



DRAFT

Range of Alternatives Technical Report

I-69 Connector from I-69C/US 281 to I-69E/US 77

TxDOT Pharr District

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Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy Counties, Texas

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the alternatives analysis methodology that TxDOT will use to develop the range of alternatives for the I-69 (Interstate 69) Connector Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The "range of alternatives" refers to the alternatives that will be discussed in environmental documents for the project. Identifying alternatives and analyzing alternatives under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) are key to the objective decision-making process. In accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), the development and evaluation of alternatives requires agencies to:

- a. *“Rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives and for alternatives which were eliminated from detailed study, briefly discuss the reasons for their having been eliminated.*
- b. *Devote substantial treatment to each alternative considered in detail including the proposed action so that reviewers may evaluate their comparative merits.*
- c. *Include reasonable alternatives not within the jurisdiction of the lead agency.*
- d. *Include the alternative of no action.*
- e. *Identify the agency’s preferred alternative or alternatives, if one or more exists, in the draft statement and identify such alternative in the final statement unless another law prohibits the expression of such a preference.*
- f. *Include appropriate mitigation measures not already included in the proposed action or alternatives.”*

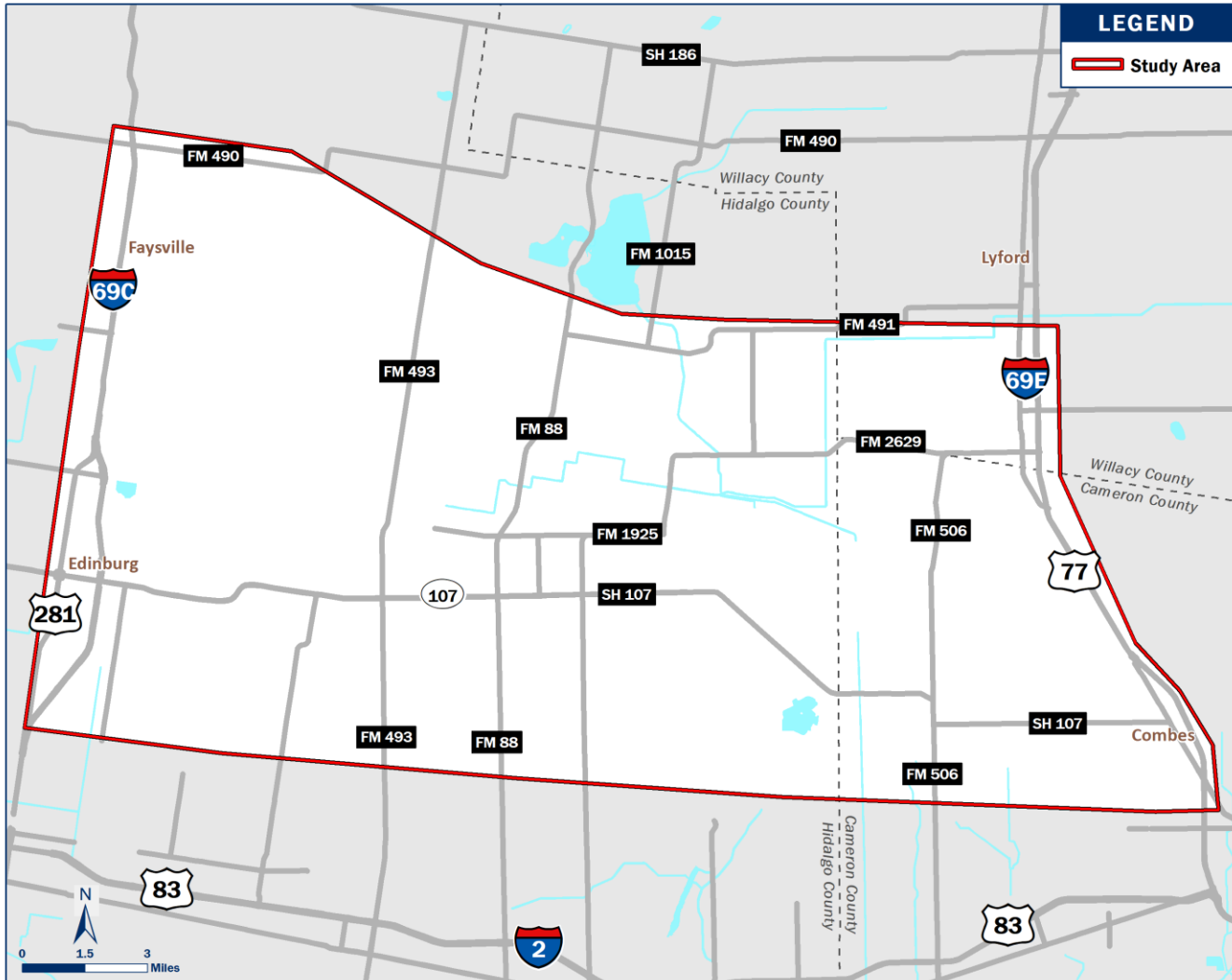
“Reasonable alternatives” are alternatives that are “technically and economically practicable or feasible and meet the purpose and need for the proposed project or action” (40 CFR § 1508.1). The I-69 Connector EIS will evaluate a reasonable range of alternatives including the No-Action Alternative (i.e. No-Build Alternative). The No-Build Alternative will be used as a baseline comparison when screening and analyzing alternatives.

2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The I-69 Connector is currently described in the 2024 Unified Transportation Plan as a new location non-toll freeway extending from I-69C/United States (US) 281 to I-69E/US 77. The proposed project would provide transportation improvements in the Lower Rio Grande Valley to accommodate additional capacity and infrastructure to meet future population growth and travel demands, improve mobility, enhance the overall connectivity of the transportation network, and alleviate traffic congestion on I-2/US 83.

The project study area is in Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy Counties, Texas and covers approximately 400 square miles. The study area is bound by I-69C/US 281 to the west, I-69E/US 77 to the east, the community of Faysville and the City of Lyford to the north, and the City of Edinburg and the town of Combes (near Mile 12) to the south. **Figure 1** provides a map of the I-69 Connector study area. The ultimate corridor configuration may be a non-tolled controlled-access facility that may include multiple modes of transportation.

Figure 1. I-69 Connector Study Area



3.0 PROJECT HISTORY

The I-69 Connector project evolved from a feasibility study conducted by TxDOT. The feasibility study began in 2019 and evaluated several conceptual corridor alternatives to address transportation needs within the I-69 Connector study. During the study, TxDOT conducted stakeholder outreach efforts, including technical work group meetings and two rounds of public meetings.

TxDOT developed a draft purpose and need statement and project objectives for the feasibility study. The draft purpose and need statement and project objectives were used to screen corridor alternatives. The project objectives and draft purpose are provided below.

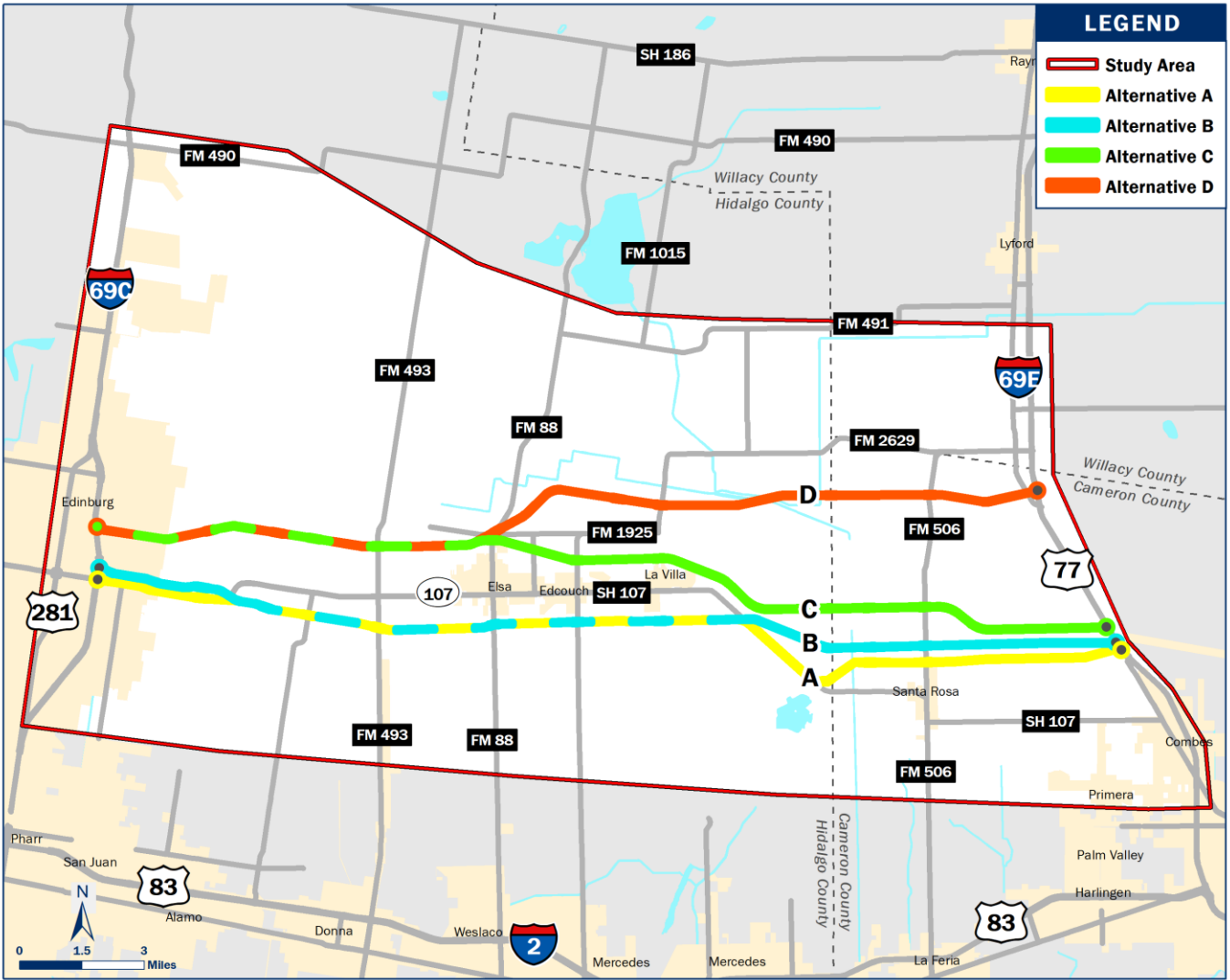
3.1 Project Objectives

The goal of the feasibility study was to examine existing and new location transportation corridors for passenger cars and trucks between I-69C/US 281 and I-69E/US 77 with the objectives being to:

- Alleviate traffic congestion on I-2
- Provide additional capacity and infrastructure to meet future population growth and travel demands
- Provide an additional hurricane evacuation route in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV)
- Improve mobility
- Enhance overall connectivity of the transportation network in the LRGV

Four corridor alternatives (i.e. build alternatives) were found to be reasonable alternatives resulting from the feasibility study. These alternatives are labeled Alternative A (Yellow Alternative), Alternative B (Blue Alternative), Alternative C (Green Alternative also known as the Orphanage Road Alternative), Alternative D (Orange Alternative), and the No-build Alternative. **Figure 2** provides the locations of these study corridors. Each corridor was analyzed to determine how they would perform relative to the study objectives, traffic projections, engineering parameters and environmental criteria.

Figure 2. Study Corridors from I-69 Connector Feasibility Study



Descriptions of the alternatives are provided below.

Alternative A was developed based on technical workgroup input that encouraged usage and development of State Highway (SH) 107 while minimizing impacts to properties. Alternative A:

- Begins at SH 107
- Continues along SH 107 until it crosses North Tower Road, where it stays south and connects to Alternative B
- Continues east, between Tex-Mex Road and East Curry Road, then Mile 16 North Road and Mile 15½ North Road
- Diverts south near Rogerslacy and reconnects on SH 107
- Follows parcel lines where possible to meet San Felipo Road
- Continues on new location north of the San Rafael Cemetery to connect with I-69E/US 77

Alternative B was developed on new location, following parcel lines where possible and minimizing impact to residential properties. Alternative B:

- Begins between SH 107/East University Drive and East Richardson Road
- Proceeds east between these roadways until it crosses East University Drive and North Tower Road where it curves south
- Continues east, between Tex-Mex Road and East Curry Road, then Mile 16 North Road and Mile 15½ North Road
- Diverts south near Rogerslacy and then runs east to connect with I-69E

Alternative C was developed based on the technical workgroup's input recommendation to intersect I-69E/US 77 as near to the existing Orphanage Road as possible. Alternative C:

- Begins between East Mile 17½ Road/Russell Road and East Chapin Street
- Proceeds east until Foster Road, where it diverts north until turning east at Terry Road
- Continues east between East Rogers Road and East Mile 17 ½ Road until diverting south near Farm to Market (FM) 88
- Crosses Mile 17½ Road before turning and proceeding east
- Diverts south near Rogerslacy, then follows a more northerly alignment
- Curves south at Hooks and Hodges Road, then runs east to connect with I-69E

Alternative D: Alternative D was developed on new location, following parcel lines where possible and minimizing impact to residential properties. Alternative D:

- Begins between East Mile 17 ½ Road/Russell Road and East Chapin Street

- Proceeds east until Foster Road, where it diverts north until turning east at Terry Road
- Continues east between East Rogers Road and East Mile 17 ½ Road until diverting north near FM 88
- Crosses Mile 19 Road before turning and proceeding east
- Crosses north of the IBWC (International Boundary and Water Commission) floodway and Las Palomas Wildlife Management Area (WMA)
- Diverts north before connecting to I-69E to avoid the intersection of Business 77 and I-69E

The feasibility study concluded that the next step in the transportation planning process would be to prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to assess reasonable alternatives and potential impacts resulting from the project.

4.0 DRAFT PURPOSE AND NEED

The draft purpose and need statement for the I-69 Connector EIS is provided below.

The purpose of the proposed I-69 Connector is to alleviate/reduce traffic congestion and improve mobility, to improve connectivity for travelers, to address future travel demand, and to provide an east-west hurricane evacuation route.

The proposed project is needed to alleviate traffic congestion and improve mobility in the study area and the region, increase connectivity of the transportation network, as well as provide an east-west alternative for the additional anticipated traffic demand and hurricane evacuation route.

5.0 ALTERNATIVES METHODOLOGY

As the lead agency, TxDOT will take the primary responsibility for preparing the EIS and will provide an opportunity for cooperating and participating agencies to collaborate with TxDOT in determining the range of reasonable alternatives, methodology for alternatives analysis and level of detail to be considered for the project.

As part of the development of the reasonable range of alternatives, TxDOT will take into account the prior feasibility planning study efforts that have already been accomplished, in accordance with [23 CFR 450.212](#), 450.318, [23 CFR part 450](#).

Based on previous work, TxDOT will begin the agency and public scoping process for the I-69 Connector EIS by introducing the same draft purpose and need statement and study goals and objectives as those examined in the feasibility study. The I-69 Connector EIS will develop and evaluate a full range of reasonable alternatives including additional transportation modes. The No-build alternative will be carried through alternative analysis process for baseline comparisons.

As mentioned in **Section 3.0 Project History**, the build alternatives (Alternatives A through D) resulting from the feasibility study will serve as a starting point for the scoping process. The no-build alternative will be used as a baseline comparison.

The alternatives analysis process will include a tiered or phased approach. Initial screening for the Draft EIS will follow a qualitative and quantitative approach. Each alternative will be evaluated/measured against the draft purpose and need statement, engineering, natural environment, human environment constraints, and public involvement input. An alternative would not be considered reasonable if it is not technically and economically feasible and does not meet the purpose and need for the proposed project or action (40 CFR § 1508.1).

The alternatives analysis methodology may be further developed based on input from cooperating agencies, participating agencies, and public input.

The second phase of the alternatives analysis will analyze/measure qualitative and quantitative information based on input from agencies, public input, and environmental studies. These will include human and natural environmental constraints, engineering constraints including transportation performance goals, technical feasibility, and economic feasibility.

6.0 AGENCY COORDINATION

TxDOT will facilitate the agency coordination process by scheduling agency scoping meetings to ensure meaningful participation during the project development process.