

# Public Hearing Summary and Analysis / Recommendation December 15, 2011

## IH 35W: From SH 114 to IH 820

**District / County:** Fort Worth / Tarrant and Denton Counties

**CSJ / Project Numbers:** 0014-16-252, 0014-16-255, 0081-12-041, and 0081-13-904

**Proposed Improvements:** The proposed study limits are within Tarrant and Denton Counties, Texas. The project area is IH 35W from SH 114 to IH 820. The length of the proposed project is approximately 10.5 miles. The proposed improvements include the expansion of the existing facility from a four-lane divided roadway to a six/eight-lane (non-toll) roadway with four/six concurrent managed (toll) lanes centered between the general purpose lanes. The following describes the improvements:

- From Eagle Parkway to US 81/US 287 - six-lane (non-toll) with four concurrent managed (toll) lanes (two each direction) divided roadway.
- From US 81/US 287 to Basswood Boulevard - eight-lane (non-toll) with four concurrent managed (toll) lanes (two each direction) divided roadway.
- From Basswood Boulevard to IH 820 - eight-lane (non-toll) with six concurrent managed (toll) lanes (three each direction) divided roadway.

Auxiliary lanes would be constructed between entrance and exit ramps along the roadway and two to four-lane frontage roads with a 14-foot wide outside shared lane for cyclists and six-foot wide sidewalks for pedestrians would be provided. The proposed roadway would consist of 12-foot wide lanes with 10-foot wide inside and outside shoulders for the general purpose lanes, and 12-foot wide lanes with four-foot wide inside and 10-foot wide outside shoulders for the managed (toll) lanes. Bicycle and pedestrian accommodations would be provided on the frontage roads and cross-streets.

**Need and Purpose:** The proposed project is needed to meet future travel demands stemming from projected population growth and traffic volumes, address operational and capacity deficiencies on IH 35W, US 81/US 287, and SH 170, and update the facility to current design standards.

The purpose of the proposed project is to improve mobility within the IH 35W corridor and facilitate access to existing and future land uses along the proposed project. The purpose of implementing tolled concurrent managed/HOV lanes as part of the IH 35W project would be to provide congestion relief primarily within the peak hour travel times, and provide a revenue source to pay for the operational and maintenance costs of the facility and future rehabilitation or reconstruction of the facility.

The capacity constraints of existing streets and alternate north/south highways near the project study area, and the limitations on the availability of right-of-way for new roadways have created and would intensify congestion. The proposed project would reduce congestion by increasing the capacity along this portion of IH 35W.

**Environmental Document Approval:** The Federal Highway Administration approved the environmental assessment for satisfactory for further processing on October 20, 2011.

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) conducted two public meetings: the first held on March 8, 2007, and the second held on July 28, 2009.

**Notices and Articles:** A notice of public hearing was published in the legal section of The *Fort Worth Star Telegram* on November 13, 2011 and December 4, 2011 and The *Times Register* on November 16, 2011 and December 7, 2011. A Spanish version of the notice was published in the legal section of *La Semana* on November 11, 2011 and December 2, 2011 and in the legal section of *La Estrella* on November 19, 2011 and December 3, 2011. Notices were mailed to adjacent property owners and public officials.

**Public Hearing Date and Place:** A Public Hearing was held on Thursday, December 15, 2011, at Tidwell Middle School, located at 3937 Haslet-Roanoke Road, Roanoke, Texas 76262. The layouts were available for public viewing from 6:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and the Public Hearing began at 7:00 p.m.

**Attendance:** The registration sheets indicated 77 people attended the public hearing. Of these, 48 were private citizens. The remaining attendees were from TxDOT, FHWA, elected officials, city and county government representatives, and the design consultant.

**Conducted By:** Mr. Brian Barth, P.E., Deputy District Engineer for the Fort Worth District of TxDOT gave the introduction for the hearing and introduced key TxDOT and Civil Associates, Inc. staff and the elected/local officials in attendance. The elected or local officials in attendance were Bob Golden, Mayor of Haslet; Roman Boydman, City of Haslet; Brian Beck, City of Fort Worth; and Randy Skinner, Tarrant County. Mr. Curtis Hanan, P.E. Advance Project Development Director for the Fort Worth District of TxDOT, explained the public hearing process, project information and the environmental assessment. Mr. Nassar Abusaad, P.E. with Civil Associates, Inc. Project Manager, discussed the recommended corridor improvements. Mr. Keith Sliger, TxDOT-Texas Turnpike Authority Division, explained the right of way acquisition and relocation assistance process.

**Exhibits:** Plans illustrating the proposed project were displayed for public view and comment. These plans included design schematics on aerial photograph, a video rendering of the project, and the Environmental Assessment document. TxDOT's *Right-of-Way* booklet and *Relocation Assistance* booklets (both in English and Spanish) were made available to the public. Handouts including the public hearing agenda and hard copies of the powerpoint presentation slides were given to attendees.

#### **Comments from Elected / Local Officials:**

**Verbal:**

No public officials provided verbal comments during the public comment period of the hearing

**Written:**

Two public officials wrote in favor of the proposed project and for a speedy implementation.

#### **Comments from Public:**

**Verbal:**

No verbal comments were made during the Public Hearing.

**Written:**

Nine people wrote in favor of the proposed project and requested speedy implementation for project implementation.

One person expressed concerns about the encroachment of the northbound access road and believes the road would come up to the west wall of their apartment complex. The commenter stated residents were originally told construction of the access road was to be a part of Segment 1 of the North Tarrant Express (NTE), but after a land assessment, construction was moved to Segment 3. Requests updated information about environmental impacts due to the roadway shifting closer to The Grove at Sandshell Drive Apartments. Commenter indicates he acts as an agent for The Grove at Sandshell Drive Apartments.

One person requested a copy of the design visualization on DVD.

One person stated the Public Hearing was very informative, the representatives answered his questions pleasantly and the commenter asked the following three questions on the design:

- A. The IH 35W and IH 820 interchange current construction activities only provide access ramps to eastbound IH 820 managed lanes. The commenter believes not providing a full interchange would be a waste of public and private resources, understands there is not funding for a complete reconstruction of the interchange and asks that the interchange not be reconstructed until there is complete funding.
- B. The maps provided at the hearing indicate there is not a southbound US 287 to northbound IH 35W connection. The commenter believes this connection is vital for trucks coming from the northwest who are continuing to Alliance, Denton and Oklahoma. Currently trucks must head south on IH 35W and u-turn at the Basswood exit in order to head north on IH 35W. The commenter has spent 20 minutes waiting through this delay and requests a direct connector bridge to connect US 287 to IH 35W northbound.
- C. The commenter suggests the proposed roadway be constructed with reinforced concrete similar to the DFW Connector in order to save maintenance costs and extend the life of the roadway.

One person stated they represent property owners at two locations along the proposed project. The commenter stated their support for the proposed project; however expressed concerns about the required right-of-way and impacts to the properties and respectfully requests to be included in the design process in order to minimize impacts.

Three people expressed concern placement of ramps adjacent to properties 61, 64 and 65 would limit access.

**Summary of Major Comments/Issues that were Addressed:**

Detailed TxDOT responses to issues and concerns can be found in the *Comment and Response Report*. The written comments suggest an overall support for the proposed project and a desire for the project to proceed quickly. Several comments raised concern regarding the following: (1) encroachment of facility into apartment complex; (2) funding for the complete reconstruction of the IH 820/IH 35W interchange; (3) provision of a direct connector from southbound US 81/US 287 to northbound IH 35W; (4) construct reinforced concrete pavement; (5) right of way impacts to existing property; and (6) location of ramps and associated impacts for access to property.

*TxDOT Response to Public Hearing Comments*

- (1) The environmental assessment (EA) and preliminary design for the proposed improvements to IH 820 from IH 35W to SH 121/SH 183, including the IH 820/ IH 35W interchange were approved by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on December 5, 2008. This project covered the area including The Grove at Sandshell Drive Apartment complex. Based on the approved preliminary design, additional right of way impacting the apartment complex was needed to accommodate the proposed northbound frontage road for the IH 820/IH 35W interchange.

As presented at the public hearing, TxDOT is proposing to design and construct an interim facility for a portion of IH 35W from IH 820 to the US 81/US 287 interchange (Segment 3B). As part of the detailed design process for Segment 3B, TxDOT is currently evaluating design alternatives for the northbound frontage road and relocation of existing utilities in an effort to reduce the amount of right of way needed from The Grove at Sandshell Drive apartment complex.

Once the frontage road design change is reviewed and approved, the amount of right of way necessary for the construction of the frontage road and relocation of existing utilities will be determined. The amount of ROW needed will be no greater than the amount indicated in the approved EA or preliminary design for IH 820. Since this portion of the Segment 3B project is located within the limits of the approved EA for IH 820, right of way acquisition can begin once the frontage road design is approved.

- (2) The IH 35W/IH 820 interchange is not part of the proposed project. The interchange was included with the proposed improvements to IH 820 from IH 35W to SH 121/SH 183, which received environmental clearance from FHWA on December 5, 2008. Only the managed lane direct connectors from northbound and southbound IH 35W to eastbound IH 820 are included in the current construction along IH 820. TxDOT is currently working with the NTE developer, North Tarrant Express Mobility Partners to determine if it would be feasible to include reconstruction of the remaining IH 35W/IH 820 interchange with the proposed improvements being planned to IH 35W from IH 30 to IH 820.
- (3) During the planning stage of the proposed project and based on project design year traffic volumes, it was determined the traffic volumes from US 81/US 287 southbound to IH 35W northbound were not sufficient to warrant a direct connector. It is anticipated regional traffic movements from US 81/US 287 southbound would currently travel the SH 114 corridor to access IH 35W northbound. A planned extension of SH 170 between the corridors would promote future regional connectivity. Local movements between the corridors would currently use the Basswood Boulevard interchange at IH 35W. Future local connectivity would be enhanced when the planned interchange at US 81/US 287 and North Tarrant Parkway is constructed.
- (4) During detailed design, a pavement design report will be prepared to determine the most appropriate, cost effective pavement type, flexible or rigid, to be used for the project.
- (5) The proposed expansion of the IH 35W facility is designed to provide safety and mobility along the IH 35W corridor to accommodate the projected traffic growth in year 2035. The addition of four concurrent managed (toll) lanes, two in each direction, between the general purpose (non toll) lanes and frontage roads can not be provided within the existing ROW for IH 35W. The proposed right of way (ROW) for IH 35W includes a 20 foot border from the frontage road curb to the property line.

For the subject properties located at 13500 Heritage Parkway and 13650 Heritage Parkway, Parcels 95 and 97B adjacent to IH 35W, the amount of additional ROW needed for the expansion of IH 35W is approximately 40 feet measured from the existing ROW. Based on the displays presented at the public hearing, it appears the impacts from the acquisition on the subject properties is the loss of head in parking.

The location of the proposed Westport Parkway exit ramp and the Alliance Boulevard entrance ramp located adjacent to Parcels 96, 97, 97A, 97B and 97D were determined based upon TxDOT's design guidelines in TxDOT's Roadway Design Manual (RDM) and a level of service (LOS) analysis. The proposed ramp spacing and locations were set to provide safety and mobility along the IH 35W corridor to accommodate the projected traffic growth in year 2035. Based on the location of the proposed entrance ramp, the existing driveway serving Parcel 97 will be closed for traffic safety. At this time, the proposed frontage road and ramp relocation is expected to be constructed between the years of 2020 to 2030.

- (6) The control of access (COA) was established when the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) purchased right of way (ROW) for IH 35W in the late 1950's and 1960's as a new location facility. Where frontage roads were planned, access was not denied but was controlled through TxDOT's driveway permit process. Where no frontage roads were planned, access was denied by statute since no access to IH 35W existed previously. Where TxDOT retains access rights by statute, the Texas Transportation Commission (TTC) has the sole authority to release access rights to adjacent property owners.

Adjacent the subject Parcels 61, 64 and 65, no frontage road was planned when the original ROW was purchased for IH 35W. The location of the proposed Keller-Hicks Road exit ramp and the SH 170 entrance ramp located adjacent to these parcels were determined based upon TxDOT's design guidelines in TxDOT's Roadway Design Manual (RDM) and a level of service (LOS) analysis.

TxDOT is committed to working with adjacent property owners during the ROW acquisition process to identify locations where access can be granted while providing safety and mobility along the corridor. Release of access rights from TxDOT to the property owner can be discussed during ROW acquisition for the project provided the TTC approves the release and the access requested meets the requirements of the RDM and TxDOT's Access Management Manual (AMM). At this time, the proposed frontage road adjacent to these parcels is expected to be constructed between the years of 2020 to 2030.

**Recommendation:** After review of the comments received during the public involvement phase, TxDOT will continue to work with the local municipalities and property owners during the design and construction phases of the project. All comments have been satisfactorily addressed and the project is recommended for approval as a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).