

# OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY

Comment and Response Report  
for the US 59 Improvement Projects  
Open House held May 6, 2014



US 59 Upgrade to Interstate Standards  
from Business 59 South of El Campo  
to Business 59 North of El Campo  
Wharton County, Texas  
CSJs: 0089-07-146, 0089-07-133, 0089-06-081

**May 2014**



## OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY

### Table of Contents

Open House Summary Report.....	2
Comment and Response Report .....	5



## OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY

A joint Open House was held by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) on May 6, 2014, to gather input regarding the US 59 Upgrade to Interstate standards from Business 59 south of El Campo to Business 59 north of El Campo and the Upgrade of US 59 to Interstate standards for the remainder of Wharton County, Texas. These projects are being developed separately, but the open houses were combined in order to garner a larger public attendance and to lessen any possible confusion over the similarities in the purpose and need of the projects to bring US 59 up to Interstate standards throughout Wharton County. This summary addresses the US 59 upgrade to Interstate standards from Business 59 south of El Campo to Business 59 north of El Campo (CSJs 0089-07-146, 0089-07-133, 0089-06-081).

The purpose of the Open House for this project was to discuss the Purpose and Need of the project; the goals and objectives of the projects; project schedules; design schematics; and gather public input on the upgrade improvements being considered. The meeting was held from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the City of El Campo Civic Center, 2350 N. Mechanic Street, El Campo, Texas. The meeting utilized an open house, come-and-go format which allowed citizens to review project materials and maps as well as speak to TxDOT and consultant staff on a one-on-one basis.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

As currently proposed, US 59 improvements would provide new frontage roads and convert the existing lanes of US 59 to a controlled access facility that meets Interstate standards. Preliminary studies indicate additional right-of-way would be needed.

The purpose of the US 59 project through El Campo is to provide frontage roads and convert the existing lanes of US 59 to a controlled access, expressway-type road that meets Interstate standards. Currently US 59 in El Campo is not a controlled access, expressway-type road. As traffic increases in the area, accessing the mainlanes of US 59 becomes more difficult. TxDOT is currently studying controlling the access along the US 59 mainlanes and providing frontage roads, so US 59 in El Campo can be safer, and better accommodate growing traffic volumes. Based on funding and need, the upgrade of US 59 in El Campo is being developed as two separate projects. The El Campo South project extends from Business 59 south of El Campo to SH 71 (CSJs 0089-06-081 and 0089-07-133). The El Campo North project extends from SH 71 to Business 59 north of El Campo (CSJ 0089-07-146).

## **OPEN HOUSE INFORMATION**

### **LEGAL NOTICES AND ADVERTISEMENTS**

Legal notices for the Open House were published in the *El Campo Leader-News* on Saturday, April 5, 2014, and Wednesday, April 23, 2014.

Display advertisements were published in both English and Spanish in the *El Campo Leader-News* on Saturday, April 26, 2014.

### **ADDITIONAL NOTIFICATION/OUTREACH EFFORTS**

Letters were sent to elected officials and local leaders within the project study area, advising them of the upcoming Open House. These letters were mailed on April 1, 2014.

Postcards were sent to approximately 122 addresses from the stakeholder database.

The TxDOT website was used as a notification tool to advertise the date, time, location and purpose of the upcoming Open House.

An electronic changeable message sign was placed in front of the El Campo Civic Center for passerby traffic beginning May 1, 2014, through May 6, 2014.

## **OPEN HOUSE DATES, LOCATIONS, AND FORMAT**

The Open House was held Tuesday, May 6, 2014, at the City of El Campo Civic Center, El Campo, Texas. The meeting was held from 5:30-7:30 p.m. It utilized an open house, come-and-go format where the public was able to review proposed project exhibits and discuss the environmental study process with project staff.

Ten informational boards were displayed around the room for public viewing. The boards included information on the proposed project's Purpose and Need; the North and South El Campo projects; what is being proposed; environmental studies; information on both the existing and proposed US 59; how to provide comments; the project schedule; and the next steps.

Displayed along with the 10 informational boards were project schematics and environmental constraint maps for both the North El Campo project and the South El Campo project.

The room was divided in half for the two projects represented for the Open House. Representatives from TxDOT and the study team were positioned around the room to answer questions, facilitate discussion and gather input from attendees.

Tables were arranged in the middle of the room so attendees could have a place to fill out comment forms. Several boxes were available on the tables and near the door for attendees to leave their completed comment forms.

## REGISTRATION AND HANDOUTS

Upon arrival at the Open House, attendees were asked to sign in and were offered a set of handouts which included:

- Two fact sheets
  - US 59 El Campo North/US 59 El Campo South fact sheet
  - US 59 Wharton County fact sheet
- Comment form

## ATTENDANCE

A total of 70 members of the public signed in at the Open House.

## PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY

The public was invited to submit comments on the project. Open House attendees had the option of leaving their completed comment forms in drop boxes provided at the meeting. Comments were also accepted by mail, email and fax. Official comments were accepted between Saturday, April 5, 2014, and Friday, May 16, 2014. Written comments were accepted if they were mailed (postmarked) by Friday, May 16, 2014, to Paul Reitz, P.E., Texas Department of Transportation, 403 Huck Street, Yoakum, Texas, 77995, faxed to 361-293-4372, or emailed to paul.reitz@txdot.gov by the submission deadline of May 16, 2014.

A total of seven comment submissions were received during the official comment period. One comment was received outside of the comment period but was included in this report due to the direct relation to the project and the close postmark date in relation to the end of the comment period. A summary of the comments received and a response to the comment follows in the Comment and Response Report portion of this document.

Two comments noted support of the project. Two comments noted the desire for two-way frontage or feeder roads, one noting to minimize distance and another noting one-way is less safe. One comment noted dissatisfaction that right-of-way will be needed. One comment noted that although inconvenient, it will be safer for grain trucks at Youngsdale Road. One comment noted a request for a culvert at a specific location. One comment indicated the need for an overpass at Meadow Lane and I-69. One commenter requested being contacted when samples and testing is done.

## COMMENT AND RESPONSE REPORT

#	Last Name	First Name	Date Received	Project	Comment Summary	Response
1	Mach	Bernard	5/6/2014	North US 59	Contact when samples and test work are done.	Comment noted.
2	Martinez, Jr.	Rudy A.	5/6/2014	South US 59	Proposed feeder roads should be two-way in order to minimize distance from one point to another. Need overpass at I-69/Meadow Lane crossing.	<p>It is current TxDOT policy to only provide one-way frontage roads primarily because of safety. Exceptions to this policy are only made when severe restrictions to circulation would be imposed by doing so. The El Campo projects include a complete frontage road network to facilitate full circulation of vehicles. The disadvantages of two-way frontage roads include: 1) higher crash rates in large part because of the risk of head on collisions, 2) increased potential for wrong-way entry to the freeway, 3) the intersections with cross streets like FM 1163 and SH 71 are much more complicated because of the increased number of options for turning that must be accommodated, and 4) the capacity of the frontage roads is less than if the facility was one-way.</p> <p>Funding for improving US 59 in El Campo is limited. Utilizing existing bridges minimizes overall project costs and may allow this project to be reasonably funded. Adding an additional overpass at Meadow Lane would substantially increase the proposed cost and likely result in project delays. Additionally, impacts to existing businesses, particularly on the north side of the roadway, may result from the addition of an overpass.</p>
3	Martinez, Sr.	Rudy A.	5/6/2014	South US 59	Dissatisfied with amount of ROW being acquired for feeder road project.	The right of way depicted accommodates the roadway, drainage ditches and a sidewalk. The amount of additional property that will potentially be acquired has been optimized to accommodate these improvements.
4	NA	NA	5/6/2014	North/South US 59	Supports project.	Comment noted.
5	NA	NA	5/6/2014	North/South US 59	Supports project. Looking forward to progress.	Comment noted.

#	Last Name	First Name	Date Received	Project	Comment Summary	Response
6	Rasmussen	Mark	5/20/2014	South US 59	Wants a culvert to enter easement on the west property line of Lamco Feeders to enter the Lamco RV park.	Guidelines for driveway number, location and spacing, as well as the procedures for requesting driveway access are detailed in the TxDOT Access Management Manual that can be found at <a href="http://onlinemanuals.txdot.gov/txdotmanuals/acm/index.htm">http://onlinemanuals.txdot.gov/txdotmanuals/acm/index.htm</a> . (Although this comment was received outside of the official designated comment period, it was reviewed and responded to due to the direct relation to the project and the postmark date being so close to the end of the comment period.)
7	Roppolo	Jimmy	5/6/2014	South US 59	A little inconvenient but safer for grain trucks entering/exiting at Youngsdale Road.	Comment noted.
8	Shoppa	Lloyd	5/8/2014	South US 59	Wants two-way frontage road until there is another frontage road on opposite side of US 59. Current plan of one-way traffic will be less safe.	It is current TxDOT policy to only provide one-way frontage roads primarily because of safety. Exceptions to this policy are only made when severe restrictions to circulation would be imposed by doing so. The El Campo projects include a complete frontage road network to facilitate full circulation of vehicles. The disadvantages of two-way frontage roads include: 1) higher crash rates, in large part because of the risk of head on collisions, 2) increased potential for wrong-way entry to the freeway, 3) the intersections with cross streets like SH 71 and FM 1162 are much more complicated because of the increased number of options for turning that must be accommodated, and 4) the capacity of the frontage roads is less than if the facility was one-way.