



I-35 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

FM 3002 IN TEXAS TO MERLE WOLFE ROAD (MILE MARKER 1) IN OKLAHOMA

VIRTUAL PUBLIC HEARING, SEPTEMBER 15, 2020

FACTS ABOUT THE PROJECT

Project Location:

Cooke County, Texas and Love County, Oklahoma

Proposed Project Length:

Approximately 22 miles

Proposed Project Limits:

FM 3002 to Merle Wolfe Road (Mile Marker 1)

Proposed Design:

- Two additional lanes in each direction
- Realignment of portions of the roadway
- Two new bridges over the Red River
- Removal of the northbound Red River bridge
- Conversion of the southbound Red River bridge to a frontage road
- Conversion of two-way frontage roads to one way
- 124 acres of additional right-of-way required, 163 parcels and potential displacement of six commercial structures.

Welcome to the I-35 Virtual Public Hearing

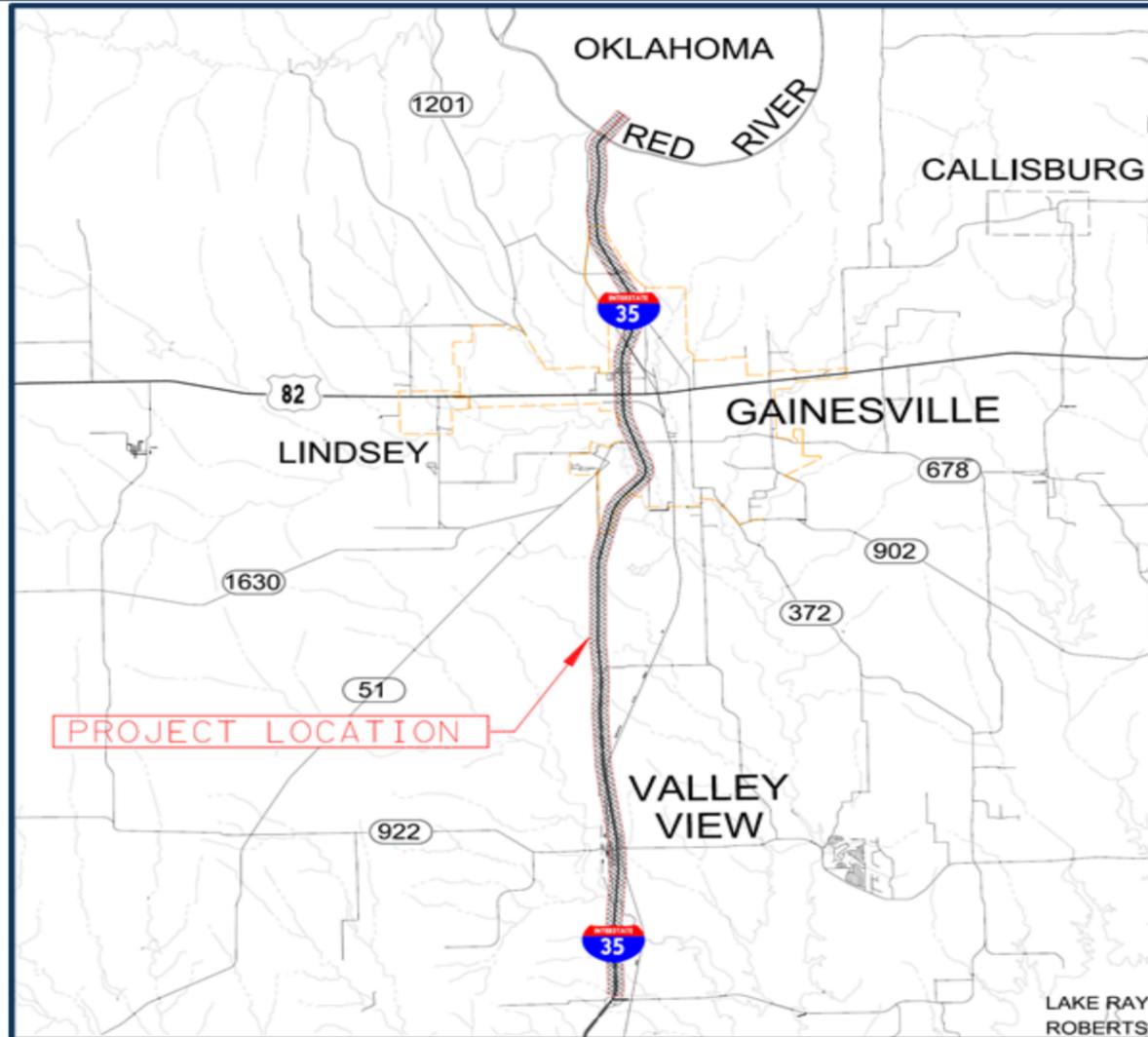
The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) welcomes you to the I-35 Virtual Public Hearing. The purpose of the Virtual Public Hearing is to present the recommended Build Alternative, summarize the findings for the Draft Environmental Assessment and to receive comments from the public.

Project Summary

The proposed project would widen the existing I-35 from four-lane highway to an 8-lane highway (four lanes in each direction) for approximately 22 miles, from near FM 3002 in Cooke, Texas to Mile Marker 1/Merle Wolfe Road in Love County, Oklahoma. The proposed project is predominately rural and passes through the Cities of Valley View and Gainesville, Texas. The proposed typical section would include four 12-foot wide travel lanes and 10-foot wide inside and outside shoulders in each direction. In addition, the proposed project would covert existing non-continuous, two-way frontage roads to continuous, one-way frontage roads. Crossover access will be provided approximately every 1.5 miles. Two new bridges would be constructed for the Red River Bridge main lanes and one existing bridge will be used for a two-way frontage road. The schematic design has been posted on the project website (visit www.txdot.gov and keyword search I-35 Cooke County) and is also available to view in the virtual room at the schematic table.

As part of the planning process, TxDOT conducted an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed project. The EA documents the existing social, economic and environmental conditions, assesses effects of the proposed alternative and identifies potential mitigation. Updated biological data is currently being reviewed and once approved will be updated in the Final EA. The EA will also evaluate the effects of a no-build alternative. The constraints map and EA have been posted on the project website (visit www.txdot.gov and keyword search I-35 Cooke County) and is also available to view in the virtual room at the environmental table.

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Funding

The I-35 project would be receiving federal funds, and because of the federal component, the potential environmental effects of the proposed project must be assessed in accordance with Federal standards. The process that is followed is called the National Environmental Policy Act process, otherwise known as NEPA. The NEPA process provides analyses of the potential impacts to the natural and manmade environment, and helps the decision maker to make an informed decision on whether or not to proceed with the project. The lead agency under NEPA for the proposed project is the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

The total estimated construction cost is approximately \$675 million for the interim six-lane facility and for an additional \$78 million the ultimate 8-lane facility would be built, for a total estimated construction cost of \$753 million. The 2035 Texas Rural Transportation Plan, the rural component of the 2035 Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan, identifies improvements to I-35 between the Denton County line and the Texas/Oklahoma state line (Red River Bridge), as the top four ranked improvement projects for the TxDOT Wichita Falls District. A portion of the proposed project is consistent with the TxDOT 2020 Unified Transportation Program (UTP). Final NEPA action cannot be completed unless funding for the project described in the environmental document is reasonably available. TxDOT is currently working on identifying reasonably available funding for the proposed project. FHWA will not take final action on the environmental document until reasonably available funding for the project is demonstrated.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed I-35 project is to improve mobility, add capacity, accommodate economic development opportunities (north and south of the proposed project), and improve the safety for existing and future travelers in the region.

The proposed I-35 project is needed because the roadway's capacity is inadequate to safely meet current and future local and regional traffic volumes, resulting in congestion, and reduced mobility on this stretch of highway.

How to Stay Involved in the Proposed Project

To stay involved, sign-up for email updates, call Shaun Barnes at the TxDOT Wichita Falls District Office at (940) 720-7744 or Mike Hallum at the Gainesville Area Office at (940)665-5071, email MyProjectsWichitaFalls@txdot.gov or follow us on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/TxDOTWF>. A Final EA will be prepared addressing all comments with an anticipated Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). This process is expected to be completed in 2020 and phased construction is programmed to begin in 2021.

Submit comments in the following ways:

- Leave a Voicemail at (833) 933-0430
- Via email to MyProjectsWichitaFalls@txdot.gov
- Via mail to the TxDOT Wichita Falls District, 1601 Southwest Parkway, Wichita Falls, Texas, 76302 (a printable form can be found online by visiting www.txdot.gov and searching in the upper right-hand search box for keyword search "I-35 Cooke County")
- Click on the Comment Button in the Virtual Room

Responses to comments received during the comment period will be included in the Virtual Public Hearing Summary report that will be posted on the project website in approximately three months. The project website is www.txdot.gov; keyword search "I-35 Cooke County."

Project History and Next Steps for the I-35 Improvement Project

