

# Archeology at Borderland Expressway

El Paso District

## Project Details: Borderland Expressway (formerly the Northeast Parkway)

The proposed Borderland Expressway (formerly Northeast Parkway) would provide a route around the northeast side of El Paso, suitable for truck and other through traffic, diverting traffic from the Interstate 10 corridor through the city center. TxDOT is currently documenting the existing social, economic and environmental conditions, and assessing the project's impact to natural and cultural resources. Environmental documents and an initial design were presented to the public in July 2018, and a public hearing is expected to take place in the Spring/Summer of 2020.

### Project Details

Borderland Expressway is planned as a new four-laned corridor with grade separations, five interchanges, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. TxDOT anticipates environmental clearance and a final design by Summer 2020. The project is 10.8 miles in length. It is not fully funded yet and is expected to start construction as early as 2022.

**FIRECRACKER PUEBLO INVESTIGATIONS:** Firecracker Pueblo is a designated State Archeological Landmark dating to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Previous excavations at Firecracker began in 1980 and continued for ten years. The main component of the site consists of a 15 to 17 room, above-ground adobe pueblo. Early on, Puebloan people at Firecracker built and lived seasonally in "pit houses," roughly circular or oval houses built over shallow pits. Pit houses were the standard form of habitation before above-ground structures in the region, and about 17 such pithouses were discovered beneath the surface adobe rooms at Firecracker, in addition to other site features.

TxDOT is working closely with the Tigua Indians of Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, the only Puebloan tribe still in Texas, regarding cultural resources on the Borderland Expressway. Archeological survey of the project corridor in 2016 identified three additional sites (possibly roughly contemporaneous to Firecracker) requiring test excavations to assess their condition and significance. In particular, the survey revealed Puebloan artifacts ranging from A.D. 900-1475. They are presently mapped as several adjacent sites, but their close proximity and similar artifact assemblages suggest that they may comprise a larger continuous site that encompasses Firecracker Pueblo.



Read more about other TxDOT archeology projects. Visit [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov), Keyword: "Archeology."

### CONSULTING PARTIES:

Ysleta del Sur Pueblo  
Texas Historical Commission

If you would like to become a consulting party, please notify TxDOT.

### PROJECT CONTACTS:

Gus Sanchez  
Advance Transportation Planner  
915-790-4233  
[gus.sanchez@txdot.gov](mailto:gus.sanchez@txdot.gov)

Mimi Horn  
Environmental Specialist  
915-790-4323  
[mimi.horn@txdot.gov](mailto:mimi.horn@txdot.gov)

### ARCHEOLOGY CONTACTS:

Laura Cruzada  
Public Involvement Specialist  
(512) 416-2638  
[laura.cruzada@txdot.gov](mailto:laura.cruzada@txdot.gov)

Kevin Hanselka  
Staff Archeologist  
214-320-4472  
[kevin.hanselka@txdot.gov](mailto:kevin.hanselka@txdot.gov)



### NEXT STEPS

Site test investigations are ongoing on three other potentially significant sites (aside from Firecracker Pueblo) in the Borderland Expressway project area. If any of these are found to have high research potential, more thorough excavations will likely be required.

TxDOT will consult with the Texas Historical Commission, interested Tribes, and other consulting parties to determine how best to mitigate project impacts to the Firecracker Pueblo site. TxDOT is presently assessing the level and scale of previous investigations on Firecracker Pueblo to determine if additional excavations are required prior to construction, or if the excavations in the 1980s depleted the research potential of the site. Mitigation plans will likely include analyses of previously-excavated materials, potentially additional field excavations, and production of a final report incorporating previous and present investigations.