

US 59 LOOP UPGRADE

OCTOBER 2016 NEWSLETTER

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The History Of the US 59 Loop

Upon the ratification and implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in the mid-1990s, international trade between the United States, Mexico and Canada began a period of rapid growth that continues to the present day. Due to the presence of I-35 in the U.S. and an equivalent Mexican Federal Highway 2 that pass through Laredo and Nuevo Laredo respectively, our community became a logical crossing location for international trade being shipped by truck. High-capacity rail facilities that cross at Laredo and high air-freight levels at the Laredo International Airport also add to these increasing trade crossings through Laredo. This growth of international crossings at Laredo was anticipated by local government officials and TxDOT, which led to a decision in the late 1990s and early 2000s for the development of projects that would provide a route around the densely populated portions of Laredo. This resulted in the World Trade International Bridge IV and Loop 20 (now the US 59 Loop) as they are travelled today.

The Evolution of the Loop to I-69 West

The northern portion of Loop 20 was re-designated as a part of US 59 and “Future I-69” by the Texas Transportation Commission (TTC) on February 26, 2014. As part of this redesignation, the portion of US 59 (Saunders Street) from Loop 20 (Bob Bullock Loop) to IH 35 is now designated as Business US 59. In addition, the TTC and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) determined that the segment of the US 59 Loop from 0.3-mile west of I-35 to the entrance to the World Trade International Bridge IV meets interstate design standards and is now officially designated as a segment of I-69 West (I-69W).



State, National and International Importance

In south Texas, I-69 will split into three branches: I-69 West in Laredo, I-69 Central in Hidalgo, and I-69 East in Brownsville. North of the south Texas split, I-69 passes through Victoria then Houston and east Texas. The northern terminus of I-69 nationally is at Port Huron, Michigan. The U.S. Congress has deemed I-69 to be a vital and high priority trade corridor between Canada, the Midwestern U.S. and Mexico. Both I-35 and I-69W are important freight corridors into Laredo. Laredo ranks as the third busiest port-of-entry of all types (land/sea/air) in the U.S.; Nuevo Laredo is the #1 port-of-entry in Mexico. According to TxDOT’s 2015 Freight Mobility Plan, nearly 7 million jobs in Texas rely on freight transportation and trade with Mexico with the vast percentage of that freight passing through Laredo.

The Need and Purpose for Upgrading US 59 Loop

Due to the rapid growth in traffic associated with the growing international trade and population increases in Laredo, traffic on the US 59 Loop has grown to levels not anticipated in the original planning of the Loop. Overall, upgrades to the Loop are needed due to:

- Population and Traffic Growth. The rapid population growth in Laredo that has resulted in increased numbers of vehicles. Traffic levels are projected to increase by approximately 70% over the next 30 years as the Laredo population doubles in that timeframe.
- Heavy trucks. Depending on the location on the US 59 Loop, trucks comprise from 8.5% to 74% of the vehicles using the Loop.
- Traffic congestion. Congestion is studied as “Level of Service” (LOS) by TxDOT. The LOS scale goes from “A” (no driving delays) to “F” (extended delays/traffic gridlock). According to recent studies commissioned by TxDOT and completed by the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) in late 2013, all of the signalized intersections between US 59/Saunders Street and International Boulevard now experience an LOS score of “D” or worse at peak travel times.
- Traffic accidents. Based on accident data compiled by TxDOT in 2012 and 2013, there were 370 accidents along the project corridor between US 59 and the World Trade International Bridge entrance with a total of 444 vehicles involved. Of these incidents, 46.6 percent were at intersections with streets or driveways. While the vast majority of these crashes resulted in either no injuries or minor, non-incapacitating injuries, two fatalities were recorded in this time period.

The purpose of the proposed project is to increase travel capacity for local, regional and international traffic, to increase safety and to upgrade the current roadway to interstate standards are required by federal legislation.

What Is Proposed With This Upgrade Of The US 59 Loop:

The US 59 Loop corridor between the International Boulevard and the US 59/Loop 20 intersection is proposed to be upgraded to an urban expressway. This expressway is proposed to include:

- Three mainlanes in each direction.
- Construction of three-lane frontage roads on each side of the mainlanes.
- Elevating the mainlanes over the major street crossings including Airport Drive, Jacaman Road, University Boulevard, Del Mar Boulevard and Shiloh Road.
- Constructing sidewalks on each side and a bicycle path adjacent to the east-side frontage road.
- This project will integrate with the International Boulevard project that is under construction and the near future construction project of installing the Loop mainlanes over the I-35 and the Union-Pacific Railroad line. The mainlanes over McPherson Road would also be completed with those two projects.

It is anticipated that approximately 182-acres of additional right-of-way would be needed from east of International Boulevard to the existing US 59/Loop 20 Interchange.

What Will It Cost And How Will It Be Funded

Using current, non-inflated future-year costs, this project is estimated to cost well over \$400 million. This overall cost would include the additional right-of-way and utility adjustments, engineering and construction costs.

Funding options for the overall cost of the proposed US 59 Loop project are being developed by the local governments and TxDOT at this time. It is anticipated that these upgrades could proceed as one project or in phases over the next 10-20 years depending on the level of local participation in the funding. If only state and federal transportation monies are used, this much needed work *could not* be completed as a single construction project.

Tolling. *No tolling is under consideration for this project.*



Other Related Projects on the US 59 Loop:

- A. West of I-35 To The Entrance of World Trade International Bridge IV: Meets interstate standards and is currently designated as I-69W.
- B. US 59 Loop over I-35/U-P RR: Construct mainlanes over I-35/Union-Pacific Railroad line (January 2017).
- C. At McPherson Road: Construct overpass (Open to Traffic).
- D. At International Blvd.: Construct mainlanes over International Blvd. (Under Construction).



The US 59 Loop Upgrade Project Requiring Additional Right-of-Way And Interchanges

- ~182-acres Additional ROW
- Interchanges At:
 - E. At Shiloh Rd.
 - F. At Del Mar Blvd.
 - G. At University Blvd.
 - H. At Jacaman Rd.
 - I. At Airport Dr.

Other Related Projects on Loop 20:

- J. At Spur 400 (Clark): Construct mainlanes over Spur 400 (Clark) (Under Construction).
- K. At Kansas City Southern: Widen mainlane's bridge & construct frontage road bridges (Under Construction).

How To Get Involved

Public involvement is an important component of the US 59 Loop Upgrade Project and your feedback is highly valued. Public input is essential to the success of the project and final design.

To get more information or to submit comments on the project, please contact:

Mike Graham – Laredo District Environmental Coordinator
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 TxDOT – Laredo District
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 Laredo, Texas 78043
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 1817 Bob Bullock Loop
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Upcoming Public Meeting

The TxDOT Laredo District will host a Public Meeting to present the proposed US 59 Loop Upgrade Project. The meeting will be held in an open-house format with no formal presentation. The public will have an opportunity to view the proposed layouts, to visit with the project staff and to ask questions about the proposed project. The discussions will be in a one-on-one setting and attendees are invited to come and go at their convenience.

Spanish-speaking team members will be available at the meeting to assist with translation needs. If you require other communication needs or special accommodations, please call Raul Leal, the TxDOT Laredo Public Information Officer at (956) 712-7416 at least five business days prior to the meeting. Every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate these needs. For more information, visit txdot.gov and search keywords “US 59 Loop Upgrade”.

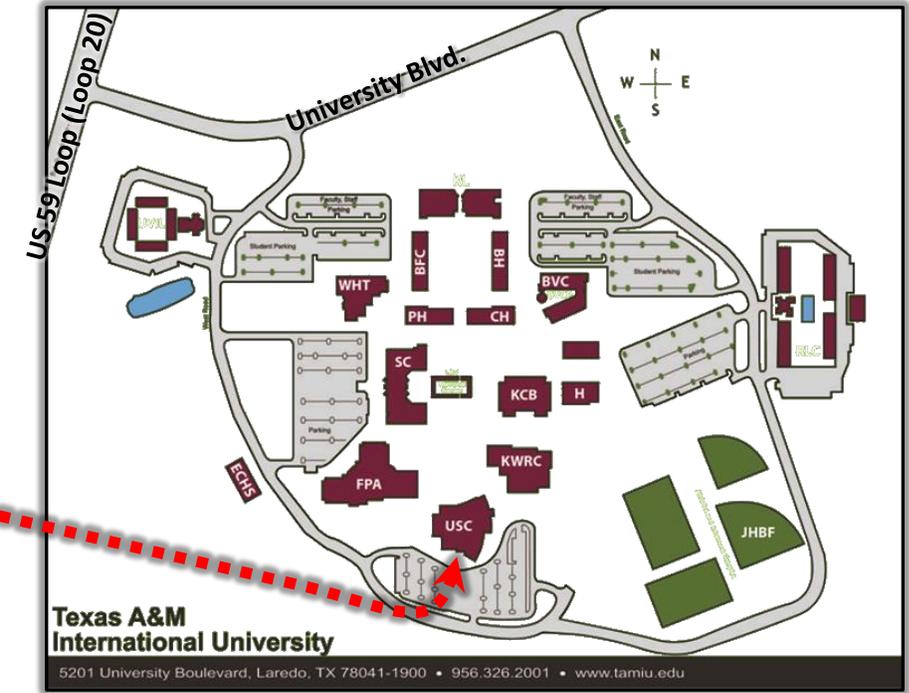
US 59 Loop Upgrade Project

Public Meeting

Thursday, December 1, 2016

5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
(Open House Format)

Texas A&M International University
at the
Zaffirini Student Success Center
Room 101



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. 17, 2014, and executed by FHWA and TxDOT.