



Notice

**Draft Environmental Assessment Available for Public Review
and
Virtual Public Hearing**

US 79

From I-35 to east of FM 1460 (A.W. Grimes)

CSJ: 0204-01-063

Williamson County, Texas

The Texas Department of Transportation is proposing to improve and widen US 79 from I-35 to east of FM 1460 in Williamson County, Texas. This notice advises the public that a draft environmental assessment (EA) is available for public review and TxDOT will be conducting an online virtual public hearing on the proposed project. The virtual hearing will begin on July 9, 2020 at 9 a.m. To log onto the virtual public hearing, go to the following web address at the date and time indicated above: www.txdot.gov. In the upper right-hand search box enter the search keywords: US 79. Project staff will provide a pre-recorded presentation regarding the project. The presentation will include both audio and visual components. If you do not have internet access, you may call 512-550-5357 to ask questions about the project and access project materials at any time during the project development process. Members of the public may call 512-647-1064 and verbally provide testimony from 9a.m. on July 9, 2020 until 11:59 pm on July 24, 2020. Formal written comments may also be provided by mail or email as explained below. Verbal testimony and written comments submitted by mail or email during the comment period will be included as part of the official record and considered by TxDOT. Responses to testimony and comments will be prepared by TxDOT, included as part of the hearing and project record, and made available online.

The proposed improvements include widening the existing US 79 roadway to add a third travel lane in each direction and installing a raised median for safety. Improvements to intersections would include constructing an underpass at US 79/Mays Street, an overpass at US 79/FM 1460 and altering the US 79/I-35 intersection. Driveways and access points would be modified to improve safety and traffic flow. The proposed improvements also include installing shared-use paths on both sides of US 79 to improve pedestrian and bicycle accommodations.

The length of the proposed project is approximately 2.5 miles and would require approximately 10.2 acres of additional right of way. The proposed project would not displace any residential properties, and would potentially require 17 commercial displacements and two other displacements (a place of worship and a job help center). Information about the TxDOT Relocation Assistance Program, benefits and services for displacees, as well as information about the tentative schedules for right-of-way acquisition and construction can be obtained from the TxDOT district office at the address listed below. Relocation assistance is available for displaced persons and businesses.

The project has no impacts for wetlands or sole-source aquifers. The project area crosses the mapped 100-year Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) floodplains associated with Onion Branch. The proposed project would not increase the base flood elevation to a level that would violate applicable

floodplain regulations and ordinances. The proposed project would have no adverse effect on historic properties. In accordance with 36 CFR § 800.2(d), there will be an opportunity for the public to review and comment on effects to historic properties at the hearing. The project would require right-of-way acquisition from three properties that are either listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places: the Texas Baptist Children's Home, the Henna House, and the Merrell House. At each site, the acquisition of new right of way constitutes a de minimis use of a historic site under the U.S. Department of Transportation Act Section 4(f) regulations (23 CFR 774).

The draft EA, other environmental documentation or studies, maps and drawings showing the project location and design, tentative construction schedules, and other information regarding the proposed project are available online at www.txdot.gov, keyword search "US 79".

TxDOT makes every reasonable effort to accommodate the needs of the public. The virtual public hearing will be in English. If you have a special communication accommodation or need for an interpreter, a request may be made. If you have a disability and need assistance, special arrangements may also be made to accommodate most needs. Please call Patricia Kelly at 512-659-3230 or at patricia@nancyledbetter.com no later than July 7, 2020. Please be aware that advance notice is requested as some accommodations may require time for TxDOT to arrange.

Written comments from the public regarding the proposed project are requested and may be submitted by mail to Giuly Caceres, P.E., project manager, TxDOT Austin District Office, P.O. Box 15426, Austin, Texas 78761-5426. Written comments may also be submitted by email to Giuly.Caceres@txdot.gov. All written comments must be received on or before July 24, 2020. Additionally, as stated above, members of the public may call 512-647-1064 and verbally provide testimony from 9 a.m. on July 9, 2020 until 11:59 p.m. on July 24, 2020. Responses to written comments received and public testimony provided will be available online at www.txdot.gov, keyword search "US 79" once they have been prepared.

If you have any general questions or concerns regarding the proposed project or the virtual hearing, please contact Giuly Caceres, P.E., project manager at 512-550-5357 or at Giuly.Caceres@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 TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated Dec. 9, 2019, and executed by FHWA and TxDOT.