



I-35 Trade Corridor Study Begins

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Departments of Transportation in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Iowa and Minnesota have combined their efforts to conduct a study of Interstate Highway 35 (I-35). The purpose of the study is to assess the need for improved local, intrastate and interstate service on I-35 and clearly define a feasible improvement plan to address those needs. The study will recommend general strategies for potential improvements to move people, goods and services through the corridor efficiently and safely well into the future.

Since 1994, when Congress passed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the heartland of America has become an increasingly important thoroughfare for trade among the United States, Mexico and Canada. I-35, which connects

these three countries through the heartland, carries a greater percentage of trade among the NAFTA partners than any other U.S. Interstate Highway. Its multimodal transportation hubs- where air, rail, river and truck cargo converge - ideally position I-35 to be a major route for what's expected to be increasing levels of international trade activity.

While the level of international trade represents significant economic opportunity, it also brings additional challenges related to the impact on highway infrastructure, roadway maintenance, traffic congestion, traffic safety and air quality. Additionally, many sections of the existing highway are currently operating at less than desirable levels of service, and anticipated population growth within the corridor is expected to exacerbate the situation. It is unclear how each state along the corridor will cope with these issues, as well as more localized concerns like how long-distance freight traffic will affect rush-hour travel. The I-35 Trade Corridor Study was initiated to address these concerns.♦

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A special project office has been established to make it easy for you to get information about the I-35 Trade Corridor Study and provide your thoughts and ideas. Comments about the study can be given directly to the study team by mail, telephone or e-mail at the addresses listed below.

I-35 Trade Corridor Study

P.O. Box 410482

Kansas City, MO 64141-0482

telephone — 1-800-590-0066

e-mail — i35Study@hntb.com

Everyone making a comment is sent a response and added to a project database to receive future study-related information.

Who is Involved in the I-35 Trade Corridor Study?

Transportation studies are complex processes that require the skills and expertise of many individuals and groups.

Representatives of FHWA and the six states involved will work together as a Steering Committee to provide

oversight and management of the study, which will be conducted by a group of consulting firms from throughout the I-35 corridor. The consulting group is headed by HNTB Corporation of Kansas City and includes Wilbur Smith Associates,

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A Plan for the Future

To formulate a plan for the future of I-35, the study team will evaluate the existing conditions in the corridor, forecast future demands, identify any deficiencies and recommend a plan of action to improve the corridor.

Arriving at a plan of action will require the study team to look at a number of options for improving the operational efficiency of the system. These options will most likely include relief routes, additional

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lanes, and the use of emerging technologies such as Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) that use state-of-the-art communications and data processing to more effectively monitor and manage the flow of traffic. Technologies and strategies that promote efficient coordination of multimodal transportation will also be considered.

The study team will also explore innovative financing strategies. These may include funding sources such as tolls, state or regional construction bonds and private investment. One

innovative option is congestion pricing, which raises toll rates during rush hours. Another strategy is to allow carpools to travel for free, but charge single-occupant vehicles a toll.

The study team will define the most promising combination of improvements and financing for the I-35 Trade Corridor. The plan will likely include conventional facility improvements, such as adding traffic lanes or building relief routes for congested areas, as well as ITS applications to manage traffic and reduce congestion. The plan will be finalized by the Steering Committee with input from local planning agencies and the public.♦

Study Fact

CORRIDOR 23

In 1991, Congress identified 21 highway corridors that were nationally significant to the efficiency of the U.S. transportation system. Congress designated these as "high-priority" corridors, meaning that study or improvement to the corridors could be undertaken using federal funds.

In 1995, other corridors were added to the "high-priority" list, with the 23rd addition being the I-35 corridor from Texas to Minnesota. Corridor 23 is the name used by Congress and the FHWA to refer to the area being studied in the I-35 Trade Corridor Study.



Notes from Texas

By Alvin R. Luedecke, Jr., P.E.
Interim Deputy Executive Director
Transportation Planning and Development Texas
Department of Transportation

National Highway System legislation authorized the I-35 Trade Corridor Study. Of the six states along the I-35 corridor, Texas was chosen to be the lead state for the study. Since 75% of the trade movements between Mexico and the U.S. are to Texas and the northeast, we are excited about this study.

Texas, because of its size, lends itself to having many trade corridors. However, I-35 is one of our major corridors since it already is an interstate highway and has been designated as a NAFTA trade corridor. All of the states along the corridor are aware of the congestion problems that exist, specifically through the major metropolitan areas.

The I-35 Trade Corridor Study will look to the future. We will examine how to keep I-35 a viable trade corridor for the next twenty or thirty years. This examination will look at many different modes of transportation and their inter-modal relationships, as well as the different options that might be available to relieve congestion. We will look at rail corridors, high occupancy vehicle lanes, and toll facilities.

Our goal as the lead state for the I-35 Trade Corridor Study is to help determine the best alternatives for congestion relief for all six states along the corridor.♦

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HDR Engineering, Hicks and Company, McCray Research, Sylva Engineering, WHM Transportation Engineering Company and C.J. Petersen & Associates.

In addition to the Steering Committee and consultant group, representatives of metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) in the corridor will take part in the study. They will provide information about how various improvement options for I-35 might work with both the short-term and long-range plans of the bodies they represent. MPOs will also work to involve area citizens in the study process.

Contributing to the study's overall direction and outcome will be the general public and other groups who might have an interest in the study. Extensive efforts will be made to inform and involve these interested parties so that their input can be integrated in the decision making process.♦



The Study Area

The study area is approximately 1,500 miles long and includes portions of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Iowa and Minnesota.

The southern terminus of the study is Laredo, Texas at the Mexican border and the northern terminus is Duluth, Minnesota.

Two Groups - Separate Efforts

There are many groups and individuals interested in making the I-35 corridor more efficient for the movement of trade. One such group is North America's Superhighway Coalition, Inc. (NASCO - formerly the Interstate Highway 35 Corridor Coalition). NASCO formed in 1994 for the purpose of gaining Congressional approval for designating I-35 as an international trade corridor (or high-priority corridor), which makes it easier for improvements to the highway to include federal funding. The group includes elected officials and business leaders from the U.S., Mexico, and Canada and has proposed a combination of streamlined governmental procedures and technological innovations along I-35 to cut travel times from border to border.

While NASCO has an interest in the future efficiency of I-35, the group is separate from the team assembled for the I-35 Trade Corridor Study. The Coalition has no direct involvement in the study's technical analyses, but their suggestions are welcome as the study progresses.♦

Your Role in the Process

Finding the best solution for improving transportation in the I-35 corridor can't be accomplished without comments and ideas from the public. Early and continuing public input is an important element in helping the study team understand locally important or sensitive issues. This understanding helps shape the way the study team thinks about transportation problems and guides them in the decision making process.

There are several methods for people to learn about the I-35 Trade Corridor Study and become involved in the process. They include:

Public Meetings

Several public meetings will be held throughout the study process to provide a forum for discussing transportation-related issues relevant to I-35. Each meeting will include presentations by study team members that will help residents understand what is being considered for I-35. The meetings will also address how potential changes to I-35 might impact the local community. Public meetings are expected to take place in Laredo, San Antonio, Austin, Dallas, Oklahoma City, Wichita, Kansas City, Des Moines and Minneapolis.

Newsletter

This newsletter is the first of four expected to be produced during the I-35 Trade Corridor Study. Each newsletter will address the latest developments of the study, provide local perspectives, and inform residents of upcoming opportunities to get involved.

Video

A video has been produced to provide public agencies and citizen groups with information about the goals and objectives of the I-35 Trade Corridor Study. To request a copy of the video, contact the project office at the address listed below.

Media

Study information will be shared with the news media and will likely appear in area newspapers and on television and radio.

Written or Verbal Comments

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By taking part in the planning and decision making process, area residents take an active role in determining the future of transportation on I-35. ♦

PUBLIC MEETING DATES

DALLAS

Tuesday, March 31, 1998
4:00 - 6:00 p.m.

City of Irving City Hall
Council Chamber
825 W. Irving Boulevard
Irving, TX

AUSTIN

Wednesday, April 1, 1998
6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

J.C. Thompson
Conference Center
University of Texas
Dean Keeton Street (26th Street)
& Red River Street
Room 2.102
Austin, TX

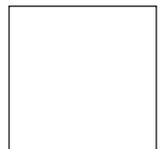
LAREDO

Thursday, April 2, 1998
6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

TxDOT District Office
1817 Bob Bullock Loop
Laredo, TX

Public meetings will also be held in Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, and Minnesota.

Please call the project office at 1-800-590-0066 for more information about the times, dates and locations.





Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Finding the best solution for improving transportation in the I-35 corridor can't be accomplished without comments and ideas from the public. Please describe your concerns related to the following topics:

Existing Conditions

What is the current state of transportation facilities in your area. Do they sufficiently meet your needs? Where are the problems and what kind of problems are they?

Trade Flow

What are your thoughts about the movement of trade on I-35 - especially how it relates to local concerns?

Technology

What type of improvements do you suggest for I-35?

Financing

How would you suggest that improvements be financed?

Other Issues

