

AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT OF 2009

**TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENT GENERATING
ECONOMIC RECOVERY**

“TIGER”

GRANT APPLICATION

Project Name: US 281

**Project Type: Highway or Bridge (construction or maintenance of a
highway or bridge):
Highway expansion construction project**

Project Location: Comal County, Texas – Rural

Congressional Districts: 21st Texas Congressional District

Funds Requested: \$88 million

**Contact: Mario G. Medina, P.E.
Texas Department of Transportation
San Antonio District
4615 NW Loop 410
San Antonio, Texas 78229-0928
(210) 615-5801
mmedina@dot.state.tx.us**

DUNS #: 806782553

EIN / TIN: 746000170

Website: www.txdot.gov



Project Description

History of project

The US 281 – Comal County expansion project is currently beyond the FY 2008-2011 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) but will be included in the 2010-2013 STIP.

Status of existing facility

The existing facility is currently a two-lane undivided highway in Comal County, Texas. See map posted separately for additional details.

Connections with existing infrastructure

The proposed roadway section is a four-lane divided roadway with drainage ditches and with a variable-width transportation corridor/median. The proposed section will require a 400-foot right of way. The purchase of additional right of way and utility adjustments will be required. The length of the proposed roadway improvement is 5.6 miles. Within the limits of the highway improvement, US 281 crosses several drainage features.

Proposed improvements

Accelerate the expansion of US 281 from the existing two-lane undivided highway to a four-lane divided highway from the Guadalupe River to the Blanco County Line. See map posted separately for additional details.

Project Funding and Parties

Estimated Total Project Cost: \$88 million (\$55 million for construction, \$22 million for right of way and \$11 million for design/construction administration)

Estimated TIGER grant funds requested: \$88,091,872 million

	State Funding		Local Funding		TIGER Grant		Grand Total
	Cost	Percent	Cost	Percent	Cost	Percent	
Preliminary Engineering/ ENV	\$2,914,912	100%		0%		0%	\$2,914,912
Right of Way/Utilities	\$0	0%	\$2,200,000	10%	\$19,800,000	90%	\$22,000,000
Detailed Design	\$0	0%		0%	\$5,500,000	100%	\$5,500,000
Construction**	\$0	0%		0%	\$55,000,000	100%	\$55,000,000
Construction Administration	\$0	0%		0%	\$2,676,960	100%	\$2,676,960
Total Cost	\$2,914,912		\$2,200,000		\$82,976,960		\$88,091,872

** The local government is providing the \$2.2 million in right of way match and they are fronting \$16 million to be paid back over five years for construction costs.

Long-term Outcomes

State of good repair

This highway needs to be expanded to meet the increased transportation demand.

Livability

This area is home to a combination of long-time residents and families who want to live in the “country” while remaining close to the benefits that a major city provides. Since 1970, the population of Comal County has increased 69 percent while the population of Bexar County (located south of Comal County and home to the city of San Antonio) increased 40 percent.

Sustainability

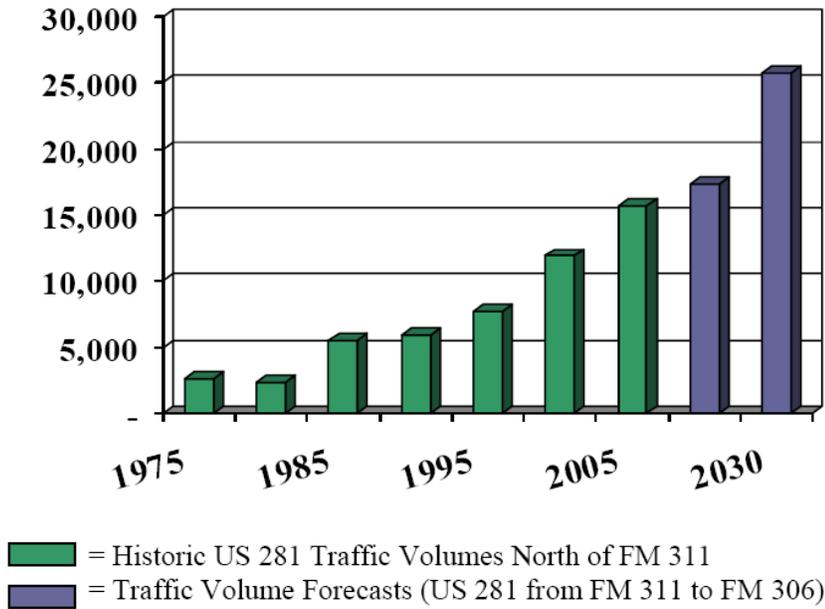
This project will increase the overall infrastructure condition in Comal County. The project corridor traverses one community: Spring Branch. The site of Spring Branch, 21 miles northwest of New Braunfels in the hills of western Comal County, was settled by the D. Knibbe family in 1852 and named for a spring that flows into the Guadalupe River. Estimates of the population grew over 85 percent by 1990 following the completion of the Canyon Dam and the filling of nearby Canyon Lake in the mid-1960s. The limited number of north/south arterial roads in the San Antonio/Austin area is another factor affecting the imbalance of capacity and transportation demand. In this corridor, US 281 is the only major north/south facility in the San Antonio/Austin area besides I-35. These factors are contributing to traffic demand on a facility that is quickly exceeding the design capacity of the existing US 281 corridor.

Safety

This project area is experiencing access problems with the mix of local traffic and the high-speed through traffic. Projected development and travel demand growth for the proposed project area indicate that safety concerns and collisions would increase within the foreseeable future along the US 281 corridor if it were to remain as a two-lane undivided highway. Recreation and tourism play a major role in transportation demand, safety and the need for additional roadway capacity within Comal County. Two of the popular destinations are the Guadalupe River and Canyon Lake.

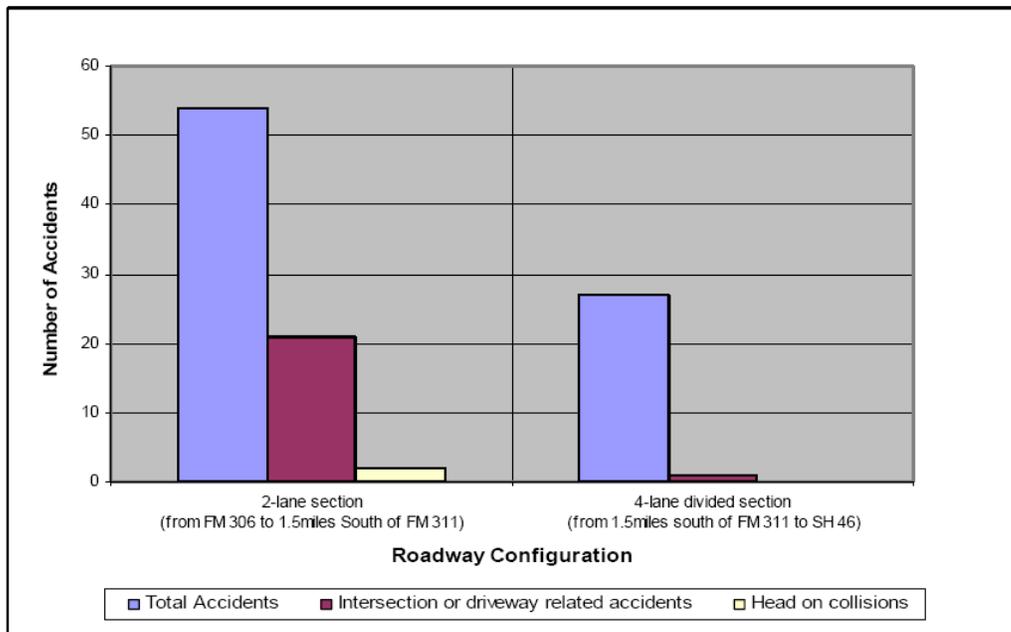
From 1975 to 2005, the average daily traffic (ADT) increased by over 585 percent. Between 2007 and the year 2030, the ADT is projected to increase by an additional 65 percent, from 17,000 vehicles per day to almost 26,000 vehicles per day. See Figure 1.

Figure 1: Average Daily Traffic Volumes



Where the existing roadway is only two lanes wide, increased safety and capacity concerns are evident. The northernmost portion of US 281 within the proposed project limits has experienced 26 percent of all traffic accidents and 33 percent of fatalities. Comparison of crashes along a two-lane (one lane in each direction) undivided roadway and a four-lane (two lanes in each direction) divided roadway shows an increase in occurrences along the two-lane undivided portion of the roadway. See Figure 2.

Figure 2: Total Accident Comparison Between Two-Lane and Four-Lane Configurations along US 281 in Comal County



Innovation and partnership

TxDOT has a pass-through agreement with Comal County, who contributed \$16 million that will assist in purchasing the necessary right of way and construction to accelerate this project.

Project Performance Plan

Job creation and economic impact

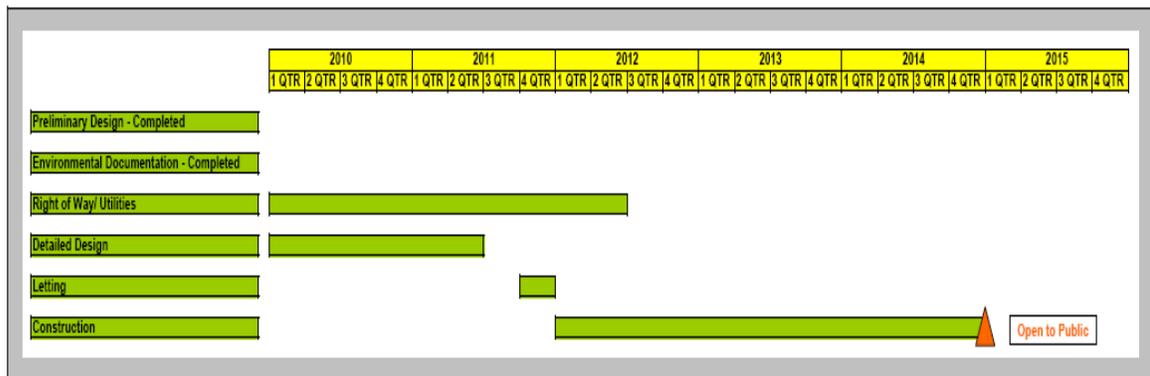
For the short-term, this project will allow opportunities for contractors to work on the project. Long-term, it will support development of growth for residential and commercial businesses and will support of the construction of this development.

Benefit/cost analysis

Traffic on US 281 in Comal County has substantially increased, and improvements to transportation infrastructure are vital to meet the demands resulting from this persistent growth. These improvements will result in enhanced traffic operations and increased safety for road users and improved travel time for the citizens of the region. It will also allow for improved access to emergency and other public use facilities, residential subdivisions and local businesses along the corridor. In addition, the acceleration of this project will have a cost savings of \$8 to \$15 million.

Project Schedule

Estimated construction completion date: 2015



Environmental Status

Status of Environmental Review/Approval: Capacity CE Approved - November 2007

Project Partners and Collaborators

The TxDOT San Antonio District is working closely with Comal County to meet the demands of US 281. The purpose of the proposed US 281 improvements is to effectively respond to increased transportation demand while enhancing mobility and improving safety within the US 281 corridor.

Program-Specific Criteria

This project meets the requirements of the Federal-Aid Highway Program.

Certifications

The Texas Department of Transportation has and will continue to comply with all required certifications under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. All current and future certifications have been submitted to the appropriate DOT and Federal websites. In addition the certifications are posted on TxDOT's website at http://www.dot.state.tx.us/project_information/stimulus/default.htm.