesday March 29, 2016  
 10am-12pm



### SIGN-IN SHEET (please print)

NAME	AGENCY / ADDRESS	PHONE	EMAIL	VIA WEB-EX?
Julie Wicker	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD)			X
Magda Dallemagne	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)			X
Keith Hayden	EPA - Dallas			X
David Najvar	Halff Associates			X
Mike Walker	Blanton & Associates			X

## **Attachment D**

### **Comments Received**

**Comments submitted by email to robin.gelston@txdot.gov**

4

**From:** "Carter, Zach R" <[Zach.R.Carter@hud.gov](mailto:Zach.R.Carter@hud.gov)>

**Date:** March 29, 2016 at 11:00:47 AM CDT

**To:** Robin Gelston <[robin.gelston@txdot.gov](mailto:robin.gelston@txdot.gov)>

**Cc:** Norma Robledo <[norma.robledo@txdot.gov](mailto:norma.robledo@txdot.gov)>, "Storms, David A" <[David.A.Storms@hud.gov](mailto:David.A.Storms@hud.gov)>

**Subject: Scoping Documents - SH 68 Agency Scoping Meeting**

Robin,

Thank you for the presentation this morning, which I attended on behalf of HUD's Regional Environmental Officer David Storms. I am writing to ask if you can share a copy of the three screening maps that were discussed during the presentation, covering Land Use, Water Resources, and Socioeconomic factors. Additionally, I would like to request a copy of the kmz file showing the alternative alignments under consideration, which was mentioned during the meeting.

I also had a follow up question regarding the speaker's discussion of the maps. He mentioned that the Land Use map reflects residential and commercial development that may be impacted, and that the Socioeconomic map includes Colonias areas. Does this mean that in addition to considering the impact of the project on Colonias as residential land use, the socioeconomic impact is also considered, or does it mean instead that Colonias are considered only under Socioeconomics, and are not considered as areas dedicated to residential use for purposes of the EIS process?

Thank you in advance for the requested documents and any additional information you can provide. After evaluating the maps and alternatives areas, HUD will attempt to identify any HUD-assisted activities not already identified that may be affected and notify TXDOT, if applicable, by the comment close.

Sincerely,

Zach Carter  
Field Environmental Officer, Region VI  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Office of Environment and Energy  
801 Cherry St., Unit#45, Suite 2500  
Fort Worth, Texas 76102  
(817) 978-5835

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**From:** Nolan Nicolas [mailto:Nolan.Nicolas@txdot.gov]  
**Sent:** Friday, April 01, 2016 10:16 AM  
**To:** Carter, Zach R <Zach.R.Carter@hud.gov>  
**Cc:** Robin Gelston <Robin.Gelston@txdot.gov>; Storms, David A <David.A.Storms@hud.gov>  
**Subject:** RE: Scoping Documents - SH 68 Agency Scoping Meeting

Dear Mr. Zach Carter,

Thank you for your participation and comments at the SH68 Scoping meeting. Below are the answer to your question.

In addition to considering the impact of the project on colonias as residential land use, the socioeconomic impact will also be considered. The residential properties layer on the land use map and the colonias on the socioeconomic map are both considered residential constraints. As such, alternatives developed for the project will attempt to avoid and/or minimize impacts to residential properties.

The colonia information is also helpful in understanding the community and population characteristics of the EIS study area. The EIS process will evaluate community impacts and address environmental justice (EJ), including but not limited to potential impacts to low income populations. The colonia information was placed on the socioeconomic map because some of these areas may lack some basic living necessities, and the information suggests the potential presence of a low income neighborhood or vulnerable population to be evaluated further. Alternatives developed for the project will attempt to avoid and/or minimize disproportionately high and adverse impacts to EJ communities.

Also attached is the KMZ file of the SH 68 Alternatives.

Below is the link on how to download the additional maps that you've also requested.

You can retrieve the drop-off by clicking the following link (or copying and pasting it into your web browser) within 21 days:

["https://ftp.dot.state.tx.us/dropbox/pickup.php?claimID=BtbYwQFtbobrpzEK&claimPasscode=MP1WxSq7guMKBrSb&emailAddr=margil.maldonado%40txdot.gov"](https://ftp.dot.state.tx.us/dropbox/pickup.php?claimID=BtbYwQFtbobrpzEK&claimPasscode=MP1WxSq7guMKBrSb&emailAddr=margil.maldonado%40txdot.gov)

Full information for the drop-off:

Claim ID: BtbYwQFtbobrpzEK  
Claim Passcode: MP1WxSq7guMKBrSb  
Date of Drop-Off: 2016-03-30 08:12:21-0500

-- Uploaded Files --

- Name: Socio-Economic Reduced.pdf  
Content Type: application/pdf  
Size: 8.9 MB  
Description: Env Exhibit - Socio-Economic
- Name: 2016-03-10\_SH 68 LULC Constraints Map sent to RJRivera.pdf  
Content Type: application/pdf  
Size: 9.5 MB  
Description: Env Exhibit - LandUse/Land Cover
- Name: 2016-03-10\_SH 68 Water Resources on Topo Constraints to RJRivera.pdf  
Content Type: application/pdf  
Size: 10.5 MB  
Description: Env Exhibits - Water Resources

If you have any question just let us know.

Thanks.

**Nolan D. Nicolas**

Environmental Specialist

Advance Planning/Project Management

Texas Department of Transportation

600 West Interstate 2

Pharr, Texas 78577

Tel. 956-702-6182

Fax.956-702-6110

[Nolan.Nicolas@txdot.gov](mailto:Nolan.Nicolas@txdot.gov)

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**From:** Carter, Zach R [<mailto:Zach.R.Carter@hud.gov>]

**Sent:** Thursday, May 05, 2016 6:07 PM

**To:** Nolan Nicolas

**Cc:** Storms, David A; Robin Gelston

**Subject:** RE: Scoping Documents - SH 68 Agency Scoping Meeting - HUD-assisted properties in areas of consideration for project (purple route)

Dear Nolan Nicolas,

Thank you again for the information provided regarding the subject EIS and scoping meeting. After reviewing this information, I have noted the following HUD-assisted properties that may be affected by routes under consideration.

- Albores Courts Public Housing – A 219-unit public housing development managed by the Edinburg Housing Authority, within purple route expansion area along 281. The address of Albores Courts is 220 S 25<sup>th</sup> Ave, Edinburg, Texas. Contact information for Edinburg Housing Authority is Edinburg Housing Authority, Ciro Treviño Administration Building, 910 S. Sugar Rd., Edinburg, Texas 78539, phone 956-383-3839.
- Kingswood Village – An 80-unit HUD-assisted unit subdivision (direct Section 8 contract administered by HUD.) Address is E. Fay and S. 25<sup>th</sup> Ave (access road for 281), Edinburg, TX. Within purple route expansion area along 281. Contact HUD directly.

Please let us know if we can be of assistance in providing more information about these properties as the impact of the purple expansion route along 281 is evaluated in the EIS, and how we can best follow the progress of the EIS.

Regards,

Zach Carter  
Field Environmental Officer, Region VI  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Office of Environment and Energy  
801 Cherry St., Unit#45, Suite 2500  
Fort Worth, Texas 76102  
(817) 978-5835

---

**From:** Julie Wicker [<mailto:Julie.Wicker@tpwd.texas.gov>]

**Sent:** Monday, March 14, 2016 3:45 PM

**To:** Robin Gelston

**Cc:** Laura Zebehazy

**Subject:** agency scoping meeting for SH 68

Hi Robin,

TPWD recently received a letter informing us that an agency scoping meeting with cooperating and participating agencies has been scheduled for March 29, 2016 from 10 am until noon regarding the above referenced project (CSJ 3629-01-011). The letter states the meeting will also be available via WebEx. Laura will be out of the office that day but I would like to attend in her place via WebEx. Please add me to the distribution list for access info.

Thank you!!

Julie

Julie C. Wicker

Wildlife Division - [Habitat Assessment Program](#)

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

4200 Smith School Road

Austin, TX 78744

Phone: (512)389-4579

---

**From:** Robin Gelston [<mailto:Robin.Gelston@txdot.gov>]

**Sent:** Monday, March 14, 2016 4:08 PM

**To:** Julie Wicker <[Julie.Wicker@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:Julie.Wicker@tpwd.texas.gov)>

**Cc:** Laura Zebehazy <[Laura.Zebehazy@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:Laura.Zebehazy@tpwd.texas.gov)>; Nolan Nicolas <[Nolan.Nicolas@txdot.gov](mailto:Nolan.Nicolas@txdot.gov)>;

Norma Robledo <[Norma.Robledo@txdot.gov](mailto:Norma.Robledo@txdot.gov)>

**Subject:** RE: agency scoping meeting for SH 68

Julie

Will do. Thanks

---

**From:** Julie Wicker [<mailto:Julie.Wicker@tpwd.texas.gov>]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 11, 2016 5:52 PM  
**To:** Robin Gelston  
**Cc:** Laura Zebehazy; Nolan Nicolas; Norma Robledo; Sue Reilly  
**Subject:** RE: agency scoping meeting for SH 68

Hi Robin,

This email is in response to your request for agency information/issues/concerns about the proposed SH 68 project in Hidalgo County (requested at the end of the scoping meeting on March 29<sup>th</sup>). Below is a list of topics TPWD believes TxDOT should consider when choosing an alternative route and should study in detail in the EIS. Please note that this list is based on the very limited amount of preliminary information TPWD has about the project and does not represent all TPWD comments and recommendations on the project. Please continue to include me in notifications about upcoming scoping meetings, and TPWD would like to review and comment on the draft EIS when it is available.

- The TXNDD indicates an ocelot has been documented in the study area. TPWD recommends TxDOT consider potential impacts to wildlife travel corridors and incorporate wildlife crossings into the project design to avoid further fragmentation of native habitats and minimize wildlife-vehicle interactions.
- The TXNDD indicates state-listed threatened amphibians and plant species of greatest conservation need have been documented in the study area. TPWD recommends TxDOT survey alternative routes for rare and protected species and their habitats and avoid adverse impacts to these resources by route selection and/or adjustments.
- TPWD recommends TxDOT avoid disturbing remnant native vegetation communities in the project area using route selection and/or adjustments.
- TPWD recommends TxDOT avoid impacting lands that are owned and managed for the purpose of wildlife habitat conservation such as the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge tract in the project area.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Julie

Julie C. Wicker  
Wildlife Division - [Habitat Assessment Program](#)  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department  
4200 Smith School Road  
Austin, TX 78744  
Phone: (512)389-4579

**From:** "Brink, Kristie A SWG" <[Kristie.A.Brink@usace.army.mil](mailto:Kristie.A.Brink@usace.army.mil)>  
**Date:** March 29, 2016 at 1:20:56 PM CDT  
**To:** "[Robin.Gelston@txdot.gov](mailto:Robin.Gelston@txdot.gov)" <[Robin.Gelston@txdot.gov](mailto:Robin.Gelston@txdot.gov)>  
**Cc:** "Kimmel, Matthew L SWG" <[Matthew.L.Kimmel@usace.army.mil](mailto:Matthew.L.Kimmel@usace.army.mil)>  
**Subject:** SH 68 Agency Scoping Meeting

Good afternoon Robin,

Thank you for inviting us to the Scoping Meeting this morning. Matt and I understood from the meeting that the various alternative corridors are available in a digital format, either KMZ or shapefile. Would you be able to send us a copy of the KMZ file? If available, it would be very helpful if that information could also be provided as a shapefile.

Have delineations for each alternative been done yet? If so, those would be tremendously helpful in formulating input on the project, but we understand if that information is still in a draft phase.

In general, when would you expect the project to be submitted for permitting, and what type of permitting do you expect to need? Again, it may be too early to know for sure, so if you do not know the answers to those questions, that is fine. We are just trying to get an idea of what this project will entail on our end.

Thanks,

Kristie Brink  
Project Manager  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Galveston District  
Corpus Christi Regulatory Field Office  
5151 Flynn Parkway, Suite 306  
Corpus Christi, TX 78411  
Office: 361-814-5847 x. 1005  
Fax: 361-814-5912  
[Kristie.A.Brink@usace.army.mil](mailto:Kristie.A.Brink@usace.army.mil)

---

**From:** Margil Maldonado Jr [<mailto:Margil.Maldonado@txdot.gov>]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 29, 2016 1:30 PM  
**To:** Roy Mynier (RJRA); Dean Tesmer ([dtesmer@blantonassociates.com](mailto:dtesmer@blantonassociates.com))  
**Subject:** FW: SH 68 Agency Scoping Meeting

See request below

Margil Maldonado Jr., P.E.  
Texas Department of Transportation  
Project Manager

---

**From:** Robin Gelston  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 31, 2016 11:38 AM  
**To:** 'Kristie.A.Brink@usace.army.mil'; 'Matthew.L.Kimmel@usace.army.mil'  
**Subject:** FW: SH 68 Agency Scoping Meeting

Kristi

Attached is the KMZ file, the wetland delineation will take place only once a preferred alignment is selected.

**From:** Price, Kimeka [<mailto:Price.Kimeka@epa.gov>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 20, 2016 2:08 PM  
**To:** Mike Chavez; Nolan Nicolas; Robin Gelston  
**Cc:** Price, Kimeka  
**Subject:** State Highway 68 EIS - Scoping Letter

Ms. Gelston, Mr. Chavez, and Mr. Nicolas,

Please find attached the electronic version of EPA's scoping letter for the Texas Department of Transportation's State Highway 68 Environmental Impact Statement. You should also receive a hardcopy via mail in the next several days. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Kimeka Price  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 6  
Compliance Assurance and Enforcement Division  
Water Enforcement Branch  
Special Projects Section/NEPA Program  
[price.kimeka@epa.gov](mailto:price.kimeka@epa.gov)  
214-665-7438

---

**From:** Robin Gelston  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 20, 2016 2:13 PM  
**To:** Price, Kimeka; Mike Chavez; Nolan Nicolas  
**Subject:** RE: State Highway 68 EIS - Scoping Letter

Thank you I will forward to the project Team and address them appropriately.

Robin Gelston  
TxDOT Pharr District  
Environmental Coordinator  
600 W. Expressway US 83  
Pharr, Texas 78577  
956-702-6130  
956-279-4978 cell



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**

**Region 6  
1445 Ross Avenue, Suite 1200  
Dallas, TX 75202-2733**

April 20, 2016

Robin Gelston  
Texas Department of Transportation  
Pharr District  
600 W. IH-2  
Pharr, Texas 78577

**RE: Detailed Scoping Comments for the Proposed State Highway 68 Environmental Impact Statement in eastern Hidalgo County, Texas**

Dear Ms. Gelston:

The Region 6 office of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has received Texas Department of Transportation's request for detailed scoping comments in preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed State Highway 68 Project.

To assist in the scoping process for this project, EPA has identified several issues for your attention in the preparation of the EIS and has enclosed detailed scoping comments for your consideration. Our comments are provided pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide scoping comments and are available to discuss our comments. Please send one hard copy of the Draft EIS and four CD ROM copies to this office when completed and submitted for public comment. If you have any questions, please contact Kimeka Price of my staff at (214) 665-7438 or by e-mail at [price.kimeka@epa.gov](mailto:price.kimeka@epa.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jerry Saunders".

Jerry Saunders  
Associate Director  
Water Enforcement Branch  
Compliance Assurance  
and Enforcement Division

Enclosure

**DETAILED SCOPING COMMENTS  
ON  
TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (TxDOT)  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT  
FOR THE PROPOSED  
STATE HIGHWAY 68 PROJECT  
IN  
HIDALGO COUNTY, TEXAS**

The following recommendations are provided for consideration by TxDOT in preparation of the EIS:

**Statement of Purpose and Need**

We recommend the EIS clearly identify the underlying purpose and need to which the TxDOT is responding in proposing the alternatives (40 CFR 1502.13). The purpose of the proposed action is typically the specific objectives of the activity, while the need for the proposed action may be to eliminate a broader underlying problem or take advantage of an opportunity.

***Recommendation:***

The purpose and need should be a clear, objective statement of the rationale for the proposed project.

**Alternatives Analysis**

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires evaluation of reasonable alternatives, including those that may not be within the jurisdiction of the lead agency (40 CFR Section 1502.14(c)). A robust range of alternatives will include options for avoiding significant environmental impacts. We recommend the EIS provide a clear discussion of the reasons for the elimination of alternatives which are not evaluated in detail.

The environmental impacts of the proposal and alternatives should be presented in comparative form, thus sharply defining the issues and providing a clear basis for choice among options by the decision maker and the public (40 CFR 1502.14). The potential environmental impacts of each alternative should be quantified to the greatest extent possible.

***Recommendations:***

We recommend the EIS describe how each alternative was developed, how it addresses each project objective, and how it will be implemented. The alternatives analysis should include a discussion of alternatives. We recommend the EIS clearly describe the rationale used to determine whether impacts of an alternative are significant or not. We recommend the EIS describe the methodology and criteria used for determining project siting. Thresholds of significance should be determined by considering the context and intensity of an action and its effects (40 CFR 1508.27).

## **Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Impacts**

The EIS should include direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the proposed action and alternatives to the environment (i.e., resources, ecosystem, and communities) in the vicinity of the project area, as well as mitigation measures for impacts.

## **Groundwater**

EPA recommends the EIS address potential adverse impacts to groundwater. For each alternative under consideration, we request that the EIS satisfy the recommendations below to ensure groundwater resources are protected and any unavoidable impacts are fully assessed in the EIS.

### ***Recommendations:***

EPA recommends the EIS describe current groundwater conditions in the project area and fully assess any impacts to groundwater quality and quantity associated with the proposed project construction and operational activities.

We also recommend the EIS identify mitigation measures to prevent or reduce adverse impacts to groundwater quality and discuss their effectiveness. EPA asks that the lead agency work closely with state and local agencies which regulate the protection of groundwater resources (i.e., state health departments and water pollution control agencies.)

## **Stormwater Considerations**

EPA recommends the EIS describe the original (natural) drainage patterns in the project locale, as well as the drainage patterns of the area during project operations. Also, we recommend the EIS identify whether any components of the proposed project are within a 50 or 100-year floodplain. We also recommend noting that, under the Federal Clean Water Act, any construction project disturbing a land area of one or more acres requires a construction stormwater discharge permit.

### ***Recommendations:***

EPA recommends the EIS document the project's consistency with applicable stormwater permitting requirements. Requirements of a stormwater pollution prevention plan should be reflected as appropriate in the EIS.

We also recommend the EIS discuss specific mitigation measures that may be necessary or beneficial in reducing adverse impacts to water quality and aquatic resources.

## **Impact to Waters of the United States**

The proposed project will require coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). The proposed project requires a Section 404 permit under the Clean Water Act (CWA). Section 404 regulates the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States (WOUS), including wetlands and other *special aquatic sites*.

EPA recommends that TxDOT include a wetland delineation for all WOUS, in accordance with the 1987 *Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual* and the December 2006 *Atlantic and Gulf Coast Region Interim Regional Supplement to the Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual*. A wetland delineation will identify vegetated wetlands in the project area. Following the wetland delineation, EPA recommends the TxDOT conduct a jurisdictional determination to determine which wetlands, waters and other special aquatic sites on the site are jurisdictional.

When the Corps issues a public notice for the CWA Section 404 permit application, the EPA will review the project for compliance with *Federal Guidelines for Specification of Disposal Sites for Dredged or Fill Materials* (40 CFR 230), promulgated pursuant to Section 404(b)(1) of the CWA. Pursuant to 40 CFR 230, any permitted discharge into WOUS must be the *least environmentally damaging practicable alternative* (LEDPA) available to achieve the project purpose. We recommend the EIS include an evaluation of the project alternatives in this context in order to demonstrate the project's compliance with the 404 (b)(1) Guidelines. If, under the proposed project, dredged or fill material would be discharged into WOUS, we recommend the EIS discuss alternatives to avoid and minimize those discharges. Finally, EPA recommends the TxDOT include a draft wetland mitigation plan that would compensate for unavoidable impacts to aquatic resources, in the EIS for review and comment by EPA, the Corps, and other interested agencies and stakeholders.

More specifically, we recommend the TxDOT address whether, and how, the proposed project will avoid and minimize potential impacts to wetlands due to altered hydrology and elevations, altered soil structure, and mowing and/or use of herbicides.

***Recommendation:***

EPA asks that TxDOT consult with the Corps to determine its requirements for permitting the proposed project under Section 404 of the CWA. We recommend the EIS include a wetland delineation and a determination of which wetlands and waters are jurisdictional under the CWA (jurisdictional determination). The EIS should address the requirements of the CWA 404(b)(1) Guidelines, and in particular, it should address the requirements for consideration of alternatives, avoidance and minimization of impacts to aquatic habitats, and demonstration that the proposed project is the LEDPA. More specifically, we recommend the TxDOT address whether, and how, the proposed project will avoid and minimize potential impacts to wetlands due to altered hydrology and elevation, altered soil structure, and mowing and/or use of herbicides. Finally, EPA requests that the TxDOT include in the EIS a draft mitigation plan to propose compensatory mitigation for unavoidable impacts to aquatic resources.

**Biological Resources, Habitat and Wildlife**

EPA asks that the EIS identify all petitioned and listed threatened and endangered species and critical habitat that might occur within the project area, including any areas. We further recommend the EIS identify which species or critical habitat might be directly, indirectly, or cumulatively affected by each alternative and describe possible mitigation for each of the species.

***Recommendations:***

EPA recommends the analysis of impacts and mitigation on covered species include:

- Baseline conditions of habitats and populations of the covered species.
- A clear description of how avoidance, mitigation and conservation measures will protect and encourage the recovery of the covered species and their habitats in the project area.
- Monitoring, reporting and adaptive management efforts to ensure species and habitat conservation effectiveness.
- A discussion of how the projects potential impacts such as air emissions and/or wastewater discharges may impact species.

If the applicant is to acquire compensation lands, the location(s) and management plans for these lands should be discussed in the EIS.

***Recommendations:***

EPA recommends incorporating information on the compensatory mitigation proposals for unavoidable impacts to WOUS and biological resources in the EIS.

We recommend identifying compensatory mitigation lands or quantify available lands for compensatory habitat mitigation for this project, as well as reasonably foreseeable projects in the area. Specify provisions that will ensure habitat selected for compensatory mitigation will be protected in perpetuity in the EIS.

EPA recommends incorporating mitigation, monitoring, and reporting measures that result from consultation with the TxDOT that incorporate recently released guidance to avoid and minimize adverse effects to sensitive biological resources in the EIS.

We further request that the EIS describe the potential for habitat fragmentation and obstructions for wildlife movement from the construction of this project. The EIS should discuss the need for monitoring, mitigation, and if applicable, translocation management plans for the sensitive biological resources.

EPA is also concerned about the potential impact of construction, installation, and maintenance activities (deep trenching, grading, filling, and fencing) on habitat. We recommend the EIS describe the extent of these activities and the associated impacts on habitat and threatened and endangered species, including all interrelated and interdependent facilities. We encourage habitat conservation alternatives that avoid and protect high value habitat and create or preserve linkages between habitat areas to better conserve the covered species.

***Recommendations:***

We recommend the EIS describe the extent of potential impacts from construction, installation, and maintenance activities, including all interrelated and interdependent facilities.

We recommend the EIS describe the ROW vegetation management techniques to be used and their potential associated environmental impacts, especially if mechanical methods or herbicides are to be used.

We recommend the EIS indicate the location of important marine and wildlife habitat

areas. We recommend the EIS describe what measures will be taken to protect important wildlife habitat areas and to preserve linkages between them.

### **Invasive Species**

Human actions are the primary means of invasive species introductions. Pipeline construction causes disturbance of ROW soils and vegetation through the movement of people and vehicles along the ROW, access roads, and lay down areas. These activities can contribute to the spread of invasive species. Parts of plants, seeds, and root stocks can contaminate construction equipment and essentially “seed” invasive species wherever the vehicle travels. Invasive species infestations can also occur during periodic ROW maintenance activities especially if these activities include mowing and clearing of vegetation. Once introduced, invasive species will likely spread and impact adjacent properties with the appropriate habitat.

Executive Order 13112, *Invasive Species* (February 3, 1999), mandates that federal agencies take actions to prevent the introduction of invasive species, provide for their control, and minimize the economic, ecological, and human health impacts that invasive species cause. Executive Order 13112 also calls for the restoration of native plants and tree species. If the proposed project will entail new landscaping, we recommend the EIS describe how the project will meet the requirements of Executive Order 13112.

In addition, we encourage alternative management practices that limit herbicide use (as a last resort), focusing instead on other methods to limit invasive species vegetation and decrease fire risk. Possible alternatives include mowing and weed control fabric, which may need a layer of soil to prevent degradation due to ultraviolet light.

#### ***Recommendations:***

EPA recommends the EIS describe the invasive plant management plan used to monitor and control noxious weeds. If herbicides or pesticides will be used to manage vegetation, we recommend the EIS disclose the projected quantities and types of chemicals. The invasive plant management plan should identify methods that can be used to limit the introduction and spread of invasive species during and post-construction. These measures can include marking and avoidance of invasives, timing construction activities during periods that would minimize their spread, proper cleaning of equipment, and proper disposal of woody material removed from the ROW.

Because construction measures may not be completely effective in controlling the introduction and spread of invasives, we recommend the EIS describe post-construction activities that will be required such as surveying for invasive species following restoration of the construction site and measures that will be taken if infestations are found.

### **Air Quality**

EPA recommends the EIS provide a detailed discussion of ambient air conditions (baseline or existing conditions), National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) and non-NAAQS pollutants, criteria pollutant nonattainment areas, and potential air quality impacts of the proposed project (including cumulative and indirect impacts). Such an evaluation is necessary to understand the potential impacts from temporary, long-term, or cumulative degradation of air

quality.

We further recommends the EIS describe and estimate air emissions from potential construction and maintenance activities, as well as proposed mitigation measures to minimize those emissions. EPA recommends an evaluation of the following measures to reduce emissions of criteria air pollutants and hazardous air pollutants (air toxics).

***Recommendations:***

- *Existing Conditions* – We recommend the EIS provide a detailed discussion of ambient air conditions, National Ambient Air Quality Standards, and criteria pollutant nonattainment areas in the vicinity of the project.
- *Quantify Emissions* – We recommend the EIS estimate emissions of criteria and hazardous air pollutants (air toxics) from the proposed project and discuss the timeframe for release of these emissions over the lifespan of the project. We recommend the EIS describe and estimate emissions from potential construction activities, as well as proposed mitigation measures to minimize these emissions.
- *Specify Emission Sources* – We recommend the EIS specify all emission sources by pollutant from mobile sources (on and off-road), stationary sources (including portable and temporary emission units), fugitive emission sources, area sources, and ground disturbance. This source specific information should be used to identify appropriate mitigation measures and areas in need of the greatest attention.
- *Construction Emissions Mitigation Plan* – We recommend the EIS include a draft Construction Emissions Mitigation Plan and ultimately adopt this plan in the Record of Decision. In addition to all applicable local, state, or federal requirements, we recommend the following control measures (Fugitive Dust, Mobile and Stationary Source and Administrative) be included in the Construction Emissions Mitigation Plan in order to reduce impacts associated with emissions of particulate matter and other toxics from construction-related activities. (See Attachment 1)

**Climate Change**

EPA recommends that the EIS include an estimate of the greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions associated with the project during construction and operation, qualitatively describe relevant climate change impacts, and analyze reasonable alternatives and/or practicable mitigation measures to reduce project-related GHG emissions. In addition, we recommend that the EIS address the appropriateness of including design elements in the proposal to incorporate resilience to foreseeable climate change, including sea level rise. We suggest that the EIS make clear whether commitments have been made to ensure implementation of design or other measures to adapt to potential climate change impacts.

More specifically, we recommend that the EIS include a summary discussion of climate change and ongoing and reasonably foreseeable climate change impacts relevant to the project based on U.S. Global Change Research Program ([www.globalchange.gov/](http://www.globalchange.gov/)) assessments. This can aid in the identification of potential project impacts that may be exacerbated by climate change and inform consideration of measures to adapt to climate change impacts. Among other things, this will assist in identifying resilience-related measures to consider in the alternatives.

We recommend that the EIS includes an estimate of the GHG emissions associated with the proposed activities and alternatives. Example tools for estimating and quantifying GHG emissions can be found on CEQ's NEPA.gov. The estimated GHG emissions can serve as a reasonable proxy for climate change impacts when comparing the proposal and alternatives. In disclosing the potential impacts of the proposal and reasonable alternatives, consideration should be given to whether and to what extent the impacts may be exacerbated by expected climate change in the action area.

Recognizing that climate impacts are not attributable to any single action, but are exacerbated by a series of smaller decisions, we do not recommend comparing GHG emissions from a proposed action to global emissions or total U.S. emissions, as this approach is limited by the cumulative nature of GHG concentrations and the impacts of climate change. Because of these limitations, these comparisons do not provide meaningful information for a project level analysis.

We recommend that the EIS commits to evaluating the implementation of reasonable mitigation measures that would reduce or eliminate management activity-related GHG emissions.

### **Hazardous Materials, Hazardous Waste and Solid Waste**

EPA recommends the EIS address potential direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of hazardous waste from construction and operation of the proposed pipeline and other facilities. The document should identify projected hazardous waste types and volumes, and expected storage, disposal, and management plans.

#### ***Recommendations:***

We recommend the EIS address the applicability of state and federal hazardous waste requirements. Appropriate mitigation should be evaluated, including measures to minimize the generation of hazardous waste (i.e., hazardous waste minimization). Alternate industrial processes using less toxic materials should be evaluated as mitigation since such processes could reduce the volume or toxicity of hazardous materials requiring management and disposal as hazardous waste.

### **Consultation and Coordination with Tribal Governments**

Executive Order 13175, *Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments* (November 6, 2000), was issued in order to establish regular and meaningful consultation and collaboration with tribal officials in the development of federal policies that have tribal implications, and to strengthen the United States government-to-government relationships with Indian tribes. If applicable, we recommend the EIS describe the process and outcome of government-to-government consultation between the TxDOT and with any and each of the tribal governments within the project area, issues that were raised (if any), and how those issues were addressed in the selection of the proposed alternative.

#### ***Recommendation:***

We recommend the EIS describe the process and outcome of government-to-government consultation between the TxDOT and each of the tribal governments within the project

area, issues that were raised (if any), and how those issues were addressed in the selection of the proposed alternative.

### **National Historic Preservation Act and Executive Order 13007 (NRHA)**

Consultation for tribal cultural resources is required under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Historic properties under the NHPA are properties that are included in the National Register of Historic Places or that meet the criteria for the National Register. Section 106 of the NHPA requires a federal agency, upon determining that activities under its control could affect historic properties, consult with the appropriate State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)/Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO), Indian tribes, or any other interested party. Under NEPA, any impacts to tribal, cultural, or other treaty resources must be discussed and mitigated. Section 106 of the NHPA requires that Federal agencies consider the effects of their actions on cultural resources, following regulation in 36 CFR 800.

#### ***Recommendation:***

We recommend the EIS address the existence of cultural and historic resources, including Indian sacred sites, in the project areas, and address compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA. It should also address Executive Order 13007, distinguish it from Section 106 of the NHPA, and discuss how the applicant will avoid adversely affecting the physical integrity, accessibility, or use of sacred sites, if they exist. We recommend the EIS provide a summary of all coordination with Tribes, the SHPO/THPO, or any other party; and identify all NRHP listed or eligible sites, and the development of a Cultural Resource Management Plan.

### **Environmental Justice and Impacted Communities**

Executive Order 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations* (February 11, 1994) and the Interagency Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Justice (August 4, 2011) direct federal agencies to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations, allowing those populations a meaningful opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. Guidance<sup>1</sup> by CEQ clarifies the terms low-income and minority population (which includes Native Americans) and describes the factors to consider when evaluating disproportionately high and adverse human health effects. We recommend the EIS include an evaluation of environmental justice populations within the geographic scope of the projects. Assessment of the projects impact on minority and low-income populations should reflect coordination with those affected populations. We recommend the EIS also describe outreach conducted to all other communities that could be affected by the project, since rural communities may be among the most vulnerable to health risks associated with the project. Additionally, EPA recommends that all the necessary tools and methods (i.e., EJ Screen, U.S. Census Bureau, and area knowledge) be used in identifying the low income and minority population within or near the parameter of the project area.

#### ***Recommendations:***

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<sup>1</sup> Environmental Justice Guidance under the National Environmental Policy Act, Appendix A (Guidance for Federal Agencies on Key Terms in Executive Order 12898), CEQ, December 10, 1997.

EPA recommends the EIS include an evaluation of environmental justice populations within the geographic scope of the projects. If such populations exist, EPA recommends the EIS address the potential for disproportionate adverse impacts to minority and low-income populations, and the approaches used to foster public participation by these populations. Assessment of the projects impact on minority and low-income populations should reflect coordination with those affected populations. We recommend the EIS describe outreach conducted to all other communities that could be affected by the project, since rural communities may be among the most vulnerable to health risks associated with the project.

### **Coordination with Land Use Planning Activities**

We recommend the EIS discuss how the proposed action would support or conflict with the objectives of federal, state, tribal or local land use plans, policies and controls in the project areas. The term "land use plans" includes all types of formally adopted documents for land use planning, conservation, zoning and related regulatory requirements. Proposed plans not yet developed should also be addressed if they have been formally proposed by the appropriate government body in a written form (CEQ's Forty Questions, #23b).

### **Visual and Aesthetics Resources**

The EIS should incorporate a discussion regarding impacts to visual and aesthetics resources associated with implementing the proposed project.

### **Additional Right-of-Way**

Because the proposed roadway may require additional easements and ROW, we recommend the EIS consider eminent domain issues during the evaluation of potential corridors. The findings should be documented in the EIS.

### **Noise**

The EIS should incorporate a discussion regarding noise associated with construction activities, operational and maintenance activities, and any other sources stemming from implementing the proposed project.

## ATTACHMENT 1

### Control Measures (Fugitive Dust, Mobile and Stationary Source and Administrative)

- **Fugitive Dust Source Controls:** We recommend the EIS identify the need for a Fugitive Dust Control Plan to reduce Particulate Matter 10 and Fine Particulate Matter 2.5 emissions during construction and operations. We recommend that the plan include these general commitments:
  - Stabilize heavily used unpaved construction roads with a non-toxic soil stabilizer or soil weighting agent that will not result in loss of vegetation, or increase other environmental impacts.
  - During grading, use water, as necessary, on disturbed areas in construction sites to control visible plumes.
  - Vehicle Speed
    - Limit speeds to 25 miles per hour on stabilized unpaved roads as long as such speeds do not create visible dust emissions.
    - Limit speeds to 10 miles per hour or less on unpaved areas within construction sites on un-stabilized (and unpaved) roads.
    - Post visible speed limit signs at construction site entrances.
  - Inspect and wash construction equipment vehicle tires, as necessary, so they are free of dirt before entering paved roadways, if applicable.
  - Provide gravel ramps of at least 20 feet in length at tire washing/cleaning stations, and ensure construction vehicles exit construction sites through treated entrance roadways, unless an alternative route has been approved by appropriate lead agencies, if applicable.
  - Use sandbags or equivalent effective measures to prevent run-off to roadways in construction areas adjacent to paved roadways. Ensure consistency with the project's Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan, if such a plan is required for the project
  - Sweep the first 500 feet of paved roads exiting construction sites, other unpaved roads en route from the construction site, or construction staging areas whenever dirt or runoff from construction activity is visible on paved roads, or at least twice daily (less during periods of precipitation).
  - Stabilize disturbed soils (after active construction activities are completed) with a non-toxic soil stabilizer, soil weighting agent, or other approved soil stabilizing method.
  - Cover or treat soil storage piles with appropriate dust suppressant compounds and disturbed areas that remain inactive for longer than 10 days. Provide vehicles (used to transport solid bulk material on public roadways and that have potential to cause visible emissions) with covers. Alternatively, sufficiently wet and load materials onto the trucks in a manner to provide at least one foot of freeboard.
  - Use wind erosion control techniques (such as windbreaks, water, chemical dust suppressants, and/or vegetation) where soils are disturbed in construction, access and maintenance routes, and materials

stock pile areas. Keep related windbreaks in place until the soil is stabilized or permanently covered with vegetation.

○ Mobile and Stationary Source Controls:

- If practicable, lease new, clean equipment meeting the most stringent of applicable Federal<sup>2</sup> or State Standards<sup>3</sup>. In general, commit to the best available emissions control technology. Tier 4 engines should be used for project construction equipment to the maximum extent feasible<sup>4</sup>.
- Where Tier 4 engines are not available, use construction diesel engines with a rating of 50 hp or higher that meet, at a minimum, the Tier 3 California Emission Standards for Off-Road Compression-Ignition Engines<sup>5</sup>, unless such engines are not available.
- Where Tier 3 engine is not available for off-road equipment larger than 100 hp, use a Tier 2 engine, or an engine equipped with retrofit controls to reduce exhaust emissions of nitrogen oxides and diesel particulate matter to no more than Tier 2 levels.
- Consider using electric vehicles, natural gas, biodiesel, or other alternative fuels during construction and operation phases to reduce the project's criteria and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Plan construction scheduling to minimize vehicle trips.
- Limit idling of heavy equipment to less than 5 minutes and verify through unscheduled inspections.
- Maintain and tune engines per manufacturer's specifications to perform at CARB and/or EPA certification levels, prevent tampering, and conduct unscheduled inspections to ensure these measures are followed.

○ Administrative controls:

- Develop a construction traffic and parking management plan that maintains traffic flow and plan construction to minimize vehicle trips.
- Identify any sensitive receptors in the project area, such as children, elderly, and the infirm, and specify the means by which impacts to these populations will be minimized (e.g. locate construction equipment and staging zones away from sensitive receptors and building air intakes).
- Include provisions for monitoring fugitive dust in the fugitive dust control plan and initiate increased mitigation measures to abate any visible dust plumes.

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<sup>2</sup> EPA's website for nonroad mobile sources is <http://www.epa.gov/nonroad/>.

<sup>3</sup> For California, see ARB emissions standards, see: <http://www.arb.ca.gov/msprog/offroad/offroad.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> Diesel engines < 25 hp rated power started phasing in Tier 4 Model Years in 2008. Larger Tier 4 diesel engines will be phased in depending on the rated power (e.g., 25 hp - <75 hp: 2013; 75 hp - < 175 hp: 2012-2013; 175 hp - < 750 hp: 2011 - 2013; and  $\geq$  750 hp 2011- 2015).

# **Attachment E**

## **Figures**

**Photographs from the Agency Scoping Meeting**

**Powerpoint Presentation from the Agency Scoping Meeting**

**Displays Available at the Agency Scoping Meeting**

\*All displays are available in the powerpoint presentation

SH 68 EIS Process

Next Steps

SH 68 Draft Purpose and Need

SH 68 Alternatives Analysis Methodology

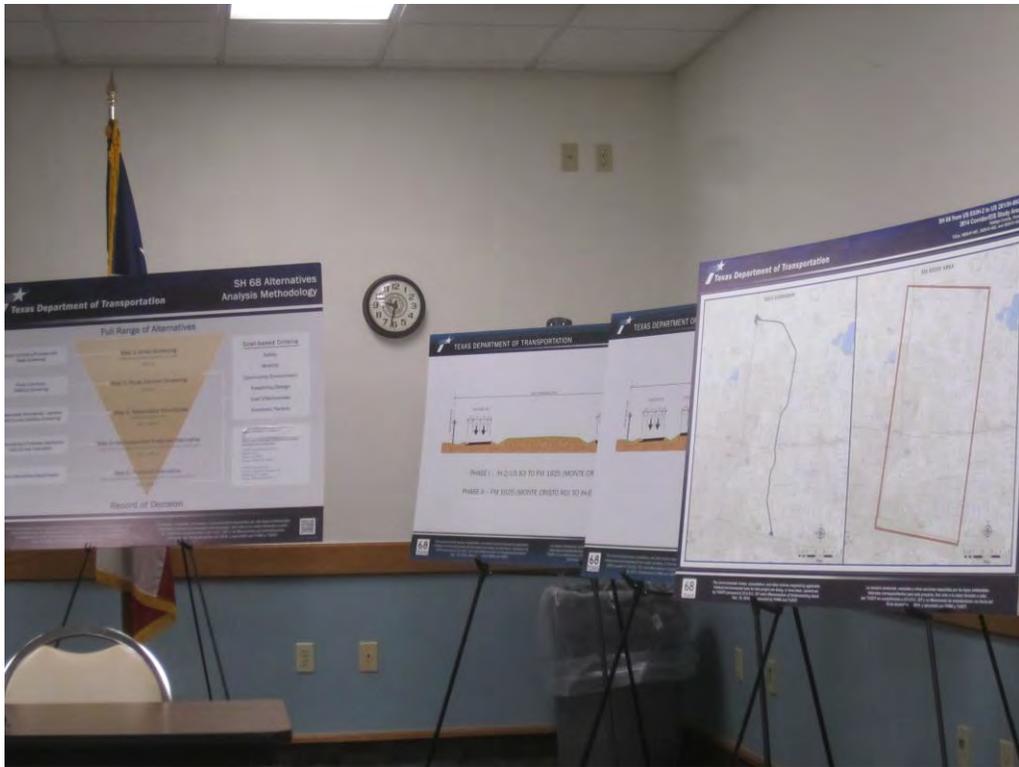
Proposed Typical Section

Proposed Ultimate Typical Section

Project History

Environmental Constraints Roll Plots

- Land Use – Land Cover
- Water Resources
- Social/Economic











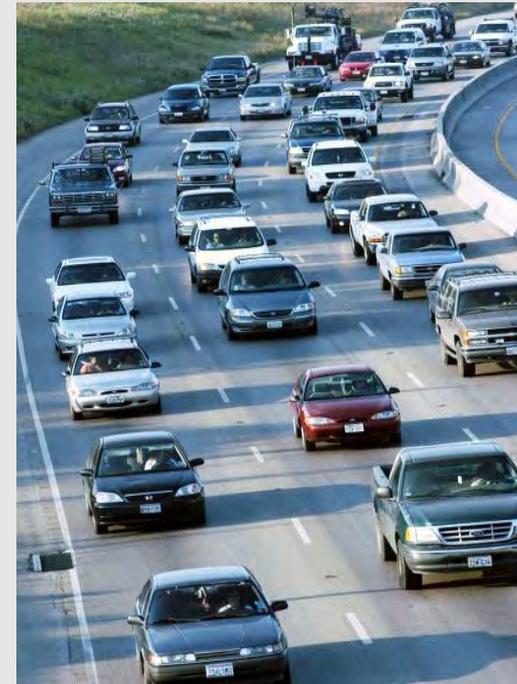


TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



# SH 68 EIS

Agency Scoping Meeting



March 29, 2016



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Safety: Mission

**ZERO**



***Safety Never Stops!***

## Discussion Topics

1 Purpose of the Agency Scoping Meeting

2 Proposed Project Description

3 Project History

4 Agency Scoping

5 Alternatives Evaluation Methodology

6 Initial Study Corridors

7 Next Steps



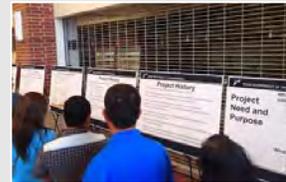
# AGENCY SCOPING MEETING

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## Agency Scoping Meeting

Purpose of this meeting is to:

- Introduce SH 68 and the project history
- Present draft Purpose and Need
- Solicit comments on the draft Coordination Plan
- Present the proposed alternatives analysis methodology
- Identify preliminary environmental and engineering constraints
- Present initial study corridors identified to date
- Present proposed project schedule



# PROPOSED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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## Project Description

SH 68 is currently described as:

- a proposed four-lane divided rural highway with future mainlanes and overpasses,
- located in eastern Hidalgo County,
- extending from US 83/IH-2 to US 281/IH-69C.

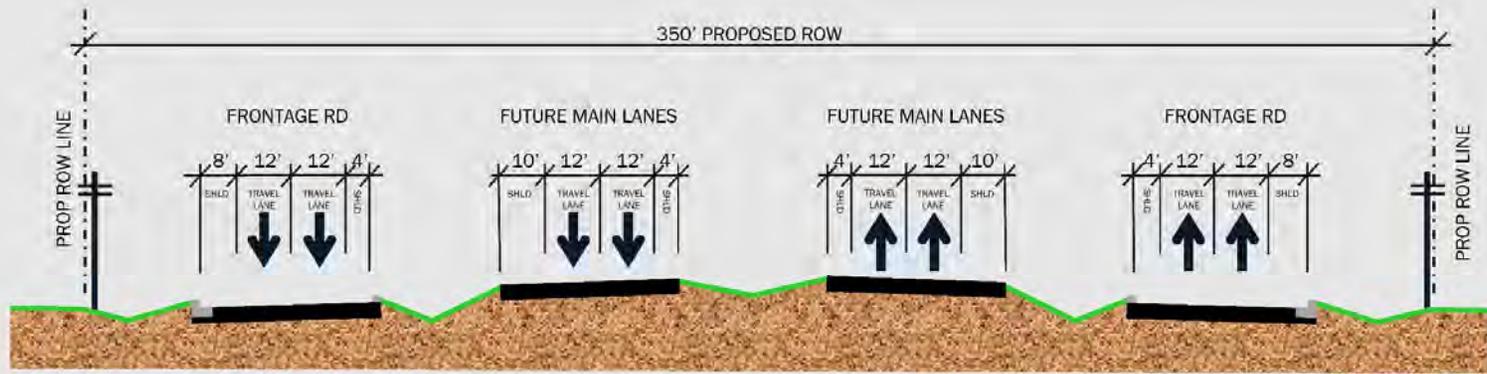
# Proposed Typical Section



PHASE I – IH-2/US 83 TO FM 1925 (MONTE CRISTO RD)

PHASE II – FM 1925 (MONTE CRISTO RD) TO IH-69C/US 281

# Proposed Ultimate Typical Section



ULTIMATE FACILITY



# PROJECT HISTORY

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## Project History

- Hidalgo County and the Hidalgo County Regional Mobility Authority (HCRMA)
  - *Studies and Public Involvement: 2008 - 2009*
  
- Texas Transportation Commission
  - Designated SH 68: February 2013
  
- SH 68
  - 2014-2015: Started Environmental Assessment and Route Analysis
  - 2015: Based on preliminary environmental studies and stakeholder input, TxDOT determined that an Environmental Impact Statement would be prepared for the project.

# Project History

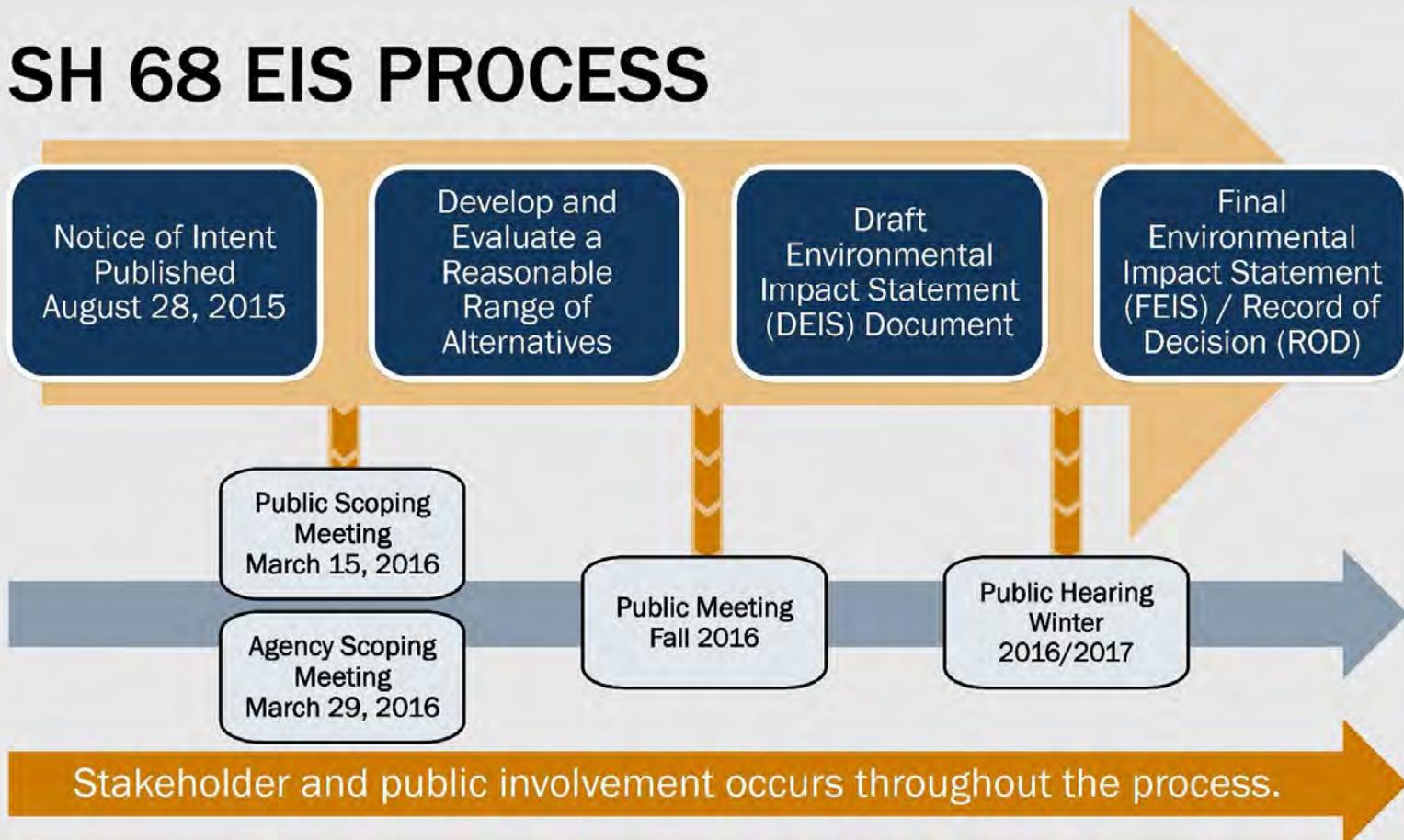




# AGENCY SCOPING

## EIS Process

# SH 68 EIS PROCESS



## Draft Purpose and Need

# SH 68 DRAFT PURPOSE AND NEED

*“The statement shall briefly specify the underlying Purpose and Need to which the agency is responding in proposing the alternatives, including the proposed action” (40 CFR 1502.13)*

### PURPOSE

- Improve north-south mobility
- Increase travel capacity for local and regional traffic
- Provide an alternate north-south evacuation route during emergency events

### NEED

- 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

# Draft Project Coordination Plan



## Draft Project Coordination Plan

Environmental Impact Statement  
 SH 68 from US 83/IH-2 to US 281/IH-69C  
 CSJs: 3629-01-001, -002, -003  
 Hidalgo County, Texas

Texas Department of Transportation – Pharr District  
 March 2016 (VERSION 6)

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.

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

Draft Coordination Plan

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A	Cooperating and Participating Agencies Invitations and Mailings Lists
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### Tables

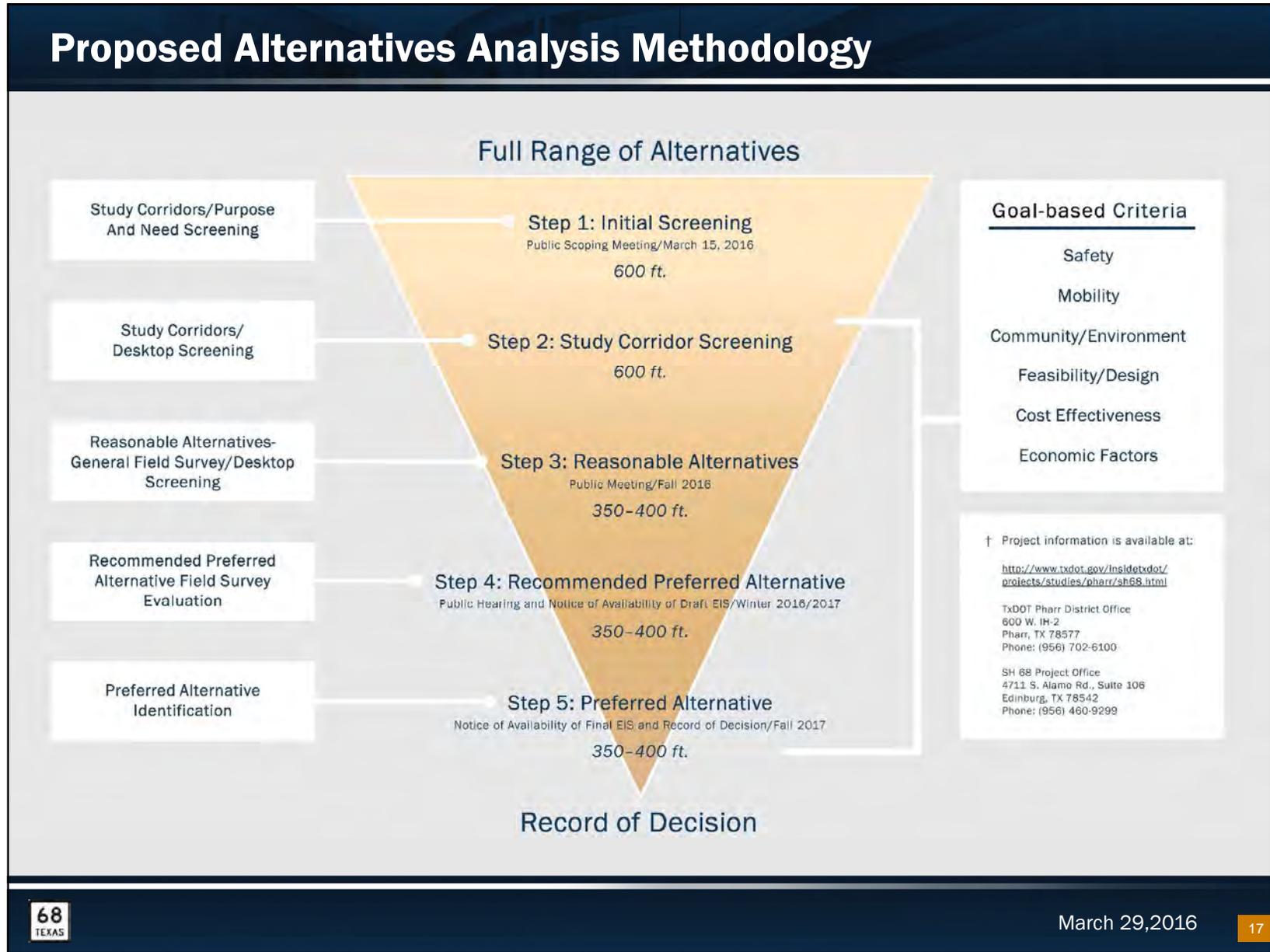
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CSJs: 3629-01-001, -002, AND -003

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MARCH 2016

# Proposed Alternatives Analysis Methodology



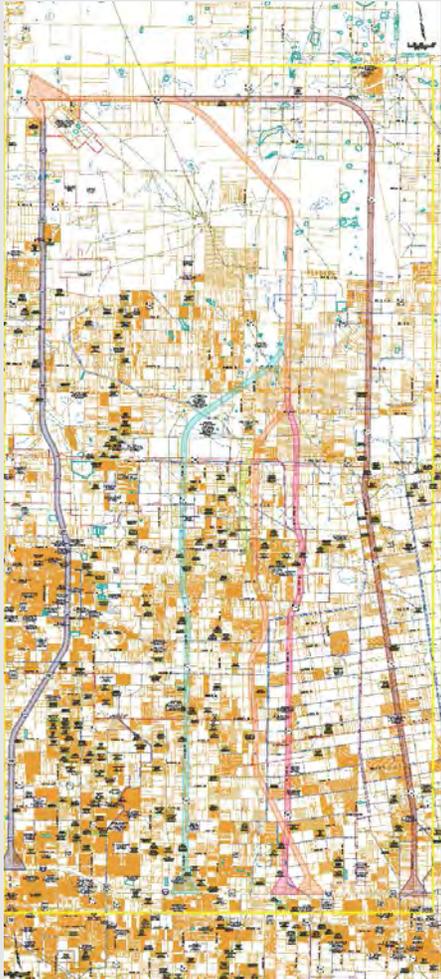




# INITIAL STUDY CORRIDORS

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## Initial Study Corridors



- FM 493
- FM 1423 (Val Verde Road)
- 2014 Corridor
- 2014 Modified Corridor
- FM 907 (Alamo Road)
- Improve IH-69C/US 281



# NEXT STEPS

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## Schedule Milestones

- August 28, 2015 – NOI Published in Federal and Texas Registers
- March 15, 2016 – Public Scoping Meeting
- March 29, 2016 – Agency Scoping Meeting
- Spring/Summer 2016 – Refine Alternatives and Screening Criteria
- Summer/Fall 2016 – Evaluate and refine alternatives to 350-foot diagrammatic to be evaluated in Draft EIS (DEIS)
- Fall 2016 – Public Meeting
- Fall 2016 – Prepare DEIS
- End of 2016/Beginning 2017 – DEIS Circulation
- End of 2016/Beginning 2017 – Public Hearing
- Spring/Summer 2017 – Prepare Final EIS (FEIS)
- Fall 2017 – Final Decision on EIS and issuance of Record of Decision

## Public Involvement



4711 S. Alamo Road, Suite 100  
Edinburg, TX 78542  
(956) 460-9299  
SH68@rjrivera.com

Regular Hours:  
Tuesdays and Wednesdays  
11 am – 8 pm  
(or by appointment)

<http://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/projects/studies/pharr/sh68.html>

## How to Provide Comments

- By email:

[Robin.Gelston@txdot.gov](mailto:Robin.Gelston@txdot.gov)

- In writing:

TxDOT Pharr District  
600 W. IH-2  
Pharr, TX 78577



# COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS?

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**Attachment F**  
**Draft Coordination Plan**



# Draft Project Coordination Plan

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Environmental Impact Statement

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

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

Hidalgo County, Texas

Texas Department of Transportation – Pharr District

March 2016 (VERSION 6)

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 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE COORDINATION PLAN

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

## 9 2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### 10 2.1 Project Location

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

### 15 2.2 Purpose and Need

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

### 21 2.3 Project History

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

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

#### 4 2.4 Projected Cost of Project

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

### 7 3.0 **AGENCY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### 8 3.1 Lead Agency:

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

15 The lead agency will:

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

### 1 3.2 Participating Agencies:

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

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

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

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

### 13 3.3 Cooperating Agencies:

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

24 **Table 1** summarizes the roles and responsibilities of participating and cooperating agencies  
25 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	Provide input on potential threatened and endangered species within the study area. Provide input on designated critical habitat within the study area. Ensure compliance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Provide input on potential impacts to wildlife refuges within the project area. Ensure compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Ensure compliance with the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. Ensure compliance with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act.
United States Army Corps of Engineers		X	Cooperating agency invitation mailed on October 2, 2015. No response received; default to Participating Agency	Ensure compliance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Ensure compliance with Section 10 of the General Bridge Act of 1946.
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	

**Table 1. Cooperating and Participating Agencies**

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	

**Table 1. Cooperating and Participating Agencies**

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	

1

1 4.0 **PROJECT COORDINATION**

2 4.1 **Agency Coordination:**

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

8 ***Table 2. Agency Coordination***

Agency Coordination Point	Timeframe
<b>Publication of Notice of Intent (NOI)*</b> in the Federal and Texas Register	August 28, 2015
<b>Modal Alternatives Conference:</b> 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
<b>Agency Scoping Meeting:</b> 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
<b>Notice of Availability and DEIS Circulation</b>	Winter 2016/2017 (45-day public and agency review period)
<b>FEIS/Record of Decision</b>	Fall 2017
<b>*A copy of the published NOI is included as Appendix B</b>	

9 4.2 **Public Involvement and Stakeholder Outreach:**

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

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

**Table 3. Public Involvement/Stakeholder Outreach**

Public Involvement/Stakeholder Outreach Point	Timeframe
<p><b>Establishing a Project Office:</b> 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><b>Project Hotline:</b> 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><b>Project Webpage:</b> A project page on TxDOT's website will be established to provide updated project information to the public.</p>	Summer 2015-Winter 2017
<p><b>E-Newsletter:</b> 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><b>Stakeholder Meetings</b></p>	Winter 2016-Spring 2017
<p><b>Technical Work Group (TWG):</b> 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><b>Public Meetings:</b> 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: Fall 2016</p>
<p>A <b>Public Hearing</b> will be conducted after approval of the DEIS to present the recommended preferred alternative.</p>	Winter 2017

1 Objectives of the SH 68 public involvement process include:

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

## 9 5.0 PROJECT MILESTONES/SCHEDULE

### 10 5.1 Project Milestones

11 Major milestones and general timeframes are identified in **Table 4**. It is the intent of the lead  
12 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	Fall 2016
DEIS preparation and identification of recommended preferred alternative and potential environmental impacts	Fall 2016
DEIS circulation	Winter 2016 (45-day agency and public comment period)
Public Hearing and presentation of recommended preferred alternative	Winter 2016/2017
FEIS preparation	Spring 2017 to Fall 2017
Final decision on EIS and issuance of Record Of Decision	Fall 2017

## 1 5.2 Project Schedule

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

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

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

## 17 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.

18

**APPENDIX A**

Cooperating and Participating Agency

Invitation Letters



# Texas Department of Transportation

125 EAST 11<sup>TH</sup> 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

*An Equal Opportunity Employer*

- 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 11<sup>TH</sup> 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.

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:

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

#### OUR GOALS

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

*An Equal Opportunity Employer*

- 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 11<sup>TH</sup> STREET | AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-2483 | (512) 416-2734 | WWW.TXDOT.GOV

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.

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:

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

#### OUR GOALS

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

*An Equal Opportunity Employer*

- 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.



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

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.

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**

*An Equal Opportunity Employer*

- 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 11<sup>TH</sup> 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**

*An Equal Opportunity Employer*

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 11<sup>TH</sup> STREET | AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-2483 | (512) 416-2734 | WWW.TXDOT.GOV

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

**OUR GOALS**

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

*An Equal Opportunity Employer*

- 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 11<sup>TH</sup> 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

#### OUR GOALS

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

*An Equal Opportunity Employer*

- 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 11<sup>TH</sup> STREET | AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-2483 | (512) 416-2734 | WWW.TXDOT.GOV

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.

#### OUR GOALS

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

*An Equal Opportunity Employer*

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 11<sup>TH</sup> STREET | AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-2483 | (512) 416-2734 | WWW.TXDOT.GOV

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.

#### OUR GOALS

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

*An Equal Opportunity Employer*

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 11<sup>TH</sup> 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.

#### OUR GOALS

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

*An Equal Opportunity Employer*

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 11<sup>TH</sup> 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.

#### OUR GOALS

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

*An Equal Opportunity Employer*

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 11<sup>TH</sup> 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.

#### OUR GOALS

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

*An Equal Opportunity Employer*

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 11<sup>TH</sup> 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.

#### OUR GOALS

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

*An Equal Opportunity Employer*

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 11<sup>TH</sup> 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.

#### 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 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.



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

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

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

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

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 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

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

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

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**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](mailto: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

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Texas Department of Transportation

Filed: August 19, 2015



## APPENDIX C

### Public Involvement Plan



# Draft Public Involvement Plan

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SH 68 from US 83/IH-2 to US 281/IH-69C  
CSJs: 3629-01-001, 3629-01-002,  
3629-01-003  
Hidalgo County, Texas

Texas Department of Transportation - Pharr District

March 2016

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 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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

9 Guiding principles of the plan include:

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

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

### 18 1.1 Goals and Objectives

19 The goals and objectives of the PIP are to:

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

## 1 2.0 PROJECT TEAM AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

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

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

## 13 3.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

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

### 18 3.1 Project Database

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

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

29 The project team will use information collected through the EIS process along with a previously  
30 developed database of PAPs to establish and maintain a comprehensive contact list for the  
31 study. The list will be used to disseminate project information, including project newsletters,  
32 project updates, and notices for public meetings, workshops, and hearings. The database will  
33 be updated throughout the duration of the study and revised following each public meeting,  
34 workshop, and hearing based on the attendees list or other requests for inclusion.

### 1 3.2 Public Information Materials

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

- 7 • documents for the project webpage on txdot.gov;
- 8 • presentations;
- 9 • project fact sheet;
- 10 • newsletters;
- 11 • frequently asked questions document;
- 12 • graphical depictions/renderings; and
- 13 • conceptual animations.

### 14 3.3 Public Meetings/Hearing

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

- 22 • For each meeting/hearing, an appropriate venue will be identified near, but preferably  
23 within the study area.
- 24 • Prior notification of both public meetings and hearing will be available to PAPs and the  
25 public through various communication channels. These channels shall include the  
26 project webpage, the meetings and hearings page on txdot.gov, e-mail, Twitter,  
27 newspaper ads, mailed notices, the SH 68 Project Office and media releases. Each  
28 required public meeting will be advertised in English and Spanish at least 14 days in  
29 advance in accordance with the Texas Administrative Code.

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

### 30   3.4   **Media Relations**

31   The TxDOT-PHR's Public Information Officer will establish and maintain a responsible,  
32   comprehensive, and proactive media relations program to enhance public awareness and  
33   participation in the environmental study process for SH 68. Public outreach and media  
34   activities and messages will be consistent and complementary of one another.

### 1 3.5 TxDOT Project Web Page

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

### 12 3.6 Social Media

13 Twitter (@TxDOTPharr) and Facebook will be used to enhance communication about the SH  
14 68 environmental study. The Pharr District PIO will use these social media tools to provide  
15 updates and information about the study and public involvement opportunities. Facebook may  
16 also be used for Sponsored Ads to announce public meetings and hearings.

### 17 3.7 Face-to-Face Involvement

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

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

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

### 1 3.8 State Highway 68 Project Office and Hotline

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

### 8 3.9 Public Feedback

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

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

### 26 4.0 EVALUATION AND MODIFICATION OF THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

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

- 31 • Number of public meetings and hearings conducted

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

## 7   5.0   **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

8   Implementing this PIP will be a combined effort with the SH 68 Project Team. These tasks  
9   capture what has been accomplished in the Environmental Assessment (EA) process, and  
10  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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