

**The Texas Department of Transportation  
El Paso District**

**Loop 375 Improvement Project  
From Interstate 10 (I-10) to 0.479 miles east of the Tom Mays Unit of the Franklin  
Mountains State Park  
El Paso County**

**Public Hearing Summary  
Public Hearing Date: March 22, 2011**

**Prepared: August 2011**

# Table of Contents

## **VOLUME 1:**

Section 1:	Certification Statement
Section 2:	Public Hearing Summary and Analysis/Recommendation
Section 3:	Public Hearing Comment and Response Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overview</li><li>• Table 3-1 Responses to Frequently Made Comments (Table 3-1)</li><li>• Table 3-2 Frequently Made Comments by RID number (Table 3-2)</li><li>• Public Hearing Comments and Responses Matrix (Response Matrix)</li><li>• TxDOT Responses to Lengthy Public Comments (Long Responses)</li></ul>
Section 4:	Public Hearing Transcript
Appendix A	Newspaper Articles/Notices & Affidavits <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• El Paso Times Articles &amp; Affidavits</li><li>• El Diario de El Paso Articles &amp; Affidavits</li><li>• Other Media Coverage/Communications</li></ul>
Appendix B	Letters/Notices
Appendix C	Mailing Lists
Appendix D	Sign-in Sheets
Appendix E	Public Hearing Handout/ Agenda
Appendix F	Public Hearing Presentation
Appendix G	Exhibits

## **VOLUME 2:**

Appendix H	Comments <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Index of Commenters (RID Log)</li><li>• Comments Organized by Reference Identification (RID) # (RIDS)</li><li>• Comment Packet (Letter and Addenda) Received from Representative Susie Byrd (S. Byrd) includes the petition called “Save El Paso’s Franklin Mountains”</li></ul>
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## **VOLUME 3:**

Appendix I	Photos
Appendix J	Meeting Minutes
Appendix K	Petitions – Includes Mr. Jim Tolbert’s petition called “Initiative Petition” provided to Mr. Gregory Punske on March 22, 2011.

**Section 1**  
**Certification Statement**

CERTIFICATE

Loop 375 (Transmountain Road)  
From: Interstate 10 (I-10)  
To: 0.497 miles east of the Tom Mays Unit of the  
Franklin Mountains State Park

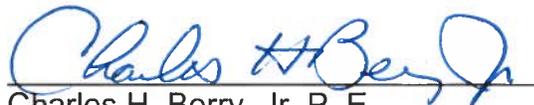
El Paso, Texas

CSJ: 2552-01-033

I hereby certify that with regard to the subject project:

- a. The District held a public hearing on this project on March 22, 2011 in El Paso, Texas. Notices of the hearing were published in both the El Paso Times and El Diario de El Paso on February 20, March 12 and again on March 20, 2011.
- b. The District has considered the economic and social effects of the project's location and design and its impact on the environment.
- c. The District has considered the statutory provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 in determining economic, social and environmental effects.
- d. The District has considered the project's consistency with the goals and objectives of the community.

Date: August 9, 2011



Charles H. Berry, Jr. P. E.  
District Engineer  
El Paso District  
Texas Department of Transportation

## **Section 2**

# **Public Hearing Summary and Analysis/Recommendation**

## **Section 2**

### **Public Hearing Summary and Analysis/Recommendation**

**District/County:** El Paso District /El Paso County

**Highway/Limits:** Loop 375 from Interstate 10 (I-10) to 0.479 miles east of the Tom Mays Unit of the Franklin Mountains State Park

**CSJ/ Project Number:** 2552-01-033

**Proposed Improvements:** The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) proposes improvements to Loop 375 (Transmountain Road) from Interstate 10 (I-10) to 0.479 mile east of the Tom Mays Unit of the Franklin Mountains State Park. The project is located in northwest El Paso in El Paso County, Texas. From east of I-10 to the Tom Mays Unit of the Franklin Mountains State Park Access Road the existing facility consists of a variable width right-of-way (ROW) with two undivided 12-foot-wide travel lanes and 8-foot wide shoulder on the north side of the roadway and a 10-foot wide shoulder on the south side of the roadway. From Tom Mays Park Access Road to the eastern end of the project, Loop 375 consists of a four-lane divided roadway with two 12-foot wide travel lanes in each direction, a variable median, 6-foot-wide inside shoulders, and 10-foot-wide outside shoulders. The existing roadway does not contain sidewalks or hike-and-bike trails but the existing shoulder is currently used as an emergency lane and bike path.

The proposed project consists of expanding the current two-lane undivided roadway to a four-lane divided freeway with two-lane frontage roads in each direction and grade separations at major intersections as well as two direct connectors from Loop 375 west to I-10 east and from I-10 west to Loop 375 east. The proposed mainlanes would generally consist of two 12-foot travel lanes in each direction with 4-foot wide inside shoulders, 10-foot wide outside shoulders, and a 38-foot wide inside median. The design includes a third 12-foot wide auxiliary lane in areas between proposed entrance and exit ramps in order to facilitate merging traffic. The proposed roadway design includes retaining walls for the mainlanes with overpasses at the existing and proposed intersections with Northwestern Drive, Resler Drive, future Plexxar Road, and future Paseo Del Norte Road. All intersections would include pedestrian crossings, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant curb ramps, future infrastructure for signals, and cross streets would provide variable-width sidewalks and 14-foot-wide outside lanes to accommodate shared use with bicycle traffic. The future Paseo Del Norte Road will include a striped bike lane at the intersection with Loop 375. As part of this project, shared hike-and-bike trails would be constructed separate from the roadways, near the Loop 375 ROW line, between the intersections of Northwestern Drive and the future Paseo del Norte Road. The hike-and-bike trail extends east of Paseo Del Norte to the

Tom Mays Unit Park entrance on the north side of Loop 375. The proposed improvements also include two elevated direct connectors to I-10. The Loop 375 west to I-10 east direct connector would be approximately 4,090 feet long, and the I-10 west to Loop 375 east direct connector would be approximately 3,420 feet long. Both direct connectors would be approximately 26 feet wide and consist of one 14-foot wide travel lane with shoulders. The proposed four-lane freeway facility would transition back to a four-lane divided roadway without frontage roads approximately 0.5 mile east of the future Paseo Del Norte intersection and continue as such to the eastern terminus of the project. The total length of the proposed project is approximately 3.6 miles of mainlanes and approximately 2.10 miles of frontage roads (from Northwestern Drive to the future Paseo del Norte Road). Due to the proposed expansion and grade separations, approximately 41.2 acres of new ROW would be acquired.

**Need and Purpose:** The El Paso District of TxDOT conducted a Public Hearing to inform the public about the proposed project, describe the proposed project and design alternatives considered, provide an opportunity for the public to present their comments and opinions, and develop a record of public views and participation to supplement recommendations for subsequent decisions. The need for the project is due to:

At a Local Level:

- Rapid Population and Housing Growth
- Increased Travel Demand
- Safety Concerns at Intersections and Driveways
- Decreased Level of Mobility

At a Regional Level:

- Increased Population due to Fort Bliss
- Limitations of the Physical Roadway Network
- Increased Traffic Volumes on I-10
- Lack of a Viable East-West Alternate Route

The purpose of the proposed improvements would accomplish the following objectives:

At a Local Level:

- Improve Traffic Mobility
- Increase Safety
- Improve Efficiency of the Transportation Route for Residents, Commuters, Commercial Vehicles, and the Traveling Public

At a Regional Level:

- Provide Regional and Local East-West Connectivity
- Provide an Alternate Route to I-10

**Environmental Document:** The objective of the Environmental Assessment (EA) was to evaluate impacts associated with upgrading Loop 375 (from I-10 to 0.479 mile east of the Franklin Mountains State Park) in order to improve mobility, safety, and accommodate projected growth on both a local and regional level.

**Public Hearing Purpose:** To inform the public about the proposed project, describe the proposed project, provide an opportunity for comments, and develop a public record.

**Public Hearing Date:** Tuesday, March 22, 2011

**Public Hearing Location:** Canutillo High School, 6675 South Desert Blvd., El Paso, Texas, 79912.

**Public Hearing Format:** 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM – Open House for Exhibit Viewing  
7:00 PM to 7:45 PM – Formal Presentation  
7:45 PM to End – Public Comment Session

The March 22nd public hearing began with an “open house” type format from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Four High Definition TV monitors showing the project alternatives and virtual animations were on display during this time, along with numerous exhibits and maps of the Loop 375 corridor. The formal presentation was between 7:00 p.m. to 7:45 p.m., and the comment session began at 7:45 p.m. during which time public officials and interested parties made verbal comments.

**Publications:** Newspaper articles and the official Public Hearing Notices along with publication affidavits are located in **Appendix A**. The following includes the dates and newspapers where Public Hearing Notices were published.

***El Paso Times (English) –***

Sunday February 20, 2011  
Saturday March 12, 2011  
Sunday March 20, 2011

***El Diario de El Paso (Spanish)***

Sunday February 20, 2011  
Saturday March 12, 2011  
Sunday March 20, 2011

Other media coverage such as internet articles/communications is also included in **Appendix A**.

## **Letters to Elected Officials and Letters to Adjacent Property Owners**

On February 16, 2011, the El Paso District mailed out letters to El Paso area federal, state, and local elected and non-elected officials, as well as the property and business owners adjacent to the proposed corridor. These letters provided detailed information of the proposed El Paso Loop 375 Project. The public officials and adjacent property owners were invited to attend the March 22, 2011 public hearing. Example copies of the elected and non-elected official's letter, and the property owner's and interested parties, letter may be found in **Appendix B** of this summary report along with the mailing lists located in **Appendix C**.

**Attendance:** The total registered attendance consisted of 240 persons comprised of 186 members of the general public; 14 public officials; 10 media personnel and 30 project team members. Copies of sign in sheets are provided in **Appendix D**.

**Public Hearing:** Handouts that included the Public Hearing Agenda were provided to each attendee and were available in both English and Spanish. Copies of the handouts provided at the Public Hearing are included in **Appendix E**. Media packets were also made available to members of the media present at the Loop 375 Public Hearing. The media packet contained a copy of the Public Hearing Agenda, comment form, location map, and a business card from Blanca Del Valle, TxDOT's Public Information Officer.

The presiding official for the public hearing was Mr. Charles H. Berry, P.E., TxDOT El Paso District Engineer. Mr. Berry convened the formal presentation portion of the hearing at 7:06 p.m. and informed the public of the public hearing agenda and procedures, the process to provide both verbal and written comments, and the purpose of the public hearing. He also informed the public that headphones were available for Spanish interpretation of the hearing and that the hearing would be recorded by a certified court reporter. Mr. Berry presented a brief description of the proposed project, summary of the project schedule, and the availability of the proposed project plans and environmental documents at the El Paso District and City of El Paso. He acknowledged attendance of: Sal Payan, from the office of Congressman Silvestre Reyes; Alexander McKibbin, from the office of Dee Margo, Texas State Representative - District 78; Laure Searls, Vice President of the Canutillo School Board; Damon Murphy, Superintendent Canutillo Independent School District; Ann M. Lilly, City Representative District 1; Theresa Ware-Asbury, Precinct Chair #7; Susie Byrd; City of El Paso Representative District 2; Sergio Coronado, Canutillo Independent School District; Armando Rodriguez, Canutillo School Board; Roy Gilyard, Executive Director, El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization; Connie Chacon for Senator Jose Rodriguez; Veronica Escobar, County Judge; and Steve Ortega, Representative City of El Paso District 7. Mr. Berry introduced the project team staff, which included TxDOT staff and consultant representatives from Entech Civil Engineers, Inc., and Blanton and Associates, who assisted in the public hearing. He expressed the importance of public participation and encouraged public comments. Mr. Berry also discussed the type of

funding available for ROW acquisition, utilities relocation, and construction of the project.

Mr. Berry introduced Mr. Antonio Uribe, Jr., P.E., from the El Paso District, and the project manager for the proposed project. Mr. Uribe first described the existing Loop 375 (Transmountain Road) facility and then presented the proposed project information. He described the details of the proposed improvements, such as the number of mainlanes and frontage roads for the freeway, the two direct connectors, the bridge overpasses at the major intersections, accommodations for bicycle and pedestrian traffic, drainage considerations, and estimated construction costs. He also informed the public that five (5) Alternatives were developed and evaluated and that, through a detailed alternatives analysis, it was determined that the proposed project (Alternative 5) met the stated need and purpose of the project. Mr. Uribe introduced Ms. Kim Johnson as the next speaker.

Ms. Johnson presented the environmental evaluation process and the assessment of impacts to vegetation, threatened and endangered species, waters of the US, water quality, floodplains, environmental justice, cultural resources, hazardous materials, air quality, traffic noise impacts, and visual impacts. Ms. Johnson informed the public that a storm water pollution plan would be developed to minimize temporary impacts to storm water runoff from increased sedimentation. Due to impacts to 100-year floodplains, coordination with the Floodplain Administrator would also be necessary. Ms. Johnson stated the proposed project would have no effect on any federally-listed threatened or endangered species. She also informed the public that, based on comments by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the public, TxDOT would install a 10-foot tall by 20-foot wide arched pipe culvert crossing near the future Paseo Del Norte Road extension that would have an earthen bottom and could be tall and wide enough to accommodate large animals. She stated that a noise analysis revealed the proposed project would not result in a traffic noise impact, and the results of studies indicated that the project is within the federal criteria for air quality standards. She concluded her presentation with slides containing virtual renderings of the proposed improvements in order to provide a representative assessment of the visual impacts associated with the project. The Public Hearing Presentation can be found in **Appendix F**.

Mr. Berry concluded the formal presentation by briefly reviewing the process on making verbal comments for the record or in written format, which needed to be postmarked or emailed no later than Friday, April 1, 2011. Mr. Berry initiated the public comment session of the hearing. A total of 50 attendees expressed interest in making public comments for the record, but only a total of 30 attendees provided verbal comments.

**Exhibits:** The Exhibits of the proposed project that were on display at the Public Hearing included an aerial map; two copies of the design schematic (plan and profile); and the EA document; and two copies of the environmental constraints map. There were four (4) LCD TV monitors that showed various depictions of the project alternatives, including: a virtual animation (fly-through) of the mainlane and frontage

road freeway (Alternative 5); actual traffic of existing conditions (No Build/Alternative 1) taken with a video camera; simulated traffic flows for Alternatives 1 through 3 using a traffic modeling software for years 2015 and 2035; and simulated traffic flows for Alternatives 4 and 5 using the same traffic modeling software for years 2015 and 2035. Alternative 1 was considered the “No Build,” Alternative 2 “Construct Climbing Lane,” Alternative 3 “Construct Two New Lanes,” Alternative 4 “Boulevard Concept,” and Alternative 5 was the “Four-lane Freeway Facility with Frontage Roads and Direct Connectors to I-10.” Additionally, welcome and thank you boards, step by step and directional boards, and informational boards were available. These exhibits can be seen in **Appendix G**.

**Comments Received:** A total of 131 individuals submitted comments on the proposed project during the public hearing comment period. The public hearing comment period extended from the date of FHWA’s determination that the environmental document was satisfactory for further processing (February 11, 2011) through April 1, 2011.

**Table 2-1** identifies the most frequently made comments and number of comments for each. Copies of all comments received within the public hearing comment period are provided in **Appendix H**.

**Table 2-1 Summary of Frequently Made Comments**

FMC #	Frequently Made Comment	Number of Commenters
1	Animal Crossings	11
2	Issues with Freeway Design (Alternative 5 - Four-lane Freeway Facility with Frontage Roads and Direct Connectors to I-10) and Support of Four Lane At-grade Alternative (Alternative 3) or Boulevard Alternative (Alternative 4)	31
3	Issues with Plexxar / Paseo Del Norte Overpass or Suggestion to Combine Plexxar / Paseo Del Norte Overpasses	24
4	Safety at Tom Mays Park Access Road Entrance	21
5	Open Space Concern / Development of Land Managed By the El Paso Water Utilities Public Service Board (PSB) for the City of El Paso	40
6	Use of Natural Vegetation / Landscaping	5
7	Addition of Direct Connectors to I-10 North of Loop 375	5
8	Alternatives Considered	33
9	Spacing Between Intersections	6
10	Plexxar Not Shown in Northwest Master Plan, Westside Master Plan, or MTP- what is justification for inclusion of Plexxar Overpass?	2
11	Concern that TxDOT used “Outdated” Traffic Data	7

FMC #	Frequently Made Comment	Number of Commenters
12	Concern with Visual Impacts	37
13	Project Funding	24
n/a	Other Comments	119

For more detailed information see “Public Hearing Comment and Response Report” in **Section 3** of this report.

Public Hearing photos are included in **Appendix I**.

### **Stakeholder Meeting Minutes**

Three City Council Meetings were conducted within the Public Hearing Comment Period. See **Appendix J** for the City Council Meetings. The following are the dates of the City Council Meetings:

- On March 1, 2011, TXDOT staff presented the Draft Environmental Assessment for the proposed Loop 375 project.
- On March 15, 2011, TxDOT presented the Comprehensive Mobility Plan where the proposed Loop 375 project was mentioned.
- On March 29, 2011, TxDOT presented information on the proposed Loop 375 project. City Council approved the Preferred Alternative (5) based the Draft EA.

On March 3, 2011, TxDOT had a Coordination Meeting with Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD).

Copies of petitions addressed to the El Paso City Council were submitted as part of the public comment record and are included in **Appendix H (S. Byrd)** and **Appendix K**.

## **Section 3**

# **Public Hearing Comment and Response Report**

## Section 3

### Public Hearing Comment and Response Report

Section 3 provides responses to all public comments provided in Appendix H and is organized into the following sections, which are described in greater detail below:

- Overview
- Table 3-1 Responses to Frequently Made Comments (Table 3-1)
- Table 3-2 Frequently Made Comments by RID number (Table 3-2)
- Public Hearing Comments and Responses Matrix (Response Matrix)
- TxDOT Responses to Lengthy Public Comments (Long Responses)

#### Overview

The Public Hearing for the proposed project was held on March 22, 2011. All comment forms, emails, letters received by TxDOT before the April 1, 2011 comment deadline, and all verbal comments reproduced from the Public Hearing Transcript in response to the Public Hearing are provided in Appendix H. Reference Identification (RID) numbers were developed to reference individuals who made comments. RID numbers were assigned sequentially to each person as their comments were being processed into the summary. If a person made more than one type of comment, whether by comment form, email, letter, and/or verbal comment, their comments appear together in the Public Hearing Comments Response Matrix under the same RID number. Two tables are provided at the beginning of Appendix H that provide: 1) the commenter by RID number (in numerical order), and 2) the RID number by commenter (in alphabetical order). Responses to comments are presented in Table 3-1, the Response Matrix, and the Long Responses to Lengthy Public Comments.

#### Table 3-1 Responses to Frequently Made Comments

Throughout review of the public comments, TxDOT representatives noted that there were comments that were frequently made by the commenters. For consistency in response preparation, these comments were organized into the following twelve Frequently Made Comment (FMC) categories.

1. Animal Crossings
2. Issues with Freeway Design (Alternative 5 - Four-lane Freeway Facility with Frontage Roads and Direct Connectors to I-10) and Support of Four Lane At-grade Alternative (Alternative 3) or Boulevard Alternative (Alternative 4)

3. Issues with the Plexxar / Paseo Del Norte Overpass or Suggestion to Combine Plexxar / Paseo Del Norte Overpasses
4. Safety at Tom Mays Park Access Road Entrance
5. Open Space Concern / Development of Land Managed by El Paso Water Utilities Public Service Board (PSB) for the City of El Paso
6. Use of Natural Vegetation / Landscaping
7. Addition of Direct Connectors to I-10 North of Loop 375
8. Alternatives Considered
9. Spacing Between Intersections
10. Plexxar Not Shown in Northwest Master Plan, Westside Master Plan, or MTP – What is Justification for Inclusion of Plexxar Overpass
11. Concern that TxDOT used “Outdated” Traffic Data
12. Concern with Visual Impacts
13. Project Funding

Table 3-1 provides each FMC and TxDOT’s response to that comment. Any comment that was not designated as FMC was designated “Other.” Responses to “Other” comments are provided in the Response Matrix described below.

**Table 3-2 Frequently Made Comments by RID number**

A tally of each FMC by RID number is provided in Table 3-2. An “X” indicates which FMC(s) each commenter made. If no “X’s” are shown for a particular RID, for that RID no FMCs were made.

**Public Hearing Comments and Responses Matrix (Response Matrix)**

The Response Matrix presents all commenters by RID number, the comments made, and the form in which they provided their comments. The RID number appears on the first line of each section assigned to an individual’s comments. For reference, two tables are provided at the beginning of Appendix H that provide: 1) the commenter by RID number (in numerical order) and 2) the RID number by commenter (in alphabetical order). The comment and comment form (letter, email, etc.) are provided in the left column of the Response Matrix and the responses are provided in the right column. Comments were then assigned a comment type (e.g. [ FMC # ] or [ Other #]). The responses to “other” comments are provided in the right column of the matrix (by comment type and #). Responses to FMCs are referred back to the responses provided in Table 3-1. Each time an FMC is identified in the Response Matrix, the FMC response can be located in Table 3-1 by matching the FMC X in the Response Matrix to the FMC X in Table 3-1.

### **TxDOT Responses to Lengthy Public Comments (Long Responses)**

Comments and associated responses from eight commenters were determined to be too long for clear presentation in the Response Matrix; therefore they are presented in the section called Long Responses immediately following the Response Matrix. Each of the eight commenters are still listed under their respective RID numbers (RID number 18, 67, 69, 71, 75, 79, 103, and 113) in the Response Matrix and in the Long Responses. The Long Responses are organized in the following manner: each RID comment is separated by comment number followed by a corresponding response. Responses to FMCs are referred back to the responses provided in Table 3-1. Each time an FMC is identified in the Long Responses, the FMC response can be located in Table 3-1 by matching the FMC X in the Response Matrix to the FMC X in Table 3-1.

Substance, intent, and content were preserved for each comment since they were reproduced in their entirety in the Response Matrix and Long Response Section. Names, addresses, phone numbers, and emails of comments were omitted from this section to separate names from specific comments. Appendix H can be referenced for a copy of each specific comment received, organized by RID.

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

No.	Comment Type and Appropriate Response
1	<p><b>Animal Crossings</b></p> <p>It is understood that roadways and vehicle traffic contribute to wildlife mortality. TxDOT previously installed animal crossing caution signs to warn motorists of the potential for wildlife to cross the road. A review of crash data from January 2006 to May 2010 revealed that more than half of recorded vehicle-to-animal crashes on Loop 375 were caused by domestic animals rather than mule deer or other wild animals. Accident crash data was collected from the Texas Crash Records Information System (CRIS). Coordination with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Franklin Mountains State Park, as well as public input, prompted TxDOT to evaluate the use of additional warning signs and the construction of a wildlife crossing somewhere along the proposed project. Placement of an adequate size animal crossing for large mammals under the roadway would require elevating the existing highway profile alignment. Increasing profile grade was considered unwise due to factors including increased highway profile grade along a segment of highway that already included 5% to 7% grades. Prior public coordination had identified that the public did not want to create elevated highway structures inside or very near the limits of the state park. Therefore, TxDOT evaluated the use of existing drainage crossings so that the road would not require a change in roadway grade or elevation. City of El Paso has a land use ordinance for Planned Mountain Development District (PMD) along the corridor. This PMD is a zoning ordinance developed to protect and preserve areas near the Franklin Mountains. One of its principle purposes is to minimize scarring and disturbances of the natural character of the mountain through control of grading operations, control storm water runoff, and soil erosion. If additional facilities were to be implemented to accommodate animal crossings, the PMD along the Loop 375 corridor would be further impacted. TxDOT determined drainage crossings based on existing and natural flow patterns within the propose project. Additional drainage locations would require the use of private property to be used as an animal crossing, potentially limiting and/or restricting access to private properties. Coordination with state park officials and review of crash records that involved wild animals did not reveal a concentration of crossings at any particular location, further complicating the review for a possible wildlife crossing location. TxDOT has determined a potential location along Drainage 4 as a crossing location: City of El Paso Arroyo Number 128 immediately west of the proposed Paseo Del Norte Interchange. The arroyo would remain as open space as part of the Westside Master Plan for future development of the area. The crossing location would utilize an existing storm drainage structure that crosses the highway within the right-of-way and would not require elevating the roadway profile. TxDOT has proposed a 10 ft tall by 20 ft wide metal plate arch pipe culvert with an earthen bottom that could be utilized by large mammals as a grade separated highway crossing for the proposed project. TxDOT will also install additional wildlife signage cautioning the public of the potential for wildlife crossing the road.</p>
2	<p><b>Issues with Freeway Design (Alternative 5 - Four-lane Freeway Facility with Frontage Roads and Direct Connectors to I-10) and Support of Four Lane At-grade Alternative (Alternative 3)</b></p> <p><b>or</b></p> <p><b>Boulevard Alternative (Alternative 4)</b></p> <p>Some comments were received regarding preference for Alternative 3, Construct Two New Lanes, or Alternative 4, Boulevard. An evaluation of a full range of alternatives was performed before the Public Hearing</p>

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

No.	Comment Type and Appropriate Response
	<p>as a part of the environmental documentation before SFP, including the two alternatives stated in the comments. The procedure and a description of the alternatives that were evaluated are presented below. All the alternatives evaluated before SFP using traffic volume data based on the TransBorder 2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (“MTP”) were re-evaluated after SFP using traffic volume data based on the Mission 2035 MTP. The process used to analyze alternatives based on TransBorder 2035 MTP is provided below. The same analysis on the same alternatives using traffic volume data based on the Mission 2035 MTP is provided in the response to FMC 11- Concerns that TxDOT Used “Outdated” Traffic Data.</p> <p>The traffic analyses discussed in the February 2011 Environmental Assessment (EA) were based on the TransBorder 2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (“MTP”) prepared by the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization (“MPO”) and the TransBorder 2035 Travel Demand Model (TDM). The EA was determined by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to be Satisfactory for Further Processing (SFP) on February 11, 2011. Traffic and other data utilized in the preparation of the EA were based on the El Paso MPO TransBorder 2035 MTP, which was the current conforming plan at the time that the EA was prepared. The MPO subsequently adopted the Mission 2035 MTP on August 6, 2010. In the development of the Corridor (i.e. project specific) Level traffic data using TransBorder 2035 TDM, the Transportation Planning and Programming Division (TPP) of TxDOT, professional transportation modeling experts, performed corridor level and intersection traffic analysis for the horizon year 2035 based on TransBorder 2035 TDM traffic forecasts developed by the El Paso MPO. The results of this exercise determined that the corridor roadway segment would experience 71,000 Average Daily Traffic (ADT) by 2035. Results from TPP’s corridor level and intersection traffic analysis were utilized as input to a micro-simulation traffic analysis. Based on this input to the micro-simulation software tool, the results of the micro-simulation are provided for the Four Lane At-grade Alternative (Alternative 3 – Construct Two New Lanes) the following Alternative Analysis was developed.</p> <p><b>Four Lane At-grade Alternative (Alternative 3):</b></p> <p>The analysis considered a roadway design that added two additional lanes to the existing facility (referenced as Alternative 3 in the February 2011 EA and at the Public Hearing March 22, 2011). This alternative would help reduce traffic conflicts with future driveways between intersecting streets by limiting main lane cross traffic to four locations. Alternative 3 would allow right-in and right-out movements on highway main lanes at future driveway locations. All intersections along the Loop 375 corridor would remain at-grade and would require traffic signals as traffic volumes warranted them.</p> <p>As shown in <b>Table 1 (See FMC 8)</b>, the average speed along the corridor is 16 mph, which is similar to that of Alternative 2 and slightly higher than that of Alternative 1. Total Corridor Intersection Delay is reduced to 579, which represents a reduction of 51%, but Total Corridor Average Queue Length shows an increase to 11,337 ft. Compared to the No-Build Alternative, Alternative 3 improves mobility along the corridor.</p> <p>In terms of safety, Alternative 3 shows the same number of conflict points along the corridor (140) as the No Build alternative. Also, there is no improvement in the number of vehicles that are exposed to any conflict point. Alternative 3 contains similar potential safety issues as were identified under Alternative 2 since it would also generate long queues at every intersection, including the Park Entrance Road and Paseo del Norte Road. This queue length creates a similar potential crash condition when vehicles traveling downhill at high speeds</p>

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

No.	Comment Type and Appropriate Response
	<p>reach vehicles in queue stopped on the mainlanes of travel.</p> <p>Although Alternative 3 shows some improvements to mobility, it does not improve the safety elements that are required by the project's need and purpose. For this reason, it was eliminated from further study.</p> <p><b>Boulevard Alternative (Alternative 4):</b></p> <p>The alternatives analysis conducted for the proposed improvements considered a boulevard design that was developed using common features described in the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) guidance entitled Context Sensitive Solutions in Designing Major Urban Thoroughfares for Walkable Communities (ITE 2006), as well as the El Paso Smart Code (City of El Paso 2008). The alternative would consist of a central roadway conveying through-traffic movement with raised landscaped medians separating two directions of travel. Additionally there would be medians separating the central roadway from access lanes. Access lanes would consist of narrow, one-lane, low-speed one-way streets including on-street parking and possibly a shared vehicle/bicycle lane. All intersections along the Loop 375 corridor would remain at-grade and would require traffic signals as traffic volumes warranted them.</p> <p>The boulevard concept separates higher speed traffic on the main lanes from slower traffic on one-way access lanes. Access lanes would allow for safe right turns in and out of adjacent properties. They would present challenges at intersections by creating a larger number of vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-pedestrian conflict points than other alternatives. As shown in <b>Table 1 (See FMC 8)</b>, the average speed is 18 mph. Total Corridor Intersection Delay is reduced to 762 seconds per vehicle. Total Corridor Average Queue Length increased to 11,043 ft.</p> <p>In terms of safety, Alternative 4 presents a deteriorating condition, since the number of conflict points along the corridor is almost doubled (from 140 to 266) from the No-Build Alternative. In addition, there is no improvement in the number of vehicles that are exposed to any conflict point.</p> <p>Similar to Alternatives 2 and 3, the maximum queue exhibited along the corridor and, more importantly, at the Park Entrance Road and the proposed Paseo del Norte Road intersections, would represent a potential safety concern to vehicles traveling downhill in a westbound direction as they reach a queue of idle vehicles on the mainlanes.</p> <p>Alternative 4 deteriorates the safety conditions along the corridor and it does not improve the safety elements that are required to best meet the project's need and purpose. For this reason, it was eliminated from further study.</p> <p><b>Four-lane Freeway Facility with Frontage Roads and Direct Connectors to I-10 (Alternative 5)</b></p> <p>Alternative 5 separates local traffic from through traffic along the corridor similar to Alternative 4 by providing main lanes as well as one-way frontage roads. The principal difference between the Alternative 5 and the other alternatives is that Alternative 5 provides grade separations for main lane traffic at intersections, and two direct connector ramps to I-10 that would allow through traffic on Loop 375 to avoid cross traffic conflicts with vehicle and pedestrian, along with avoiding traffic signals at the intersections. <b>Table 1 (See FMC 8)</b> indicates</p>

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

No.	Comment Type and Appropriate Response
	<p>an average speed along the corridor of 34 mph, which is almost three times the speed of Alternative 1, and the highest average speed of all Build alternatives. Total Corridor Intersection Delay shows 325 seconds per vehicle, while Total Corridor Average Queue Length has a value of 2973 ft. These represent improvements of 72% and 71% respectively. These values are also the lowest of all the Build Alternatives.</p> <p>In terms of safety, Alternative 5 presents a double improvement to safety conditions. The number of conflict points along the corridor is reduced by 23% (from 140 to 108) from the No-Build Alternative. In addition, the proportion of vehicles that are exposed to a conflict point along the corridor is reduced from 100% in all other alternatives, including the No-Build, to 52% for this alternative. The calculations leading to this proportion are presented in <b>Table 3</b> in <b>FMC 8</b>. This means that 48% of the traffic along the corridor would not be exposed to a single conflict point, which substantially reduces the opportunity for a collision. The improvement is due to the geometric characteristics of Alternative 5 where there is grade separation of the main lanes of Loop 375 and the cross streets. Although the frontage roads and the cross streets continue to operate at-grade, there are fewer vehicles exposed to the conflicts.</p> <p>Due to improved performance of the freeway in addressing mobility and safety needs when compared to the no build alternative, Alternative 5 is considered to best meet the need and purpose of the project by improving mobility and traffic safety. Therefore, it is identified as the preferred build alternative and has been carried forward for further detailed evaluation in the remaining sections of the document.</p> <p>On March 29, 2011, the El Paso City Council approved a resolution, voting seven to one, in favor of the proposed configuration of the preferred alternative, which included an overpass at Plexxar Road and an interchange at Paseo Del Norte Road. The proposed alternative would also be consistent with the City of El Paso's Northwest Master Plan.</p> <p>As of August 2011, updated analyses and methodology of determining Measures of Effectiveness (MOEs) of all of the alternatives were conducted using traffic volumes derived from TransBorder 2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan. These alternatives analyses reached the conclusion the preferred alternative, Alternative 5; best meets the need and purpose of the project.</p> <p>See FMC 8 for Alternatives Considered in the development of the February 2011 EA.</p> <p>See FMC 11 for response to comments that TxDOT used outdated traffic volumes for its analyses.</p>
3	<p><b>Issues with Plexxar / Paseo Del Norte Overpass</b></p> <p><b>or</b></p> <p><b>Suggestion to Combine Plexxar / Paseo del Norte Overpasses</b></p> <p>The proposed project, including the overpasses at Paseo del Norte and Plexxar, was designed to be compatible with approved land use and the City of El Paso approved Northwest Master Plan.</p>

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

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	<p>The overpass at future Paseo del Norte Road was planned to accommodate a full diamond interchange, while the overpass at future Plexxar Road was planned to provide Loop 375 operational improvements along the frontage roads, allow Plexxar to cross Loop 375 and allow turn around points for potential weather related closures of Loop 375. The proposal to combine the alignments would not be consistent with land use or the City of El Paso Northwest Master Plan where both roadways are proposed.</p> <p>Plexxar vehicle traffic is anticipated to consist of a large percentage of cross street traffic volumes to be commercial vehicles entering and exiting the industrial and commercial zoned area adjoining future Plexxar Road. The future Paseo del Norte Road vehicle traffic is anticipated to consist of a large percentage of cross street traffic to be passenger vehicle traffic accessing residential zoned areas along future Paseo del Norte Road. Realignment of the future Paseo del Norte Road so that it coincides with the location of the overpass for the proposed Plexxar Road would result in an undesirable mix of commercial and passenger vehicle traffic. The proposal to combine the alignments would not be consistent with land use or the City of El Paso Northwest Master Plan where both roadways are proposed.</p> <p>Based on Plexxar's roadway configuration related to the corridor and proximity to the Resler interchange, ramps to and from the mainlanes are not be able to be accommodated based on acceptable and established geometric standards for freeways.</p> <p>On March 29, 2011, the El Paso City Council approved a resolution, voting seven to one, in favor of the proposed configuration of the preferred alternative, which included an overpass at Plexxar Road and diamond interchange at Paseo Del Norte. The proposed alternative would also be consistent with the City of El Paso's Northwest Master Plan.</p>
4	<p><b>Safety at Tom Mays Park Access Road Entrance</b></p> <p>The Tom Mays Park Access Road entrance has been redesigned by TxDOT in response to coordination with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), and public comment. Additionally, a new project has been programmed for preliminary engineering and construction in the near future to address additional safety improvements along the corridor.</p> <p>Consistent with the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and TPWD coordination has occurred over a period of several years. The proximity of the Tom Mays Unit of the Franklin Mountains State Park (Franklin Mountains State Park) to the proposed project has been a factor for continued coordination. The following list of communications and meetings have taken place over the last several years regarding different versions of proposed improvements to Loop 375 from I-10 to approximately 0.479 mile east of the Franklin Mountains State Park Entrance (CSJ 2552-01-033).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TPWD Letter to TxDOT – April 1, 2011 (various issues). This letter included the following attachments: TPWD/TxDOT Meeting Minutes– March 3, 2011 (various issues) and TPWD comments on plant specification sheet and plans dated March 7, 2011.</li> <li>• TxDOT Letter to TPWD – January 19, 2011 (response to December 29, 2010 TPWD letter)</li> </ul>

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

No.	Comment Type and Appropriate Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TPWD Letter to TxDOT – December 29, 2010 (comments on the November 2010 EA). This letter also included two attachments: TPWD comments on plant specification sheet and plans dated September 5, 2010, and TPWD comments on wildlife-related transportation issues dated March 23, 2006 (although TxDOT believes the date is a typo and should be 2010).</li> <li>• TxDOT Letter of Transmittal to TPWD – November 12, 2010 (request for review of Re-evaluation)</li> <li>• TPWD/TxDOT Meetings – September 2010 (various issues)</li> <li>• TPWD Letter to TxDOT – March 23, 2010 (various issues)</li> <li>• TPWD Letter to TxDOT – September 15, 2009 (comments on Re-evaluation)</li> <li>• TxDOT Letter of Transmittal to TPWD – July 2, 2009 (request for review of Re-evaluation)</li> <li>• TPWD/TxDOT Meeting – March 2009 (wildlife crossings)</li> <li>• TPWD Letter to TxDOT – March 21, 2006 (clarification regarding proposed land swap)</li> <li>• TPWD Superintendent/TxDOT meetings – 2005-2006 (entrance to the park)</li> <li>• TPWD Letter to TxDOT – December 20, 2005 (comments on park entrance design alternatives)</li> <li>• TPWD Letter to TxDOT – October 21, 2005 (comments on Re-evaluation)</li> <li>• TPWD Letter to TxDOT – August 29, 2005 (comments on Re-evaluation)</li> <li>• TPWD Letter to TxDOT – July 7, 2005 (documentation of agreement regarding a proposed land swap and potential 4(f))</li> <li>• TxDOT Letter to TPWD – June 30, 2005 (request for review of the Re-evaluation)</li> <li>• TPWD Letter to TxDOT – August 5, 2004 (response to species data request from TxDOT)</li> <li>• PSB Letter to TPWD – August 3, 2004 (PSB concurrence to proceed with project and required ROW)</li> <li>• TxDOT Letter to TPWD – March 6, 2003 (Notice Affording Opportunity for Public Hearing)</li> <li>• TPWD Letter to TxDOT – May 6, 2002 (response to EA review request from TxDOT)</li> <li>• TPWD Letter to TxDOT – April 17, 2002 (comments on EA)</li> <li>• TxDOT Letter of Transmittal to TPWD – March 18, 2002 (sent EA to TPWD for review)</li> </ul> <p>As a result of interagency review of the February 2011 EA, a meeting was arranged on March 3, 2011 between TxDOT and representatives from TPWD, followed by a letter from TPWD to TxDOT dated April 1, 2011.</p> <p>TxDOT agreed with TPWD that the alignment of the temporary entrance that had been planned for interim use during construction would be made into the permanent entrance. TxDOT has adjusted the proposed design of the entrance from what was originally proposed in the February 2011 EA. The redesigned entrance would be moved as far to the east as possible, while staying within TxDOT right-of-way and would allow vehicles to enter and exit the park closer to a right angle. Among other benefits, right angle entrance and exit will ease entrance and exit movements; accommodate larger vehicles better; address driver expectation for usual geometry at an intersection; and improve the ability for drivers exiting the driveway to safely look both directions. Advisory signs with flashers will be installed in advance of the intersection to advise drivers on Loop 375 of the potential for cross traffic at the new park entrance.</p> <p>The proposed driveway has been further redesigned to allow right and left turn movements into the park from the Loop 375 but would only allow right turn movements to westbound Loop 375 leaving the park. Left turn movements leaving the park to access the eastbound lanes of Loop 375 would no longer be allowed.</p>

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

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	<p>Pedestrian/bicycle traffic would continue to be allowed access to cross the highway on the east side of the driveway, or use the preferred access along the proposed hike-and-bike trail inside the northerly right of way line of Loop 375 from the proposed Paseo Del Norte Drive to the driveway to the Tom Mays Unit. The resulting driveway design reduces the number of vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-pedestrian conflict points by reducing the number of conflicting movements entering and exiting the park to and from Loop 375. Traffic that exits the park will use the westbound lanes of Loop 375. Traffic that desire to travel eastbound would turn around to the east bound lanes of Loop 375 at the underpass for the future Paseo Del Norte Drive. The redesigned driveway does not affect access or use of Franklin Mountains State Park while improving traffic safety. For pedestrian and bicycle visitors, use of the preferred access along the proposed hike-and-bike trail inside the northerly right of way line would reduce the number of pedestrian and bicycles users who presently cross the highway at grade. Additionally, limiting pedestrian and bicycle users to cross the highway east of the driveway intersection also improves safety by reducing the number of vehicle-to-pedestrian conflict points to which pedestrian and vehicles are exposed. The redesign provides demonstrable improvements to traffic safety at the driveway to Tom Mays Unit for vehicles and pedestrian/bicyclist.</p> <p>TxDOT recognizes that additional improvements are appropriate due to projected future increases in traffic volumes along Loop 375. Where the redesigned driveway access would create improved safety, projected traffic volumes indicate decreased number and duration of gaps in cross traffic for safely entering or leaving the park in the future. Additional improvements to the park entrance beyond what are included in the proposed project would result in more design elements that potentially require acquisition of right of way from the park for the additional improvements.</p> <p>A separate TxDOT project has been programmed to perform environmental analysis, design, and construction of a new park entrance to the Franklin Mountains State Park. Funding for the proposed project comes from the same source as the current proposed project. TxDOT anticipates that project development for the additional work on the entrance to the Franklin Mountains State Park would take approximately two years. A bid date is anticipated for FY 2013. Separate environmental documentation, right-of-way determinations, and project design would be prepared for the newly programmed project. TxDOT will work closely with TPWD throughout this process. The scope of work to be evaluated under the new project for the state park entrance would consider various alternatives including access off of the underpass for future Paseo Del Norte Drive, or a grade separated access below the existing profile grade of Loop 375 in the vicinity of the driveway design for the currently proposed project. Vehicle traffic, pedestrians, bicycles, and wildlife crossing of Loop 375 will be considered in the separate TxDOT project that has been programmed. The new project will also be considered for use as access to the scenic overlook locations near the summit of Loop 375 so that existing highway crossovers may be eliminated after the project is constructed.</p> <p>This new project will consider the feasibility of the alternatives that can further enhance the park entrance, including a "spur road".</p>

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

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5	<p><b>Open Space Concern / Development of Land Managed by El Paso Water Utilities Public Service Board (PSB) for the City of El Paso</b></p> <p>The proposed project has been designed to minimize the acquisition of additional right-of-way, minimize direct impacts to undisturbed vegetation, and to accommodate local land use plans. The indirect and cumulative impacts analysis conducted in the EA addressed reasonably foreseeable development in the project area and potential impacts to land use, vegetation, threatened and endangered species, and water resources. The designation of open space and land use in northwestern El Paso is an issue outside of the scope of the proposed project and is ultimately the decision of the El Paso City Council. TxDOT does not have statutory authority to regulate land use. On March 9, 2011, the City Council voted against an initiative that would have created approximately 900 acres of natural open space adjoining the existing right-of-way of the proposed project. Their vote continued the proposal to develop the 900 acres as Smart Code land use. El Paso City Council also voted in favor of the proposed project as designed, including the proposed roadway referred to as Plexxar and the interchange at the proposed location for Paseo Del Norte.</p>
6	<p><b>Use of Natural Vegetation / Landscaping</b></p> <p>The EA evaluated direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to both vegetation and wildlife through standardized methods for state and federally-funded transportation projects. As per the standards of practice, qualified biologists knowledgeable in regional flora and fauna conducted the following assessments for the proposed project, which meet federal and state requirements (including but not limited to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)/Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between TxDOT and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) (43 TAC, Section 2.22), the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321-4347), the Endangered Species Act, as amended (7 U.S.C. 136; 16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.), and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S. C. 703-712, as amended).</p> <p>A habitat assessment was conducted for protected species including species listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as threatened or endangered or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered; species that are candidates for review or listing by USFWS as threatened or endangered; species listed as threatened or endangered species by the TPWD; species protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Habitat assessments are typically conducted using a two-step approach. Step 1 includes a detailed review of remote sensing data, including a review of the TPWD's Natural Diversity Database (NDD) and USFWS's Threatened and Endangered Species Lists. A review of black and white and color infrared aerial photography, National Resources Conservation Service soils maps, U.S. Geographic Service topographic maps, USFWS National Wetland Inventory maps was conducted to determine the portions of the project area that have the potential to be considered habitat. Step 2 is based on field investigations to ground verify the results of Step 1 and modify the potential habitat maps as appropriate. If potential habitat for federally protected species is identified, avoidance and minimization measures are recommended. If the potential habitat cannot be avoided, presence/absence surveys may be required. As detailed on page 63 of the February 2011 EA, the NDD reports a population of Sneed's pincushion cactus within 10 miles of the project area. Sneed's pincushion cactus is found on limestone outcrops, and no limestone outcrops or Sneed's pincushion cactus were identified in the project area during field work.</p>

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

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	<p>If potential habitat for unregulated species (i.e., state-listed species, federal species of concern, etc.) is identified, a qualitative assessment by a qualified biologist of the type and magnitude of the potential impacts is included in the National Environmental Policy Act document. Unregulated species are not specifically protected from incidental take associated with an otherwise lawful activity. Potential habitat was identified within the project limits for the state-listed Texas horned lizard and the Chihuahuan desert lyre snake. However, as noted above, unregulated species are not protected from incidental take. Therefore, presence/absence surveys were not required or conducted.</p> <p>Potential direct impacts to habitat for these species were minimized by reducing the amount of new right-of-way utilized for the proposed project. During construction activities, the clearing of vegetation will be limited to those areas needed for construction and disturbed areas will be reseeded with native vegetation where other landscaping methods are not dictated by City of El Paso guidelines.</p> <p>TxDOT has committed to the use of native plants that are commercially available and meet the necessary specifications. TxDOT will further coordinate with TPWD staff members to identify which species may be included in the proposed project plans and specifications, and which are also identified to be commercially available. Those commercially available native plants will be given preference for planting along the northerly hike-and-bike trail from the future Paseo Del Norte Drive to the driveway entrance of the Tom Mays Unit. For the areas west of the future Paseo Del Norte Drive the plant list was selected by the City of El Paso in accordance with availability of native plants in the region and based on design review comments received from the City. The City of El Paso has requested that TxDOT provide a landscape design that will mature to provide a tree canopy along the hike-and-bike trails between I 10 and the future Paseo Del Norte Drive. TxDOT commits not to use invasive plant species for the proposed project, in response to TPWD comments.</p> <p>TxDOT has specified that if any of the listed species are observed during construction, the contractor's employees will be notified to cease work in the immediate area and not to disturb the species or habitat. The employee will then immediately contact the project engineer. Contractors will not remove active nests from bridges and other structures during nesting season.</p>
7	<p><b>Addition of Direct Connectors to I-10 North of Loop 375</b></p> <p>The preferred alternative identified in the EA proposes to construct two direct connectors: westbound I-10 to eastbound Loop 375, and westbound Loop 375 to eastbound I-10. These connectors would allow vehicles to make these movements between the main lanes of I-10 and Loop 375 without having to negotiate the signalized intersection. At this time, there are no plans for the implementation of other direct connector ramps at this interchange. The right-of-way identified only pertains to the current proposed project. Additional right-of-way would need to be identified for the additional direct connectors to I-10 Westbound. The proposed project does not preclude the future of additional direct connectors to the west.</p> <p>Based on the current project's need and purpose, the west direct connectors were not a factor in the findings of the project's results.</p>

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

No.	Comment Type and Appropriate Response
8	<p><b>Alternatives Considered</b></p> <p>Some comments were received expressing concerns that a full range of alternatives had not been evaluated during analysis and development of the proposed project. An evaluation of a range of different alternatives was performed before the Public Hearing as a part of the environmental documentation before SFP. The procedure and a description of the alternatives that were evaluated are presented below.</p> <p>The February 2011 Environmental Assessment (EA) documented the alternatives analysis that was conducted to evaluate five different alternative designs for the proposed project on Loop 375. The analysis was performed pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) that requires all reasonable alternatives be discussed at a comparable level of detail using state-of-the-practice engineering principles. One of the main objectives of the alternatives analysis is to evaluate how closely each alternative meets the stated need and purpose for the proposed project.</p> <p>In order to evaluate proposed transportation solutions intended to address the need to improve this corridor, a state of the practice procedure was utilized. This process utilizes several quantifiable parameters, which are referred to as Measures of Effectiveness (MOE), that provide information on how well each proposed solution performs under future traffic conditions and how each addresses the stated local and regional mobility and safety needs of the project. The MOEs used to measure congestion are average corridor travel time, average corridor speed, total corridor intersection delay, and total corridor average maximum queue length. To evaluate safety, two parameters were used: corridor total number of vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-pedestrian conflict points at all intersections, and the percent of vehicles that are exposed to at least one conflict point.</p> <p>The five alternatives that were evaluated were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No-Build</li> <li>2. Construct Climbing Lane</li> <li>3. Construct Two New Lanes</li> <li>4. Boulevard Concept</li> <li>5. Four-lane freeway facility with Frontage Roads and Direct Connectors to I-10</li> </ol> <p>The traffic analyses discussed in the February 2011 EA were based on the TransBorder 2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (“MTP”) prepared by the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization (“MPO”) and the TransBorder 2035 Travel Demand Model (TDM). The EA was determined by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to be Satisfactory for Further Processing (SFP) on February 11, 2011. Traffic and other data utilized in the preparation of the EA were based on the El Paso MPO Transborder 2035 MTP, which was the current conforming plan at the time that the EA was prepared. The MPO subsequently adopted the Mission 2035 MTP on August 6, 2010. In the development of the Corridor (i.e. project specific) Level traffic data using TransBorder 2035 TDM, the Transportation Planning and Programming Division (TPP) of TxDOT,</p>

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

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	<p>professional transportation modeling experts, performed corridor level and intersection traffic analysis for the horizon year 2035 based on TransBorder 2035 TDM traffic forecasts developed by the El Paso MPO. The results of this exercise determined that the corridor roadway segment would experience 71,000 Average Daily Traffic (ADT) by 2035. Results from TPP’s corridor level and intersection traffic analysis were utilized as input to a micro-simulation traffic analysis. A microscopic traffic simulation model, using the VISSIM simulation software, was developed for the Loop 375 corridor. Each alternative was modeled with the VISSIM traffic simulation software. The micro-simulation software tool results provided the output of the Measures of Effectiveness (MOEs) that are considered below under the Alternative Analysis. Note - An alternatives analysis using traffic volume data based on the Mission 2035 MTP is provided in the response to FMC 11- Concerns that TxDOT Used “Outdated” Traffic Data.</p> <p><b>Alternative Analysis</b></p> <p><b>Table 1</b> summarizes the results of the updated micro-simulation analysis for the No Build and four preliminary build alternatives. In general terms, the data for the No Build alternatives serve as a benchmark to evaluate and compare the performance of the four preliminary build alternatives in the year 2035. The MOEs quantify and evaluate how each alternative provides for mobility and safety improvements along the corridor.</p> <p><b>Alternative 1 (No Build)</b></p> <p>Alternative 1 was used in the alternative analyses as the baseline condition for comparison to determine whether a proposed alternative improves mobility by reducing travel times, increasing average speed, or reducing system intersection delay and queue length. While improving safety, by reducing the total number of conflict points as well as reducing the number of potential collision opportunities along the corridor. A conflict point is created when two traffic movements in an intersection cross each other, thus creating an opportunity for a collision.</p> <p>The data presented in <b>Table 1</b> indicate that the No Build scenario in 2035 Loop 375 would experience highly congested conditions along the corridor and at the intersections, as evidenced by the average travel speed of 13 miles per hour along the corridor. Table 1 also shows that the Total Corridor Intersection Delay, which represents the sum of the average delay at all intersections in the corridor, is 1,178 seconds per vehicle. Similarly, Table 1 presents that Total Average Queue Length, which reflects the sum of the highest average queue length at each intersection, is 10,353 ft.</p> <p>In terms of safety, the No Build alternative presents existing safety concerns that were described earlier. According to the micro-simulation results, traffic queues at the intersections in 2035 would be more than a quarter of a mile long, including the easternmost intersection at the entrance to the Tom Mays State Park (Park Entrance Road). This would create an undesirable condition when vehicles are traveling at high speeds down a five to seven percent grade and reach the queue of idle vehicles on the main travel lanes waiting to go through the intersections.</p> <p>In terms of safety, the No Build alternative shows a total of 140 conflict points along the corridor. This number represents the sum of all vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-pedestrian conflict points at all intersections along the corridor. In addition, under this alternative, all of the vehicles (i.e., 100%) travelling along Loop 375 would be exposed to at least one of the conflict points at any intersection. This information is presented in Table 2.4</p>

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

No.	Comment Type and Appropriate Response
	<p>for this and all alternatives.</p> <p><b>Alternative 2 (Construct Climbing Lane)</b></p> <p>This alternative addresses growing concerns regarding decreased passing opportunities for traffic traveling up the mountain grade as traffic volumes increase into the future. It is a relatively low-cost alternative because it could be built inside existing ROW while also minimizing construction material and labor requirements. Alternative 2 demonstrates modest improvement to average speed to 16 mph when compared to the No Build Alternative's 13 mph, as shown in <b>Table 1</b>. Total Corridor Intersection Delay is reduced to 792 seconds per vehicle (33% improvement compared to No-Build) while Total Corridor Average Queue Length increases slightly to 10,474 ft., which represents a 1% deterioration compared to No-Build. Compared to the No-Build Alternative, Alternative 2 improves mobility along the corridor.</p> <p>In terms of safety, Alternative 2 has the same number of conflict points along the corridor (140) as the No Build alternative. Also, there is no improvement in the number of vehicles that are exposed to any conflict point. This alternative shows that there would be substantial queuing at every intersection, including the intersection of Loop 375 and the Park Entrance Road. The undesirable conditions described in the No Build alternative would also exist under this alternative.</p> <p>Although Alternative 2 shows modest improvements to mobility, it does not improve the safety elements that are required by the project's need and purpose. For this reason, it was eliminated from further study.</p> <p><b>Alternative 3 (Construct Two New Lanes)</b></p> <p>This design alternative would widen the existing two-lane roadway to three lanes in order to provide two lanes traveling east toward the mountain and one lane west down the mountain. The intersections with Northwestern Drive, Resler Drive, Plexxar Road, and Paseo Del Norte Road would remain at-grade and would include traffic signals when traffic warrants are met. This alternative would help reduce traffic conflicts with future driveways between intersecting streets by limiting main lane cross traffic to four locations. Alternative 3 would allow right-in and right-out movements on highway main lanes at future driveway locations.</p> <p>As shown in <b>Table 1</b>, the average speed along the corridor is 16 mph, which is similar to that of Alternative 2 and slightly higher than that of Alternative 1. Total Corridor Intersection Delay is reduced to 579, which represents a reduction of 51%, but Total Corridor Average Queue Length shows an increase to 11,337 ft. Compared to the No-Build Alternative, Alternative 3 improves mobility along the corridor.</p> <p>In terms of safety, Alternative 3 shows the same number of conflict points along the corridor (140) as the No Build alternative. Also, there is no improvement in the number of vehicles that are exposed to any conflict point. Alternative 3 contains similar potential safety issues as were identified under Alternative 2 since it would also generate long queues at every intersection, including the Park Entrance Road and Paseo del Norte Road. This queue length creates a similar potential crash condition when vehicles traveling downhill at high speeds reach vehicles in queue stopped on the mainlanes of travel.</p>

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

**Table 1. Summary of Alternatives Analysis Data (2035)**

Alternative	Description	MOBILITY					SAFETY			Meets Need and Purpose	Carried Forward
		Average Corridor Travel Time (min)	Average Corridor Speed (MPH)	Total Corridor Intersection Delay (sec/veh) <sup>1</sup>	Total Corridor Average Queue length (ft) <sup>1</sup>	Improves Mobility	Corridor Total Conflict Points <sup>2</sup>	Percent Vehicles Exposed to at Least One Conflict Point <sup>3</sup>	Improves Safety		
1	No Build	30.2	13	1178	10353	No	140	100%	No	No	Yes
2	Construct Climbing Lane	23.5	16	792	10474	Yes	140	100%	No	No	No
3	Construct Two New Lanes	19.4	16	579	11337	Yes	140	100%	No	No	No
4	Boulevard Concept	19.0	18	762	11043	Yes	266	100%	No	No	No
5	Freeway	7.5	34	325	2973	Yes	108	52%	Yes	Yes	Yes

<sup>1</sup>: The values presented for total corridor intersection delay and average queue length were calculated considering seven intersections (west to east): South Desert Blvd (I-10 frontage rd), North Desert Blvd (I-10 frontage rd), Northwestern Dr., Resler Dr., Plexsar Dr., Paseo del Norte Dr., and FMSP entrance.

<sup>2</sup>: The values correspond to the total number (i.e., the sum) of vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-pedestrian conflict points the intersections along the corridor, excluding South Desert Blvd. and North Desert Blvd. Refer to "Loop 375 (Transmountain Road) Corridor Alternative Simulation Study," August 9, 2011 by Jacobs Engineering Group, Inc., Appendix D, for Vehicular and Pedestrian Conflict Points, for locations, and for numbers of conflict points at each intersection.

<sup>3</sup>: In Alternative 1 through 4, all vehicular movements in an intersection result in at least one vehicle-to-vehicle or vehicle-to-pedestrian conflict. Alternative 5 provides grade separated intersections between the main lanes of Loop 375 and the four cross streets along the corridor. Approximately 48% of the traffic in the system is travelling along the main lanes and is excluded from encountering any conflict point. Refer to Tables 2 and 3 for individual intersection analysis.

## TABLE 3-1 RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS

No.	Comment Type and Appropriate Response
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**Table 2. Analysis of Conflict Points along the Loop 375 Corridor**

	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4	Alternative 5
<b>Northwestern</b>					
Not Exposed <sup>1</sup>	0%	0%	0%	0%	59%
Exposed <sup>1</sup>	100%	100%	100%	100%	41%
Total Conflict Points	32	32	32	49	24
<b>Resler</b>					
Not Exposed <sup>1</sup>	0%	0%	0%	0%	41%
Exposed <sup>1</sup>	100%	100%	100%	100%	59%
Total Conflict Points	32	32	32	78	24
<b>Plexxar</b>					
Not Exposed <sup>1</sup>	0%	0%	0%	0%	71%
Exposed <sup>1</sup>	100%	100%	100%	100%	29%
Total Conflict Points	32	32	32	78	24
<b>Paseo del Norte</b>					
Not Exposed <sup>1</sup>	0%	0%	0%	0%	59%
Exposed <sup>1</sup>	100%	100%	100%	100%	41%
Total Conflict Points	32	32	32	49	24
<b>FMSP entrance</b>					
Not Exposed <sup>1</sup>	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Exposed <sup>1</sup>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total Conflict Points	12	12	12	12	12
<b>Total Corridor</b>					
Not Exposed <sup>1</sup>	0%	0%	0%	0%	48%
Exposed <sup>1</sup>	100%	100%	100%	100%	52%
Total Conflict Points	140	140	140	266	108

<sup>1</sup>: Percentage represents proportion of ADT approaching individual intersections.

NOTE: Calculation of percentages for Alternative 5 is presented in Table 3.

Although Alternative 3 shows some improvements to mobility, it does not improve the safety elements that are required by the project's need and purpose. For this reason, it was eliminated from further study.

### **Alternative 4 (Boulevard Concept)**

The boulevard concept separates higher speed traffic on the main lanes from slower traffic on one-way access lanes. Access lanes would allow for safe right turns in and out of adjacent properties. They would present challenges at intersections by creating a larger number of vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-pedestrian conflict

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

No.	Comment Type and Appropriate Response
	<p>points than the other alternatives. As shown in <b>Table 1</b>, the average speed is 18 mph. Total Corridor Intersection Delay is reduced to 762 seconds per vehicle. Total Corridor Average Queue Length increased to 11,043 ft.</p> <p>In terms of safety, Alternative 4 presents a deteriorating condition, since the number of conflict points along the corridor is almost doubled (from 140 to 266) from the No-Build Alternative. In addition, there is no improvement in the number of vehicles that are exposed to any conflict point.</p> <p>Similar to Alternatives 2 and 3, the maximum queue exhibited along the corridor and, more importantly, at the Park Entrance Road and the proposed Paseo del Norte Road intersections, would represent a potential safety concern to vehicles traveling downhill in a westbound direction as they reach a queue of idle vehicles on the mainlanes.</p> <p>Alternative 4 provides modest improvements to mobility compared to Alternative 1. However, Alternative 4 deteriorates the safety conditions along the corridor, which is not consistent with the project’s need and purpose. For this reason, it was eliminated from further study.</p> <p><b>Alternative 5 (Four-lane Freeway Facility with Frontage Roads and Direct Connectors to I-10)</b></p> <p>Alternative 5 separates local traffic from through traffic along the corridor similar to Alternative 4 by providing main lanes as well as one-way frontage roads. The principal difference between the Alternative 5 and the other alternatives is that Alternative 5 provides grade separations for main lane traffic at intersections, and two direct connector ramps to I-10 that would allow through traffic on Loop 375 to avoid cross traffic conflicts with vehicle and pedestrian, along with avoiding traffic signals at the intersections. <b>Table 1</b> indicates an average speed along the corridor of 34 mph, which is almost three times the speed of Alternative 1, and the highest average speed of all Build alternatives. Total Corridor Intersection Delay shows 325 seconds per vehicle, while Total Corridor Average Queue Length has a value of 2973 ft. These represent improvements of 72% and 71% respectively. These values are also the lowest of all the Build Alternatives.</p> <p>In terms of safety, Alternative 5 provides the most substantial improvements to the interaction of vehicles and pedestrians along the corridor. The number of conflict points along the corridor is reduced by 23% (from 140 to 108) from the No-Build Alternative. In addition, the proportion of vehicles that are exposed to a conflict point along the corridor is reduced from 100% in all other alternatives, including the No-Build, to 52% for this alternative. The calculations leading to this proportion are presented in <b>Table 3</b>. This means that 48% of the traffic along the corridor would not be exposed to a single conflict point, which substantially reduces the opportunity for a collision. The improvement is due to the geometric characteristics of Alternative 5 where there is grade separation between the main lanes of Loop 375 and the cross streets. Although the frontage roads and the cross streets continue to operate at-grade, there are fewer vehicles exposed to the conflicts.</p> <p>Due to improved performance of the freeway in addressing mobility and safety needs when compared to the no build alternative, Alternative 5 is considered to best meet the need and purpose of the project by improving mobility and traffic safety. Therefore, it is identified as the preferred build alternative and has been carried forward for further detailed evaluation in the remaining sections of the document. This FMC response (FMC 8) addresses TransBorder traffic data. For comments regarding the use of “outdated” traffic data for the alternatives analysis, please reference FMC11 – Concerns that TxDOT used “Outdated” Traffic Data.</p>

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

No.	Comment Type and Appropriate Response
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**Table 3. Analysis of Conflict Points Alternative 5**

Northwestern							
	EB (ADT)	WB (ADT)	SB (ADT)	NB (ADT)	Total (ADT)	%	Conflict Points
Mainlanes	22,900	34,500			57,400	59%	0
Frontage Rd and Cross Street	9,200	6,400	12,700	12,100	40,400	41%	24
					<b>97,800</b>		
Resler							
	EB	WB	SB	NB	Total	%	Conflict Points
Mainlanes	21,400	20,000			41,400	41%	0
Frontage Rd and Cross Street	20,600	16,400	13,100	10,400	60,500	59%	24
					<b>101,900</b>		
Plexxar							
	EB (ADT)	WB (ADT)	SB (ADT)	NB (ADT)	Total (ADT)	%	Conflict Points
Mainlanes	31,800	33,000			64,800	71%	0
Frontage Rd and Cross Street	5,700	3,400	8,900	8,700	26,700	29%	24
					<b>91,500</b>		
Paseo del Norte							
	EB (ADT)	WB (ADT)	SB (ADT)	NB (ADT)	Total (ADT)	%	Conflict Points
Mainlanes	25,300	23,500			48,800	59%	0
Frontage Rd and Cross Street	12,200	10,300	2,800	9,300	34,600	41%	24
					<b>83,400</b>		
Franklin Mountains State Park Entrance							
	EB (ADT)	WB (ADT)	SB (ADT)	NB (ADT)	Total (ADT)	%	Conflict Points
All Loop 375 and Cross Street	35,200	33,800	900		69,900	100%	12
					<b>69,900</b>		
Total All Intersections							
					Total (ADT)	%	Conflict Points
Main lanes (Free of conflicts)					<b>212,400</b>	48%	0
Loop 375 Frontage Roads and main lanes (Not free of conflicts)					<b>232,100</b>	52%	108
					<b>444,500</b>		

NOTE: Values correspond to ADT approaching intersections.

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

No.	Comment Type and Appropriate Response
9	<p><b>Spacing Between Intersections</b></p> <p>According to page 807 of the 2004 American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' (AASHTO) guidance, A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets, "...a general rule of thumb for minimum interchange spacing is 1.5 km [1 mi] in urban areas, spacing of less than 1.5 km [1 mi] may be developed by grade separated ramps or by adding collector-distributor roads..." or as in this proposed project which includes frontage roads. Frontage Roads provide the same opportunities for traffic movement from adjacent development as collector-distributor roads. However, as the guidance states, this is a general rule of thumb and is not a design standard. On page xliii of the Forward, the guidance states that "the intent of this policy is to provide guidance to the designer by referencing a recommended range of values for critical dimensions. It is not intended to be a detailed design manual that could supersede the need for the application of sound principles by the knowledgeable design professionals."</p> <p>Further, according to page 743 of the AASHTO guidance, "An interchange is a system of interconnecting roadways in conjunction with one or more grade separations that provides for the movement of traffic between two or more roadways or highways on different levels. The selection of the appropriate type of grade separation and interchange, along with its design, is influenced by many factors, such as highway classification, character and composition of traffic, design speed, and degree of access control."</p> <p>For the proposed project, the following new interchanges have been proposed: Loop 375 / Resler Drive and Loop 375 / future Paseo Del Norte. These two interchanges are approximately 1 mile apart. The grade-separations (or "overpasses") at Northwestern and Future Plexxar Road do not qualify as interchanges based on the AASHTO description provided above. The Resler Drive and future Paseo Del Norte interchanges meet the approximate guidelines of the AASHTO guide document. The proposed project design complies and best meets the purpose and need. The proposed design complies with applicable design criteria for the project.</p>
10	<p><b>Plexxar Not Shown in Northwest Master Plan, Westside Master Plan, or MTP- What is Justification for Inclusion of Plexxar Overpass?</b></p> <p>A collector street in the same location as the future Plexxar Road which is not within the El Paso Water Utilities Public Service Board property boundaries was depicted in the El Paso Water Utilities Public Service Board (PSB) Westside Master Plan, approved by the City of El Paso in 2005. The PSB's Westside Master Plan addressed the proposed roadway connectivity beyond the PSB's property boundaries. TxDOT included the overpass to provide operational improvements along Loop 375 and along existing and future cross streets. The overpasses at Plexxar and Paseo Del Norte would also facilitate traffic circulation in the event that weather or traffic incidents require closure of Loop 375 east of future Plexxar Road allowing traffic to safely turn around at the intersection. Plexxar Road would also allow for safe and operational u-turns between Resler Drive and the future Paseo Del Norte Road, in addition to providing another opportunity for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross Loop 375. Throughout the proposed project corridor at every cross-street interchange there are dedicated u-turns. At the Plexxar underpass vehicles that want to make a u-turn will have to exit at Paseo del Norte or Northwestern to go through Plexxar.</p> <p>Additionally, El Paso City Council voted to include Plexxar Road in an update of their Major Thoroughfare</p>

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

No.	Comment Type and Appropriate Response
	<p>Plan. On March 29, 2011 the City Council approved a motion in favor of the addition of Plexxar to the Major Thoroughfare Plan and adopt the TxDOT plan for the West Transmountain Loop 375 Project.</p>
11	<p><b>Concern that TxDOT Used “Outdated” Traffic Data</b></p> <p>The traffic analyses discussed in the February 2011 Environmental Assessment (EA) were based on the TransBorder 2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (“MTP”) prepared by the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization (“MPO”) and the TransBorder 2035 Travel Demand Model (TDM). The EA was determined by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to be Satisfactory for Further Processing (SFP) on February 11, 2011. The El Paso MPO TransBorder 2035 MTP was the current conforming plan at the time that the EA was prepared. To obtain Corridor (i.e. project specific) Level traffic data to be used for engineering and environmental project development activities, the Transportation Planning and Programming Division (TPP) of TxDOT, professional transportation modeling experts, performed corridor level and intersection traffic analysis for the horizon year 2035 based on TransBorder 2035 TDM traffic forecasts developed by the El Paso MPO. The results of this exercise determined that the corridor roadway segment would experience 71,000 Average Daily Traffic (ADT) by 2035. Results from TPP’s corridor level and intersection traffic analysis were utilized as input to a micro-simulation traffic analysis of the same five alternatives that were analyzed in the February 2011 EA.</p> <p>The El Paso MPO adopted the Mission 2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (Mission 2035 MTP) in August 2010. This plan received a Conformity determination from FHWA in January 2011. Several comments received during the public comment period referred to the fact that, at the time of public comment period, the Mission 2035 MTP was the current conforming plan, not the TransBorder 2035 MTP. Several comments relayed concern that TxDOT had not used the latest available information.</p> <p>In order to address these comments, TxDOT developed a parallel set of traffic data and analysis of future conditions along the Loop 375 corridor based on the Mission 2035 MTP. In order to use the latest information possible, the MPO reviewed land use and demographic information related to the corridor and updated the data where appropriate. The revised data was incorporated to the Mission 2035 MTP (revised Mission 2035 MTP) and a new set of traffic forecasts was developed. The results of this exercise determined that the revised corridor roadway segment would experience 33,200 Average Daily Traffic (ADT) by 2035.</p> <p>A technical report was prepared by TxDOT to provide information related to the analysis of alternative design scenarios for proposed improvements to the Loop 375 corridor between I-10 and 0.479 east of the Franklin Mountain State Park entrance. The objective was to demonstrate that the transition between MPO plans would not affect the outcome of the process to determine a preferred preliminary design alternative for the desired improvements along the corridor. This activity was coordinated with El Paso MPO with guidance from Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Technical procedures to develop traffic data and analysis performed replicate procedures and assumptions utilized in the alternatives analysis included in the February 2011 EA.</p> <p>In the development of the Corridor (i.e. project specific) Level traffic data using the Revised Mission 2035 TDM, TPP of TxDOT, at the request of the El Paso District (ELoop), performed corridor level and intersection traffic analysis for the horizon year 2035 based on the revised Mission 2035 TDM traffic forecasts developed</p>

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

No.	Comment Type and Appropriate Response
	<p>by the El Paso MPO. Results from TPP’s corridor level and intersection traffic analysis were utilized as input to a micro-simulation traffic analysis of the same five alternatives that were analyzed in the <b>corrected</b> February 2011 EA, utilizing the same methodology and set of Measures of Effectiveness (MOE). Subsequently following the same traffic engineering procedures for the February 2011 EA and using Revised Mission 2035 TDM, development of a new micro-simulation analysis utilizing the VISSIM microscopic simulation software tool was completed.</p> <p><b>ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS</b></p> <p><b>Table 1</b> summarizes the results of the updated micro-simulation analysis for the No Build and four preliminary build alternatives. The five alternatives are the same that were originally discussed in the Alternatives Analysis section of the <b>corrected</b> February 2011 EA. In general terms, the data for the No Build alternatives serve as a benchmark to evaluate and compare the performance of the four preliminary build alternatives. The MOEs quantify and evaluate how each alternative provides for mobility and safety improvements along the corridor.</p> <p><b>Alternative 1 (No Build)</b></p> <p>As in the February 2011 EA, Alternative 1 was used as the baseline condition for comparison to determine whether a proposed alternative improves mobility by reducing travel times, increasing average speed, and reducing system intersection delay and queue length; and improving safety by reducing the total number of conflict points as well as reducing the number of potential collision opportunities along the corridor.</p> <p>The data presented in <b>Table 1</b> indicate that the No Build scenario in 2035 Loop 375 would experience highly congested conditions along the corridor and at the intersections, as evidenced by the average travel speed of 16 miles per hour along the corridor. <b>Table 1</b> also shows that the Total Corridor Intersection Delay, which represents the sum of the average delay at all intersections in the corridor (i.e., system delay), is 244 seconds per vehicle. Similarly, <b>Table 1</b> presents that Total Corridor Average Queue Length, which reflects the sum of the maximum queue length at each intersection, is 4,387 ft. The major contributors to this value are the Resler and Plexxar intersections with 1,076 ft and 1,013 ft. respectively.</p> <p>In terms of safety, the No Build alternative shows a total of 140 conflict points along the corridor. This number represents the sum of all vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-pedestrian conflict points at all intersections along the corridor. In addition, under this alternative, all of the vehicles (i.e., 100%) travelling along Loop 375 would be exposed to at least one of the conflict points at any intersection. This information is presented in <b>Table 2</b> for this and all alternatives.</p>

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

**Table 1. Summary of Alternatives Analysis Data (2035)**

Alternative	Description	MOBILITY					SAFETY				
		Average Corridor Travel Time (min)	Average Corridor Speed (MPH)	Total Corridor Intersection Delay (sec/veh) <small>(Note 1)</small>	Total Corridor Average Queue length (ft) <small>(Note1)</small>	Improves Mobility	Corridor Total Conflict Points <small>(Note 2)</small>	Percent Vehicles Exposed to at Least One Conflict Point <small>(Note 3)</small>	Improves Safety	Meets Need and Purpose	Carried Forward
1	No Build	12.3	16	244	4387	No	140	100%	No	No	Yes
2	Construct Climbing Lane	7.6	26	137	2488	Yes	140	100%	No	No	No
3	Construct two new Lanes	5.9	34	120	591	Yes	140	100%	No	No	No
4	Boulevard Concept	8.0	25	243	1173	Yes	266	100%	No	No	No
5	Freeway	4.2	47	81	288	Yes	108	65%	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note 1: The values presented for total corridor intersection delay and average queue length were calculated considering seven intersections (west to east): South Desert Blvd (I-10 frontage rd), North Desert Blvd (I-10 frontage rd), Northwestern Dr., Resler Dr., Plexxar Dr., Paseo del Norte Dr., and FMSP entrance.

Note 2: The values correspond to the total number (i.e., the sum) of vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-pedestrian conflict points the intersections along the corridor, excluding South Desert Blvd. and North Desert Blvd. Refer to "Loop 375 (Transmountain Road) Corridor Alternative Simulation Study", August 9, 2011 by Jacobs Engineering Group, Inc., Appendix D, for Vehicular and Pedestrian Conflict Points, for locations, and for numbers of conflict points at each intersection.

Note 3: In Alternative 1 through 4, all vehicular movements in an intersection result in at least one vehicle-to-vehicle or vehicle-to-pedestrian conflict. Alternative 5 provides grade separated intersections between the main lanes of Loop 375 and the four cross streets along the corridor. Approximately 33% of the traffic in the system is travelling along the main lanes and is excluded from encountering any conflict point. Refer to Tables 2 and 3 for individual intersection analysis.

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

No.	Comment Type and Appropriate Response
	<p><b>Alternative 2 (Construct Climbing Lane)</b></p> <p>This alternative addresses growing concerns regarding decreased passing opportunities for traffic traveling up the mountain grade as traffic volumes increase into the future. It is a relatively low-cost alternative because it could be built inside existing ROW while also minimizing construction material and labor requirements. Alternative 2 demonstrates modest improvement to average speed to 26 mph when compared to the No Build Alternative's 16 mph, as shown in <b>Table 1</b>. Total Corridor Intersection Delay is reduced to 137 seconds per vehicle and Total Corridor Average Queue Length is reduced to 2488 feet, which represent 44% and 43% reductions respectively. Compared to the No-Build Alternative, Alternative 2 improves mobility along the corridor.</p> <p>In terms of safety, Alternative 2 shows the same number of conflict points along the corridor (140) as the No Build alternative. Also, there is no improvement in the number of vehicles that are exposed to any conflict point. Although Alternative 2 shows modest improvements to mobility, it does not improve the safety elements that are required by the project's need and purpose. For this reason, it was eliminated from further study.</p> <p><b>Alternative 3 (Construct Two New Lanes)</b></p> <p>This alternative would help reduce traffic conflicts with future driveways between intersecting streets by limiting main lane cross traffic to four locations (five, if including the entrance to the State Park), although these intersections would be at-grade. Alternative 3 would allow right-in and right-out movements on highway main lanes at future driveway locations.</p> <p>As shown in <b>Table 1</b>, the average speed along the corridor is approximately doubled to 34 mph, compared to Alternative 1. Total Corridor Intersection Delay is reduced to 120 seconds per vehicle (41% reduction), and Total Corridor Average Queue Length is reduced to 591 feet (87% reduction). Compared to the No-Build Alternative, Alternative 3 improves mobility along the corridor.</p> <p>In terms of safety, Alternative 3 shows the same number of conflict points along the corridor (140) as the No Build alternative. Also, there is no improvement in the number of vehicles that are exposed to any conflict point. Although Alternative 3 shows improvements to mobility, it does not improve the safety elements that are required by the project's need and purpose. For this reason, it was eliminated from further study.</p> <p><b>Alternative 4 (Boulevard Concept)</b></p> <p>The boulevard concept separates higher speed traffic on the main lanes from slower traffic on one-way access lanes. Access lanes would allow for safe right turns in and out of adjacent properties. They would present challenges at intersections by creating a larger number of vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-pedestrian conflict points than other alternatives. As shown in <b>Table 1</b>, the average speed is 25 miles per hour, which is the lowest of all build alternatives, but improved over Alternative 1. Total Corridor Intersection Delay has a negligible reduction from 244 to 243 seconds per vehicle compared to Alternative 1. Total Corridor Maximum Queue Length is reduced to 1,173ft., which represents a 73% reduction. Compared to the No-Build Alternative, Alternative 3 marginally improves mobility along the corridor.</p>

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

No.	Comment Type and Appropriate Response
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**Table 2. Analysis of Conflict Points along the Loop 375 Corridor**

	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4	Alternative 5 (Note 2)
<b>Northwestern</b>					
Not Exposed	0%	0%	0%	0%	57%
Exposed	100%	100%	100%	100%	43%
Total Conflict Points	32	32	32	49	24
<b>Resler</b>					
Not Exposed	0%	0%	0%	0%	27%
Exposed	100%	100%	100%	100%	73%
Total Conflict Points	32	32	32	78	24
<b>Plexxar</b>					
Not Exposed	0%	0%	0%	0%	53%
Exposed	100%	100%	100%	100%	47%
Total Conflict Points	32	32	32	78	24
<b>Paseo del Norte</b>					
Not Exposed	0%	0%	0%	0%	31%
Exposed	100%	100%	100%	100%	69%
Total Conflict Points	32	32	32	49	24
<b>FMSP entrance</b>					
Not Exposed	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Exposed	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total Conflict Points	12	12	12	12	12
<b>Total Corridor</b>					
Not Exposed	0%	0%	0%	0%	35%
Exposed	100%	100%	100%	100%	65%
Total Conflict Points	140	140	140	266	108

Note 1: Percentage represent proportion of ADT approaching individual intersections.

Note 2: Calculation of percentages for Alternative 5 is presented in Table 3.

In terms of safety, Alternative 4 presents a deteriorating condition, since the number of conflict points along the corridor is almost doubled (from 140 to 266) from the No-Build Alternative. In addition, there is no improvement in the number of vehicles that are exposed to any conflict point. Compared to Alternative 1, Alternative 4 deteriorates the safety conditions along the corridor, which is not consistent with the project's need and purpose. For this reason, it was eliminated from further study.

**Alternative 5 (Four-lane Freeway Facility with Frontage Roads and Direct Connectors to I-10)**

Alternative 5 separates local traffic from through traffic along the corridor similar to Alternative 4 by providing main lanes as well as one-way frontage roads. The principal difference between the Alternative 5 and the other alternatives is that Alternative 5 provides grade separations for main lane traffic at intersections, and two direct connector ramps to I-10 that would allow through traffic on Loop 375 to avoid cross traffic conflicts with

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

No.	Comment Type and Appropriate Response
	<p>vehicle and pedestrian, along with avoiding traffic signals at the intersections. <b>Table 1</b> indicates an average speed along the corridor of 47 mph, which is almost three times the speed of Alternative 1, and the highest average speed of all Build alternatives. Total Corridor Intersection Delay is reduced to 81 seconds per vehicle (67% reduction) and Total Corridor Average Queue Length is reduced to 288 feet (93% reduction). Compared to the No Build alternative, Alternative 5 improves mobility along the corridor.</p> <p>In terms of safety, Alternative 5 provides the most substantial improvements to the interaction of vehicles and pedestrians along the corridor. The number of conflict points along the corridor is reduced by 24% (140 to 108) from the No-Build Alternative. In addition, the proportion of vehicles that are exposed to a conflict point along the corridor is reduced from 100% in all other alternatives to 65% for this alternative. The calculations leading to this proportion are presented in <b>Table 3</b>. This means that 35% of the traffic along the corridor would not be exposed to a single conflict point, which substantially reduces the opportunity for a collision. The improvement is due to the geometric characteristics of Alternative 5 where there is grade separation between the main lanes of Loop 375 and the cross streets. Although frontage roads and cross streets continue to operate at-grade, there are fewer vehicles exposed to the conflicts.</p> <p>Due to improved performance of the freeway in addressing mobility and safety needs when compared to the no build alternative, Alternative 5 is considered to meet the need and purpose of the project by improving mobility and traffic safety.</p> <p>The alternatives analysis based on the revised Mission 2035 TDM, documented that Alternative 5 (freeway concept) as the preferred “build” alternative for the proposed project. This is the same outcome of the alternative analysis documented in the February 2011 EA based on TransBorder 2035 TDM. In both analyses, Alternative 5 improves mobility and traffic safety and best meets the core of the need and purpose of the proposed project, and Alternatives 2 through 4 were found to not best meet the need and purpose of the project satisfactorily and were eliminated from further study.</p> <p>Regarding air quality concerns, both the TransBorder MTP and the Mission MTP received Conformity determinations from FHWA . This means that the emission levels for harmful pollutants, such as CO, ozone, and PM-10, are within the accepted levels according to state and federal regulations. Additionally, the model runs that were developed based on the revised Mission 2035 were also tested for compliance with air quality restrictions. The emissions resulting from the revised model are also within accepted levels.</p> <p>In conclusion, the outcome of the alternative analysis documented in the February 2011 Environmental Assessment is the same when utilizing the latest MPO plan.</p>

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

No.	Comment Type and Appropriate Response
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**Table 3. Analysis of Conflict Points Alternative 5 (Note 1)**

**Northwestern**

	EB	WB	SB	NB	Total	%	Conflict Points
Mainlanes	10,900	12,600			23,500	57%	0
Frontage Rd and Cross Street	5,000	3,700	4,500	4,400	17,600	43%	24
					41,100		

**Resler**

	EB	WB	SB	NB	Total	%	Conflict Points
Mainlanes	4,700	6,500			11,200	27%	0
Frontage Rd and Cross Street	10,400	8,100	4,500	6,800	29,800	73%	24
					41,000		

**Plexxar**

	EB	WB	SB	NB	Total	%	Conflict Points
Mainlanes	9,300	10,800			20,100	53%	0
Frontage Rd and Cross Street	5,300	4,800	2,700	4,800	17,600	47%	24
					37,700		

**Paseo del Norte**

	EB	WB	SB	NB	Total	%	Conflict Points
Mainlanes	6,100	7,000			13,100	31%	0
Frontage Rd and Cross Street	8,400	9,900	2,800	8,300	29,400	69%	24
					42,500		

**FMSP Entrance**

	EB	WB	SB	NB	Total	%	Conflict Points
All LP 375 and Cross Street	16,300	16,900	600		33,800	100%	12
					33,800		

**Total All intersections**

	Total	%	Conflict Points
Main lanes (Free of conflicts)	67,900	35%	0
Loop 375 Frontage Roads and main lanes (Not free of conflicts)	128,200	65%	108
	196,100		

Note 1: Values correspond to ADT approaching interesections

**12 Concern with Visual Impacts**

A visual impact analysis was conducted utilizing FHWA's Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Project guidance. Visual assessment units were identified using standard assessment practices that took into account a full body of knowledge about the project area, including extensive site photographs, field investigations, aerial photography, and topographic maps. Per FHWA guidance, visual impacts were defined as a change in the aesthetic value resulting from the introduction of modifications to the landscape. The project vicinity was

**TABLE 3-1  
RESPONSES TO FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENTS**

No.	Comment Type and Appropriate Response
	<p>evaluated in terms of project impacts on visual character and scenic (visual) quality. In an effort to determine the visual resource effects of the proposed roadway improvements, an analysis of the landscape components affected by the Build Alternative was conducted. The visual character of the roadway itself was evaluated in terms of pattern elements (form, line, color, and texture) as well as pattern character (dominance, scale, diversity, and continuity). The roadway alignment (which will not be substantially altered under the proposed design) follows the natural slope and curvature of the landscape as it enters the Franklin Mountains, providing a level of continuity and compatibility with visual patterns in the area. In order to determine the scale and dominance of the proposed roadway improvements, the roadway cross-sections, plans, and profile were used to evaluate changes in elevation and potential impacts to the current viewshed in the project vicinity. The scale and dominance of the roadway were determined to be compatible with the project surroundings due in large part to the fact that a distinct transportation corridor within the identified visual assessment units has already been established by the existing roadway. This corridor would not be substantially altered or realigned under the proposed design. The proposed grade separations at intersecting roadways would result in increased elevations of the roadway in portions of the project area; however, after examination of the project plan and profile, these changes are not expected to substantially obstruct current scenic viewsheds to and from existing recreational areas such as the Tom Mays Unit of the Franklin Mountains State Park. Views of the Franklin Mountains from south of Loop 375 would not be fully obstructed by the proposed roadway design due to the relative scale of the mountains as compared to the maximum roadway elevation of 19 feet in that area.</p> <p>Future development and potential visual impacts associated with this development were estimated and assessed based on information included in the MTP, the City of El Paso's current and future land use plans, as well as input from City of El Paso planning personnel, and planned or platted future development. The visual assessment concludes that projected growth will likely result in new development and the conversion of currently undeveloped land to developed uses. As more people move to the area, the visual character along the Loop 375 roadway corridor is expected to change. Existing view sheds may be altered by the conversion of native vegetation to developed uses. In the absence of statutory authority for TxDOT to regulate land use, this change in visual character may be mitigated by changes to the City of El Paso's zoning and building restrictions intended to control the density, type, and rate of future development.</p>
13	<p><b>Project Funding</b></p> <p>In the event that the governing bodies who decide project funding conclude that this project is not viable, they may decide to allocate funds to other projects in Texas. In response to questions or comments from public officials or the general public whether delays could jeopardize availability of project funds, or the pace of moving the proposed project forward as quickly as practical, TxDOT responded to questions on various occasions. In those responses, TxDOT described that funds are currently programmed for the construction of a project on Loop 375, along the proposed limits. Available funding is not limited to the selection of Alternative 5 (the Freeway Alternative). In the event those governing entities who had allocated the funds for a project would determine that the work was not making progress, they could decide to allocate funds elsewhere in Texas.</p>

**TABLE 3-2  
FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENT BY RID NUMBER**

RID	FMC 1	FMC 2	FMC 3	FMC 4	FMC 5	FMC 6	FMC 7	FMC 8	FMC 9	FMC 10	FMC 11	FMC 12	FMC 13	Other
(SEE TABLE 3.1 FOR DETAILED FMC DESCRIPTION)														
1		X											X	X
2	X	X	X	X				X	X					X
3		X										X		X
4		X	X	X	X			X				X		X
5	X	X	X	X	X	X		X				X	X	X
6														X
7														X
8														X
9		X	X	X							X	X		X
10						X						X		X
11														X
12				X	X		X							X
13							X							X
14		X	X					X				X		X
15			X	X	X									
16		X	X		X							X		X
17			X	X	X							X		X
18	X		X	X	X			X	X	X		X	X	X
19				X			X		X					X
20														X
21														X
22				X										X
23														X
24														X
25														X
26														X
27														X
28														X
29														X
30												X		X
31														X
32							X							X
33														X
34														X
35														X
36														X
37														X

**TABLE 3-2  
FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENT BY RID NUMBER**

RID	FMC 1	FMC 2	FMC 3	FMC 4	FMC 5	FMC 6	FMC 7	FMC 8	FMC 9	FMC 10	FMC 11	FMC 12	FMC 13	Other
(SEE TABLE 3.1 FOR DETAILED FMC DESCRIPTION)														
38														X
39														X
40														X
41														X
42														X
43														X
44														X
45														X
46														X
47														X
48														X
49														X
50														X
51														X
52														X
53														X
54			X	X	X			X					X	X
55		X										X		X
56												X		X
57														X
58		X	X											X
59														X
60		X			X							X		X
61	X			X										
62														X
63														X
64		X			X			X				X	X	X
65		X			X	X		X				X	X	X
66				X	X			X	X					X
67	X		X	X	X			X	X	X		X	X	X
68	X	X	X	X	X						X	X		X
69	X		X		X							X		X
70							X							X
71			X		X			X			X	X	X	X
72														X
73														X
74			X	X	X			X				X		X
75			X		X							X		X

**TABLE 3-2  
FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENT BY RID NUMBER**

RID	FMC 1	FMC 2	FMC 3	FMC 4	FMC 5	FMC 6	FMC 7	FMC 8	FMC 9	FMC 10	FMC 11	FMC 12	FMC 13	Other
(SEE TABLE 3.1 FOR DETAILED FMC DESCRIPTION)														
76		X		X								X		X
77														X
78														X
79			X		X			X					X	X
80					X							X		X
81														X
82					X			X				X		X
83		X			X			X				X	X	X
84		X			X			X					X	
85		X			X			X				X	X	
86		X			X			X					X	
87		X			X			X					X	
88		X			X			X					X	
89		X			X			X					X	
90		X			X			X					X	
91		X	X		X			X					X	
92		X			X			X					X	
93		X			X			X					X	X
94		X			X			X			X	X	X	X
95				X										X
96														X
97														X
98														X
99														X
100														X
101														X
102		X	X		X			X					X	X
103	X	X	X			X		X			X	X		X
104														X
105														X
106														X
107														X
108														X
109														X
110														X
111														X
112	X											X		X
113	X				X			X			X	X		X
114			X											X

**TABLE 3-2  
FREQUENTLY MADE COMMENT BY RID NUMBER**

RID	FMC 1	FMC 2	FMC 3	FMC 4	FMC 5	FMC 6	FMC 7	FMC 8	FMC 9	FMC 10	FMC 11	FMC 12	FMC 13	Other
(SEE TABLE 3.1 FOR DETAILED FMC DESCRIPTION)														
115				X	X			X	X					X
116				X										X
117	X		X									X	X	X
118			X		X							X		X
119														X
120														X
121												X		X
122												X		X
123		X			X			X					X	X
124														X
125														X
126														X
127				X										X
128					X			X				X		X
129		X			X	X		X				X		X
130														X
131											X	X		X
TOTALS	11	31	24	21	40	5	5	33	6	2	7	37	24	119

Public Hearing Comments and Responses Matrix

Loop 375 Transmountain Road Project  
 I-10 to East of the Franklin Mountains State Park Entrance  
 El Paso County, Texas  
 CSJ: 2552-01-033

RID: 1	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b>                  3/22/2011                  The EA should have been available to the public at this meeting free on CDROM (or DVD) along with all the videos/movies (some are not available on the internet) being shown here. [ Other 1a ]                  Only 3 paper copies of the EA are available here to read on site. There are no paper copies to take home. [ Other 1b ]                  There are no Spanish-language copies of the EA available here at the meeting. [ Other 1c ]                  The person I spoke to representing the EA is a Civil Engineer not a biologist or ecologist. [ Other 1d ]                  People at this meeting representing this project are not aware of how the Santa Teresa port of entry project wants to tie in to this Transmountain expansion. [ Other 1e ]                  There are no views of the 450 acre Quarry here but there is a print showing a tiny closed city "dump." [ Other 1f ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b>                  None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b>                  None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b>                  3/22/2011                  Hello, Mr. Berry and audience. My name is XX and I am a certified high school science teacher and -- and I have a master's in biology. [ Other 1g ]                  I work on a lot of different issues in our region and my feeling on this is that this is a pork barrel spending project whose costs have already exploded from the initial proposals. I feel that taxpayers will end up footing the bill for business on this and that, had the TxDOT and the planners stuck to just simply widening this road, we would have been all right but instead all these bridges have been proposed and ele- -- this elevated thing with pylons and -- and Lord knows what else. [ FMC 2 ] &amp; [ FMC 13 ]                  I am concerned that the plans for bridges leave out support for our state park's wildlife by encouraging more roadways around this area north and south further isolating the plants and animals in those areas from reaching other natural areas and our river. [ Other 1h ]                  I'm concerned that a new 450-acre rock quarry which isn't on your maps back there, by the way, but you show a little old dump, but there's a 450-acre rock quarry sprung up right between our state park and the outlet mall, it's visible from Transmountain Road. It's there to support projects like this and to save its fuel cost so it can be competitive. [ Other 1f ]                  I'm concerned that the new BNSF Railroad, Santa Teresa modular offloading facility will be offloading rail traffic from Santa Teresa, New Mexico, to this new facility to semi trucks. These will link to one of these proposed bridges and you're not telling people. It will probably link -- to the Plexxar -- to Artcraft and Plexxar and they can then send those trucks if they want to the climb across Transmountain. [ Other 1e ]                  I agree that something else needs to be proposed and that this isn't the right project for it. [ Other 1g ]</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b>                  [ Other 1a ] - CD or DVD copies of the project information are available from TxDOT upon request for the nominal cost of the CD or DVD media. The public was notified of this availability when the project public hearing notices were published in the El Paso Times and El Diario newspapers. An electronic copy of the EA was available for down load from the internet from the TxDOT and City of El Paso web sites. Notices of public meetings and hearings, public hearing information, and the virtual simulation of the proposed project are available on TxDOT's website and were available in the weeks leading up to the hearing. The virtual simulation of the proposed project was made available on the "YouTube.com" internet site for the purposes of downloading the video from the internet, a feature that is not available from the TxDOT web site. Notification of the availability on YouTube was posted on the TxDOT website. The documents were made available for public review on February 15, 2011, more than 30 days before the public hearing. The proposed project documents can be viewed and retrieved from TxDOT's website: <a href="http://www.txdot.gov/public_involvement/hearings_meetings/elp_375_032211.htm">http://www.txdot.gov/public_involvement/hearings_meetings/elp_375_032211.htm</a>                  [ Other 1b ] - Three paper copies of the EA were available for review at the public hearing. As stated in the Public Hearing Presentation, hard copies of the EA were available by contacting Blanca Del Valle, TxDOT El Paso District Public Information Officer (#915-790-4200) and remain available for the nominal cost of printing.                  [ Other 1c ] - Translation of the EA is available upon request for the nominal cost of the copies. Simultaneous translation of the public hearing and public meetings were performed in Spanish. This was announced at the public hearing in English and in Spanish. Spanish-speaking project personnel were available to speak with the public during the Public Hearing.                  [ Other 1d ] - Five environmental professionals, including a biologist, professional planning specialists, right-of-way specialists, several civil engineers, and several civil engineering graduates were available to speak with the public about the project at the public hearing. The environmental professionals and biologist were stationed adjacent to the environmental displays and other project displays. Project representatives were available to speak at any of the project displays during the open house and the break periods of the public hearing afforded to the public to review project displays.                  [ Other 1e ] - The State Highway System is designed to accommodate local, regional, cross-border, interstate, and commuter traffic. The State Highway System is developed in response to land uses that are established by the local government, including commercial, residential, and recreational uses. Professional planning specialists who are familiar with the overall planning of the regional transportation system were available to speak with the public about the project at the public hearing. They were stationed adjacent to the environmental displays and other project displays. The El Paso MPO's regional Travel Demand Model (TDM) captures traffic volumes coming into the El Paso region as well as traffic patterns within the El Paso area based on current and future land use designations. The traffic volumes resulting from the expansion of the Santa Teresa facility is being captured with El Paso MPO's TDM.                  [ Other 1f ] - The environmental constraints exhibits shown at the public hearing depicted both land use and hazardous materials sites (among other constraint categories). The former landfill was categorized as a potential hazardous materials site. The rock quarry is located outside of the project's area of potential effect and the area within which land use was identified on the maps; therefore, the rock quarry was not identified on the map.                  [ Other 1g ] - Comment noted for the record.                  [ Other 1h ] - The EA evaluated direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to both vegetation and wildlife through standardized methods for state and federally-funded transportation projects. The direct impacts of the future construction of other roadways are not known at this time and cannot be accurately quantified until the design has been developed and the roadway footprint is finalized. At that time, the project sponsor would evaluate impacts associated with the construction of this roadway. However, the indirect and cumulative impacts analysis conducted as part of the Loop 375 EA did take the construction of other planned and programmed roadways into account when estimating impacts to potentially affected resources.</p>

RID: 2	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 Good that you plan an animal crossing, 10'X20' with dirt bottom. Bad that the location is in an area zoned commercial. [ FMC 1 ] Good idea to expand Transmountain Rd. to 4 lanes. There are better options than a high speed freeway. [ FMC 2 ] Slower traffic is better. Use stop lights or traffic circles. [ FMC 2 ] &amp; [ FMC 8 ] The entrance to the Tom Mays section of Franklin Mts. State Park is extremely hazardous. The current TxDOT Plan will make it even more dangerous. We need more options. [ FMC 4 ] Eliminate the interchange on &amp; off ramps, at Paseo Del Norte. Eliminate that road entirely or at minimum, move it to the proposed Plexar Interchange (move west). [ FMC 3 ] Recommend you do more communication electronically. Save money in printing &amp; mailing. Put your comment form on line and make it easy to use. Then you will not have to struggle with my bad spelling &amp; hand writing! [ Other 2a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 2/28/2011 Thank you for sending me the detailed information and maps about the 22 Mar 2011 meeting on Loop 375 Transmountain Road Project. Please send electronic versions of these documents to my e-mail address: XXXX so I can share with others who may be interested. [ Other 2b ] I notice that much of the information you sent is available on your website: <a href="http://www.txdot.gov/public_involvement/hearings_meetings/elp_375_032211.htm">http://www.txdot.gov/public_involvement/hearings_meetings/elp_375_032211.htm</a> , but not all. [ Other 2a ] If possible, please have comment forms available electronically. It would greatly improve efficiency if you were able to receive comments electronically – and they would probably be easier to read than hand written documents. [ Other 2a ] It would be great if you would send me e-mails on future updates. That way you could also save on printing and postage. [ Other 2a ] Thank you for your help and especially for striving for maximum citizen involvement in TXDOT projects. [ Other 2c ]</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 Good evening. Mr. Chuck Berry, TxDOT, all your staff, I want to thank you profusely for having this public forum. The idea of getting public input and the fact that you are soliciting public input is huge and I really appreciate it. [ Other 2c ] I support additional lanes on Transmountain Road. I think they're absolutely necessary for safety, but I have several concerns with the current plan and I'll mention three or four of them. [ Other 2c ] First is the entrance to the Tom Mays section of the state park. It has already been addressed, but I feel this is really an important issue because the Franklin Mountains State Park are such a huge asset to El Paso. This is a destination location for people coming to El Paso to enjoy our state park and the entrance is simply not safe, it's not adequate so that's a big concern that needs to be addressed. [ FMC 4 ] The concept of animal crossings. I greatly appreciate that you have added an animal crossing and I understand it's because of the comments that you got at the last forum and I really appreciate that you're responsive to the public needs and I understand that there is a plan for an animal crossing that will be a 10-by-20 feet with a dirt bottom and that is really wonderful. The only difficulty is that it is located in the commercial district where it will be in the middle of the big box stores so a little difficulty there. I would recommend that it be somewhere else and that there many of them and not just for the animals. You're not -- some people say, "Hey, it's animals. Who cares." Well, it's people that die when they intersect with those animals as they cross Transmountain Road. So for safety issue in addition to preserving the animals I think it's really important. And I understand that animal crossings cost money. It's much easier to put a culvert but here's a way you could save some money so that you can put it towards animal crossings[ FMC 1 ] and that would be with the elimination of Paseo Del Norte. We've had many reasons why we need to eliminate it and I believe -- I've been told that each of those huge interchanges where you have things going up and down and around and on- and off-ramps and lots of space and -- each one of those costs in the neighborhood of 7 to \$8 million so you can eliminate one and build some more animal crossings. [ FMC 3 ] Okay. That would take me to number 4. I haven't heard this one mentioned yet. And that is the -- how close the various on and off and interchanges are to each other. I believe there is a national standard recommendation for how close those things are. So if you talk about 10 then the next one is Northwestern, then comes Resler, then comes Plexar, then it's Paseo Del Norte and guess what, they're too close, it's not safe so I recommend you eliminate some and I thank you very much for your time. [ FMC 9 ]</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 2a ] - For the proposed project, TxDOT provided the opportunity for the public to email comments in response to the Public Meeting and Public Hearing, which does not require the use of an electronic comment form. The email address was identified in the Public Hearing Notice printed in English and Spanish in the El Paso Times and El Diario newspapers on three separate occasions before the hearing. The Public Hearing Notice was also posted on the TxDOT web site. The email address for making comments was included in the Public Hearing notice, along with the comment deadline. The email address was <a href="mailto:ELP_Loop375West@txdot.gov">ELP_Loop375West@txdot.gov</a>. TxDOT will send a broadcast email to those who provided an email address during the public comment process in order to notify interested parties of FHWA's decision. This email will also include information about the availability of project information on TxDOT's website. [ Other 2b ] - CD or DVD copies of the any of the project information is available from TxDOT upon request for the nominal cost of the CD or DVD media. No requests were received at the public hearing. Additionally, an electronic copy of the EA was available for down load from the internet from the TxDOT and City of El Paso web sites. The public was notified of this availability when the project public hearing notices were published in the El Paso Times and El Diario newspapers. Notices of public meetings and hearings, public hearing information, and the virtual simulation of the proposed project are available on TxDOT's website and were available in the weeks leading up to the hearing. The virtual simulation of the proposed project was made available on "YouTube.com" internet site for the purpose of allowing an option to download the video from the internet, a feature that is not available from the TxDOT web site. The project documents were made available for public review on February 15, 2011, more than 30 days before the public hearing. The proposed project documents can be viewed and retrieved from TxDOT's website: <a href="http://www.txdot.gov/public_involvement/hearings_meetings/elp_375_032211.htm">http://www.txdot.gov/public_involvement/hearings_meetings/elp_375_032211.htm</a> [ Other 2c ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 3	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 We need 4 lanes no more. [ FMC 2 ] We have an empty virgin palate, please don't destroy our children's heritage. [ Other 3a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 You did. You did really good. Thank you. XX, Canutillo community citizen. I've lived in El Paso since 1965 and I really, I'd like to ask who is here. Could I see a show of hands. Who thinks this is a good idea? With the overpasses and the whole way they've presented it? I see some hands go down but a few up. [ Other 3a ] I just feel so strongly that we have to be secure and sure when we make a decision like this. You don't make mountains every day. This is our heritage. This is our children's heritage. I know that we need extra lanes on the road up there, there's no doubt about that, [ Other 3a ] but all the enhancements of overpasses, that will visually obstruct our mountains, the view that we have from the valley. It's -- it just seems unconscionable to destroy what we have without giving further thought to it and, you know, in our consciences knowing that that's our greatest pull. We always want people to come here and visit and be tourists. You know, if it looks like a commercial freeway going through our beauty, I don't really see that happening. [ FMC 12 ] I agree that you've got to have -- you know, we need four, maybe six lanes up there, but I sure don't agree with the overpasses. Thank you so much. [ FMC 2 ] [ FMC 3 ]</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [Other 3a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 4

**Comment Form:**

3/22/2011

Take off the last overpass - Plexxar (I believe). [ FMC 3 ]

No gateways – [ Other 4a ]

what an ugly encouragement of sprawl. [ FMC 5 ]

Provide safety to entrance/exit to state park. [ FMC 4 ]

Preserve land east of Gas Line road as open space. [ FMC 5 ]

**E-Mail Comment:**

4/1/2011

This is what I had to say at the TxDOT meeting at Canutillo High. I think these are important points that need to be addressed in this very flawed plan.

"I find it interesting that a project that touts itself on safety - safety at Resler, safety at Paseo del Norte, safety at Plexxar - has forgotten about safety at the State Park entrance. It really makes one wonder who this project is looking after. El Pasoans wanting to enter the State Park will have to cross 2 lanes of oncoming traffic. [ FMC 4 ]

"I have also heard others comment about how building overpasses, and gateways are going to relieve traffic congestion and pollution. I find that to be very interesting because the most congested areas that we have in El Paso are the gateways at the Hawkins, Airways, Lee Trevino, intersections. These also happen to be the most dangerous intersections in the city. So is this project helping congestion? Or safety? [ Other 4b ]

I worry this project is only for the benefit of a few at the expense of our tax dollars and our scenic mountains. Those of us against this freeway as it is currently being presented, bisecting our beloved mountains, are not trying to halt development in this city that we all love. Rather we want to preserve our mountains while still encouraging businesses to locate to a scenic, beautiful, desirable El Paso that we can all be proud of." [ FMC 12 ]

Are we going to look back and be proud of this freeway we are about to construct bisecting our beloved mountains? I doubt it. We need to proceed with caution when it comes to something sacred to our city. [ Other 4c ]

No overpasses [ FMC 2 ] [ FMC 3 ]

No gateway [ Other 4a ]

No more taxpayer subsidies of the wealthy in El Paso [ Other 4c ]

Yes to preserving open space along our mountain [ FMC 5 ]

We are not trying to stop this plan, but we want it done correctly. As presented, it isn't correct Mrs. Lilly. [ Other 4c ]

Please make the right choice for the citizens of El Paso. [ Other 4c ]

Thanks,

XX

FOLLOW ME

I truly hope that TxDOT will take into consideration other alternatives to the Transmountain construction. [ FMC 8 ]

El Paso wants a road that embraces our mountains while still providing easy transportation from east to west. The current plan is one of only destruction though while not taking into consideration the respect that we have for our beautiful mountains. [ FMC 12 ]

Having overpasses along Transmountain, especially so far east (closer to the mountain) is totally unacceptable. I hope that TxDOT looks at some alternatives that eliminate the overpasses at Paseo del Norte that completely interferes with our scenic vista of the mountains that this city embrace. [ FMC 3 ] [ FMC 12 ]

As a 4th generation El Pasoan, and one who loves this city, I truly hope that we can all agree on a compromise. We don't want to halt the development of this city, but rather create something that we can all be proud of and look back at with pride. Pride that we were able to preserve something we all identify with in El Paso and hold very sacred while still encouraging the city to thrive in a positive way. [ Other 4c ]

Development is not a one way street but rather a compromise between economic prosperity and preservation of a quality of life. [ FMC 5 ]

These mountains contribute greatly to the quality of life of the citizens of this city. They are not a barrier that need to be plowed through, but an inviting place that adds to the beauty of our wonderful city. [ FMC 12 ]

I hope that TxDOT will look at other alternatives than the current plan. [ FMC 2 ]

No overpasses [ FMC 3 ]

No gateways [ Other 4a ]

Preservation of open space [ FMC 5 ]

Safe entrance into the state park [ FMC 4 ]

Please - for the sake of the citizens of El Paso take a look at the current plan and come up with a better one. [ FMC 8 ]

We will never regret building the best for our city and our citizens. Thanks for your consideration, [ Other 4c ]

XX

**Letter:**

None

**Verbal Comment:**

3/22/2011

Hello. Thank you guys for giving us the opportunity to talk. I'm XX and I'm from the Borderland Mountain Bike Association. I'm a fourth-generation El Pasoan. I love El Paso.[Other 4c]

I find it interesting that a project that has touted itself on safety, safety at Plexxar, safety at Paseo Del Norte, safety at Resler, safety at the I-10 interchange, completely eliminated safety at the state park entrance. [ FMC 4 ]

I find that quite interesting. Whose interests were we taking into account when we were looking into safety issues. [ Other 4b ]

I also heard some comments about relieving congestion. I have lived in El Paso basically my whole life. The most congested areas I've been in El Paso are where there are gateways along the freeway. The longest line that we have in El Paso is the gateway paralleling I-10, Hawkins, Lee Trevino, so why is it building this gateway going to be relieving traffic and making Transmountain safer? [ Other 4b ]

Those are also the most dangerous intersections that we have in the city. [ Other 4c ]

I worry this project is going to only benefit a few of the -- a few people in El Paso at the expense of all of our tax dollars and at the expense of our beautiful mountains. [ Other 4c ]

Those of us against this freeway, as it is being presented bisecting our beloved mountains, are not trying to halt development in the city that we all love but rather we want to preserve our mountains while still encouraging businesses to locate to this scenic beautiful desirable El Paso that we all love. [ FMC 2 ] [ FMC 12 ]

We don't want to completely stop this project. We need a compromise. We need something that's going to benefit all of El Paso, not just a few El Pasoans which is the way it's being presented right now. [ Other 4c ]

Bike riders don't like to ride on gateways by the way, guys. That's not something that's desirable for us. So thanks for thinking of us, but we want real bike lanes, scenic bike lanes and safe bike lanes. [ Other 4d ]Thank you.

**Response to Frequently Made Comments:** see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]

**Response to Other Comments:**

[Other 4a ] - Frontage roads are included for approximately 2 miles of the western portion of the proposed project, nearest to I-10. They are provided for access to adjoining property with existing access rights to the highway. The proposed design addresses the need to provide driveway access to properties along the project corridor so that driveway access that creates slow moving left and right turn movements would not be required to cross higher speed traffic on the highway. Frontage roads are not included for approximately 1 mile on the eastern end of the project because those properties do not currently require access or they are part of the state park where direct access to the highway is not necessary. The proposed project design is according to PSB Water Plan which calls for no Frontage Roads along Loop 375 between Paseo del Norte Interchange and the eastern portion of the PSB property. Any future development adjacent to Loop 375 requesting access will require to comply with TxDOT's Access Management Guidelines.

[ Other 4b ] - An alternatives analysis that considered safety was conducted as part of the environmental evaluation process. The analysis considered several measures of effectiveness for each alternative, including counting the number of vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-pedestrian conflict points, and projecting queue lengths under various design alternatives. The results of this analysis indicated that the proposed freeway design improves traffic safety. Queue lengths at signalized intersections on frontage roads are shorter than queue lengths at signalized intersections for the other alternatives, thereby reducing the possibility of faster main lane traffic unexpectedly encountering the end of a queue well before reaching the intersection. Similarly, conflict points would be limited to the lower-speed frontage roads that carry only a portion of the LP 375 traffic, and not on the higher speed main lanes.

[ Other 4c ] - Comment noted for the record.

[ Other 4d ] - Bicycle accommodation is proposed along the one-way frontage roads by providing a wide outside lane (14- foot wide lane) adjacent to the curb. Also proposed along the same length of the proposed project are two-12 foot wide hike and bike lanes separate from the frontage road adjoining the right-of-way line. By providing both types of bicycle accommodation along the frontage road the user may determine their desired route. At the eastern terminus of the frontage roads, the proposed project would provide a separate hike and bike lane from the eastern terminus of the hike and bike path adjoining the northerly right-of-way line, to the park entrance.

RID: 5	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 The entrance to the St. Park is dangerous, and will become more so! [ FMC 4 ] The wildlife crossing is inappropriate in current location. [ FMC 1 ] Smart growth principles for roadways were not used. [ Other 5a ] The eastern two overpasses should not be considered. [ FMC 3 ] Must use native plants only for revegetation. [ FMC 6 ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> 3/22/2011 You have not given El Pasoans real choices in designing the Transmountain West Project. [ FMC 8 ] You have coerced this community by saying that we either build the freeway the way you propose or we lose the funding for the project. [ FMC 13 ] El Pasoans demand real choices about how our City is built and developed. [ FMC 8 ] Here is my choice as an El Pasoan. 1) Build Transmountain West as a Boulevard [ FMC 2 ] and preserve the Public Service Board land [ FMC 5 ] 2) Freeway but remove the last overpass (Paseo del Norte) [ FMC 3 ] and preserve the Public Service Board land. [ FMC 5 ] 3) provide other alternatives please. [ FMC 8 ] Use only native plants when re-vegetated. [ FMC 6 ] End the entire project at Gas Line Road. [ Other 5b ] Must give much more consideration to the wildlife. [ FMC 1 ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 Good evening and thank you for having this presentation. [ Other 5c ] I'm very concerned about very -- about many parts of this proposed freeway project up through the Transmountain corridor. The state park is one of our best assets in this city. [ Other 5c ] As we know tourism is something that El Paso needs and camping up there is a really special thing to do with kids. And I understand it's a dangerous road as it is, but I don't see how this helps alleviate the danger. [ Other 5d ] When you camp up there you -- you enjoy everything there is to enjoy about El Paso and the mountains. [ Other 5c ] Building a freeway through this will not help that situation. I think the project as its proposed is an antiquated way to develop and design roadways. [ FMC 2 ] I wish that TxDOT would use smart growth principles like the people in this city want to see you-all do for this road. [ Other 5a ] I'm not encouraged that the design to the entrance to the state park is at all safer even with the traffic we have now or the traffic that's proposed to come. [ FMC 4 ] I'm also not encouraged and would encourage TxDOT to reinvestigate the location of the wildlife crossing. It seems to me like the wildlife is up in the mountains and needs to cross the road close to up the mountains, not where the proposed development is. [ FMC 1 ] I do not believe we need to have development occur above the foothills of this road, like Mr. Wakeem said, above Gasline road. They chose the best path to put that in because it was the most obvious and I don't think we need development above that road. [ FMC 5 ] That's where the beauty starts and that's where the freeway should end. [ FMC 12 ] Thank you very much</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 5a ] - The proposed project was prepared using the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) guidelines for planning transportation facilities. Smart Growth principles, as they have been discussed in the El Paso region, refer to the attempt to plan and build developments that are less reliant on car travel. (from City of El Paso FAQ web site <a href="http://www.elpasotexas.gov/sustainability/faq.asp">http://www.elpasotexas.gov/sustainability/faq.asp</a>). Many principles of Smart Growth relate to land use regulations, which are under local authority. The proposed project includes features compatible with "Smart Growth" planning, such as accommodation for bicycle traffic on frontage roads, two separate hike and bike paths adjoining the right-of-way lines in the frontage road area, an extension of the hike and bike path connecting to the state park boundary along the northerly right-of-way line, and landscaping beyond typical highway project criteria are included in the proposed project for the purpose of encouraging walking and bicycle use.</p> <p>[ Other 5b ] - Logical termini for the project were determined to be from I 10 to the location where four lane divided highway already exists approximately 4 miles east of I 10 along LP 375. Logical termini could not be located shorter than the proposed project length for a proposed project that would improve mobility and safety for the corridor. [ Other 5c ] - Comment noted for the record. [ Other 5d ] - An alternatives analysis that considered safety was conducted as part of the environmental evaluation process. The analysis considered several measures of effectiveness for each alternative, including counting the number of vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-pedestrian conflict points, and projecting queue lengths under various design alternatives. The results of this analysis indicated that the proposed freeway design improves traffic safety. Queue lengths at signalized intersections on frontage roads are shorter than queue lengths at signalized intersections for the other alternatives, thereby reducing the possibility of faster main lane traffic unexpectedly encountering the end of a queue well before reaching the intersection. Similarly, conflict points would be limited to the lower-speed frontage roads that carry only a portion of the LP 375 traffic, and not on the higher speed main lanes.</p>
RID: 6	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 It is very important to receive the available funds for completion of 375 around the entire City. [ Other 6a ] Many people live on the west side and use Transmountain to go to Fort Bliss and other locations over the mountain. At present the last leg of the Transmountain Road is unsafe. It goes from four lanes to 2 lanes. [ Other 6a ] I fully support the best utilization of funds to complete Transmountain Rd. all the way to Interstate 10. The sooner the better. [ Other 6a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 6a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 7	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 We, my husband and I are in favor of the proposed expansion of Transmountain Road. In the (11) eleven since we moved to El Paso we have seen a big increase in the amount of traffic on this section of road due to population, building new homes, BRAC, growth in general. [ <b>Other 7a</b> ] The expansion allows for bicyclists, and walker's safety. [ <b>Other 7a</b> ] And we don't believe it will detract from the mountain vistas. [ <b>Other 7a</b> ] Moving traffic along in a safe manner is the first priority! [ <b>Other 7a</b> ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ <b>Other 7a</b> ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 8	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 These roadway improvements are very much needed. With the expansion at Ft. Bliss, El Paso will continue to grow. The only place for growth on the westside is along I-10 on the lower foothills of the Mountains. Planned growth will enhance the value of the land and the view people have of our City. [ <b>Other 8a</b> ] It is a much needed relief for traffic on I-10, also, if more traffic can be funneled to the loop it will make getting from one side of town to the other easier. [ <b>Other 8a</b> ] Much more needs to be done to improve the infrastructure, but this is a great start. [ <b>Other 8a</b> ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ <b>Other 8a</b> ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 9	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> 3/30/2011 Concern: The Environmental Assessment (EA) submitted to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) by TxDOT regarding their proposed Transmountain West Freeway Project has a major flaw. The need for the Project is based on a February 2009 projection of traffic volume resulting in a 2015 traffic count of 40,000 ADT and a 2035 ADT of 71,000. In the Mission 2025 Metropolitan Transportation Plan approved by the El Paso MPO on August 5, 2010, the Plan specifies the Project as carrying 18,000 ADT in 2020 and 31,000 ADT in 2035. To base the entire EA on outdated traffic volumes --- 71,000 ADT in 2009 as opposed to 31,000 in 2010 is inexcusable --- a difference of 30,000 ADT! [ <b>FMC 11</b> ] This use of significantly outdated and inaccurate data is reason enough to call for a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to be performed. [ <b>FMC 11</b> ] [ <b>Other 9a</b> ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 XX. I also represent the Sierra Club. There's a lot of us around so you'd better watch out. [ <b>Other 9b</b> ] Anyway, I -- most of what I was here to say has been said already but the traffic counts that were used for this, 71,000 trips per day and now it's coming in that it should have been 31,000, [ <b>FMC 11</b> ] I don't even see how an environmental assessment could be submitted like that and much less accepted by Federal Highway Administration and I would hope that would throw it out right away. [ <b>Other 9a</b> ] The other thing is the entrance to the park, that's been brought up that why not use a flyunder -- I think that's the term that's been talked about to go underground and access the park in a safe manner. [ <b>FMC 4</b> ] And if you're going to have other elevated intersections and exits, do the same down there at Northwestern and also at Resler. And we certainly don't need another Paseo Del Norte extended or a Plexxar which is not even on the MPO master plan, as you well know, and so how can it be included in the environmental assessment? I don't know. [ <b>FMC 3</b> ] Bill spoke earlier about a \$17 million project they should have stuck with and just continued the roadway the way it is and yet we're now at some [ <b>FMC 2</b> ] -- way up there and of course we all know that once again developers are controlling this city. We had a very progressive city council, I felt, such as Ms. Byrd who I thought we were going to get away from that in this town, but they've gotten involved and they're controlling this situation and, you know, we even -- I even see two Jobe trucks out in the parking lot here outside the building. They can hardly -- they can hardly wait to load and start making money for their new quarry out there. I just think it's disgusting that developers are still controlling this town and that we need to make it best -- what's best for everybody. [ <b>Other 9b</b> ] And like Ms. Barr said, how could the environmental assessment say there's not a disservice to the aesthetic quality we see when we look at the mountain. It's just a sad situation. Thank you. [ <b>FMC 12</b> ]</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ <b>FMC X</b> ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ <b>Other 9a</b> ] - The preparation of an environmental assessment (EA) is undertaken in order to provide FHWA sufficient evidence and analysis for determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) or a finding of no significant impact. TxDOT has concluded that the EA faithfully analyzes the direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of this project, and that the potential impacts are not significant enough to require an EIS. FHWA would make the final determination as to whether the project would warrant further consideration and development of additional environmental documentation.</p> <p>[ <b>Other 9b</b> ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

<p>RID: 10</p>	<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 The landscape plans for this project demonstrate very little regard for the native flora and fauna of the region, and seem not to be designed by a landscape architect. With such a large scale project it seems TxDOT should require some degree of professional input on landscaping. Certainly, landscape architects are employed by TxDOT, (albeit not in this District), and could design these plans with local input. I cannot imagine a plan that would scrape the existing terrain of native Yucca, ocotillo, lechuguilla, sotol &amp; cacti, in favor of plans that have no place on this roadway, such as golden euonymous and lantana. I cannot imagine a plan that would spend money on quarried rock and weed barrier, when native seeding could replicate the beauty found in Franklin Mountains State Park. [ FMC 6 ] I cannot imagine what Ladybird Johnson would have said to see this, our City's most beautiful public roadway, converted to rock and concrete. [ Other 10a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 My name is XX and I'm a mother, a wife, a business owner and usually a devil's advocate, but when I see a visual impact assessment that says that there is none expected other than the addition of trees to the right-of-way, I can't help but be astonished. [ Other 10a ] I wonder how many people here think the Transmountain corridor as existing is beautiful? How many people here think the Transmountain corridor as proposed will be beautiful? Okay. That's aesthetics. I'm not addressing obviously traffic -- traffic concerns, but I just wanted to address that visual impact assessment. [ FMC 12 ] The landscape plans for this project which I have seen demonstrate very little regard for the native flora and fauna of the region and seem not to be designed by a landscape architect. [ FMC 6 ] With such a large-scale project, it seems TxDOT should require some degree of professional input on landscaping. Certainly landscape architects are employed by TxDOT, albeit not in this district, and could design these plans with local input. I cannot imagine a plan that would scrape the existing terrain of native Yucca, Ocotillo, Lechuguilla, Creosote and cacti in favor of plants that have no place on this roadway such as golden lanimas (phonetic) and lantana. I cannot imagine a plan that would spend money on quarried rock and weed barrier when native seeding and salvaged plants could replicate the beauty found in Franklin Mountain State Park. [ FMC 6 ] I cannot imagine what Ladybird Johnson would have said to see this, our city's most cherished and beautiful public roadway converted to rock, concrete and asphalt. Thank you. [ Other 10a ]</p>
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<p>RID: 11</p>	<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> 3/21/2011 Dear Director Saenz, I am writing you today to show my support of the Texas Department of Transportation's plans to widen Transmountain Road in El Paso, Texas. Transmountain Road is essential to the transportation infrastructure of our community, and the proposed project will improve the connectivity of West and North El Paso. In recent years, we have seen several deaths on Transmountain and through this project we can address that problem. [ Other 11a ] Fort Bliss has benefited greatly from BRAC in recent years, and many of our soldiers and their families use Transmountain Road daily to get to and from Post. [ Other 11a ] As currently planned, not only would the road be widened from two lanes to four, but two direct connectors would allow traffic to access Interstate 10 without stopping. The expansion of Transmountain would greatly reduce congestion, and improve the safety of the road. [ Other 11a ]</p> <p>TxDOT has gone to great lengths to ensure the projects meet all environmental standards while providing the most benefit to the area. As part of TxDOT's plans, they have included hike and bike trails that cater to the wishes of the community. With your help, I look forward to seeing the project move forward, on time and as planned. [ Other 11a ]</p> <p>Sincerely, XX</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>
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RID: 12	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 Population growth patterns indicate increases between El Paso and Las Cruces especially with projected growth in Las Cruces due to establishment of the spaceport. Workers will need access to the international airport in El Paso. [ Other 12a ] This project does not appear to have contingencies, or a "plug in" for future inclusion of connectors from 375 west to I-10 west and from I-10 east to 375 east. I did not see any plans for ROW acquisition near construction of ramps that would address the future requirement. Shouldn't we plan now for "plugs" or "hooks" that might mitigate costs of future expansion? [ FMC 7 ] I am also concerned about entrance to Tom Mays Park. Current plans appear to require crossing on-coming traffic to reach the park entrance if traffic is approaching from the west. Likewise traffic exiting the park and heading east on 375 would be required to cross-traffic on 375 west. It does not appear as though the recommended frontage roads extend to the park entrance. [ FMC 4 ] [ Other 12b ] Keep as much open space as possible. [ FMC 5 ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 12a ] - Comment noted for the record. [ Other 12b ] – Based on the current adjacent land use designations, the proposed project considered frontage roads from Interstate 10 to Paseo del Norte. Beyond Paseo del Norte to the east, the proposed project did not consider frontage roads due to the fact that no existing or planned developments are present requiring access to proposed corridor.</p>
RID: 13	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 I'm for TxDOT's current proposed Freeway Expansion. A Roadway will not solve this city's future growth problems. I support a full fledged freeway. [ Other 13a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 My name is XX and I do commute every day to and from the northeast to the west side. I do support TxDOT's current plan as it stands [ Other 13a ]; however, I would -- probably would like to go ahead and see an on-ramp for those people who are going to be commuting to Las Cruces in the future so I would recommend an 1-10 west ramp and I didn't see that in the proposed current plan, but I see that more people are going to be commuting in the future from Las Cruces or from New Mexico and I do believe that this plan is necessary because we do have a tremendous amount of traffic right now on Transmountain and the plan will also provide another – [ FMC 7 ] alleviate some of the traffic that's currently on 1-10. [ Other 13a ] And as far as the overpasses, I do believe that TxDOT has done quite a bit of changes in making these overpasses more attractive and I would like to keep the beauty that we have in the mountains, but I do believe that TxDOT is addressing that issue and I am happy with the current plan so I do support it. [ Other 13a ] Thank you</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 13a ] - Comment noted for record.</p>
RID: 14	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 I don't agree with the over passes. [ FMC 3 ] I like and enjoy the beauty of the mountains. [ FMC 12 ] I don't think we need over passes. [ FMC 3 ] There has to be another way. [ FMC 2 ] [ FMC 8 ] Really the mountains are the beauty of El Paso. [ FMC 12 ]. We like the under pass idea. [ Other 14a ] Thank you.</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 14a ] - Previous planning documents for development of the proposed project considered underpasses. Due to the profile grade along the corridor, the overall concept of underpasses did not meet engineering standards to appropriately accommodate the necessary design and safety criteria. In addition, on-site and off-site drainage considerations for the corridor and adjacent land use for the City cross streets prohibited feasible design accommodations for implementation of underpasses.</p>

RID: 15	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 Basic idea is fine and needed, but, - cut out last 2 over-passes [ FMC 3 ] - better entry to FM SP [ FMC 4 ] - More open space [ FMC 5 ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b></p>
RID: 16	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 Yes, Transmountain should be four lanes from I-10 to Tom Mays entrance. [ FMC 2 ] When I drive by Transmountain on I-10 and look toward the mountains, I wonder why anyone would want to develop that area and destroy the view of the mountains. [ FMC 12 ] At the least, the fourth overpass at (the future Paseo del Norte) should be deleted. [ FMC 3 ] Nothing should be developed above Gas Line Rd. That land should be left as natural open space. [ FMC 5 ] Using Transmountain as an interstate has a problem - it is closed in bad weather which includes windy weather which we have a lot of in the spring. [ Other 16a ] Please reconsider your design and listen to the environmental concerns. [ Other 16b ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 16a ] - Transmountain is considered as a regional State Route Loop. The proposed overpasses would facilitate traffic circulation in the event that weather or traffic incidents require closure of LP 375, allowing traffic to safely turn around at the intersections. Typically on average 3 to 5 times per year, Transmountain is closed due to severe impassable weather conditions. [ Other 16b ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 17	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 My ideal project would be a combination of Option 2 and 5 with the following caveats. [ Other 17a ] Yes, we need 2 more lanes but eliminate the Paseo Del Norte overpass. [ FMC 3 ] Build an underpass at the entrance to Tom Mays Park. [ FMC 4 ] We do not want the land on either side of Transmountain Road east of Gas Line Road up to the entrance of Tom Mays Park to ever be sold or developed &amp; to be designated Natural Open Space. [ FMC 5 ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 Good afternoon, everyone. My name is XX. I'm here on behalf of the Franklin Mountain Wilderness Coalition. [ Other 17a ] First of all, I'd like to say that I love the Franklin Mountains. I'm a lifelong El Pasoan. [ Other 17a ] I've climbed all over those mountains since I've been a little boy. I'm a 60-year-old man now. I've climbed both of the peaks, the north peak and the south peak. I've seen deer in the Franklins, foxes, eagles, some friends of mine said they saw a mountain lion the other day over there on the east side. It's El Paso's preeminent tourist attraction and it's just -- it's unbelievable that we might be messing it up. [ FMC 12 ] So my ideal project would be a combination of options 2 and 5 with the following caveats. Yes, we need two more lanes but eliminate the Paseo Del Norte overpass. [ FMC 3 ] Build an underpass at the entrance to Tom Mays Park [ FMC 4 ] and we do not want the land on either side of Transmountain Road east of Gasline Road up to the entrance of Tom Mays Park to ever be sold or developed and it should be designated as natural open space. [ FMC 5 ] Thank you</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 17a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 18	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 See RID 18 in Appendix H for a copy of the correspondence</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> Postmarked 3/31/2011 See RID 18 in Appendix H for a copy of the correspondence</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 See RID 18 in Appendix H for a copy of the correspondence</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> See Section "Long Responses" RID 18 for the comments and corresponding responses. Due to the length and complexity of the comments from this commenter, a separate detailed response was prepared and is attached at the end of this table.</p>
RID: 19	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 I'm XX and I'm tall. Okay. Is that okay? [ <b>Other 19a</b> ] Several of the items that I'm concerned about have already been mentioned. It hasn't been brought up though that there's -- according to the plan that has been presented there's four overpasses within a three-mile area. That seems a little excessive. [ <b>FMC 9</b> ] But there's been several people talking about the unsafe left turn into Franklin Mountain State Park but no one has mentioned the unsafe left turn coming out of Franklin Mountain State Park. So if you're coming out and you're going to make a left turn or you're going to make a right turn, you know, it's unsafe. There needs to be a better way of getting in and out of Franklin Mountain State Park. I understand that a prior concern -- a prior concept of using an access road to go into the mountain - Franklin Mountain State Park has been understudied but because there are some archeological factors that that has been shelved or put away. [ <b>FMC 4</b> ] Also, when I viewed your presentation that you made to the city council -- I happen to be a geek and I like to watch those things -- I noticed that you have a flyover going from Interstate 10 to 375, but you didn't show a flyover coming back from 375 to Interstate 10. Maybe I just didn't see it. [ <b>FMC 7</b> ] The other thing that I noticed, that the exits for each of the four roads are after the overpasses for the road. I mean, that doesn't make sense. You usually get off for a road prior to that road but then again, you know - And also there's no entries on your presentation going from the west to the east so you can get off the road, but you can't get on 375. My concern on the flyover is I go to northeast every day and that set of flyovers over there has really changed what used to be somewhat attractive to me, kind of like what you'd see in Houston. [ <b>Other 19b</b> ] [ <b>FMC 9</b> ] Thank you.</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ <b>FMC X</b> ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ <b>Other 19a</b> ] - Comment noted for the record. [ <b>Other 19b</b> ] - Guide or exit signs would be incorporated into the proposed improvements that would alert drivers when to exit the facility. The project, as presented in the EA and at the hearing, includes eastbound entrance ramps west of Northwestern Drive where the I-10 direct-connector meets LP 375, east of Resler Drive, and east of the future Paseo Del Norte Road. Proposed Northwestern, Ressler, and Paseo del Norte interchanges are the typical diamond interchange configurations which allow the traveling public to exit before each major cross-street and enter after each major cross-street.</p>
RID: 20	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 I cannot believe that this day has come! [ <b>Other 20a</b> ] I guess I knew it would, sooner or later someone was going to put a dollar sign on nature's beauty of course nature lost again. [ <b>Other 20a</b> ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ <b>Other 20a</b> ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 21	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 Why when El Pasoans have had Bronchitis passing around the last ten days is the air conditioning on during this hearing - so that the temp is below 70 degrees for hours???</p> <p>[ Other 21a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 21a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 22	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 More population in west. [ Other 22a ] Tom Mays Park needs better entrance. [ FMC 4 ] Shopping center concession. We have more vehicles than ever. A larger amount of U.S. army living on east side. What about Desert Spring development. [ Other 22a ] Vegetation can be moved to the median or given to the city and not destroyed. [ Other 22c ] Safety in 4 lanes. [ Other 22b ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 22a ] - Comment noted for the record. Based on the development of the traffic engineering and analysis, the El Paso MPO's Regional Traffic Demand Model (TDM) which includes the next 20 years has the best information at the present time to depict present and future land use, including the Desert Springs proposed developments among others. [ Other 22b ] - An alternatives analysis that considered safety was conducted as part of the environmental evaluation process. The analysis considered several measures of effectiveness for each alternative, including counting the number of vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-pedestrian conflict points, and projecting queue lengths under various design alternatives. The results of this analysis indicated that the proposed freeway design improves traffic safety. Queue lengths at signalized intersections on frontage roads are shorter than queue lengths at signalized intersections for the other alternatives, thereby reducing the possibility of faster main lane traffic unexpectedly encountering the end of a queue well before reaching the intersection. Similarly, conflict points would be limited to the lower-speed frontage roads that carry only a portion of the LP 375 traffic, and not on the higher speed main lanes. [ Other 22c ] - In order to minimize impacts to vegetation and wildlife during construction, TxDOT will limit the clearing of vegetation to those areas needed for construction and disturbed areas would be reseeded with native vegetation where possible. This is in accordance with Provision (4)(A)(ii) of the TxDOT - TPWD Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).</p>
RID: 23	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 I fully support this. [ Other 23a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 23a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 24	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 I am in favor of the proposed improvements to Transmountain Rd. on both the east side and west side of the mountain. [ Other 24a ] When completed, I will feel much safer and will probably save time in crossing the mountain. Today the Resler entrance is a safety hazard for all traffic in the area. The cars traveling westbound and down the mountain cannot stop if a vehicle pulls out into the roadway! [ Other 24b ] Please consider the needs of someone like myself who uses the Transmountain Rd. to make a living by traveling from northwest El Paso to Northeast El Paso to handle business affairs at least twice weekly. [ Other 24a ] Thank you</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 24a ] - Comment noted for the record. [ Other 24b ] - The proposed project addresses safety, as demonstrated in the Environmental Assessment.</p>

RID: 25		
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 I am all for the expansion. It is long overdue. Having lived in both the northeast and Vinton, I traveled Transmountain daily. [ Other 25a ] It will relieve traffic, improve safety and add to a better flow of traffic in an ever expanding population. [ Other 25a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>		<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 25a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 26		
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 Great Project. Keep it as designed! [ Other 26a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 3/16/2011 TXDOT has put together a very good comprehensive plan for Trans Mountain that not only provides for the current needs, the safety of the driving, walking and bicycling public, but also for the future development that is already planned. [ Other 26a ] I would hope that the shortsighted views of some of the members of the city council does not derail a plan that is shown to be the best approach for the future of Trans Mountain and is in the best interest of the public. [ Other 26a ]</p> <p>Keep up the good work, XX</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>		<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 26a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 27		
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 I proudly support the proposed improvements due to the congestion that is happening now. It will allow commuters to easy access and definitely relieve traffic during rush hours. [ Other 27a ] It will also help the two major streets that intersect such as Resler/Northwestern. [ Other 27b ] Bicyclist and joggers will also feel safer using the loop and easier to do their activities. [ Other 27a ] I believe it will help El Paso and growing surroundings! It's a must and no questions should arise for everyone's benefit. [ Other 27a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>		<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 27a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 28	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 I proudly support the proposed improvements for Transmountain. We definitely need it. [ Other 28a ] I work off of Resler and the traffic from Resler going on Transmountain is horrible! This will relieve traffic and congestion. [ Other 28a ] And even with the new subdivision of homes coming how will we not build another lane. It's a must! [ Other 28a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 28a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 29	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 We definitely need this improvement. [ Other 29a ] I travel from the east side of El Paso to Las Cruces and I'm forced to take the Anthony Gap because most times there is less traffic there. [ Other 29a ] I support the proposed improvement. [ Other 29a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 29a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 30	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 Hi. My name is XX and I'm here representing myself and every other person in El Paso that is a child at heart. Kids love the mountains, we need the mountains. I've got a brochure here that the city of El Paso did a very good job putting together. It's the visitor's convention and tourist pamphlet. All it talks about is the beauty of El Paso. [ Other 30a ] Where is the beauty of El Paso that they talk about in this brochure if we're turning Transmountain into a freeway? [ FMC 12 ] Nobody likes to ride mountain bikes on cement. That is not mountain biking. [ Other 30b ] Nobody likes to go down to the river and see the river empty but that's the way it is. Sometimes you have to have water in the river, the rest of the time it's being used for irrigation. Nobody likes to see the river empty, I doubt anyone would like to see Transmountain loaded with cars, 18-wheelers and stuff that doesn't need to be on that road. [ Other 30a ] Frankly, I don't think it takes a genius to see why the gravel pit is being opened up out there. [ Other 30a ] Also, it's not a mystery as to why Santa Teresa is trying to get the module plan built out there. I think it's just a grand scheme of being able to allow all that traffic off the corridor to come into El Paso and out of El Paso. None of that traffic is staying here, it's going through El Paso. [ Other 30c ] Thank you.</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 30a ] - Comment noted for the record. [ Other 30b ] - The proposed hike and bike trail is designed for a variety of uses and includes an all-weather surface that will minimize future maintenance and provide accessibility for all users. [ Other 30c ] - The State Highway System is designed to accommodate local, regional, cross-border, interstate, and commuter traffic. The State Highway System is developed in response to land uses that are established by the local government, including commercial, residential, and recreational uses. The El Paso MPO's regional Travel Demand Model (TDM) captures traffic volumes coming into the El Paso region as well as traffic patterns within the El Paso area based on current and future land use designations. The traffic volumes resulting from the expansion of the Santa Teresa facility is being captured with El Paso MPO's Regional TDM.</p>

RID: 31	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 I am a life long El Pasoan who supports the TxDOT Loop 375 as proposed. [ Other 31a ] The current Loop 375 Road (Transmountain) is dangerous and traffic is very heavy. [ Other 31a ] The proposed roadway project includes great bike/pedestrian trails, trees and landscaping and will great for cars and pedestrians. This is good for the City and will promote its growth. [ Other 31a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 31a ]-Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 32	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 I am concerned that the plan does not appear to include a flyover north towards Las Cruces If this road is to provide an alternative route through El Paso this would seem to be important. [ FMC 7 ] Has sufficient right-of-way been acquired to accommodate future growth? [ Other 32a ] There are a dozen bills in Austin to tighten restrictions on eminent domain. [ Other 32b ] If ROW were acquired today that parcel could be temporary leased until needed thereby reducing future costs while providing a minimal rental income stream. Also plans seem to only have one lane on the flyover. Looks like a potential bottleneck. A potential problem exist @ Resler with current development potentially limiting the ability to add a flyover towards Las Cruces. [ FMC 7 ] [ Other 32c ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 32a ] - Sufficient right-of-way has been identified for the overall proposed project, which addresses planned growth for the area. [ Other 32b ] - Comment noted for the record. [ Other 32c ] - The proposed project includes two direct connectors that have sufficient roadway geometry for the anticipated traffic volumes for entering and exiting the direct connectors to/from Loop 375 and Interstate 10 mainlanes.</p>
RID: 33	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 This project is badly needed. [ Other 33a ] Current road is dangerous. Divided highway will reduce congestion and increase mobility. [ Other 33a ] Very important quality of life issues. Let's get it done! [ Other 33a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 33a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 34		
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 I'm a teen who's only been driving for a year. But in that time period there have been numerous times where I was ran off the road, especially on the westside of town, entering and exiting Transmountain. I think I speak for others in my situation when I can say this expansion should be approved. [ Other 34a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>		<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 34a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 35		
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 This project should have been done years ago. [ Other 35a ] It will be a lot safer when done for the traveling public. [ Other 35a ] It is also a plus for El Paso's growth and economy. The project will employ 100s which is also a big plus. [ Other 35a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>		<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 35a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 36		
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 In favor of having the infrastructure of this project. Safer roads, jobs in area will go a long way. [ Other 36a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>		<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 36a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 37		
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 I drive Transmountain everyday and have for 13 years. Traffic has increased a great deal during that time frame. The Loop needs to be completed. This project is badly needed. [ Other 37a ] It will provide a safer road. It provide safer and better pedestrian and bike use for a growing westside. As Fort Bliss grows the east west commuter traffic is going to continue to grow and this route is shorter than I-10. Transmountain is a designated route for oversize loads and the two lane portion is very dangerous with these loads. Four lane will make it much safer for these loads. [ Other 37a ] Please build it. This is a good design for an improvement that has been needed for several years. [ Other 37a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>		<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 37a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 38		
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 I first came to El Paso in August 1968, one year before Transmountain Road opened in August 1969. Over the last 40+ years, there have not been any significant improvements or expansions of the road. It is about time that we undertake the proposed Westside and Eastside expansions and improvements which have truly been needed for many years. [ <b>Other 38a</b> ] I wholly support the proposed improvements for reasons of vehicular safety pedestrian safety [ <b>Other 38a</b> ] and the fact that this construction project will provide and economic effect of much needed construction jobs for the El Paso community. [ <b>Other 38a</b> ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>		<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ <b>Other 38a</b> ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 39		
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 Great project. Must do it!! TxDOT did a great job! [ <b>Other 39a</b> ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>		<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ <b>Other 39a</b> ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 40		
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 I am for the Transmountain Road expansion as El Paso grows and traffic gets hectic it can really help the flow of traffic getting to work. [ <b>Other 40a</b> ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>		<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ <b>Other 40a</b> ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 41		
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 Our population growth, FT Bliss growth and expansion, the outlet mall's success and the development that has already begun in the affected area cannot be stopped or ignored. [ <b>Other 41a</b> ] We can proactively address the congestion and safety issues or ignore them and pay the consequences. [ <b>Other 41a</b> ] We must move forward and approve this project now. [ <b>Other 41a</b> ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>		<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ <b>Other 41a</b> ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 42		
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 I strongly favor the proposed improvements to Loop 375. I live in east El Paso, but shop, visit family and attend classes in west El Paso. [ Other 42a ] The improvements would greatly alleviate the traffic congestion. [ Other 42a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>		<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 42a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 43		
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 I am in favor of this project. In my opinion it is needed for the future growth of El Paso. [ Other 43a ] In addition, it will be an improvement that provides a safer route for everyone who travels on the Loop. Traffic is only going to increase with the arrival of more Ft. Bliss troops which will make the existing road even more congested. [ Other 43a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>		<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 43a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 44		
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 This Project is simple. Let's move El Paso forward. [ Other 44a ] This new highway will provide safety while alleviating congestion and improving our quality of live. [ Other 44a ] It is good for business, Ft. Bliss and the citizens of El Paso County. We must not delay. The funding is there and available. This will complete another section of Loop 375. The time has come for this project. It will be a beautiful addition to our current highway system. Please do what is right and move forward. El Paso deserves the best that TxDOT can provide. [ Other 44a ] Thank you for listening.</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 My name is XX. I'm a board member of the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce and I would like to thank TxDOT and all their staff for all the contributions you've made to El Paso and what you'll do in the future. [ Other 44a ] I just have a few quick comments and I also thank everybody for their opinions tonight and I respect everybody's opinion. The chamber is in favor of this project for a few simple reasons, it will help safety concerns that are valid today and are only going to get worse. Our population growth including Fort Bliss is going to continue as we grow our community here. It's going to improve mobility and alleviate congestion which we already have and we need to get that under control. [ Other 44a ] I do like the project because it is being constructed with both hiking and bike trails and I'm 100 percent for that and we need to do the best job we can to not just do it on this project but many projects in the future for all of our community members. And I would just like to say, I think we can work together on this. Someone said that earlier. We need to -- this project needs to be done. It's past due. I want to see us work together. And finally the business community thinks this project is very important for the future of our community. [ Other 44a ] Thank you.</p>		<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 44a ]-Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 45		
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 I am in favor of the proposed Loop 375 roadway improvements for the following reasons: 1. Safety!!! - makes a dangerous safer for bikes &amp; people. [ Other 45a ] 2. Completes the Loop 375. [ Other 45a ] 3. Provides jobs on a 75,000,000 project. [ Other 45a ] 4. Completes an important piece of regional infrastructure. [ Other 45a ] 5. Completes separate hike and bike trails &amp; landscaping &amp; tree planting on day one. [ Other 45a ] 6. Provides opportunities for business to grow. It will be a catalyst for growth. [ Other 45a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>		<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 45a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 46		
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 I am in support of the project as proposed by TxDOT and the Draft Environmental Assessment. [ Other 46a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>		<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 46a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 47		
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 I live in Canutillo and travel Transmountain just occasionally. I fully support this project and believe whole heartedly that this is necessary. [ Other 47a ] I also believe the opposition to this project represents the vocal minority. However, they stand to delay this project or kill it all together &amp; thus we lose the funding. If this is the case then I would highly encourage TxDOT to reach a compromise so we don't delay the project &amp; we don't lose the funding. [ Other 47a ] We need this project. " Save The Mountains" is a nice thought - but not at the cost of lives lost. [ Other 47a ] Thank you for enduring the hostility of the public &amp; the threats of these interest groups. [ Other 47a ] Sincerely, XXXXX</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>		<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 47a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 48		
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 Absolutely need this road expanded. [ Other 48a ] It is very dangerous &amp; a traffic disaster. [ Other 48a ] Please build road per TxDOT's plans. [ Other 48a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>		<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 48a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 49		
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 Great project. Must do it. Need the jobs in El Paso. Need new and improved infrastructure and roads in El Paso. [ Other 49a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>		<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 49a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 50		
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 I support the expansion. We need it for the growth in the Westside. [ Other 50a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>		<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 50a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 51		
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 I fully support the future development of this project. It is vitally important for the region and the Westside. [ Other 51a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>		<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 51a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 52	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 I strongly support the proposed changes to Loop 375. [ Other 52a ] I live in west El Paso and work in east El Paso, so the advantages of this project would allow me &amp; thousands of others in the same situation to have alternate routes to travel. [ Other 52a ] I also have family in east El Paso that I visit on a regular basis &amp; if I-10 is busy, it would be great to take the Loop. [ Other 52a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 52a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 53	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 3/22/2011 Road project has been well planned. We fully support this project and hope it gets started immediately! Please do not listen to the few hecklers who want to rail road this project because of unrealistic concerns. Like XXXXXX (name is included in original comment, under RID 53 in Appendix H of the Public Hearing Summary). [ Other 53a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 53a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 54	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> Postmarked 3/23/2011 Time and time again we have pointed out that an underpass is needed so that people driving east on Transmountain can enter Tom Mays without having to stop and then wait for a break in the west bound traffic that is coming down the mountain at seventy miles per hour. The TxDOT plan is deeply flawed in that grade-level access to Tom Mays will now be even more dangerous than it presently is. An underpass must be added to the design. If none is added, the TxDOT plan should be rejected on those grounds alone. [ FMC 4 ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 3/28/2011 I was one of several dozen members of the public who spoke at the Tuesday, March 22, 2011 meeting, 7 p.m. onward, Canutillo High School, El Paso, Texas. The purpose of the meeting was for the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to present the current version of its proposed changes to West Transmountain Road (Texas state highway 375, El Paso's "loop") from within the western portion of the Franklin Mountain State Park to the proposed interchange with Interstate 10 ("I-10"), and for the public to comment. [ Other 54a ] My comments were limited to the Tom Mays entrance to the Franklin Mountain State Park. [ FMC 4 ] This is the sole portion of the west-of-the-Franklin-Mountains part of the park that is accessible by side-road; thousands of people use it annually; the rest of the park's west side is only accessible from the current heavily-trafficked-and-four-laned Transmountain Road (Texas 375). [ Other 54a ] From their inception, TxDOT plans and supporters have stressed how essential it is that West Transmountain be made safer for all concerned—drivers, bikers, hikers and pedestrians alike. I fully agree that safety is paramount—which is why I protest the current plans for the Tom Mays entrance, which entail a strictly grade-level crossing from south to north and also from north to south. [ FMC 4 ] That means this: if vehicles seeking to access the park through the Tom Mays entrance are driving east on the freeway, they will have to cross the freeway's two (or three) lanes of westbound traffic at grade level and thus "wait for a break in the traffic," no mean feat given the fact that westbound traffic is going downhill and tends to exceed the speed limit. That also means that vehicles LEAVING the Tom Mays entrance and desiring to make a left turn to go east-bound on the freeway will have to do the same—cross two (or three) lanes of westbound traffic at grade level, waiting "for a break in the traffic." This enhances safety? This reduces accidents? The solution is clear: an UNDERPASS (and not a grade-level crossing) at the Tom Mays Entrance. [ FMC 4 ] I should add that a grade-level crossing means the freeway is no longer a freeway but a highway. Yet TxDOT continues to call it a freeway. [ Other 54b ] Thank for you for your attention to this matter.</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> Postmarked 3/23/2011 You have not given El Pasoans real choices in designing the Transmountain West Project. [ FMC 8 ] You have coerced this community by saying that we either build the freeway the way you propose or we lose the funding for the project. [ FMC 13 ] El Pasoans demand real choices about how our City is built and developed. [ FMC 8 ] Here is my choice as an El Pasoan. Freeway but remove the last overpass (Paseo del Norte) [ FMC 3 ] and preserve the Public Service Board land. [ FMC 5 ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 54a ]-Comment noted for the record. [ Other 54b ]-The project as proposed in the EA and at the public hearing would include widening the roadway to a four-lane divided freeway with two-lane frontage roads in each direction and transitioning the freeway to a highway facility east of the proposed Paseo Del Norte overpass.</p>

	<p>I am XX, Franklin Mountains Wilderness Coalition, et cetera. [ Other 54a ]  Time and time again it has been pointed out that an underpass is needed so that people driving east on Transmountain can enter Tom Mays without having to stop and then wait for a break in the westbound traffic that is coming down the mountain at 70 miles per hour or more. The TxDOT plan is deeply flawed in that grade level access to Tom Mays will now be even more dangerous than it presently is. An underpass must be added to the design. If none is added, the TxDOT plan should be rejected on those grounds alone. [ FMC 4 ]  Thank you.</p>	
RID: 55		
	<p><b>Comment Form:</b>  Postmarked 3/25/2011  I agree with you putting four lanes [ FMC 2 ]  but please don't destroy our beautiful view of our mountains. [ FMC 12 ]  People use these mountains for hiking and It would be a tragedy if they were destroyed to make over passes and other things. Let people enjoy our natural earth, let us keep what nature we have left here. [ Other 55a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b>  None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b>  None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b>  None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b>  [ Other 55a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 56		
	<p><b>Comment Form:</b>  Postmarked 3/24/2011  Transmountain is a beautiful drive. [ FMC 12 ]  Whenever someone visits me from out of town I take them for a ride and we always go to Transmountain and they always want to go again. It is a real show place for El Paso to keep just as it is. We don't need anything more than what is there. Please do not disturb what is now perfect. [ Other 56a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b>  None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b>  None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b>  None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b>  [ Other 56a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 57		
	<p><b>Comment Form:</b>  Postmarked 3/24/2011  I am in favor of the proposed improvements to Loop 375 for the following reasons: Transmountain is a much used commuter route between the East side and West side; It will complete the balance of Loop 375 on the East side and will provide badly needed completion of Loop 375; [ Other 57a ]  It will provide an alternate route to IH-10; It will make a dangerous road safer by making it a 4-lane road, instead of a 2-lane road. [ Other 57a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b>  None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b>  None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b>  None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b>  [ Other 57a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 58	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b>  Postmarked 3/24/2011  If there still is a chance to convert the desecration of a unique and irreplaceable landscape, lets drop this freeway proposed now. The only real need for expansion is to upgrade the 2 lane portion of Transmountain to 4 lanes to remedy the bottleneck. [ FMC 2 ]  This can be done for less than a tenth of the cost of the proposed freeway by simply adding a lane of pavement on each side of the existing 2 lanes and put a Jersey barrier in the middle. [ Other 52a ]  Given the potential and financial realities there is not much chance that the above will take place. At least keep the collateral damage to a minimum by binding contractors from removing fill or depositing spoil on vegetated areas off the construction footprint, and follow the option that minimizes the number of overpasses. [ Other 58b ] [ FMC 3 ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b>  None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b>  None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b>  None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b>  [ Other 58a ] - Three four-lane options were evaluated and the proposed project incorporates a divided median rather than a jersey barrier.  [ Other 58b ] - During construction, the contractor will be required to implement beneficial landscaping practices to revegetate the right-of-way. Permanent erosion and water-pollution controls will be used in all areas disturbed by the contractor's equipment. These controls will consists of the placement of topsoil and permanent seeding with a mix of native species of vegetation, where possible.</p>
RID: 59	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b>  None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b>  3/18/2011  I am unable to attend the public meeting on this matter. Allow me to express my full support of the TXDOT proposal to expand Loop 375 W (Transmountain). [ Other 59a ]  The city badly needs a freeway around the city and I see no other viable option except the expansion proposed by TXDOT. [ Other 59a ]  I do not believe that the proposal will have an adverse effect on the Franklin Mountain State Park; in fact, it should improve access to the park by the community. [ Other 59a ]</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposal.</p> <p><b>Letter:</b>  None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b>  None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b>  [ Other 59a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 60	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b>  None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b>  3/23/2011  I find it important to take a moment of my time to express my opinion of the proposed expansion into a freeway on the west side of Transmountain Road. [ Other 60a ]</p> <p>First, I oppose the freeway concept. [ FMC 2 ]  I presently live on the eastside of El Paso near the 375 freeway extension completed a few years ago. It has the intersection that is famous for the most accidents in all of El Paso yet there is almost no way to avoid passing through that intersection. [ Other 60a ]  The area is now littered with stores and stripmalls. [ Other 60a ]  Although once a traveler is on the freeway, it is easy to reach I-10, the intersection at I-10 is also a nightmare and very hazardous. [ Other 60a ]  In addition to this, the monstrous overpasses destroyed the rural character of the area and has again littered the area that once held farmers' markets with fast food restaurants. [ FMC 5 ]</p> <p>We must avoid this at all costs on the westside. It is a beautiful area that must be enhanced rather than destroyed in the name of progress. [ FMC 12 ] [ FMC 5 ]  Listen to the people of El Paso. We believe that the alternative plan is much preferred. [ FMC 2 ]</p> <p>Thank you for your solicitation of comments.</p> <p><b>Letter:</b>  None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b>  None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b>  [ Other 60a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 61	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 3/26/2011 Have a overpass or a underpass entrance way to the State park. [ FMC 4 ] Have a wildlife underpass near the park. [ FMC 1 ]</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p>
RID: 62	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 3/26/2011 I drive Transmountain Road Monday through Friday to teach at El Paso Community College. [ Other 62a ] I am concerned about the safety issues at the intersection of Transmountain and Resler. Moreover, there has been increased traffic over the last twenty five years. [ Other 62b ] I-10 is the only route though El Paso so there is a need for an alternate East-West route. [ Other 62b ] I am also concerned about the hiking and biking safety issues on Transmountain. [ Other 62c ] I understand that the Freeway will include both hiking and biking trails. I think building a limited access freeway will fix the problems and address my concerns. [ Other 62a ]</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 62a ] - Comment noted for the record. [ Other 62b ] - The proposed project addresses safety and regional mobility, as demonstrated in the Environmental Assessment. [ Other 62c ] - The proposed project will accommodate a shared-use lane on the outside frontage road lane in each frontage road direction. In addition and in coordination with the City of El Paso the proposed project includes two separate bike and hike trails that are separate from the frontage road system that run the length of the project corridor and connect to the State park.</p>
RID: 63	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 3/23/2011 I was not able to attend the community meeting last night, but wanted to express my support for the Loop 375 Transmountain project. [ Other 63a ] It is my understanding that the project will improve the safety of the current roads, complete another step in our area's road system and for me personally (as a cyclist) will improve the safety of bike traffic as the current road is not conducive for this use. [ Other 63a ] It is projects such as this that encourages economic growth for our city. [ Other 63a ]</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 63a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 64	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> 3/22/2011 You have not given El Pasoans any alternative choices in the design of the Transmountain West Project, [ FMC 8 ] since you have stated that we either build the freeway the way you propose or we lose the funding for the project. [ FMC 13 ] As a proud El Pasoan, I demand our voices be heard, and our opinions be given serious consideration about how our City is built and developed. [ Other 64a ] I have traveled by car extensively in the United States and have always been very impressed with the roads that are built around the mountains in Washington State, New York State, New Hampshire, Vermont, New Mexico, Arkansas, Illinois, California and Colorado. [ Other 64b ] There are no freeways on or around these mountains; only smooth surface roads (some are 4-lane highways that move traffic easily and take advantage of the breathtaking scenery. This is my vision for our beautiful Franklin Mountain in El Paso, and I would like to see your department [ FMC 12 ] reconsider better options for the city and citizens of El Paso. [ FMC 8 ] My choice as an El Pasoan is that you build Transmountain West as a boulevard [ FMC 2 ] and preserve the Public Service Board land. [ FMC 5 ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 64a ] - The public hearing and public participation process has been undertaken to receive and address public comment. [ Other 64b ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 65	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> 3/22/2011 You have not given El Pasoans any alternative choices in the design of the Transmountain West Project, [ FMC 8 ] since you have stated that we either build the freeway the way you propose or we lose the funding for the project. [ FMC 13 ] As a proud El Pasoan, I demand our voices be heard, and our opinions be given serious consideration about how our City is built and developed. [ Other 65a ] I have traveled by car extensively in the United States and have always been very impressed with the roads that are built around the mountains in Washington State, New York State, Vermont, New Mexico, Arkansas, Illinois, California and Colorado. [ Other 65a ] There are no freeways on or around these mountains; only smooth surface roads (some are 4-lane highways) that move traffic easily and take advantage of the breathtaking scenery. This is my vision for our beautiful Franklin Mountain in El Paso. A freeway with its bridges and access roads cutting through our native landscape would be a terrible eyesore. I would like to see your department reconsider better options that would blend harmoniously with the mountain. [ FMC 12 ] and the native plants that surround it, [ FMC 6 ] so that we could be proud of our effective method of solving traffic problems, [ Other 65b ] and at the same time preserving the beauty of the land that area residents and tourists would enjoy visiting. [ FMC 12 ] Please make a decision that benefits the city and citizens of El Paso. [ Other 65b ] My choice as an El Pasoan is that you build Transmountain West as a boulevard . [ FMC 2 ] and preserve the Public Service Board land [ FMC 5 ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 65a ]-The public hearing and public participation process has been undertaken to receive and address public comment. [ Other 65b ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 66	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 3/29/2011 As a 3rd generation El Pasoan who cares about the future of El Paso not only for myself but for my children and grandchildren, I want it noted that the expansion of Transmountain as is proposed would be a horrible mistake. [ Other 66a ]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It will make the area very busy and there will be a great deal of congestion with all the traffic. [ Other 66b ]</li> <li>2. Tom Mays Park is not protected-many safety issues need to be addressed. [ FMC 4 ]</li> <li>3. Many citizens have signed petitions expressing their desire to have open space and they should be respected. [ Other 66c ] [ FMC 5 ]</li> <li>4. Four overpasses on a 2-3 mile road- why [ FMC 8 ] [ FMC 9 ]</li> <li>5. The animal life is endangered. [ Other 66d ]</li> <li>6. Decisions have been rapidly made that have been challenged as not workable. [ Other 66e ]</li> <li>7. The proposed plan needs to be reviewed and revised. [Other 66e ] [ FMC 8 ]</li> <li>8. The desires and safety of the citizens should be taken into consideration. [ Other 66e ]</li> </ol> <p>I am sure there are more reasons why the TransMountain area should not be developed as proposed. [ Other 66a ]</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 66a ] - Comment noted for the record. [ Other 66b ] - Projected land use and related population growth have been addressed in the proposed design for improved mobility and improved traffic safety of the proposed project. [ Other 66c ] - A member of the public provided two of the referenced petitions to FHWA. Copies of the petitions have been provided to the appropriate City of El Paso official and are included in Appendix K of this public hearing summary document. TxDOT does not have statutory authority to regulate land use. A vote was taken by El Paso City Council on October 22, 2010 that supported the development of the land owned by the City of El Paso and managed by the PSB. [ Other 66d ] - In order to assess the proposed project's potential impacts to natural resources, the EA evaluated direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to both vegetation and wildlife through standardized methods for state and federally-funded transportation projects. As per the standards of practice, qualified biologists knowledgeable in regional flora and fauna conducted the following assessments for the proposed project, which meet federal and state requirements (including but not limited to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)/Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between TxDOT and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) (43 TAC, Section 2.22), the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321-4347), the Endangered Species Act, as amended (7 U.S.C. 136; 16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.), and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S. C. 703-712, as amended). A habitat assessment was conducted for protected species including species listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as threatened or endangered or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered; species that are candidates for review or listing by USFWS as threatened or endangered; species listed as threatened or endangered species by the TPWD; and species protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Habitat assessments are typically conducted using a two-step approach. Step 1 includes a detailed review of remote sensing data, including a review of the TPWD's Natural Diversity Database (NDD) and USFWS's Threatened and Endangered Species Lists. A review of black and white and color infrared aerial photography, National Resources Conservation Service soils maps, U.S. Geographic Service topographic maps, USFWS National Wetland Inventory maps is conducted to determine the portions of the project area that have the potential to be considered habitat. Step 2 is based on field investigations to ground verify the results of Step 1 and modify the potential habitat maps as appropriate. If potential habitat for federally protected species is identified, avoidance and minimization measures are recommended. If the potential habitat cannot be avoided, presence/absence surveys may be required. Presence/absence surveys were not required or conducted. In order to minimize and avoid impacts, TxDOT has specified that if any of the listed species are observed during construction, the contractor's employees will be notified to cease work in the immediate area and not to disturb the species or habitat. The employee will then immediately contact the project engineer. If applicable, construction will not remove active nests from bridges and other structures during nesting season. [ Other 66e ] - The public participation process has proceeded with numerous opportunities for public input on the proposed project, in the format of public meetings, a public hearing, and multiple presentations to El Paso City Council. Design elements of the proposed project have addressed public comments.</p>
RID: 67	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 4/1/2011 See RID 67 in Appendix H for a copy of the correspondence</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> 3/22/2011 See RID 67 in Appendix H for a copy of the correspondence</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 See RID 67 in Appendix H for a copy of the correspondence</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> See Section "Long Responses" under RID 67 for the comments and corresponding responses. Due to the length and complexity of the comments from this commenter, a separate detailed response was prepared and is attached at the end of this table.</p>

RID: 68	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 1/25/2011 I chair the City of El Paso Open Space Advisory Board. [ <b>Other 68a</b> ] The board advises City Council, by ordinance, on all Open Space matters for the city. The board has had made several recommendations to City Council regarding the TxDOT freeway/highway on Woodrow Bean Transmountain Road between Interstate 10 and the Tom Mays Unit entrance of the Franklin Mountains State Park. [ <b>Other 68a</b> ] First, we pointed out that the scenic foothills of the Franklin Mountains start from the El Paso Natural Gas Line Road about half way between I-10 and the Tom Mays entrance. One half mile of the 3.3 mile TexDOT project is designed to accommodate commercial development, [ <b>Other 68b</b> ] which would eliminate two significant hillsides and one arroyo within the scenic corridor. [ <b>FMC 5</b> ] We also recommended moving the future Paseo Del Norte crossing within the scenic corridor west one half mile to the Gas Line Rd., thereby eliminating an unnecessary overpass. [ <b>FMC 3</b> ] Secondly, there would be no safe entrance to the Tom Mays Unit once the roadway is widened. We recommended a spur road from the location of the Gas Line Rd. parallel to Transmountain Road to the Tom Mays Unit entrance. That would prevent traffic on the opposite side of the roadway from crossing into oncoming traffic at that entrance. [ <b>FMC 4</b> ] Finally, the board recommends at least one wildlife and pedestrian crossing under Transmountain Road at one or more locations where arroyos pass underneath the road. It would merely require enlarging culverts that already exist. [ <b>FMC 1</b> ] [ <b>Other 68c</b> ] Woodrow Bean Transmountain Road is the only Scenic Corridor in the City of El Paso. [ <b>Other 68a</b> ] The highway project TxDOT is proposing would severely damage this public scenic corridor [ <b>FMC 12</b> ] and would also be dangerous for people and wildlife. [ <b>Other 68d</b> ]</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 Good evening, Mr. Berry, ladies and gentlemen. I'm XX I live at XX and I also serve as chairman of the Open Space Advisory Board. And as you know, Mr. Berry, January of 2010, the Open Space Board first looked at this project. We had a presentation by TxDOT. There were a couple of developers there and preliminary it was -- we thought this was a good project. [ <b>Other 68a</b> ] We didn't have the full plans, we didn't vet it, we didn't examine it at that time. We were told that it would come back to us at a later date when it was completed and in August, quite a bit -- while later it went directly to the city council, this project, to our surprise because we didn't get to see the final plans, but it came to us shortly thereafter. [ <b>Other 68e</b> ] And after examining it we discovered one thing -- and this is something we didn't choose, I didn't choose it, Mother Nature did it -- that at Gasline Road, the EPNG service line road, and you can see this on any topographic map, the scenic foothills of the Franklin Mountains begin right there. [ <b>Other 68a</b> ] The El Paso Natural Gas Company picked the right location to put its gas line and that's in the foot of the foothills or where it is flatter. Above that they didn't want to go over hillsides and down arroyos, up and down sleep canyons and arroyos. [ <b>Other 68a</b> ] West of the Gasline Road is relatively flat and suitable for development and frankly already privately owned. We're fortunate in that most of the land east of the Gasline Road except for about 100 yards is our land, yours and mine, city land managed by the Public Service Board. [ <b>FMC 5</b> ] And this is an important scenic corridor because there are two major hillsides on either side of the Franklin Mountain -- the Transmountain Road and a major arroyo which you saw in the video. [ <b>FMC 12</b> ] And these, according to the west side master plan, would be obliterated and this is why this is so important to us. Nature picked this, not us, not you. This is Mother Nature. [ <b>Other 68a</b> ] And the TxDOT plan encourages development by using the freeway style [ <b>FMC 5</b> ] and running Paseo Del Norte across the scenic corridor. [ <b>FMC 3</b> ] We propose the widening of Transmountain Road east of the corridor to be at grade, whether it's four lanes, six lanes or eight lanes, whatever it takes to handle the capacity of traffic is necessary. [ <b>FMC 2</b> ] Yes, sir. So this is what is important to us. Of course we had -- we as a board had a concern about the -- the entrance of the state park, the left-turn lanes would be dangerous [ <b>FMC 4</b> ] and the wildlife crossing. [ <b>FMC 1</b> ] The last concern I had as an individual is I've been hearing 70,000 vehicles per day number in 2025 and then now it's all of a sudden changed to 30,000 a day. Let's get our numbers right so we can build the right roadway. [ <b>FMC 11</b> ] hillsides and down arroyos, up and down sleep canyons and arroyos. [ <b>Other 68a</b> ] West of the Gasline Road is relatively flat and suitable for development and frankly already privately owned. We're Thank you.</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ <b>FMC X</b> ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ <b>Other 68a</b> ] - Comment noted for the record. [ <b>Other 68b</b> ] - The proposed project is designed to accommodate land uses and the proposed Master Plan approved by the El Paso City Council. [ <b>Other 68c</b> ] - In addition to use of the proposed oversized, earthen-bottom culvert, wildlife and pedestrians would be able to cross Loop 375 at each of the four grade-separated intersections along the corridor. Both the proposed project schematic and Draft Environmental Assessment depict the earthen bottom culvert and the four grade-separated intersections. [ <b>Other 68d</b> ] - An alternatives analysis that considered safety was conducted as part of the environmental evaluation process. The analysis considered several measures of effectiveness for each alternative, including counting the number of vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-pedestrian conflict points, and projecting queue lengths under various design alternatives. The results of this analysis indicated that the proposed freeway design improves traffic safety. Queue lengths at signalized intersections on frontage roads are shorter than queue lengths at signalized intersections for the other alternatives, thereby reducing the possibility of faster main lane traffic unexpectedly encountering the end of a queue well before reaching the intersection. Similarly, conflict points would be limited to the lower-speed frontage roads that carry only a portion of the LP 375 traffic, and not on the higher speed main lanes. [ <b>Other 68e</b> ] - The public participation process has proceeded with numerous opportunities for public input on the proposed project through the use of public meetings, a public hearing, and multiple public presentations to El Paso City Council. Design elements of the proposed project have addressed public comments.</p>

RID: 69	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 4/1/2011 See RID 69 in Appendix H for a copy of the correspondence</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 See RID 69 in Appendix H for a copy of the correspondence</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> See Section "Long Responses" under RID 69 for the comments and corresponding responses. Due to the length and complexity of the comments from this commenter, a separate detailed response was prepared and is attached at the end of this table.</p>

RID: 70	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 My name's XX. I'm a native El Pasoan, born and raised. I love the mountains and I love El Paso. I'm also a person that lives in El Paso and uses all the facilities that are available and I'm one of the people here that drives Transmountain every day. This project is long overdue. [ Other 70a ] I'm glad they're doing it because it's going to improve safety for people that do have to use Transmountain in their daily commute. There have been issues that I've seen where people have been hurt or injured, both drivers in vehicles and people walking on the side of the road or biking so I think that some of the things I've seen here will address that. I realize there may be some modifications necessary to -- to the design and I'm sure that they're going to work through that but what I see from TxDOT is -- actually, I'm pretty impressed. I think this will end up improving, you know, traffic flow for people that have to use it. [ Other 70a ] and I -- the only thing I don't see -- once again as one other person mentioned it -- was a flyover that would tie in from Transmountain onto -- going north into Las Cruces. [ FMC 7 ] El Paso is growing. You know, we'd all like to keep a small, little town image, but, you know, we're having to deal with the people that are moving here that love the town too. I'm hoping that I see this come to pass in the near future where people will be able to use the road efficiently [ Other 70a ]. I don't think it's going to affect the view of the mountain. I see more damage from these warehouses right here along the freeway than from a short little corridor of three miles going up that way. [ Other 70a ] So once again, I support the project. [ Other 70a ] Thank you.</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 70a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 71	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> 3/31/2011 See RID 71 in Appendix H for a copy of the correspondence</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 See RID 71 in Appendix H for a copy of the correspondence</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> See Section "Long Responses" under RID 71 for the comments and corresponding responses. Due to the length and complexity of the comments from this commenter, a separate detailed response was prepared and is attached at the end of this table.</p>
RID: 72	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> A copy of the letter from XXXXXX XXXXX is located in Appendix H of the Public Hearing Summary under RID #114.</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 Good evening, everyone. I'm going to read a letter from the senator, just a few key sentences. And of course this based on his understanding of the information as presented as the representative has requested any additional information or updated information, of course he would like to be able to review that. Dear Mayor Cook and Director Saenz, I write to you today to extend my support to the Texas Department of Transportation's Transmountain West/Interstate 10 project in El Paso. [ Other 72a ] This project is an important component to the overall transportation infrastructure of our community and its construction will vastly improve the connectivity of Loop 375 between west and northeast El Paso. [ Other 72a ] Expanding Transmountain will greatly improve safety and reduce congestion by allowing travelers to bypass downtown and connecting the two sides of town that would otherwise take much longer to access. [ Other 72a ] The project represents a true public-private partnership which includes new public amenities that will be constructed simultaneously with the road. [ Other 72a ] While the project's impact on the environment is also a concern, I have come to the conclusion that on balance, this project will beneficially enhance El Paso's development as a smart -- smart growth community. [ Other 72a ] I appreciate your consideration of my position and I hope you will include my letter as part of the public hearing record. [ Other 72a ] Thank you very much.</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 72a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 73

**Comment Form:**

None

**E-Mail Comment:**

None

**Letter:**

3/22/2011

I am writing in support of the TransMountain West/IH-10 project as presented by the Texas Department of Transportation and supported by the Draft Environmental Assessment conducted by the Department. This \$85 million project is an important component to the overall transportation infrastructure and mobility of our community and its construction will improve the connectivity of Loop 375. [ Other 73a ]

TransMountain West/IH-10 represents a true public-private partnership that includes new public amenities that will be constructed simultaneously with the road. The new public amenities, hike and bike trails, will be open for everyone to use and connect to Franklin Mountain State Park after their completion. In addition, the project will have a positive economic impact on our community by expanding the tax base and creating jobs for our residents. [ Other 73a ]

Most importantly it will improve the safety of the road for all those that use it today and those that will use it in the future. [ Other 73a ]

I appreciate your consideration of my position, and would hope you will read my letter into your official record, thank you. [ Other 73a ]

**Verbal Comment:**

3/22/2011

Thank you. For the record, I'm here as a community member, okay, not on behalf of the board of trustees. [ Other 73a ]

My opinion is obviously as most of the people are really in favor of having this, I guess, expansion of our roadway up here. It's definitely necessary. [ Other 73a ]

Some people may quarrel about the overpasses and obstruction, but you know what? There's ways to do this right, folks. [ Other 73a ]

And other -- other communities - Arizona, for example, Phoenix, the way they do these projects are very, very nice so you don't have to sacrifice both just because you get the overpasses. [ Other 73a ]

And I see an improvement lately in our area in starting to do that in terms of the way these overpasses are done. It's been a long time coming and I think we can do a better job. That doesn't mean that we need to scrap it altogether. I'm in favor of this expansion. I think that there's a fine medium that we can find in between in terms of do we need some of those overpasses? Yes, we do. You know, not only that, some of these access roads actually create a better buffer for the state park than some of the other alternatives and I'd rather have that in certain places as an alternative than one of the other alternatives. So in terms of the plan that -- that's been proposed, it's not perfect, but I think I support it and I think we need to do this as soon as possible. [ Other 73a ]

That's one of the other things that I'm definitely in favor of getting it done as quick as possible. One of the things is that Canutillo High School and the El Paso Community College, I mean, there's a proposed -- been a proposed roadway that goes - initially it was an extension of Loop 375, this same area, and now it's been converted into a spur that will run behind El Paso Community College and the high school to give us access -- another access off the community college and the Canutillo High School towards the rear and I don't see that happening unless we get this project done and we get it done quickly. [ Other 73a ]

And we've been promised that for quite some time and the thing that's been delaying this is -- some of things they've told us is that the city has delayed in the acquisition of the rights-of-way for that area which goes along one of those arroyos behind El Paso Community College and the high school. You know, I think we need to get this done and that's really my position [ Other 73b ]

Thank you.

**Response to Frequently Made Comments:** see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]

**Response to Other Comments:**

[ Other 73a ] - Comment noted for the record.

[ Other 73b ] - TxDOT is currently developing a separate project for Spur 276 that will extend from I-10/Transmountain West to Doniphan (State Highway 20). FHWA issued a finding of no significant impact on the environmental document for this project on February 23, 2010. This project is scheduled to be advertised for construction in late 2011 or 2012. Right-of-way is being coordinated with the City of El Paso and Public Service Board.

RID: 74	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 Hello. My name is XX. I'm here as a private citizen. [ Other 74a ] I have five comments that I'd like to make. One is I would like to encourage TxDOT to consider having an optional plan developed that takes into consideration the city's open space land on either side as being left as open space because if that's not to be developed in the future, [ FMC 5 ] then that should impact where the Paseo Del Norte overpass is put or should be eliminated because there would be no need for it so by having an alternate plan, no time would be lost in starting the project that would allow the lower parts of the road to be developed. [ FMC 3 ] Secondly, I'd like to ask that the -- that TxDOT consider putting in an underpass for the state park entrance, [ FMC 4 ] find some way, either below or above the existing area if there's not a suitable spot, to be able to have an underpass that people would be able to use to access the park rather than having some sort of an overpass or as is proposed right now to have eastbound traffic have to cross two lanes of oncoming traffic to get into the park. I think there should be some way to find a way to create the roads, the underpass so that it could be done at grade and allow traffic to be able to get in there safely. [ FMC 4 ] Third, everyone's talking about this being a part of Loop 375 that will provide access for truck traffic to get from the east side to the west side or the west side to the east side. Transmountain Road is really not a suitable place to encourage truck traffic. [ Other 74b ] If you ride on it now you know that if you get behind a truck they're going slow because it's very steep. And I know there have been proposals in the past or discussions about doing the loop up through the 404 -- Highway 404 that would take people from the east side going up past McCombs and that area and then crossing over to I-10 which would be a much more suitable area for truck traffic to go either going east or west. It would also allow for all of the development that goes on at Fort Bliss and around the airport to have an easier grade to get either east or west. [ Other 74c ] Thank you. I would also question the level of service assumption that were made in that if the land on either side of Transmountain -- city land is left as open space, then that should reduce the level of service which would reduce the need for a lot of the infrastructure. [ FMC 5 ] [ FMC 8 ] And then lastly the visual impact analysis that you did, at least from my perspective, what you proposed is not leaving this as a scenic corridor either for bikers, hikers or for people traveling. You lose the whole impact of a scenic byway with all of the overpasses, the trees that have eliminated the open space that we currently have. [ FMC 12 ] Thank you.</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 74a ]-Comment noted for the record. [ Other 74b ]-The State Highway System is designed to accommodate local, regional, cross-border, interstate, and commuter traffic. The State Highway System is developed in response to land uses that are established by the local government, including commercial, residential, and recreational uses. The proposed project's design criteria provides for the use of truck traffic. [ Other 74c ]-The proposed Northeast Parkway project is being developed as a separate project to address increases in through-traffic, while the Loop 375 project is intended to address local and regional traffic needs. Both the proposed project and the separate project are programmed into long range plans and are intended to address current and future traffic demand on a local and regional scale.</p>
RID: 75	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> Postmarked 3/31/2011</p> <p>See RID #75 in Appendix H for a copy of the correspondence.</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011</p> <p>See RID #75 in Appendix H for a copy of the correspondence.</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> See Section "Long Responses" RID 75 for text of letter, copy of verbal comments, and corresponding responses Due to the length and complexity of the comments from this commenter, a separate detailed response was prepared and is attached at the end of this table.</p>

**Comment Form:**

Note- a comment form postmarked on April 2, 2011 (after close of the public comment hearing period) was received on April 5, 2011 and is therefore not included . However, the concerns expressed in the comment form are addressed in responses to verbal comments.

**E-Mail Comment:**

None

**Letter:**

None

**Verbal Comment:**

3/22/2011

XX, Franklin Mountain Wilderness Coalition and EPAS. I have a few comments I'd like to make regarding this situation. [ **Other 76a** ]

I asked Chuck Berry a number of times at city hall and a number of places, "Is this a freeway or is this a highway?" [ **Other 76b** ]

I never got a real answer so I would like him if he can sometime in the near future -- and I know you're not going to answer it tonight, but I'd like you to do that sometime in the near future because you can't turn left on freeways. Okay? [ **Other 76b** ]

Period. So that means if we're going up the mountain and we want to turn left into the park, we can't have -- we can't have an off-ramp there unless we go underneath. But a left-lane turning is ridiculous and out of the question. [ **FMC 4** ]

Secondly, we need a public hearing in the -- we have a forum here tonight, but I'd like to have a forum sometime in the very near future for all of us that are opposed to this

[ **Other 76a** ]

or have different views so we can solidify all these views an ideas and make it hopefully workable and right for all of us. [ **Other 76c** ]

And I'd like Susie Byrd to help -- help us with that. If you would, Susie. [ **Other 76a** ]

Anyway. Let me read some of these comments that I have here.

We need two more lanes. [ **FMC 2** ]

I think anybody that's against two more lanes is kind of unrealistic. [ **Other 76a** ]

Two more lanes should have been done a long time ago. The whole thing should have been two -- four lanes all the way down the 1-10. [ **FMC 2** ]

Why they stopped at three miles up the I-10, I have no clue and nobody's ever given me a reason for that. [ **Other 76a** ]

The most important thing I think we need to get out of this -- this meeting is we really don't need to spend all this money on this project. We need to take that money and use an alternative and the alternative as far as I'm concerned is Anthony Gap. [ **Other 76d** ]

And I know that we have -- we've heard that New Mexico doesn't want to foot the bill or doesn't want to participate. Well, we don't need New Mexico to do it, we need to do it ourselves. Because I can guarantee you in ten years that -- that area coming over the mountain is going to be so congested you won't be able to get through there. [ **Other 76d** ]

And the -- the area coming to and from Mexico, if you haven't been over that way and a lot of El Pasoan's haven't been there, they've already expanded from Las Cruces all the way down to the Texas line. They've already expanded their freeway, the 1-10. Okay? [ **Other 76a** ]

Let's see. You mentioned something about expanding to six lanes as we're coming down the -- coming off from the east side going west. Is that true? Are you going to go six lanes?

We've got four lanes. Are we going to go -- as we get down the mountain, are we going to be six lanes or not? That's another question I have. [ **Other 76b** ]

Anyway. The Tom Mays Park, I already mentioned that. It's ridiculous to turn left. If you're going to turn left there, whether it's a highway or a freeway, you can sit there and grow old waiting to turn left and the traffic is -- is really big. [ **FMC 4** ]

Anyway. I would like to say this in closing. That we need to save our mountain. It's the only mountain we've got and when it's gone, it's gone, folks. And if you want to bastardize it, do so. [ **FMC 12** ]

Thank you.

**Response to Frequently Made Comments:** see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ **FMC X** ]

**Response to Other Comments:**

[ **Other 76a** ] - Comment noted for the record.

[ **Other 76b** ] - The project as proposed in the EA and at the public hearing would include widening the roadway to a four-lane divided freeway with two-lane frontage roads in each direction and transitioning the freeway to a highway facility east of the proposed Paseo Del Norte overpass.

[ **Other 76c** ] - The public participation process has proceeded with numerous opportunities for public input on the proposed project, in the format of public meetings, a public hearing, and multiple presentations to El Paso City Council. Design elements of the proposed project have addressed public comments.

[ **Other 76d** ] - The proposed Northeast Parkway project, which traverses the Anthony Gap, is being developed as a separate project to address increases in through-traffic, while the Loop 375 project is intended to address local and regional traffic needs. Both the proposed project and the separate project are programmed into long range plans and are intended to address current and future traffic demand on a local and regional scale.

RID: 77	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 Thanks, Chuck, for letting me be the last speaker. I hope -- I'm XXX. I'm XXX I have a policy board, some of the members are here tonight. I just want to go on the record as stating that the policy board supports this project as well as completing the entire loop. That is the MPO's number one priority project. [ Other 77a ] The MPO is a regional transportation agency. We have to look regionally and not at a project by project. We have a regional transportation system that's over 1,200 square miles. We live in a community -- in an international community that by 2035 will have 3.2 million people in it, that's including Juarez, El Paso and Southern New Mexico. I want all of you to just stop for a second and -- and think where you were at in August of 2006 when the worst flood that hit El Paso since 1912. How did you get home from work that day? Interstate 10, closed. You had no alternative route to take. This is about -- this is about building a multi-modal transportation system that gives you alternative routes [ Other 77a ] whether there's a flood -- maybe it won't be a flood the next time but every day out there on the freeway there are wrecks, there are 18-wheelers that are turned over, there's automobiles that roll over. How do you get from one side of this city to the other in an east-west direction? You only have, on the west side of town, Mesa, you have I-10, portions of Paisano. That's it. And so as long as this community continues to grow, and it will, I don't think city council or anyone else is going to stop issuing building permits, then you're going to have to continue to expand your transportation system. [ Other 77a ] This segment of Transmountain Road is a very important vital link to a much bigger transportation system that we have to design today so that we can stay ahead and not wait 25 years from now and ask, "Why didn't they do the planning back in 2011 for our needs?" [ Other 77a ] It will be too late. Thank you.</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 77a ]-Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 78	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 I actually put down "maybe" on the -- whether I was going to speak or not. I support the project as -- I think I want to talk about the staff that's been involved so far, city department, the planning department, the streets department, the PSB, TxDOT has been very involved. [ Other 78a ] There's been a lot of work to this point and ultimately it's a policy matter of -- of which way this goes but from all the multiple private owners of land along Transmountain there's been a lot of heavy lifting, a lot of consultants that we've worked with so far and philosophically I support the project, but I just wanted to point out that -- point out, rather, that there's been a lot of work to this date. That's all. [ Other 78a ] Thank you.</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 78a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 79	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 4/1/2011 See RID 79 in Appendix H for a copy of the correspondence</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 See RID 79 in Appendix H for a copy of the correspondence</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> See Section "Long Responses" under RID 79 for the comments and corresponding responses. Due to the length and complexity of the comments from this commenter, a separate detailed response was prepared and is attached at the end of this table.</p>

<p>RID: 80</p> <p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> Postmarked 3/30/2011 My belief's in this so called Loop 375 roadway improvement is destructive and disrespectful to nature. [ <b>Other 80a</b> ] Please reconsider the safety of the environment and the animals. We all need to RESPECT and CARE for the animals habitat, preserve and protect what is rightful theirs and treasure this golden paradise. All of us have the right to stand up and speak up for this "jewel" in El Paso. [ <b>Other 80b</b> ] All of us need a place to be at one with God's nature. What I don't want is El Paso to be commercialized. [ <b>FMC 5</b> ] I want all of the children of El Paso and other's to see El Paso true beauty, not just in picture or in stories of El Paso once upon a time Beauty. Have you even seen the beauty and peace that these golden mountains have to offer? [ <b>FMC 12</b> ] Have you even seen the beautiful animals that are in these exquisite mountains? You are going to contribute in the destruction of the habitat of these animals. [ <b>Other 80b</b> ] Is this just sheer greed? Are you blinded by greed that you have lost compassion towards nature? [ <b>Other 80a</b> ] I wish you will realize what ungodly evil you will do to the terrain of El Paso before it is too late. [ <b>Other 80a</b> ] Remember life if more meaningful when you take a stand and fight for what is right. Please protect something that is defenseless and voiceless. [ <b>Other 80a</b> ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 I am XX and I just totally dislike this idea. [ <b>Other 80a</b> ] I don't like destroying mountains [ <b>FMC 12</b> ] or destroying natural habitats such as the environment of the animals. You -- do you even think about what you're going to do to the animals' environment? [ <b>Other 80b</b> ] Is this just sheer greed? And think of the questions, what -- what is the mountain about? Like it's about beauty, it's about preserving the environment and the creation of God. You know what I mean? Like why would you want to destroy that. [ <b>FMC 12</b> ] It's so beautiful. I don't want Transmountain to be once-upon-a-time thing. You know what? Like it has to be -- this -- Transmountain is the heart and the jewel of El Paso and if you destroy it, it's just -- we're nothing. You know what I mean? It's terrible. That's what I've got to say. [ <b>Other 80a</b> ]</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ <b>FMC X</b> ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ <b>Other 80a</b> ]-Comment noted for the record. [ <b>Other 80b</b> ] - In order to assess the proposed project's potential impacts to natural resources, the EA evaluated direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to both vegetation and wildlife through standardized methods for state and federally-funded transportation projects. As per the standards of practice, qualified biologists knowledgeable in regional flora and fauna conducted the following assessments for the proposed project, which meet federal and state requirements (including but not limited to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)/Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between TxDOT and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) (43 TAC, Section 2.22), the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321-4347), the Endangered Species Act, as amended (7 U.S.C. 136; 16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.), and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S. C. 703-712, as amended). A habitat assessment was conducted for protected species including species listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as threatened or endangered or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered; species that are candidates for review or listing by USFWS as threatened or endangered; species listed as threatened or endangered species by the TPWD; and species protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Habitat assessments are typically conducted using a two-step approach. Step 1 includes a detailed review of remote sensing data, including a review of the TPWD's Natural Diversity Database (NDD) and USFWS's Threatened and Endangered Species Lists. A review of black and white and color infrared aerial photography, National Resources Conservation Service soils maps, U.S. Geographic Service topographic maps, USFWS National Wetland Inventory maps is conducted to determine the portions of the project area that have the potential to be considered habitat. Step 2 is based on field investigations to ground verify the results of Step 1 and modify the potential habitat maps as appropriate. If potential habitat for federally protected species is identified, avoidance and minimization measures are recommended. If the potential habitat cannot be avoided, presence/absence surveys may be required. Presence/absence surveys were not required or conducted. In order to minimize and avoid impacts, TxDOT has specified that if any of the listed species are observed during construction, the contractor's employees will be notified to cease work in the immediate area and not to disturb the species or habitat. The employee will then immediately contact the project engineer. If applicable, construction will not remove active nests from bridges and other structures during nesting season.</p>
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<p>RID: 81</p> <p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 Hi. I'm XX. I've lived on the west side for twenty years. I hike the mountains, I bike the mountains, I drive Transmountain. [ <b>Other 81a</b> ] The only thing that's wrong with this project is it should have been done ten years ago. [ <b>Other 81a</b> ] From here on out, if you want to -- if you want any of the first four options, go drive in the northeast, go look at Transmountain on the west -- or the east side of the mountain. Look at what a boulevard does. [ <b>Other 81a</b> ] If you like the pollution, good, that's what you're going to get. You're going to get bumper-to-bumper traffic, you're going to sit through red lights multiple times just like they're doing in the northeast right now. If that's what you want, turn the project down. I don't want that. I don't want the safety problems that you get because you've got people trying to get on and off of the streets and boulevards. [ <b>Other 81a</b> ] Look at the -- the traffic accidents you have over there. People, think about what you're doing. It is not going to stay the way it looks today. I don't care what you do and how hard you fight it, you're going to have people -- the city of El Paso doesn't stop there, the city land goes all the way out to the New Mexico state line. That's how far the city of El Paso is going. [ <b>Other 81a</b> ] That's all the way above Anthony. So you're going to have all of those houses going and being built out there, you're going to have Wal-Marts, you're going to have all of the things that go into any city and they're all going to be built out there no matter what you want to do tonight. So the only question is where is this whole thing going to go? Are you going to increase traffic and pollution? I don't want that pollution. [ <b>Other 81a</b> ] This is a good project. It makes sense. It should have been done a long time ago. Why in the world would you build a two-lane road across there in the first place. And, yes, there are lots of trucks that drive it today. I see them all the time. It may not be the best answer, but it is certainly the best answer we have anywhere in the future. [ <b>Other 81a</b> ]</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ <b>Other 81a</b> ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
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RID: 82	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> 3/22/2011 My name is X XXXX. Actually, I wrote a letter to the editor which came out a couple of Saturdays ago on Transmountain so I think anybody who read it knows my position. [ Other 82a ] We need to find another alternative to this project. [FMC 8 ] As that young lady said a little while ago -- and she'll be here long after we're all gone -- you know, we're going to wind up with another Crazy Cat area. As far as I'm concerned, that's an eyesore. That's what's going to happen to Transmountain. Your development is going to do that -- not yours but - I'm here representing myself -- excuse me. [ FMC 5] And actually my mother who died two years ago, she used to live in northeast. I've lived in the upper valley most of my life so I traveled Transmountain all the time with her to doctors' offices or to and from her house and she always used to say Transmountain is the best thing about El Paso. She was 86 when she died and actually when she died, from the funeral home in downtown El Paso, I had the funeral home drive through Transmountain across for her last ride to the church. I mean, those are the kind of things that count, it's not just the freeways. We're going to lose all that. You know, people keep talking about -- comparing us to Arizona. That mountain isn't an Arizona mountain. I've been to Arizona plenty of times and no freeways look good, believe me. We need to preserve the mountain the way it is forever. [ FMC 12 ] Thank you.</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 82a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 83	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> Postmarked 3/28/2011 You have not given El Pasoans real choices in designing the Transmountain West Project. [ FMC 8 ] You have coerced this community by saying that we either build the freeway the way you propose or we lose the funding for the project. [ FMC 13 ] El Pasoans demand real choices about how our City is built and developed. [ FMC 8 ] Here is my choice as an El Pasoan. Build Transmountain West as a Boulevard [ FMC 2 ] and preserve the Public Service Board land. [ FMC 5 ] This is such a beautiful part of El Paso. Please do not destroy it! [ Other 83a ] [ FMC 12 ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 83a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 84	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> Postmarked 3/28/2011 You have not given El Pasoans real choices in designing the Transmountain West Project. [ FMC 8 ] You have coerced this community by saying that we either build the freeway the way you propose or we lose the funding for the project. [ FMC 13 ] El Pasoans demand real choices about how our City is built and developed. [ FMC 8 ] Here is my choice as an El Pasoan. Build Transmountain West as a Boulevard [ FMC 2 ] and preserve the Public Service Board land. [ FMC 5 ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p>

RID: 85	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> Postmarked 3/28/2011 You have not given El Pasoans real choices in designing the Transmountain West Project. [ FMC 8 ] You have coerced this community by saying that we either build the freeway the way you propose or we lose the funding for the project. [ FMC 13 ] El Pasoans demand real choices about how our City is built and developed. [ FMC 8 ] Here is my choice as an El Pasoan. Build Transmountain West as a Boulevard [ FMC 2 ] and preserve the Public Service Board land. [ FMC 5 ] I do not approve of destroying the land on Transmountain. [ FMC 12 ] [ FMC 5 ] We don't need a highway, freeway, or development there! [ FMC 5 ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p>
RID: 86	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> 3/23/2011 You have not given El Pasoans real choices in designing the Transmountain West Project. [ FMC 8 ] You have coerced this community by saying that we either build the freeway the way you propose or we lose the funding for the project. [ FMC 13 ] El Pasoans demand real choices about how our City is built and developed. [ FMC 8 ] Here is my choice as an El Pasoan. Build Transmountain West as a Boulevard [ FMC 2 ] and preserve the Public Service Board land. [ FMC 5 ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p>
RID: 87	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> Postmarked 3/29/2011 You have not given El Pasoans real choices in designing the Transmountain West Project. [ FMC 8 ] You have coerced this community by saying that we either build the freeway the way you propose or we lose the funding for the project. [ FMC 13 ] El Pasoans demand real choices about how our City is built and developed. [ FMC 8 ] Here is my choice as an El Pasoan. Build Transmountain West as a Boulevard [ FMC 2 ] and preserve the Public Service Board land. [ FMC 5 ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p>

RID: 88	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> Postmarked 3/29/2011 You have not given El Pasoans real choices in designing the Transmountain West Project. [ FMC 8 ] You have coerced this community by saying that we either build the freeway the way you propose or we lose the funding for the project. [ FMC 13 ] El Pasoans demand real choices about how our City is built and developed. [ FMC 8 ] Here is my choice as an El Pasoan. Build Transmountain West as a Boulevard [ FMC 2 ] and preserve the Public Service Board land. [ FMC 5 ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p>
RID: 89	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> Postmarked 3/29/2011 You have not given El Pasoans real choices in designing the Transmountain West Project. [ FMC 8 ] You have coerced this community by saying that we either build the freeway the way you propose or we lose the funding for the project. [ FMC 13 ] El Pasoans demand real choices about how our City is built and developed. [ FMC 8 ] Here is my choice as an El Pasoan. Build Transmountain West as a Boulevard [ FMC 2 ] and preserve the Public Service Board land. [ FMC 5 ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p>
RID: 90	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> Postmarked 3/29/2011 You have not given El Pasoans real choices in designing the Transmountain West Project. [ FMC 8 ] You have coerced this community by saying that we either build the freeway the way you propose or we lose the funding for the project. [ FMC 13 ] El Pasoans demand real choices about how our City is built and developed. [ FMC 8 ] Here is my choice as an El Pasoan. Build Transmountain West as a Boulevard [ FMC 2 ] and preserve the Public Service Board land. [ FMC 5 ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p>

RID: 91	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> 3/23/2011 You have not given El Pasoans real choices in designing the Transmountain West Project. [ FMC 8 ] You have coerced this community by saying that we either build the freeway the way you propose or we lose the funding for the project. [ FMC 13 ] El Pasoans demand real choices about how our City is built and developed. [ FMC 8 ] Here is my choice as an El Pasoan. Build Transmountain West as a Boulevard [ FMC 2 ] and preserve the Public Service Board land. [ FMC 5 ] My second choice is the freeway option but remove the last overpass. [ FMC 3 ] and preserve the PSB land [ FMC 5 ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p>
RID: 92	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> 3/23/2011 You have not given El Pasoans real choices in designing the Transmountain West Project. [ FMC 8 ] You have coerced this community by saying that we either build the freeway the way you propose or we lose the funding for the project. [ FMC 13 ] El Pasoans demand real choices about how our City is built and developed. [ FMC 8 ] Here is my choice as an El Pasoan. Build Transmountain West as a Boulevard [ FMC 2 ] and preserve the Public Service Board land. [ FMC 5 ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p>
RID: 93	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> Unknown date You have not given El Pasoans real choices in designing the Transmountain West Project. [ FMC 8 ] You have coerced this community by saying that we either build the freeway the way you propose or we lose the funding for the project. [ FMC 13 ] El Pasoans demand real choices about how our City is built and developed. [ FMC 8 ] Here is my choice as an El Pasoan. Build Transmountain West as a Boulevard [ FMC 2 ] and preserve the Public Service Board land. [ FMC 5 ] Having been born and raised in El Paso, and return frequently, I feel it is important to listen to the community. [ Other 93a ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 93a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 94	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 3/29/2011 From: XX Sent: Tuesday, March 29, 2011 8:42 PM To: Byrd, Susannah M. Subject: Trans Mountain Freeway Plan Ms. Byrd, I am a concerned citizen of El Paso, TX, a student of the University of Texas El Paso, and a member of Sierra Club. I am pursuing a degree in Environmental Science with a concentration in Geology. I am very concerned about the Trans Mountain freeway plan. [ Other 94a ] I believe TXDOT is not looking into accurate statistics going into this plan, [ FMC 11 ] and it seems they are pressed for time in making a decision. [ Other 94a ] Looking into the future I think it is best to consider the boulevard-style road. [ FMC 2 ] With growing awareness on Environmental issues, carpooling and other routes of transportation will continue to grow. While working at Grand Teton National Park the abundance of bike routes established was astonishing. [ Other 94b ] If these options were presented to El Pasoans an idea like this would not be in vain. [ FMC 8 ] To make a point, El Pasoans would not ride their bikes in proximity to cars traveling at high speeds. [ Other 94b ] This is not the only issue; the magnitude of the freeway would deplete the scenic view of the Franklin Mountains. The mountains are what bring beauty into this area. There are plenty of areas in the United States where mountainous areas are never seen and we are blessed to have the Franklin Mountains in our backyard, [ FMC 12 ] not a towering freeway. [ FMC 2 ] I would like to have a copy of the form letter with the different options. [ Other 94c ] Thank you for your time. El Pasoans need more representatives like you who push the issue. [ Other 94c ] Sincerely, XX =====</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> 4/1/2011 You have not given El Pasoans real choices in designing the Transmountain West Project. [ FMC 8 ] You have coerced this community by saying that we either build the freeway the way you propose or we lose the funding for the project. [ FMC 13 ] El Pasoans demand real choices about how our City is built and developed. [ FMC 8 ] Here is my choice as an El Pasoan. Build Transmountain West as a Boulevard [ FMC 2 ] and preserve the Public Service Board land. [ FMC 5 ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 94a ] - Comment noted for the record. [ Other 94b ]-The proposed project includes pedestrian and bicycle elements which consist of both eastbound and westbound frontage roads having an outside shared-use lane for bicycles and a separate bike and hike trail adjacent to northerly and southerly right-of-way lines for the length of the proposed frontage roads, as well as an extension of the bike and hike trail along the northerly right-of-way line beyond the limits of the frontage roads to the park boundary line. [ Other 94c ] - This comment was directed to the City Representative. This email was received as a copy of an email sent to Rep. Byrd.</p>

RID: 95	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> Postmarked 3/31/2011 (Note- an additional copy of this letter was received after the close of the public comment period on April 14, 2011 from Robert D. Andon, General Counsel.) RE: Resolution Supporting Texas Department of Transportation Transmountain I-10 Project Dear Mr. Berry: On March 9, 2011, the El Paso Water Utilities Public Service Board adopted a resolution (attached) supporting the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Transmountain I-10 Project, as well as the City of El Paso's recommendation to update the Northwest Masterplan to SmartCode Development. [ Other 95a ] In an effort to expand the use of SmartCode Development in El Paso, the City proposed that the Northwest Masterplan be updated using SmartCode standards at the request of City Council. With the necessary funding, TxDOT plans to improve the corridor from Transmountain/Loop 375 to I-10. [ Other 95a ] By adopting this resolution the PSB confirmed its support of the project as presented to the City Council by TxDOT, and transferred a parcel of land adjacent to the Transmountain roadway. It also supports the updating of the Northwest Masterplan, which is to include appropriate open space acreage in conjunction with maximizing the value of developable lands of the EPWU ratepayers. [ Other 95a ] In the same manner, the resolution opposes a blanket Natural Open Space designation or zoning of 800 acres within the Northwest Masterplan which currently includes designated open space. [ Other 95a ] The PSB recommended that TxDOT consider a subsequent phase of the Transmountain Project to develop a safer access to the Franklin Mountains State Park. [ FMC 4 ] Please let me know if you have any additional questions regarding the resolution. I may be reached via phone at XX or via email at XX. [ Other 95a ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 95a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 96	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> 3/16/2011 Dear Director Saenz and Mayor Cook I am writing to you today to show my support of the Texas Department of Transportation 's plans to widen Transmountain Road in El Paso, Texas. Transmountain Road serves as a key part of Loop 375. The project is essential to the area because it provides better connectivity between West and North East El Paso. [ Other 96a ] As currently planned, not only would the road be widened from two lanes to four, but two direct connectors would allow traffic to access Interstate 10 without stopping. The project will allow the traveling public to transverse the mountain in a much safer manner while increasing mobility. [ Other 96a ] In recent years, we have seen several deaths on Transmountain and hope through this project we can address that problem. Transmountain allows travelers to bypass downtown and connects the two sides of town that would otherwise take much longer to access. Fort Bliss has benefited greatly from BRAC in recent years and many of our soldiers and their families use Transmountain Road daily to get to and from Post. Expanding Transmountain will allow more cars to flow through the area and greatly reduce congestion. [ Other 96a ] TxDOT has gone to great lengths to ensure the projects meet all environmental standards while providing the most benefit to the area. As part of TxDOT's plans, they have included hike and bike trails that cater to the wishes of the community. [ Other 96a ] Transmountain is scheduled to be let in early April. The project has been divided into two projects, one of the West side, and one of the North East, with plans for the projects to meet in the middle. With your help, I look forward to seeing this project move forward on time and as planned. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at XX. [ Other 96a ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 96a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 97	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> 3/22/2011 Dear Mr. Berry: I am writing in support of the TransMountain West/H-10 project as presented by the Texas Department of Transportation and supported by the Draft Environmental Assessment conducted by the Department. This \$85 million project is an important component to the overall transportation infrastructure of our community and its construction will vastly improve the connectivity of Loop 375. [ Other 97a ] TransMountain West/H-10 represents a true public-private partnership that includes new public amenities that will be constructed simultaneously with the road. The new public amenities, hike and bike trails, will open for everyone to use and will connect to Franklin Mountain State Park after their completion. In addition, the project will have a positive economic impact on our community by expanding the tax base and creating jobs for our residents. [ Other 97a ] Most importantly it will improve the safety of the road for all those that use it today and those that will use it in the future. [ Other 97a ] I appreciate your cooperation of my position, and would hope you will read my letter into official public hearing, thank you. [ Other 97a ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 97a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 98	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> 3/14/2011 Dear Mr. Berry: I am writing in support of the TransMountain West/IH-10 project as presented by the Texas Department of Transportation and supported by the Draft Environmental Assessment conducted by the Department. This \$85 million project is an important component to the overall transportation infrastructure of our community and its construction will vastly improve the connectivity of Loop 375. [ Other 98a ] TransMountain West/IH-10 represents a true public-private partnership that includes new public amenities that will be constructed simultaneously with the road. The new public amenities, hike and bike trails, will be open for everyone to use and connect to Franklin Mountain State Park after their completion. In addition, the project will have a positive economic impact on our community by expanding the tax base and creating jobs for our residents. Most importantly it will improve the safety of the road for all those that use it today and those that will use it in the future. As a Trustee representing District 6 (Westside of El Paso), I have always been concerned about the safety of the community and our employees who travel TransMountain Road on a daily basis. [ Other 98a ] I appreciate your consideration of my position, and would hope you will read my letter into your official record, thank you. [ Other 98a ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 98a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 99	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 3/23/2011 My name is XX. I am a Senior Vice President with Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. and have been providing engineering consulting services and working in the El Paso community for 20 years. [ Other 99a ] I am sending you this email in support of the Loop 375 project. [ Other 99a ] When this project is complete it will make a dangerous road safer; [ Other 99a ] completes the Loop 375 freeway; provides separate hike and bike trails and landscaping which provides better and safer pedestrian and bike traffic; and creates jobs for El Pasoans on a \$75,000,000 construction project. [ Other 99a ] This project will draw employees to the corridor increasing property values around the area raising tax revenue for the City. [ Other 99a ] I respectfully request you accept my support for this project. [ Other 99a ]</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 99a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 100	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 3/23/2011 My name is XX, I am an Engineer Associate working for Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. a UTEP alumni and consider myself an El Pasoan. [ Other 100a ] I want to send this email in support of the Loop 375 plan for widening the road and making a dangerous road much safer. [ Other 100a ] When I used to live in El Paso, myself and a group of friends used to ride our bicycles along this road to get to the state park located in the vicinity. [ Other 100a ] Many times we wished the road was wider or there was a bike trail along the road. I was very happy when this project was announced and ashamed that some members of my beloved El Paso and City Council are against this project. [ Other 100a ] Being an Engineer I am able to grasp the importance of such project from the mobility, safety, environmental and economic point of view and could not be happier that such project has been designed and funds are available for construction. [ Other 100a ] Living outside of El Paso gives me a different perspective of the news I hear about this project in the Dallas newspapers. [ Other 100a ] The on-going joke is that if El Paso doesn't want the project and funding, the Dallas-FW community will be happy to receive those funds instead. Those type of comments bother me because I think the funds and jobs should stay in El Paso. Elected officials and community representatives should do everything they can to move the project forward. [ Other 100a ] I respectfully request you accept my support for this project and forward my message to whomever you think should read my humble opinion. [ Other 100a ]</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 100a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 101	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 3/23/2011 To Whom it May Concern, I attended the meeting for the Loop 375 project. [ Other 101a ] One of the people who spoke at the meeting asked all people who agree with the current proposed plan to raise their hands. It appeared to me that the majority of the people attending agreed with TxDOT's current proposal. [ Other 101a ] This could be easily verified by the staff of TxDOT that also attended the meeting. [ Other 101a ] There were a very few but loud people who don't want the project. [ Other 101a ] Please ignore these people such as Susie Bird and her small group. [ Other 101a ] This small group's opinion does not represent the majority of people that will be affected by this project. [ Other 101a ] This was clearly demonstrated by the hand vote that was conducted at the meeting. Therefore I think TxDOT should continue the project as planned without further delay. [ Other 101a ]</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 101a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 102	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> Postmarked 3/30/2011 Dear Mr. Uribe, El Pasoans have not been given real choices in designing the Transmountain West Project. [ FMC 8 ] The community must either choose to build the freeway in the way that TxDOT proposes or lose the funding for the project. [ FMC 13 ] We need real, forward-thinking choices about how our city is built and developed. [ FMC 8 ] As a concerned El Paso citizen, I would prefer that Transmountain West be built as a boulevard [ FMC 2 ] with preservation of the Public Service Board land. [ FMC 5 ] Failing that, my next choice is that the project be built as a freeway but without the last overpass (Paseo del Norte) [ FMC 3 ] and preserving the PSB land. [ FMC 5 ] Thank you for your consideration. [ Other 102a ] Sincerely, XXXX</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 102a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 103	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 4/1/2011 See RID 103 in Appendix H for a copy of the correspondence</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> See Section "Long Responses" under RID 103 for the comments and corresponding responses. Due to the length and complexity of the comments from this commenter, a separate detailed response was prepared and is attached at the end of this table.</p>

RID: 104	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> Postmarked 3/29/2011 Dear Director Saenz, I am writing you today to show my support of the Texas Department of Transportation's plans to widen Transmountain Road in El Paso, Texas. Transmountain Road serves as a key part of Loop 375. The project is essential to the area because it provides better connectivity between West and North East El Paso. [ Other 104a ] As currently planned, not only would the road be widened from two lanes to four, but two direct connectors would allow traffic to access Interstate 10 without stopping. [ Other 104a ] The project will allow the traveling public to transverse the mountain in a much safer manner while increasing mobility. [ Other 104a ] In recent years, we have seen several deaths on Transmountain and hope through this project we can address that problem. Transmountain allows travelers to bypass downtown and connects the two sides of town that would otherwise take much longer to access. Fort Bliss has benefited greatly from BRAC in recent years and many of our soldiers and their families use Transmountain Road daily to get to and from the Post. Expanding Transmountain will allow more cars to flow through the area and greatly reduce congestion. [ Other 104a ] TxDOT has gone to great lengths to ensure the projects meet all environmental standards while providing the most benefit to the area. As part of TxDOT's plans, they have included hike and bike trails that cater to the wishes of the community. [ Other 104a ] Transmountain is schedule to be let in early April. The project has been divided into two projects, one for the West side and one for the North East, with plans for the projects to meet in the middle. With your help, I look forward to seeing this project move forward on time and as planned. [ Other 104a ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 104a ]-Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 105	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 4/1/2011 With the growing population of the City and Fort Bliss, I think that the 375 Loop through the Franklin Mountains is very important and needed in the City of El Paso. [ Other 105a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 105a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 106	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 4/1/2011 Building the proposed Loop 375 Roadway is a good idea because it will allow for a better traffic flow. [ Other 106a ] I think it will also prevent any future accidents. [ Other 106a ] The current layout doesn't really allow any passing and it frustrates drivers that are in a hurry. [ Other 106b ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 106a ] - Comment noted for the record. [ Other 106b ] - The proposed project will provide for an additional lane in both directions of the corridor comprising of a 4-lane roadway. Based on the design, the traveling public can use the second or inside lane as a passing lane. During normal driving conditions, typically the lower speed traveling public will utilize the outside lane and the higher speed traveling public will utilize the inside lane for passing.</p>

RID: 107	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 4/1/2011 This project is a great improvement for El Paso citizens. [ Other 107a ] As a daily commuter through that road, maintaining a constant "flow" doesn't always occur. Usually, any traffic accident stops commuters. This expansion will allow for commuters to continue on their way, while still maintaining a safe distance for those involved. [ Other 107a ] I fully support this plan. [ Other 107a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 107a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 108	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 4/1/2011 I am in favor of the expansion/improvements to Loop 375. [ Other 108a ] I believe that the expansion will benefit and improve the functionality of the roadway. [ Other 108a ] Current conditions of the road create congestion points, which impedes traffic flow. [ Other 108a ] The bottle necked western portion of the Loop does not allow for proper usage as the remaining portion of the roadway is a 4 lane roadway. [ Other 108a ] I believe the two lane scenario of the roadway causes accidents because vehicles merging onto the Loop from the connector streets at slower velocities than the existing flows traveling on the Loop. Therefore, the change in contrast causes accidents. [ Other 108a ] I believe the wider roadway will help the vehicles merging onto the Loop. I also believe the improvements will relieve some of the congestion on I-10 as well. I really don't see any cons to performing the improvements. [ Other 108a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 108a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 109	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 4/1/2011 I am completely in favor of the proposed alternate for this project. [ Other 109a ] As a professional engineer and owner of both a civil engineering design firm, and a heavy construction firm located in the Northwestern Corporate Center (adjacent to Transmountain); I believe the proposed alternate will yield the most benefit in SAFETY for our area. [ Other 109a ] The proposed alternative will also provide the most efficient circulation across the City, [ Other 109a ] while providing those of us with businesses in the area safer and more efficient ingress and egress from work to the surrounding highways. [ Other 109a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 109a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 110	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 4/1/2011 I am in support of the TxDOT plan for Loop 375 Transmountain Road project. [ <b>Other 110a</b> ] My office is located on Northwestern Drive between Transmountain and Artcraft. We have been here since 1999 and I have seen a huge increase in traffic volumes and I believe its critically important to widen the road. [ <b>Other 110a</b> ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ <b>Other 110a</b> ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 111	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> 4/1/2011 This is a road I travel on a regular basis and have for a number of years. I have witnessed the steady increase in traffic over the last decade. I believe the amount of daily trips required for this upgrade was met many years ago. I support this construction and welcome the future reliefs it will provide. It's about time.....! [ <b>Other 111a</b> ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ <b>Other 111a</b> ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 112	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> Postmarked 3/30/2011 We all need to protect and preserve the natural beauty in transmountain. [ <b>FMC 12</b> ] In the world we are going to fast and are becoming too commercialized and disregarding natural habitats. [ <b>Other 112b</b> ] We need healthy and peaceful areas to enjoy. [ <b>Other 112a</b> ] And respecting and coexisting with natural habitats and letting them be. Destroying these mountains is like taking away something special. and sacred to the environment without it wildlife will be wiped off the face of this earth. [ <b>Other 112b</b> ] Shouldn't the modern society be about saving the environment and turning to ECO friendly methods. [ <b>Other 112a</b> ] Even if you build an over pass for the animals they're still going to be innocent animals killed because they don't know any better. [ <b>Other 112c</b> ] [ <b>FMC 1</b> ] This idea doesn't make any sense, [ <b>Other 112a</b> ] We don't need more pollution [ <b>Other 112a</b> ] and noise in these natural environments. [ <b>Other 112d</b> ] Please reconsider CHERISHING Mother Nature and saving God's golden treasures. [ <b>Other 112a</b> ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ <b>FMC X</b> ]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ <b>Other 112a</b> ] - Comment noted for the record. [ <b>Other 112b</b> ]-In order to assess the proposed project's potential impacts to natural resources, the EA evaluated direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to both vegetation and wildlife through standardized methods for state and federally-funded transportation projects. As per the standards of practice, qualified biologists knowledgeable in regional flora and fauna conducted the following assessments for the proposed project, which meet federal and state requirements (including but not limited to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)/Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between TxDOT and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) (43 TAC, Section 2.22), the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321-4347), the Endangered Species Act, as amended (7 U.S.C. 136; 16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.), and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S. C. 703-712, as amended). A habitat assessment was conducted for protected species including species listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as threatened or endangered or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered; species that are candidates for review or listing by USFWS as threatened or endangered; species listed as threatened or endangered species by the TPWD; and species protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Habitat assessments are typically conducted using a two-step approach. Step 1 includes a detailed review of remote sensing data, including a review of the TPWD's Natural Diversity Database (NDD) and USFWS's Threatened and Endangered Species Lists. A review of black and white and color infrared aerial photography, National Resources Conservation Service soils maps, U.S. Geographic Service topographic maps, USFWS National Wetland Inventory maps is conducted to determine the portions of the project area that have the potential to be considered habitat. Step 2 is based on field investigations to ground verify the results of Step 1 and modify the potential habitat maps as appropriate. If potential habitat for federally protected species is identified, avoidance and minimization measures are recommended. If the potential habitat cannot be avoided, presence/absence surveys may be required. Presence/absence surveys were not required or conducted. In order to minimize and avoid impacts, TxDOT has specified that if any of the listed species are observed during construction, the contractor's employees will be notified to cease work in the immediate area and not to disturb the species or habitat. The employee will then immediately contact the project engineer. If applicable, construction will not remove active nests from bridges and other structures during nesting season. [ <b>Other 112c</b> ]-TxDOT acknowledges that animal road mortality would likely continue to occur on Loop 375 even though a culvert would be constructed that could be utilized by mammals. See FMC 1 for more information on the animal crossing issue. [ <b>Other 112d</b> ] - The February 2011 EA utilized FHWA's standard of practice traffic noise modeling software to calculate existing and predicted traffic noise levels using traffic data derived from the TransBorder 2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). This noise model takes into account various land use categories, including developed land use, parks, and recreational areas. Noise receiver locations were identified at two commercial properties located in the western portion of the project. On July 13, 2011 TxDOT formally adopted new traffic noise guidelines entitled, TxDOT Guidelines for Analysis and Abatement of Roadway Traffic Noise. Projects not approved by July 13, 2011 were required to comply with the policy; therefore, the noise analysis has been revised in accordance with the new guidelines. The July 2011 TxDOT noise guidelines established updated Noise Abatement Criteria (NAC) for various land use activity areas; therefore additional representative receivers were included in the most recent noise assessment, including a school, a residence, a restaurant, and a trailhead located near the Franklin Mountains State Park.</p>

Although the results of the analysis using the Mission 2035 MTP-derived volumes indicate an increase in noise levels as compared to the TransBorder MTP volumes, the proposed project would not result in a traffic noise impact. Based on the analysis, a 3 dBA increase is expected at three representative receivers (school, commercial, and restaurant properties) and a 2 dBA increase is expected at the remaining two representative receivers (a residence and a trailhead). According to the TxDOT 2011 Guidelines for Analysis and Abatement of Roadway Traffic Noise, a 3 dBA increase is barely a perceptible change to the human ear.

Much of the surrounding land use in the Loop 375 project area is undeveloped. There is no NAC for undeveloped land; however, to avoid noise impacts that may result from future development of properties adjacent to the project, local officials for land use control programs would ensure, to the maximum extent possible, no new activities are planned or constructed along or within the impact contours. The impact thresholds for these land use categories (66 dBA for Categories B and C and 71 dBA for Category E) are established by FHWA. Impact contours for Categories B and C were defined as 65 feet from the right of way line and 15 feet from the right of way line for Category E.

The results of both the TransBorder and Mission 2035 MTP-based traffic noise analyses indicate that the proposed project would not result in a traffic noise impact. In order to avoid noise impacts that may result from future development of properties adjacent to the project, local officials for land use control programs would ensure, to the maximum extent possible, no new activities are planned or constructed along or within the impact contours.

RID: 113

**Comment Form:**  
None

**E-Mail Comment:**  
None

**Letter:**  
Postmarked 4/1/2011  
See RID 113 in Appendix H for a copy of the correspondence

**Verbal Comment:**  
None

**Response to Other Comments:**  
See Section "Long Responses" under RID 113 for the comments and corresponding responses. Due to the length and complexity of the comments from this commenter, a separate detailed response was prepared and is attached at the end of this table.

RID: 114

**Comment Form:**  
None

**E-Mail Comment:**  
None

**Letter:**  
3/21/2011

Dear Mayor Cook and Director Saenz:  
I write to you today to extend my support to the Texas Department of Transportation's Transmountain West/Interstate 10 project in El Paso. [ Other 114a ]  
This \$79.3 million project is an important component to the overall transportation infrastructure of our community, and its construction will vastly improve the connectivity of Loop 375 between West and north East El Paso. [ Other 114a ]  
As currently planned, the road will be widened from two lanes to four lanes, and two direct connectors will allow traffic to access Interstate 10 without stopping. [ Other 114a ]  
Expanding Transmountain will greatly improve safety and reduce congestion by allowing travelers to bypass downtown and connecting the two sides of town that would otherwise take much longer to access. [ Other 114a ]  
The Transmountain West/I-10 project represents a true public-private partnership, which includes new public amenities that will be constructed simultaneously with the road. After their completion, these public amenities-new hike and bike trails-will be open for everyone to use and will connect to Franklin Mountains State Park. In addition, the project will have a positive economic impact on our community by expanding the tax base and creating jobs for our residents. [ Other 114a ]  
While the project's impact on the environment is also a concern, I have come to the conclusion that, on balance, this project will beneficially enhance El Paso's development as a smart growth community. [ Other 114a ]  
I appreciate your consideration of my position, and hope you will include my letter as part of the public hearing record. If I can be of any further assistance or support, please feel free to contact me or my General Counsel, XXXX, at ##### or XXXXX. [ Other 114a ]

3/31/2011  
Dear Director Saenz  
I write to you today regarding the Texas Department of Transportation's Transmountain West/Interstate 10 project in El Paso. Although I still support this project, the attendees of the public meeting held last week in El Paso raised some important concerns. [ Other 114a ]  
I kindly request that your agency study viable alternatives for the planned fourth (or final) overpass in order to mitigate environmental impacts as much as possible. Suggested alternatives include delaying the overpass until such time as it is needed; constructing an intersection in the interim; or, depending on flooding conditions, constructing a depressed road. [ FMC 3 ]  
I appreciate your consideration of my request, and look forward to working with you to ensure success of the Transmountain West/I-10 project. [ Other 114a ]

**Verbal Comment:**  
None

**Response to Frequently Made Comments:** see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [FMC X]

**Response to Other Comments:**  
[ Other 114a ]-Comment noted for the record.

<p>RID: 115</p> <p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 3/28/2011 As a 3rd generation El Pasoan who cares about the future of El Paso not only for myself but for my children and grandchildren, I want it noted that the expansion of Transmountain as is proposed would be a horrible mistake. [ <b>Other 115a</b> ] 1. It will make the area very busy and there will be a great deal of congestion with all the traffic [ <b>FMC 5</b> ] 2. Tom Mays Park is not protected-many safety issues need to be met. [ <b>FMC 4</b> ] 3. Many citizens have signed petitions [ <b>Other 115b</b> ] expressing their desire to have open space [ <b>FMC 5</b> ] and they should be heard [ <b>Other 115c</b> ] 4. Four overpasses on a 2-3 mile road- why [ <b>FMC 9</b> ] 5. The animal life is endangered [ <b>Other 115d</b> ] 6. Decisions have been rapidly made that have been challenged as not workable. [ <b>Other 115a</b> ] 7. The proposed plan needs to be reviewed and revised. [ <b>FMC 8</b> ] [ <b>Other 115c</b> ] 8. The desires and safety of the citizens should be taken into consideration [ <b>Other 115c</b> ] I am sure there are more reasons why the TransMountain area should not be developed as proposed. [ <b>Other 115a</b> ] XX</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [FMC X]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ <b>Other 115a</b> ] - Comment noted for the record. [ <b>Other 115b</b> ] - A member of the public provided two of the referenced petitions to FHWA. Copies of the petitions have been provided to the appropriate City of El Paso official and are included in Appendix K of this public hearing summary document. [ <b>Other 115c</b> ] - The public participation process, undertaken in accordance with TxDOT's public involvement requirements, has proceeded with numerous opportunities for public input on the proposed project through the use of public meetings, a public hearing, and multiple public presentations to El Paso City Council. [ <b>Other 115d</b> ] - In order to assess the proposed project's potential impacts to natural resources, the EA evaluated direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to both vegetation and wildlife through standardized methods for state and federally-funded transportation projects. As per the standards of practice, qualified biologists knowledgeable in regional flora and fauna conducted the following assessments for the proposed project, which meet federal and state requirements (including but not limited to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)/Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between TxDOT and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) (43 TAC, Section 2.22), the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321-4347), the Endangered Species Act, as amended (7 U.S.C. 136; 16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.), and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S. C. 703-712, as amended). A habitat assessment was conducted for protected species including species listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as threatened or endangered or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered; species that are candidates for review or listing by USFWS as threatened or endangered; species listed as threatened or endangered species by the TPWD; and species protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Habitat assessments are typically conducted using a two-step approach. Step 1 includes a detailed review of remote sensing data, including a review of the TPWD's Natural Diversity Database (NDD) and USFWS's Threatened and Endangered Species Lists. A review of black and white and color infrared aerial photography, National Resources Conservation Service soils maps, U.S. Geographic Service topographic maps, USFWS National Wetland Inventory maps is conducted to determine the portions of the project area that have the potential to be considered habitat. Step 2 is based on field investigations to ground verify the results of Step 1 and modify the potential habitat maps as appropriate. If potential habitat for federally protected species is identified, avoidance and minimization measures are recommended. If the potential habitat cannot be avoided, presence/absence surveys may be required. Presence/absence surveys were not required or conducted. In order to minimize and avoid impacts, TxDOT has specified that if any of the listed species are observed during construction, the contractor's employees will be notified to cease work in the immediate area and not to disturb the species or habitat. The employee will then immediately contact the project engineer. If applicable, construction will not remove active nests from bridges and other structures during nesting season.</p>
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<p>RID: 116</p> <p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> Postmarked 4/1/2011 Dear Mr. Gelacio: The El Paso City Council considered the Loop 375 TransMountain Rod. Project from I-10 to east of the Franklin Mountain State Park Entrance at its regular council meeting on March 29, 2011. The City offers the following comments as part of the public comment period for this project and requests that they be made part of the project record. [ <b>Other 116a</b> ] As the official position for the City, Council voted to support the improvements as designed, and reviewed by FHWA in the environmental document prepared for the project. This includes the overpass at the proposed roadway referred to as Plexxar and the interchange at the proposed location for Paseo Del Norte. Council's action is documented in the attached motion. [ <b>Other 116a</b> ] However, given one of the project's stated purposes to improve safety along this corridor, the City Council expressed serious concerns about the safety of the proposed at-grade access to the Franklin Mountain (Tom Mays) State Park. District Engineer Chuck Berry indicated the access proposed as part of the TransMountain project was an interim solution and committed to developing a project that improves access to the State Park within six months. City Council strongly encourages the Texas Department of Transportation to address an alternate access that does not involve highway lanes and provides a safer route for park visitors. According to Mr. Berry, the State is experiencing favorable bidding environment and expects to bid the project under the current estimate. The City requests and savings in this project be immediately applied to the State Park access project. Should the savings not be adequate to fully fund the project, the City requests additional state funds be made available to fund and deliver access to the park as soon as practicable. Should you have any questions, you may contact Daryl W. Cole, Director, El Paso Department of Transportation at 621-6750. [ <b>FMC 4</b> ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [FMC X]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ <b>Other 116a</b> ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
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<p>RID: 117</p>	<p><b>Comment Form:</b>  Postmarked 4/1/2011  1.) This form does not accurately portray discussions, meetings with City Council &amp; the public! Initial discussions merely mentioned "improvements" changes (pushed this idea) from I-10 W (NW) up the NW side with no mention of the tie in to Loop 375 on the NE side of the Mountain. [ <b>Other 117a</b> ]  2.) This was supposed to be a widening of Transmountain Road for safety reasons &amp; projected increases in traffic. [ <b>Other 117b</b> ]  One such idea expressed by TXDOT rep Mr. Berry suggested increased traffic from Mexico. Most traffic (individuals) do not head to far east El Paso, so would not use Transmountain. They are going shopping at malls located along I-10. Other than the point of Entry @ Santa Teresa, NM most traffic enters from places already much further east on I-10 and [ <b>Other 117c</b> ]  3.) Inclement weather ice/snow &amp; high winds (our area prone to) makes Transmountain Road especially dangerous for high profile vehicles. The elevation nearly 6000 ft. is also a concern as are occasional rains, etc which cause rock slides. The road is often closed at such times. [ <b>Other 117d</b> ]  A better choice would be Anthony Gap further NW &amp; at a lower elevation. [ <b>Other 117e</b> ]  4) As mentioned repeatedly by TXDOT (TXDOT) (a veiled threat) to City Council \$85 million could be lost if we did not accept their proposal! [ <b>FMC 13</b> ]  5) More than 1 petition has been circulated &amp; signed by citizens of this community [ <b>Other 117f</b> ]  saying we do not want our scenic corridor obstructed [ <b>FMC 12</b> ]  as would occur with the addition of 2 interchanges overpasses at Plexxar &amp; Paseo del Norte [ <b>FMC 3</b> ]  &amp; of course fourth development would occur further &amp; further up towards Franklin Mountain St. Park. [ <b>Other 117 c</b> ]  6) There is currently no consideration for animal movement in the area. [ <b>FMC 1</b> ]  Proposals may provide a "tunnel", "culvert" which would allow them to go from 1 side of the highway to the other – absurd, as predator &amp; prey are moving within a relatively small, confined area. [ <b>Other 117c</b> ]  7) Why not make I-10 E/W have a 2 decker multi-lane from far E El Paso thru downtown and out W similar to Austin. [ <b>Other 117g</b> ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b>  None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b>  None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b>  None</p>
<p>RID: 118</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [FMC X]</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b>  [ <b>Other 117a</b> ] - There are no other improvements planned through the park to tie the NW side to the NE side of Transmountain. This comment appears to reference a separate project on LP 375, approximately 9 miles east of the currently proposed project in Northeast El Paso. This project identified independent logical project termini from approximately one mile west of US 54 to BS 54 (Dyer Street) and secured a finding of no significant impact from FHWA on March 11, 2011. Public involvement for this project included a public meeting on September 23, 2009 and a public hearing on February 15, 2011. These events were advertised in both the El Paso Times and <i>El Diario De El Paso</i>, as well as on the TxDOT website. Letters notifying adjacent land owners and public officials of the meeting and hearing were also sent out. The final environmental assessment and public hearing summary report for this project are available for review at the TxDOT El Paso District Office, located at 13301 Gateway West, El Paso, Texas.  [ <b>Other 117b</b> ] - The proposed project addresses mobility and safety, as described in the Environmental Assessment.  [ <b>Other 117c</b> ] - Comment noted for the record. City of El Paso is the public agency responsible for land use policies.  [ <b>Other 117d</b> ] - The proposed overpasses would facilitate traffic circulation in the event that weather or traffic incidents require closure of LP 375, allowing traffic to safely turn around at the proposed grade separated interchanges. Typically on average 3 to 5 times per year, Transmountain is closed due to severe impassable weather conditions.  [ <b>Other 117e</b> ] - The proposed Northeast Parkway project, which traverses the Anthony Gap, is being developed as a separate planning project to address increases in through-traffic, while the proposed subject Loop 375 project is planned to address local and regional traffic needs. Both projects are programmed into long range plans and are intended to address current and future traffic demand on a local and regional scale.  [ <b>Other 117f</b> ] - A member of the public provided two of the referenced petitions to FHWA. Copies of the petitions have been provided to the appropriate City of El Paso official.  [ <b>Other 117g</b> ] - The El Paso MPO, acting as the regional transportation organization, has included expansion of Loop 375 in its long range plans as an alternative to significant expansion of I 10 through El Paso.</p>
<p>RID: 118</p>	<p><b>Comment Form:</b>  Postmarked 4/1/2011  We were told this was going to be a widening of west side Transmountain Road for safety &amp; increased future traffic. [ <b>Other 118a</b> ]  Now they are planning 2 more overpasses/interchanges at Plexxar &amp; Paseo Del Norte, which we were not aware. [ <b>FMC 3</b> ]  This will ruin our view of the mountain [ <b>FMC 12</b> ]  and cause further development along the route too close to the entrance of the Franklin Mt. State Park [ <b>FMC 5</b> ]  This is the largest urban park in the U.S. [ <b>Other 118a</b> ]  Due to bad weather this not a good idea [ <b>Other 118b</b> ]  to use Transmountain as a connection with Loop 375 coming from the east. [ <b>Other 118c</b> ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b>  None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b>  None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b>  None</p>

RID: 119	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b>  Postmarked 3/30/2011  Growth and safety are two important factors to any city's development into a successful and modern community. [ Other 119a ]  Growth maintains and helps create jobs. With the continued increase of El Paso's population, the increase of traffic is irrefutable. [ Other 119a ]  The proposed Loop 375 improvements project is exactly what is states in the project title. It will be an "improvement" to the city of El Paso and is essential to the progression of the City and its citizens while enabling a safer route to and from interstate-10. [ Other 119a ]  I am fully behind and in favor of TXDOT's proposed Loop 375 Transmountain Road Project. [ Other 119a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b>  None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b>  None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b>  None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b>  [ Other 119a ] - Commented noted for the record.</p>
RID: 120	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b>  Postmarked 4/1/2011  I'm in favor of the expansion of Loop 375 Transmountain Road. [ Other 120a ]  The expansion will ease traffic in this area. [ Other 120a ]  With West El Paso rapid growth, the addition of this road expansion will benefit the citizens of El Paso. [ Other 120a ]</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b>  None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b>  None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b>  None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b>  [ Other 120a ] - Commented noted for the record.</p>
RID: 121	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b>  None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b>  None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b>  Postmarked 3/31/2011  Please allow me to explain and give reasons to my letter. [ Other 121a ]  I am hoping that you will carefully think about what is going on in El Paso, Texas. The most beautiful scenic mountain in my eyes is about to be destroyed. [ FMC 12 ]  I hope and pray it will not happen. [ Other 121a ]  I have lived all my life in El Paso and every morning when I wake up, their stands this huge mountain range. [ FMC 12 ]  I say it is the most appealing part of El Paso. [ Other 121a ]  I know so because when I stand on the mountain I see El Paso, New Mexico and another country, Mexico. But the part that always comes to mind is the poem by John Gillespie Magee Jr - High Flight. But in my words I say as I ride the mountains: Oh I have been to the mountains (Trans Mountain). Put out my hand and touched the face of God. I feel I lot closer to God as I stand on the mountain overlooking El Paso. At ease and simply enjoying the quiet and peaceful view. This breath taking view brings joy and tranquility. But with the break of the mountain the whole picture will change tremendously. This change will pollute the life of the mountain. There will be changes in all life cycles. Please do not destroy the mountain. [ FMC 12 ]  Let's take care of it. In closing let me invite you to ride the mountain. [ Other 121a ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b>  None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ].</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b>  [ Other 121a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 122	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> Postmarked 3/31/2011 I am writing because I was unable to make it to the meeting for our mountains here in El Paso, Texas. My car was broken down and I had it in the mechanics shop. [ Other 122a ] But, I will tell you what I think: about you and your people destroying any parts of our mountains. [ Other 122a ] These mountains that we have here is what makes El Paso, Texas stand out. Everyone loves the mountains except for the money hungry mongers. [ Other 122a ] There should not have been a road cut off in the first place. [ Other 122a ] The mountains here is the only thing that brings beauty to this territory. [ Other 122a ] Not only that, you are destroying the animals homes that live in the area. How would you like it if someone came and destroyed your home? [ Other 122b ] That is called animal abuse! [ Other 122a ] Another thing is that I will bet that all of you call yourself Christians. If you really had any love for God you would respect what He made. He created these mountains and all the terrain around here. So quit being hypocrites. [ Other 122a ] Also, no one has even bothered with the geology around here. Most all the land has many holes underground. The earth is mostly caliche and there is a fault line in that area. Remember that Mother Nature will not care who She hurts if you all destroy her. It may not happen right away but, it will. The earth is always shifting. [ Other 122a ] All I can say for now is: Learn from the mistakes of others. You can't live long enough to make them all -YOURSELF. [ Other 122a ] Just remember what has happened in other places like California, Missouri, sink holes in several places of Texas and others. Hope that you will change your mind and leave our mountains alone. [ FMC 12 ] Thank You, Enclosed is a copy of an editorial article in the newspaper here. It was written by my City Representative. She is the only one that has the guts to fight for her constituents. But no one of you or those that are getting money out of this want to hear her. [ Other 122c ] It is really a shame, she is only one woman!?! [ Other 122a ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ].</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 122a ] - Comment noted for the record. [ Other 122b ] - In order to assess the proposed project's potential impacts to natural resources, the EA evaluated direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to both vegetation and wildlife through standardized methods for state and federally-funded transportation projects. As per the standards of practice, qualified biologists knowledgeable in regional flora and fauna conducted the following assessments for the proposed project, which meet federal and state requirements (including but not limited to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)/Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between TxDOT and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) (43 TAC, Section 2.22), the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321-4347), the Endangered Species Act, as amended (7 U.S.C. 136; 16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.), and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S. C. 703-712, as amended). A habitat assessment was conducted for protected species including species listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as threatened or endangered or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered; species that are candidates for review or listing by USFWS as threatened or endangered; species listed as threatened or endangered species by the TPWD; and species protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Habitat assessments are typically conducted using a two-step approach. Step 1 includes a detailed review of remote sensing data, including a review of the TPWD's Natural Diversity Database (NDD) and USFWS's Threatened and Endangered Species Lists. A review of black and white and color infrared aerial photography, National Resources Conservation Service soils maps, U.S. Geographic Service topographic maps, USFWS National Wetland Inventory maps is conducted to determine the portions of the project area that have the potential to be considered habitat. Step 2 is based on field investigations to ground verify the results of Step 1 and modify the potential habitat maps as appropriate. If potential habitat for federally protected species is identified, avoidance and minimization measures are recommended. If the potential habitat cannot be avoided, presence/absence surveys may be required. Presence/absence surveys were not required or conducted. In order to minimize and avoid impacts, TxDOT has specified that if any of the listed species are observed during construction, the contractor's employees will be notified to cease work in the immediate area and not to disturb the species or habitat. The employee will then immediately contact the project engineer. If applicable, construction will not remove active nests from bridges and other structures during nesting season. [ Other 122c ] - The public participation process has proceeded with numerous opportunities for public input on the proposed project through the use of public meetings, a public hearing, and multiple public presentations to El Paso City Council. Design elements of the proposed project have addressed public comments. (A copy of the referenced article is included in Appendix H under RID #122.)</p>
RID: 123	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> None</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> 3/30/2011 You have not given El Pasoans real choices in designing the Transmountain West Project. [ FMC 8 ] You have coerced this community by saying that we either build the freeway the way you propose or we lose the funding for the project. [ FMC 13 ] El Pasoans demand real choices about how our City is built and developed. Here is my choice as an El Pasoan. Build Transmountain West as a Boulevard [ FMC 2 ] and preserve the Public Service Board land. [ FMC 5 ] Let's stop trying to turn El Paso into Southern California, okay? [ Other 123a ]</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1for responses indicated as [ FMC X ].</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 123b ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 124	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 3/24/2011 For the project as proposed. [ Other 124a ] Let's get this done. [ Other 124a ]</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 124a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 125	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 3/24/2011 I completely support the proposed project for Loop 375 as currently proposed. [ Other 125a ] I travel transmountain 5 or 6 times weekly and the traffic on the two lane stretch is very dangerous. [ Other 125a ]</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 125a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>
RID: 126	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 3/24/2011 Good morning, My question regards the retaining walls on this project. Does TEX DOT consider looking at alternate retaining wall systems that are approved through TEX DOT [ Other 126a ], Has TEX DOT considered all retaining wall systems that have been approved and used in other local TEX DOT projects? [ Other 126a ] See DOT attached list of approved retaining wall manufacturers. [ Other 126b ] We believe that this would provide value and savings to TEX DOT and the public sector should you consider all retaining wall systems in an addendum to this project. [ Other 126c ]</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ].</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 126a ] - The proposed retaining wall design for this project was developed using standardized TxDOT materials and practices, as well as input on aesthetics from the City of El Paso and consideration of the project setting. [ Other 126b ] - Retaining wall systems identified for use on the proposed project are those that are included in the TxDOT standard design drawings for use on TxDOT projects. Various retaining wall systems would be proposed for use on the proposed project. (NOTE- the referenced electronic link was not functional.) [ Other 127c ] - Comment noted for the record. TxDOT strives for economic designs that are responsive to structural, maintenance, and appearance goals for the project.</p>
RID: 127	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 3/24/2011 I attended the presentation on Tues. nite 3/22/11 and would like to ask that all the improvements to the west side of Transmountain be completed as presented with 4 overpasses and the other improvements as shown. [ Other 127a ] The 1 improvement that was asked for by an audience member that was good was to make the entrance to Tom Mays park such that the traffic traveling East on Transmountain be able to enter park without having to cross the West bound lanes. I am not sure that this isn't already in the plans but looking at the drawings I was not able to tell if this is already incorporated in the plans. [ FMC 4 ]</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1for responses indicated as [ FMC X ].</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 127a ]-Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 128	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 3/30/2011 I'm not sure what all the problems are with the Trans Mountain extension because I have not seen the drawings etc. [ Other 128a ] I do use Trans Mountain occasionally, and I do think it needs to be improved. [ Other 128a ] The section which is only two lanes running from I-10 on the west to the bottom of the mountain needs to be widened. [ Other 128a ] If you get behind a slow truck trying to go up that grade, you are stuck because it has no passing yellow lines all the way. [ Other 128b ] At the other end where it crosses the Patriot Freeway the road stops. For years I have been wanting the loop to be finished. It looks like the land is there, but I think the problem is whether to go over or leave it under the Patriot Freeway. [ Other 128c ] I don't care which is done as long as it is safe. [ Other 128a ] I did read that the expansion includes access roads on both sides of the section through the mountain. Maybe that is what people don't like. I don't think they are necessary. [ Other 128d ] [ FMC 8 ] I think that people will learn that if you get on that part of Trans Mountain you cannot turn around until you get to the other side. [ Other 128a ] And I hope that there will not be any commercial or residential development along that part of Trans Mountain. [ FMC 5 ] If there are not access roads then there wouldn't be any development because you couldn't get to it. [ Other 128a ] It is a beautiful drive, and I would hate to see it ruined. [ FMC 12 ] My father was a County Commissioner when the Trans Mountain was first approved back in the late 50s. He thought that it was important to have that road. [ Other 128a ] Thank you for consideration of my opinions.</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ].</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 128a ] - Comment noted for the record. [ Other 128b ] - The proposed project will provide for an additional lane in both directions of the corridor comprising of a 4-lane roadway. Based on the design, the traveling public can use the second or inside lane as a passing lane. During normal driving conditions, typically the lower speed traveling public will utilize the outside lane and the higher speed traveling public will utilize the inside lane for passing. [ Other 128c ] - Improvements to the portion of LP 375 from US 54 (Patriot Freeway) to BU 54 (Dyer Street) have been analyzed under a separate project. The proposed expansion of this section, including an underpass at US 54, was approved by FHWA in March 2011 and construction is expected to begin this spring. [ Other 128b ] - The proposed improvements on this section of LP 375 end at the entrance of the Tom Mays Unit of the Franklin Mountains State Park.</p>
RID: 129	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 3/30/2011 Good morning, I drive over trans mountain every day. I live off Resler and I work in the Northeast. [ Other 129a ] The traffic and congestion on Resler to get on to trans mountain, and at the light to get from trans mountain to 54 seem to get worse every day! [ Other 129a ] I've also been the victim of, and have frequently seen, rear ending accidents involving people desperately trying to get on to trans mountain to go East from Resler. [ Other 129a ] Something definitely needs to be done as far as ease of traffic and flow. [ Other 129b ] Perhaps a light or additional lanes. [ FMC 8 ] That being said, the scenic beauty is second to none! [ FMC 12 ] I never fully understood why expanding the road to ease traffic has equated to a full blown freeway [ FMC 2 ] and new development. [ FMC 5 ] Is there not a happy medium? [ Other 129a ] It feels as if its all or nothing- a huge project with a huge highway [ Other 129a ] and retail. [ FMC 5 ] Can't we just add lanes [ FMC 8 ] [ FMC 2 ] and do minimal damage to nature and our wildlife? [ FMC 6 ] The city sprawl has taken over the East side of El Paso already. [ Other 129a ] It would be a shame to get rid of the city's natural beauty. The rolling hills and mountain views along trans mountain are part of what makes El Paso so mesmerizing. [ FMC 12 ] Every morning and afternoon I point out the different types of cacti to my toddler. I tell him we are lucky to live in such a beautiful area!! I grew up in New Orleans, DC and El paso and as an adult I spent eight year in Dallas. I chose to come back to El Paso to raise my family- and it saddens me to think that we will soon be just "another city." Keep El Paso Beautiful!!! [ Other 129a ]</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ].</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 129a ] - Comment noted for the record. [ Other 129b ] - The proposed project addresses mobility and safety, as described in the Environmental Assessment.</p>

RID: 130	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 3/30/2011 This project is sorely needed. [ Other 130a ]. Whenever there's an accident on that section of the loop it creates a mess. [ Other 130a ].</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 130a ] - Comment noted for the record.</p>

RID: 131	
<p><b>Comment Form:</b> None</p> <p><b>E-Mail Comment:</b> 3/30/2011 Mr. Antonio Uribe Jr., City Council, or who it may concern: I am so disappointed in the outcome of the voting in favor of the proposed Transmountain project. [ Other 131a ] I just don't agree with this project at all. [ Other 131b ] I understand that traffic is expected to get worse as the city grows, but wasn't the decision to build this based on the wrong numbers? [ FMC 11 ] Either way, when I look at congestion I usually see it on the east side, on the west side we have a decent flow of traffic. [ Other 131c ] Its only when there's a sale at the new outlet mall, 4th of July, or during the Christmas shopping craze that things get bad, and of course when there is an accident. [ Other 131b ] Wouldn't it be more cost effective to figure out ways to eliminate these crazy sales during Christmas that cause so much traffic and even accidents? [ Other 131b ] I want my tax dollars to go where they are truly needed and legislation that makes sense. I think this project will be money spent in the wrong place, what would happen if they close down Ft Bliss, they talked of doing that before and with the way everything is I wouldn't be surprised if this happened. [ Other 131a ] I think this proposed project will cost us in many ways, especially loosing the beauty of our mountains that have already been destroyed enough as it is. [ FMC 12 ] Safety is another concern and I already hate getting around the existing freeway as it is, after I drop my kids off at Canutillo High School. [ Other 131d ] Leaving on the West side means not having everything to have peace, tranquility, and the joy of those majestic mountains. [ FMC 12 ] Just one more angry taxpayer! [ Other 131a ]</p> <p><b>Letter:</b> None</p> <p><b>Verbal Comment:</b> None</p>	<p><b>Response to Frequently Made Comments:</b> see Table 3.1 for responses indicated as [ FMC X ].</p> <p><b>Response to Other Comments:</b> [ Other 131a ] - This comment appears to be directed to El Paso City Council Members. [ Other 131b ] - Comment noted for record. [ Other 131c ] - The El Paso MPO acting as the regional transportation organization, has included expansion of LP 375 in its long range plans as an alternative to significant expansion of I 10 through El Paso. [ Other 131d ] - The proposed project addresses mobility and safety, as described in the Environmental Assessment.</p>

YOU TUBE COMMENTS ON VIRTUAL SIMULATION VIDEO

YouTube Comment 1	
<p>Very nice visualization here. Thumbs up. Sure thing . If you ever have had the chance to drive this route it is amazing .</p>	<p>Comment noted for the record.</p>
YouTube Comment 2	
<p>Why no seamless entrance ramps onto I-10 West? Or am I just not seeing them? How will this improve traffic flow at that intersection when half the traffic still has to stop at the lights?</p>	<p>See response to FMC 7.</p>
YouTube Comment 3	
<p>Looks like they re gonna put in carpool lanes!!!! YAY!!!! Finally in El Paso, we have carpool lanes. We have been needing those for years now!!!!</p>	<p>The proposed project design does not currently include carpool lanes.</p>

Reference ID #: 18

**Comment Form:**

**Comment 1:**

1) There is a lack of alternatives presented for public comment.

***Response to Comment 1:***

*FMC 8*

**Comment 2:**

2) Hike and bike between business and access road/hike bike trail will be crossed by business aprons so render trail useless.

***Response to Comment 2:***

*Developers must submit their driveway plans through the TxDOT Access Management Process in order to secure required driveway permits. At that time, the appropriate regulatory and advisory signage would be required at driveways to advise vehicular traffic of pedestrians and bicyclists. Bicyclists will also have the option of using the wide outer lane on the east-bound frontage road, intended for shared use with motorists.*

**Comment 3:**

3) Spacing between intersections not within ASSHTO standards as per page 807.

***Response to Comment 3:***

*FMC 9*

**Comment 4:**

4) Plexxar is not in the Northwest Master plan on westside master plan or city's current MTP. Why? What is justification to build.

***Response to Comment 4:***

*FMC 10*

**Comment 5:**

5) City's TIA by Walter P. Moore states Phase 1B1 no Paseo Del Norte - gives better flow within the subdivisions and 375 and I-10. Do you concur?

***Response to Comment 5:***

*The City's Walter P. Moore document (WMP TIA) was an independent traffic study that the City commissioned. Following the NEPA process and standard engineering practice, TxDOT developed the traffic data for the proposed project in coordination with the El Paso MPO. TxDOT does not have an official opinion on the development and results of the WPM TIA.*

**Comment 6:**

6) Environmental study did not measure air quality impact from 71,000 car trips/day why?

***Response to Comment 6:***

*An approved TxDOT modeling study demonstrated that it is unlikely that a carbon monoxide (CO) standard would be exceeded as a result of any project with an average daily traffic volume below 140,000 average daily traffic (ADT). Based on project design year of 2035 and projected traffic*

volumes below 140,000 ADT for the proposed project, a qualitative air quality analysis was conducted in lieu of a quantitative analysis. The analysis concluded that the proposed project is not expected to result in substantial impacts to air quality. Similarly, because the design year traffic for this project did not exceed 140,000 , a quantitative MSAT analysis is not required.

Regarding PM-10, on June 6, 2011, the project was reviewed by the Consultation Partners for the El Paso MPO area, which consists of representatives from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), FHWA, TxDOT, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the El Paso MPO, and representatives from the State of New Mexico transportation and environmental agencies. The Consultation Partners concurred that the project is not one of local air quality concern and, therefore, does not require a quantitative or qualitative PM-10 hot-spot analysis. The determination was based upon the fact that the project ADT and percent truck traffic are below the values that would indicate a project of air quality concern (125,000 ADT and 8 percent truck traffic), as specified in 40 CFR Part 93 (Conformity Regulation) and in EPA's Transportation Conformity Guidance for Quantitative Hotspot Analyses in PM 2.5 and PM10 Nonattainment and Maintenance Areas, December 2010. The public was notified of the results of the Consultative Partners meeting in notices published in the El Paso Times on June 12, 2011 and June 15, 2011, as well as in Spanish in El Diario de El Paso on June 15, 2011. These notices initiated a seven day public comment period and two comments were received and addressed.

**Comment 7:**

7) Wildlife corridor not placed in an area where wildlife will be due to heavy commercial development there. Need to be near current park entrance.

**Response to Comment 7:**

FMC 1

**Comment 8:**

8) Entrance to park is at grade. Users will need to cross two lanes of oncoming freeway traffic - dangerous. needs a spur road as proposed in 2004.

**Response to Comment 8:**

FMC 4

**Comment 9:**

9) Graphics don't show surrounding development that will impact area.

**Response to Comment 9:**

Adjacent future development was not depicted as part of the virtual animation or project graphics because these items were intended to show only the improvements on Loop 375. It was not the intent of the video or graphics to project or depict future development outside of the right-of-way. Development approvals and land use decisions are made by the City of El Paso and are subject to change over time. It would not be possible for TxDOT to accurately depict future development. The video was developed using a birds-eye perspective that allowed for more accurate representation of area topography and scale.

**Letter:**

Basically I have four areas of concern arising from the EA for NW Transmountain project.

**Comment 10:**

1. THE ENTRANCE TO TOM MAYES UNIT OF FRANKLIN MOUNTAIN STATE PARK. The proposed project will widen the freeway and require westbound traffic attempting to enter the park or eastbound traffic exiting the park to cross 2 lanes of oncoming freeway traffic. Currently traffic must only cross 1 lane of traffic. The proposed project doubles the points of conflict and willfully decreases safety.

**Response to Comment 10:**

*FMC 4*

**Comment 11:**

In 2005 I began discussions with TxDOT to build a spur road as a reasonable solution. TxDOT estimated the costs to be about 2.6 million dollars. I have since reviewed the plan and would propose an even shorter route between FEMA arroyo 40 and the freeway. This would be even more cost effective. The ROW is confined to City of El Paso-PSB property and State Park Property.

**Response to Comment 11:**

*As noted in FMC 4, a separate project has been programmed to enhance the accessibility of a new park entrance to the Franklin Mountains State Park. This new project will consider the feasibility of the alternatives that can further enhance the park entrance, including a "spur road".*

**Comment 12:**

At less than 3% of the projected cost, and with 6 years lead time to develop, why didn't TxDOT include this as an alternative for mitigating the increased hazard associated with the expansion for vetting apart of the NEPA process?

**Response to Comment 12:**

*As noted in FMC 4, a separate project has been programmed to enhance the accessibility of a new park entrance to the Franklin Mountains State Park. This new project will consider the feasibility of the alternatives that can further enhance the park entrance, including a "spur road".*

**Comment 13:**

2. ABSENCE OF A PEDESTRIAN, BICYCLE, AND WILDLIFE CORRIDOR. Beginning in 2008 I proposed a pedestrian underpass utilizing the existing culverts under the Tom Mayes entrance.

**Response to Comment 13:**

*Based on previous public discussion, TxDOT determined that a ped/bike/animal crossing at the Franklin Mountains State Park entrance would not be considered further. However, based on recent comments from the public, TxDOT has funded and committed to develop a separate project to address a new vehicular/ped/bike/animal crossing at the Franklin Mountains State Park entrance.*

*Potential options discussed during coordination on the proposed project and during previous versions of the proposed project are being addressed as a part of the proposed project. Drainage improvements are proposed for a 78" multiple barrel corrugated metal pipe culvert located between the park entrance and the eastern project termini. The work proposed would repair storm water erosion damage on the downstream end of the culvert creating a berm area approximately beyond the downstream end of the culvert pipe.*

**Comment 14:**

This location would be ideal and help complete the Mountain to River Trail. Several letters were exchanged and meetings eventually held at the proposed location with several TxDOT and TPW

personnel including Mr. Chuck Berry. An agreement was reached to build a ramp and deemed part of the drainage improvements. Although not officially called a trail, it could be officially designated as a wildlife corridor. This concession was not included in the EA.

**Response to Comment 14:**

*The proposed project will reconstruct the downstream end of the 3 – 78” Corrugated Metal Pipe (CMP). The proposed improvements will backfill the existing drop and construct stone riprap that will be level for 20ft and then slope 3:1 for another 18ft to match existing grade.*

**Comment 15:**

Considering the need, the increased budget for project, and the lead time of 3 years why didn't TxDOT propose widening the existing 3 culverts into one large passage that would meet official trail requirements?

**Response to Comment 15:**

*The existing 78” multiple barrel corrugated metal pipe culvert located between the park entrance and the eastern project termini was investigated for use as an underpass during preliminary design investigations for the proposed project. The original location concept was considered for replacement of the multiple barrel pipe culverts by a larger structure that could be used for bike and pedestrian including vehicular underpass access and egress to and from the state park driveway. Profile grades needed for vehicle access in and out of the underpass from the main lanes of Loop 375 were determined to be outside the acceptable range for eastbound vehicles attempting to access Loop 375 and westbound vehicles exiting Loop 375 attempting to access the park underpass. The alternative was abandoned as not feasible. Different versions of the alternative will be evaluated as a separate future project in response to comments received about improving the safety of the access to the state park entrance. As noted in the Response to Comment 14, the proposed project will reconstruct the downstream end of the 3 – 78” Corrugated Metal Pipe (CMP). The proposed improvements will backfill the existing drop and construct stone riprap that will be level for 20ft and then slope 3:1 for another 18ft to match existing grade.*

**Comment 16:**

3. PLEXXAR OVERPASS WAS IMPROPERLY INCLUDED IN THE PROJECT. The EA incorrectly attributes the need for Plexxar to the City of El Paso's Westside Master Plan. Plexxar is outside the boundaries of the Westside Master Plan. Plexxar is not in the City's current Major Thoroughfare Plan.

**Response to Comment 16:**

- *Plexxar is within the boundaries of the Westside Master Plan.*
  
- *FMC 10*

**Comment 17:**

A Traffic Impact Analysis Study commissioned by the City of El Paso and conducted by Charles P. Moore PE.; concludes that with Smart Code, now proposed for the Westside Master Plan, the convergence of Plexxar and Paseo del Norte would:

- Reduce traffic on Interstate 10 between Artcraft and Transmountain and will be below capacity...p. 16
  
- All intersections will have reduced trips and operate below capacity...p. 34
  
- Trans CAD modeling predicts a better level of service p. 42

- No mitigation strategies required...p. 43

With the budget constraints facing the State how can TxDOT justify the cost benefit of building an extra overpass?

**Response to Comment 17:**

*FMC 3*

**Comment 18:**

4. THE PROPOSED PROJECT HAS BEEN A BARRIER TO THE PUBLICS DESIRE TO SAVE OPEN SPACE: The Mayor has been quoted as saying he would veto any vote by City Council to set aside open space along Transmountain Road as it would endanger the TxDOT project and cost El Paso the funding.

**Response to Comment 18:**

*FMC 5*

**Comment 19:**

Mr. Berry has stated at City Council the rationale for the way the project was designed is directly correlated to the need created by development in the Westside Master Plan. Although City Council and the PSB have signed resolutions to convert the plan to Smart Code and thereby decrease traffic; when asked if preserving extra open space within the Westside Master Plan would endanger the project he indicated it might have a negative impact.

**Response to Comment 19:**

*FMC 5*

**Comment 20:**

Preserving Open Space and the Scenic corridor along Transmountain Road are strong community values as witnessed by 3 petitions asking for their preservation.

**Response to Comment 20:**

- *FMC 5*
- *FMC 12*
- *Copies of two of the referenced petitions called "Initiative Petition" addressed to City Council were provided by Mr. Jim Tolbert to FHWA during the public hearing comment period and are included as Appendix K in the Public Hearing Summary.*
- *The other petition called "Save El Paso's Franklin Mountains" was submitted to TxDOT by City Representative Susie Byrd with her letter dated March 31, 2011.*

**Comment 21:**

Fear of endangering project funding has negatively influenced community leaders and interfered with preservation efforts.

**Response to Comment 21:**

*FMC 13*

**Comment 22:**

Would it be possible to have an EIS to further evaluate the extent to which the project is directly and indirectly affecting these preservation efforts?

***Response to Comment 22:***

*An EIS is not needed to evaluate preservation efforts, due to fact that land use and preservation are under the jurisdiction of the City of El Paso and are outside of the scope of this project and NEPA evaluation. TxDOT has concluded that the EA faithfully analyzes the direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of this project, and that the potential impacts are not significant enough to require an EIS. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) would make the final determination as to whether the transportation project would warrant further consideration and development of additional environmental documentation.*

Sincerely,

XX

**Verbal Comment:**

I'm XX and I represent the Borderland Mountain Bike Association.

**Comment 23:**

It's been mentioned several times regarding the safety of the park entrance but what hasn't been mentioned is as early as 2004 I believe I came to your office and we had discussed alternate routes, removing the overpass that you proposed there, but you didn't proceed with the alternate which was to build a spur road into the park and I would like to see that addressed.

***Response to Comment 23:***

*As noted in FMC 4, a separate project has been programmed to enhance the accessibility of a new park entrance to the Franklin Mountains State Park. This new project will consider the feasibility of the alternatives that can further enhance the park entrance, including a "spur road".*

**Comment 24:**

Similarly, about a year ago, we had a meeting with someone from TxDOT that came out and talked about a proposed wildlife hike and bike corridor that went under the -- at the culvert to the entrance of Tom Mays Park and that was not mentioned in the environmental assessment and I would like to see that placed in that document.

***Response to Comment 24:***

*See response to Comment 13.*

**Comment 25:**

And then where did Plexxar come from? It's mentioned in the environmental assessment and a TIA that was done by the city as coming from the northwest or synonymously the west side master plan; however, that document does not contain that -- that overpass. The west side master plan is actually far east of the proposed Plexxar site. Plexxar is not even in the current city's MTP.

***Response to Comment 25:***

*FMC 10*

**Comment 26:**

And then one question that I think needs to be addressed is can open space be spared

***Response to Comment 26:***

*FMC 5*

**Comment 27:**

without any damage to your project for the financial involvement.

***Response to Comment 27:***

*See response to Comment 21.*

**Comment 28:**

And a big question for me is why were the five options not publicly vetted? We've only been able to see options 1 and 2. There hasn't been credence to those.

***Response to Comment 28:***

*FMC 8*

**Comment 29:**

And then somebody also mentioned the AASHTO standards. On page 807 of your current AASHTO standards, the distance between the ramps is proposed to be at least one mile apart and you have not -- you have not met that standard.

***Response to Comment 29:***

*FMC 9*

**Comment 30:**

And as I addressed before and talked to your people before, what's going to happen to the right-of-way for bicycles during the construction phase?

***Response to Comment 30:***

*Bicycle access to Loop 375 is currently accommodated. Construction sequence and procedures will continue to allow bicycle access consistent with construction traffic control devices and methods of managing construction traffic to the extent possible. Construction detours will be utilized.*

**Comment 31:**

And when you build your bike path, how many -- how many times will you bisect that path between the access roads and the business that will be along that -- that avenue.

***Response to Comment 31:***

*See response to Comment 2.*

**Comment 32:**

Sure. And as far as the indirect impacts, one of the things that was left out tonight was the air quality. Well, what -- what parameters did you use to determine air quality and why wasn't that mentioned tonight and why isn't it -- isn't it completely diagnosed in your environmental impact statement or your environmental assessment?

***Response to Comment 32:***

*See response to Comment 6.*

**Comment 33:**

And then I'll -- then another thing is, although I had asked you many times to present some slides, no one ever got back to me as to why I was not able to do that.

***Response to Comment 33:***

*A public hearing is a formal procedure that follows specific federal and state rules for the government to gather community comments and positions from all interested parties for public record and input for decisions. Public hearings require an official hearing officer, who presides at the meeting and may limit the timeframe for comments (in this situation three minutes per person) in order to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to comment at the public hearing. Slide show presentations made by the public are inconsistent with the formal format of the public hearing. Representatives of the government collect comments from the public. A public hearing is not a forum for members of the public to present information to each other. In order to accomplish the information sharing with the government a hard copy of the slide show presentation can be submitted either through email, mail, or attached to a comment form during the established comment period in order to ensure the presentation is made a part of the public record and available for reference in making decisions about a proposed project.*

## Reference ID #: 67

### **Comment Form:**

None

### **Letter:**

I am submitting this letter as part of the public hearing regarding the Transmountain project. I am also emailing a digital copy to Mr. Gregory Punske of the FHWA.

### **Comment 1:**

Many El Pasoans favor the preservation of land in what is called the Scenic Transmountain Corridor — land owned by the City of El Paso and managed by the Public Service Board. We believe that the El Paso City Council failed to preserve this land as Natural Open Space

#### ***Response to Comment 1:***

*FMC 5*

### **Comment 2:**

because they believed that the money for the Transmountain project would go away if they kept the land in its natural state.

#### ***Response to Comment 2:***

*FMC 13*

### **Comment 3:**

As a result of Council's failure to act, we have circulated four separate petitions calling for the preservation of the Scenic Corridor or of all the land in the Westside Plan and have requested that no major roads such as Paseo del Norte be built through the Corridor.

#### ***Response to Comment 3:***

- *Copies of two of the referenced petitions called "Initiative Petition" addressed to City Council were provided by Mr. Jim Tolbert to FHWA during the public hearing comment period and are included as Appendix K in the Public Hearing Summary.*
- *Another petition called "Save El Paso's Franklin Mountains" was submitted to TxDOT by City Representative Susie Byrd with her letter dated March 31, 2011.*
- *FMC 5*

### **Comment 4:**

Instead we have urged moving Paseo west toward the current proposed site for Plexxar Road.

#### ***Response to Comment 4:***

*FMC 3*

### **Comment 5:**

Nearly 1900 citizens of El Paso signed two petitions presented to the Municipal Clerk. 2100+ people signed an earlier statement of desire to preserve all of the land. Another 1248 people have responded online.

A vote was taken by El Paso city Council that supported the project as proposed including the overpasses at the proposed crossing at Plexxar and proposed Paseo Del Norte Roads..

Although we believe that Transmountain Road requires improvement to handle traffic safely and efficiently, we believe that not all alternatives have been considered by TxDOT and that TxDOT has been deaf to public comment and values.

**Response to Comment 5:**

- See response to Comment 3.
  
- FMC 8

**Comment 6:**

We raise the following concerns about the TxDOT plan:

1. There is no safe entrance to the State Park. In fact, it will get worse. Now you will have to make a left turn across two lanes of traffic going 70 mph off the mountain. Want to see how that works? See this video.

**Response to Comment 6:**

FMC 4

**Comment 7:**

2. There are many problems with TxDOT's public relations video for this project. They touted to City Council and the Open Space Advisory Board how nice the mountain will look. Several problems to note while viewing the video:

- The video shows no commercial or residential development.

**Response to Comment 7:**

*The virtual animation video of the proposed project was prepared for the public to understand proposed project design information that would otherwise be presented in engineering drawings. The video was available on the TxDOT web site and youtube.com. The video was also presented at the public hearing during the open house portion of the meeting.*

*Adjacent future development was not depicted as part of the virtual animation because the video was intended to show only the improvements on Loop 375. It was not the intent of the video to project or depict future development outside of the right-of-way. Development approvals and land use decisions are made by the City of El Paso and are subject to change over time. It would not be possible for TxDOT to accurately depict future development. The video was developed using a birds-eye perspective that allowed for more accurate representation of area topography and scale.*

**Comment 8:**

Of course, open space looks great! But the plan (especially if land isn't preserved in the Scenic Corridor won't look anything like this. El Paso naturally has posted this picture online of what that scene of the mountain will really look like.)

**Response to Comment 8:**

FMC 12

**Comment 9:**

- Note the flyover (like the one on the Patriot Freeway at Fred Wilson) at 1-10. TxDOT has never truly disclosed this.

**Response to Comment 9:**

*The direct connectors to I-10 were presented at the public meeting held on March 10, 2010 and at the public hearing on March 22, 2011. On March 29, 2011, the City Council voted to support the improvements as designed, and reviewed by FHWA in the environmental document prepared for the project. Other city meetings which the project was presented were at the Natural Open Space meetings and City Council Meetings.*

**Comment 10:**

- Yes you can see the mountains in their video since their camera isn't at road level but rather hovers above. Take a helicopter ride and you can see the mountains too once TxDOT is done and commercial and residential development takes off. Otherwise, people will view big box stores and the fast food joints.

**Response to Comment 10:**

*See response to Comment 7.*

**Comment 11:**

- Plexxar wasn't on any earlier map of the Westside Master Plan.

**Response to Comment 11:**

*FMC 10*

**Comment 12:**

- Finally, Paseo del Norte will slice through deep arroyos and steep hills.

**Response to Comment 12:**

*The proposed project accommodates future plans approved by the City of El Paso for a major arterial crossing planned as Paseo Del Norte. The direct impacts of the future construction of Paseo Del Norte beyond the proposed project limits are not known at this time and cannot be accurately quantified until the design has been developed and the roadway footprint is finalized by other entities. At that time, the project sponsor would evaluate impacts associated with the construction of the roadway as required by applicable federal, state, and local laws and ordinances. As designed for a city street, Paseo Del Norte may be designed to follow the natural terrain more closely than a high speed highway.*

**Comment 13:**

3. There is no wildlife crossing except possibly through proposed residential land going from non-State Park land to non-State Park land.

**Response to Comment 13:**

*FMC 1*

**Comment 14:**

4. And, again, there is the public desire and value to preserve open space.

**Response to Comment 14:**

*FMC 5*

**Comment 15:**

5. The proximity of Paseo to Plexxar violates AASHTO standards.

***Response to Comment 15:***

*FMC 9*

**Comment 16:**

It is never too late to plan a project of this size to consider alternatives

***Response to Comment 16:***

*FMC 8*

**Comment 17:**

and to listen to the public. We sincerely hope that you will do just that. We believe that further study is required and that there cannot be a FONSI granted at this time.

***Response to Comment 17:***

*TxDOT has concluded that the EA faithfully analyzes the direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of this project, and that the potential impacts are not significant enough to require an EIS. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) would make the final determination as to whether the project would warrant further consideration and development of additional environmental documentation.*

**Verbal Comment:**

**Comment 18:**

XX. And as the one who helped spearhead the petition drive, I am a representative of the Franklin Mountain Wilderness Coalition.

And very simply all I wanted to say is that our main issue has been to preserve some open space

***Response to Comment 18:***

*FMC 5*

**Comment 19:**

and we're a little bit concerned -- not a little bit, we're a lot concerned that city council really failed to pay attention to this issue because they were afraid the \$85 million was going to go away.

***Response to Comment 19:***

*FMC 13*

**Comment 20:**

And so a very important issue of preserving that land, preserving that natural space, natural environment, the ecosystem, the real hike and bike trails, not just simply the concrete and asphalt trails, has all not been considered.

***Response to Comment 20:***

*FMC 5*

**Comment 21:**

Now, we had nearly 1,900 people sign two petitions. Prior to that we had a petition that called for preserving all of the west side master plan and there were nearly 2,000 -- or there were 2,100 people that signed that and there were an additional 2,000 people who signed online. So my point is that this represents a major value of El Pasoans and we'd like to see it addressed

***Response to Comment 21:***

*See response to Comment 3.*

**Comment 22:**

and it can be addressed if we move things like Paseo Del Norte to the west to where Plexxar might be,

***Response to Comment 22:***

*FMC 3*

**Comment 23:**

it can be addressed by making a safer entrance into the state park and it can be addressed in

***Response to Comment 23:***

*FMC 4*

**Comment 24:**

-- in a myriad of other ways especially how we build roads appropriately. I -- I don't think anyone opposes making the improvements that are necessary, but I do think that people want to see building done appropriately. I think we can have the best of all possible worlds. I think we can have a world that honors the development that needs to -- that will take place, but I also think at the same time we can honor the natural open space and I think that's the part that has not really been paid attention to in this whole matter.

***Response to Comment 24:***

*FMC 5*

**Comment 25:**

And with all due respect, if people really want to know what -- what the land is going to look like after the road development -- inappropriate develop - inappropriate road construction and development all you have to do is go walk the Pat O'Rourke Trail down along Resler. You can see the buildings going up there now. People no longer have the view of the mountain.

***Response to Comment 25:***

*FMC 12*

**Comment 26:**

They have a view of condos, apartments, whatever, so that's a great deal of what it's going to look like. And, again, with all due respect, TxDOT seems to build roads like McDonald's builds golden arches and I think we can do better. Thank you.

***Response to Comment 26:***

*Commented noted for the record.*

Reference ID #: 69

**E-Mail Comment:**

**Comment 1:**

I serve on the Executive Committee of the El Paso Regional Sierra Club Group and on our New Mexico Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter. Our group has over 500 active members in El Paso County.

***Response to Comment 1:***

*Comment noted for the record.*

**Comment 2:**

We believe that the proposed improvements to Transmountain Road will have irreversible and profound impacts to the environment, which includes native wildlife,

***Response to Comment 2:***

*Throughout the environmental process, an assessment of potential impacts to natural resources, including wildlife, was conducted. The environmental assessment evaluated direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to both vegetation and wildlife through standardized methods for state and federally-funded transportation projects. As per the standards of practice, qualified biologists knowledgeable in regional flora and fauna conducted the following assessments for the proposed project, which meet federal and state requirements (including but not limited to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)/Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between TxDOT and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) (43 TAC, Section 2.22), the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321-4347), the Endangered Species Act, as amended (7 U.S.C. 136; 16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.), and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S. C. 703-712, as amended).*

*A habitat assessment was conducted for protected species including species listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as threatened or endangered or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered; species that are candidates for review or listing by USFWS as threatened or endangered; species listed as threatened or endangered species by the TPWD; and species protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Habitat assessments are typically conducted using a two-step approach. Step 1 includes a detailed review of remote sensing data, including a review of the TPWD's Natural Diversity Database (NDD) and USFWS's Threatened and Endangered Species Lists. A review of black and white and color infrared aerial photography, National Resources Conservation Service soils maps, U.S. Geographic Service topographic maps, USFWS National Wetland Inventory maps is conducted to determine the portions of the project area that have the potential to be considered habitat. Step 2 is based on field investigations to ground verify the results of Step 1 and modify the potential habitat maps as appropriate. If potential habitat for federally protected species is identified, avoidance and minimization measures are recommended. If the potential habitat cannot be avoided, presence/absence surveys may be required. As detailed on page 63 of the February 2011 EA, the NDD reports a population of Sneed's pincushion cactus within 10 miles of the project area. Sneed's pincushion cactus is found on limestone outcrops, and no limestone outcrops or Sneed's pincushion cactus were identified in the project area during field work.*

*If potential habitat for unregulated species (i.e., state-listed species, federal species of concern, etc.) is identified, a qualitative assessment by a qualified biologist of the type and magnitude of the potential impacts is included in the National Environmental Policy Act document. Unregulated species are not specifically protected from incidental take associated with an otherwise lawful*

activity. Potential habitat was identified within the project limits for the state-listed Texas horned lizard and the Chihuahuan desert lyre snake. However, as noted above, unregulated species are not protected from incidental take. Therefore, presence/absence surveys were not required or conducted.

Potential direct impacts to habitat for these species were minimized by reducing the amount of new right-of-way utilized for the proposed project. During construction activities, the clearing of vegetation will be limited to those areas needed for construction and disturbed areas will be reseeded with native vegetation where other landscaping methods are not dictated by City of El Paso guidelines. Where possible native species of shrubs and trees will be replanted and efforts will be made to avoid impacts to roosts of migratory bats and nests and eggs of migratory birds during construction. In order to further minimize and avoid impacts, TxDOT has specified that if any of the listed species are observed during construction, the contractor's employees will be notified to cease work in the immediate area and not to disturb the species or habitat. The employee will then immediately contact the project engineer. Contractors will not remove active nests from bridges and other structures during nesting season.

**Comment 3:**

air quality,

**Response to Comment 3:**

An approved TxDOT modeling study demonstrated that it is unlikely that a carbon monoxide (CO) standard would be exceeded as a result of any project with an average daily traffic volume below 140,000 average daily traffic (ADT). Based on project design year of 2035 and projected traffic volumes below 140,000 ADT for the proposed project, a qualitative air quality analysis was conducted in lieu of a quantitative analysis. The analysis concluded that the proposed project is not expected to result in substantial impacts to air quality. Similarly, because the design year traffic for this project did not exceed 140,000 , a quantitative MSAT analysis is not required.

Regarding PM-10, on June 6, 2011, the project was reviewed by the Consultation Partners for the El Paso MPO area, which consists of representatives from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), FHWA, TxDOT, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the El Paso MPO, and representatives from the State of New Mexico transportation and environmental agencies. The Consultation Partners concurred that the project is not one of local air quality concern and, therefore, does not require a quantitative or qualitative PM-10 hot-spot analysis. The determination was based upon the fact that the project ADT and percent truck traffic are below the values that would indicate a project of air quality concern (125,000 ADT and 8 percent truck traffic), as specified in 40 CFR Part 93 (Conformity Regulation) and in EPA's Transportation Conformity Guidance for Quantitative Hotspot Analyses in PM 2.5 and PM10 Nonattainment and Maintenance Areas, December 2010. The public was notified of the results of the Consultative Partners meeting in notices published in the El Paso Times on June 12, 2011 and June 15, 2011, as well as in Spanish in El Diario de El Paso on June 15, 2011. These notices initiated a seven day public comment period and two comments were received and addressed.

**Comment 4:**

will promote sprawl and growth inducing effects, changes in land use patterns, high up the Franklin Mountain apron that borders the Franklin Mountain State Park.

**Response to Comment 4:**

*The indirect and cumulative impacts analysis conducted as part of the EA utilized the National Cooperative Highway Research Program Report 466 Desk Reference for Estimating the Indirect Effects of Proposed Transportation Projects and TxDOT's Revised Guidance on Preparing Indirect and Cumulative Impact Analyses (September 2010). TxDOT consulted on the proposed project with the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the City of El Paso, the local agency responsible for land use management. The scope of the analysis was determined through field investigations, research of the City of El Paso's land use and development plans, soliciting input from local planners, and other related research. Indirect impacts were identified and quantified (as practicable) by identifying reasonably foreseeable development within the project's area of influence (AOI) and resource study areas (RSA). The AOI for indirect impacts and RSAs for cumulative impacts to land use, vegetation and wildlife habitat, and water resources, were defined through consideration of the project travel shed, resource distribution, and notable features within the area. Reasonably foreseeable development was defined as projects or undertakings located within the AOI and RSA that are listed in long-range transportation planning documents, as well as projects that were identified through consultation with City of El Paso planning staff, and those undertakings that have been planned and/or platted. Reasonably foreseeable transportation projects listed in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) were identified within the established AOI and RSAs. The indirect and cumulative impacts analysis identified indirect impacts to land use and cumulative impacts to land use, vegetation and wildlife habitat, water resources, and air quality, and impacts were described and quantified based on the availability of information regarding the size and scope of future undertakings.*

**Comment 5:**

The Franklin Mountain State Park is the largest urban park in the United States, and many El Pasoans and visitors believe the Franklin Mountains define El Paso.

**Response to Comment 5:**

*Comment noted for the record.*

**Comment 6:**

Sierra Club strongly believes that the Texas Department of Transportation should be required to prepare an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) to access and consider alternatives. We know and believe we can prove that the impacts of the current design and the cumulative impacts merit attention with an EIS.

**Response to Comment 6:**

*TxDOT has concluded that the EA faithfully analyzes the direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of this project, and that the potential impacts are not significant enough to require an EIS. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) would make the final determination as to whether the project would warrant further consideration and development of additional environmental documentation.*

**Comment 7:**

We understand that NEPA regulations define "effects" to include both "direct effects", those that are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place and "indirect effects", those that are caused by the action and occur later or farther away, but are reasonably foreseeable. Indirect effects may include growth inducing effects and other effects of induced changes in land use patterns.

We also understand NEPA regulations define "affecting" to mean "will or may have an effect on". If there is no significant environmental impact no EIS is required. An EIS is required, however, both when a significant impact is certain and when it is not known whether there will be such an impact.

We also want to emphasize to the Texas Department of Transportation that we understand cumulative impacts merit special attention. We know these include impacts that result from the environmental impact of the action in question when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of who is undertaking those actions. We know cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but cumulatively significant actions taking place over a period of time. Sierra Club has observed allegations of failure to address appropriately cumulative impacts have become increasingly important to NEPA litigation

***Response to Comment 7:***

*Comment noted for the record.*

**Comment 8:**

We believe that the Texas Department of Transportation has failed to address or consider indirect effects and cumulative impacts in their Environmental Assessment.

***Response to Comment 8:***

*See Response to Comment 4.*

**Comment 9:**

Some of these effects are:

1. The Plexxar and Paseo Del Norte Bridge interchanges, next to 1800 acres of city owned public land will have the effect of facilitating home development high up the Franklin Mountain Apron, from the El Paso Natural Gas- Gas Line Road & Trans Mountain to EPWU- PSB public land bordering the Franklin Mountains State Park. The two bridges mentioned above will promote sprawl north and south of Transmountain Drive all the way north to the nearby El Paso City Limits and New Mexico State Line. This sprawling development we contend is "unsustainable development" near the city limits of El Paso. New water supply storage tanks, water supply infrastructure, water treatment plants, fire stations, schools, etc. will have to be built near our city limits on undeveloped natural high desert land. The proposed Plexxar and Paseo del Norte Bridges also put development pressure on city owned public land, bought by the EPWU-PSB many years ago to control growth and protect mountain aquifer recharge areas from damage.

***Response to Comment9:***

- *FMC 3*

- *FMC 5*

- *The PSB takes its own action to address the buying and selling of land. The PSB Board did pass a resolution in favor of the preferred proposed project. In addition, PSB took action towards the City's proposal of open space designation and determined that the PSB would abide by the City's "Smart Code" ordinance for development and infrastructure.*

**Comment 10:**

2. The Paseo del Norte Bridge interchange would create a north - south highway very near the boundary of the Franklin Mountain State Park. Paseo del Norte North would extend into New Mexico past the El

Paso city limits parallel and next to north south boundary of the Franklin Mountain State Park. The highway construction could damage and cause negative impacts to flow paths and water quality.

**Response to Comment 10:**

*The direct impacts of the future construction of Paseo Del Norte are not known at this time and cannot be accurately quantified until the design has been developed and the roadway footprint is finalized. At that time, the project sponsor would evaluate impacts associated with the construction of this roadway.*

**Comment 11:**

The future Paseo del Norte would fragment native wildlife habitat. Any native wildlife attempting to cross the Paseo del Norte at night or day to travel to lower elevations to find other food not or water not found on the mountain, but existing in lower elevations all the way to the Rio Grande would be at risk of being hit and killed or hit and injured to crawl or walk off to die somewhere else. This happens regularly on Trans Mountain Drive now. Sierra Club hikers and others regularly find animals including dead mule deer, skunks, opossums, snakes and sometimes even horned toads run over on Transmountain Drive.

The Paseo del Norte highway - road to be built after the Freeway is constructed would be laid over numerous very large and significant arroyos that efficiently move large volumes of storm water off the mountainsides west to the Rio Grande. Paseo del Norte south would facilitate and encourage development on 1800 acres of city owned public land adjoining the boundary of the Franklin Mountain State Park, high up the mountain apron.

**Response to Comment 11:**

*It is widely understood that roads are a contributor to habitat fragmentation because they divide habitat into smaller patches and convert interior habitat into edge habitat. However, impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat due to the proposed Loop 375 improvements were minimized by widening the existing facility within the current right-of-way to the extent possible. For additional information of the process followed, see Response to Comment 2.*

*Regarding impacts to the future Paseo Del Norte, the EA evaluated direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to both vegetation and wildlife associated with the proposed LP 375 project through standardized methods for state and federally-funded transportation projects. The direct impacts of the future construction of Paseo Del Norte Road are not known at this time and cannot be accurately quantified until the design has been developed and the roadway footprint is finalized. At that time, the project sponsor would evaluate impacts associated with the construction of this roadway. However, the indirect and cumulative impacts analysis conducted as part of the Loop 375 EA did take the construction of Paseo Del Norte and the City of El Paso's projected land use/zoning in the area into account when estimating impacts to potentially affected resources.*

**Comment 12:**

3. The Avispa Canyon Quarry owned by Jobe Materials

Mr. Stanley Jobe created the Avispa Canyon rock and gravel quarry to sell gravel, cement, and rock for the proposed Transmountain Freeway Project and for cement, rock and gravel for the thousands of homes and commercial development that he knew would follow from Hunt Communities (Mr. Woody Hunt) Enchanted Hills Development (Mr. O'Leary) and for the Desert Springs Development. All of these privately owned lands that will have thousands of homes built on them are below Gas Line road and Transmountain Drive. Mr. Jobe obtained his quarry through a no bid mineral lease from the Texas General Land Office (GLO). Jobe Materials mineral lease is on 450 acres of Texas Public School land.

The Freeway Construction for the proposed project will cause this quarry to exponentially grow. The accompanying home and commercial development the proposed Trans Mountain freeway will encourage and cause will also require large amounts of cement, gravel, asphalt, and sand which Jobe Materials is strategically placed to supply. It is evident Jobe Materials placed the Avispa Canyon Quarry next to Trans Mountain Road, as any other quarry, including Jobe's Hitt Canyon Quarry on PSB leased land is in Northeast El Paso. Hauling sand, gravel or cement from Cemex's McKellegon Canyon Quarry in the Northeast and from Jobe's Hitt Canyon Quarry would require the large added transportation expense of Diesel, time and wear and tear on Cement and Gravel Trucks that the Avispa Canyon Quarry would not have, being very close to the proposed Freeway and accompanying new development.

**Response to Comment 12:**

*Comment noted for the record. The business plans, management, and practices of private companies such as Jobe Materials are beyond the scope of this EA or of a NEPA review. TxDOT contracts do not require project specific locations for source materials; it is left up to contractor discretion where to get building materials. The Desert Springs development is currently under construction.*

**Comment 13:**

Anyone assessing or looking into cumulative and indirect impacts of this Freeway project should understand that the 24,247 acre Franklin Mountain State Park must understand that although very large in size, native wildlife living there cannot survive by staying in the Franklin Mountain State Park boundaries. Many small and large species living in the mountains must travel to lower elevations, sometimes much lower elevations to find food or water not available on the mountain in the park boundaries. That means wildlife must cross into private land to find food or water, especially in times of drought. The Franklin Mountains State park is currently almost completely surrounded by homes and development, making it extremely hard or even impossible to reach lower elevations to find food, if it even exists in developed areas. There are two very important wildlife corridors still remaining to lower elevations of the Franklin Mountains State Park. One area is in Northeast El Paso, Casner Range owned by the US Army and another large parcel, the PSB-EPWU land, 3,000 acres. The river does not exist on the northeast side of the Mountain. The only other large undeveloped open natural area wildlife can use to find food or travel to the Rio Grande is on the large apron of land on the north west side of the Franklin Mountains, north and south of Transmountain Drive. The North side of Trans mountain Drive is almost completely clear of any development. Restler Drive and areas further south of Trans Mountain Drive are completely developed.

We feel the last remaining natural and undeveloped land connecting the Franklin Mountains to the Rio Grande is the undeveloped apron of land north and some on the south side of Trans Mountain Drive. Arroyo's such as the very large and wide Arroyo 41A are wildlife corridors to the Rio Grande as are the land adjoining the arroyos.

**Response to Comment 13:**

- *According to the following link, Flow Path 41A would not be affected by the project as it is north of the proposed improvements to Loop 375.*

<http://www.elpasotexas.gov/engineering/floodzones.asp>

- *FMC 5*

**Comment 14:**

Direct impacts:

Mule Deer, javalina, foxes, mountain lions, and other wildlife deaths:

Sierra Club members and other hikers walking along Trans Mountain Drive or near it have found all of the above dead wildlife, killed instantly or mortally wounded to die off the highway, including many mule deer that were instantly killed by autos or trucks driving down Trans Mountain Drive, especially at night. Wildlife are blinded by bright headlights and are at increased risk of being hit, killed or mortally injured. Hikers have found many dead mule deer that walked away from being hit, only to die out away from the highway. Once the Trans Mountain Freeway is built making it easier to drive 70 or even 80 MPH (illegally or legally), the speeds of automobiles and trucks traveling up and down Trans Mountain Drive - and possibly speed limits will increase causing increased deaths where wildlife attempt or dare to cross.

Mr. Chuck Berry has repeatedly and publicly told residents and other concerned citizens and officials that TxDot considered a wildlife crossing but deemed it too expensive to seriously consider building.

The new Freeway will be elevated 20 feet for four interchange- bridges fragmenting wildlife habitat. Wildlife can currently cross Trans Mountain Drive with the highway at grade for all 3.6 miles will have very close and repeated elevated highway / bridges dividing and stopping them from crossing in many places they can cross and walk now. Fragmenting wildlife habitat has been proven to weaken and even kill wildlife, that can't access food or water they need to survive.

**Response to Comment 14:**

- See Response to Comment 11.
  
- FMC 1

**Comment 15:**

On page 58 of your report in Table 3.14 (Threatened and Endangered Species/Species of Concern in El Paso County, Texas, and Potential Impacts), you state in reference to burrowing owls that there will be "No impact; no open grassland vegetation present in the project area."

Many of our members including myself have seen Burrowing Owls very near Trans mountain Drive, especially above gas line road

Burrowing Owls are known to use lower elevation and higher mountain elevations in desert habitat in the southwest. I personally have seen burrowing owls using creosote shrub habitat like that along Trans Mountain Road in El Paso. Supporting references of burrowing owl use of desert habitat: USFW Southwest Regional Gap Analysis Wildlife Habitat Relationship (2004) and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Report (TPWD, 2011). The TPWD report, Burrowing Owls of the Trans-Pecos and Panhandle Regions of Texas, states "They (burrowing owls) use a wide array of arid and semi-arid environments including deserts, desert grasslands, scrub and shrub-lands that contain creosote bush, mesquite, four-wing saltbush, and rabbit-brush.

The status of burrowing owls as noted in the recently published Texas Parks and Wildlife Report, Burrowing Owls of the Trans-Pecos and Panhandle Regions of Texas. 2011 is as follows: "Currently they are listed as a Species of International Conservation Concern, Endangered in Canada, Threatened in Mexico, and a Bird of National Conservation Concern by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The owls are a Species of Concern in 9 U.S. states, 3 USFWS regions, 9 Bird Conservation Regions and rated as a Species of Regional Importance (Trans-Pecos) by Partners in Flight."

**Response to Comment 15:**

*TxDOT reviewed the TPWD's "Annotated County List of Rare Species" for El Paso County, which describes habitat for the western burrowing owl as "open grasslands, especially prairie, plains, and savanna, sometimes in open areas such as vacant lots near human habitation or airports; nests and roosts in abandoned burrows." Using this description, the project area was assessed for potential habitat. In addition, existing elements of occurrence from the TPWD's NDD were obtained and reviewed, and no western burrowing owls have been recorded within 10 miles of the project area. During field investigations for the proposed project, no western burrowing owls or evidence of the species was observed. Because unregulated species are not protected from incidental take, no presence/absence surveys were performed for the western burrowing owl.*

**Comment 16:**

We have seen Texas Horned Lizards on undeveloped land near Trans Mountain Drive. Carpenter Ant hills, one main food source of Texas Horned Lizards are present in many areas along Trans Mountain Drive. We have seen these listed threatened horned lizards in many places along the 3.6 mile project area. The land use of development promoted and facilitated by the Freeway's four bridges and gateways will create a new land use and change that will destroy horned lizard habitat including their main food source, carpenter ants.

I and many hikers involved in Sierra Club outings have personally seen threatened Texas Horned Lizards in the road project area. We disagree with the EA statement: "substantial indirect impacts are not anticipated."

It is very important that negative wildlife impacts - direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts be studied and considered. The Texas Department of Transportation has not done so. More research needs to be conducted on possible Sneed's Cholla Cactus via indirect and cumulative impacts from the project.

**Response to Comment 16:**

- See Response to Comment 2.
  
- *Texas horned lizards are known to exist in desert habitats along Loop 375 and throughout the region. Although induced development associated with the proposed project may occur and may impact additional Texas horned lizard habitat, surrounding areas provide large tracts of habitat that can support Texas horned lizard populations. In addition, large amounts of habitat occur in West Texas. As a result, the proposed project and potentially induced development are not expected to have a substantial impact on the Texas horned lizard or its habitat.*

**Comment 17:**

The proposal to widen and improve Transmountain Drive by TxDOT was a 17 million dollar mostly at grade logical road widening project in 2009. No logical person in El Paso County would oppose that original project design. Several key developers who stand to gain financially from an upgraded project asked Texas Transportation Commissioner Ted Houghton to add additional bridges high up the mountain (Plexar and Paseo del Norte) and two gateways, (frontage land donated by developers Woody Hunt and others). The project was changed into a 85 million dollar project that has become very controversial in El Paso. Many of us ask: 85 million dollars for 3.6 miles of freeway?

For 85 million for only 3.6 miles we should have a Cadillac of a freeway that most all El Pasoans can support.

**Response to Comment 17:**

*Comment noted for the record. The original Comprehensive Mobility Plan (CMP) (adopted in 2008) included a \$17 million project and was considered at the time an interim phased project.*

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

XX

El Paso Regional Sierra Club Group

**Verbal Comment:**

**Comment 18:**

Good evening, Mr. Berry. Thank you. For the record, my name is that XX. I'm representing the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club as well as the El Paso Regional Sierra Club Group. With all due respect, I've -- we have analyzed the environmental assessment since before it was issued by TxDOT, we had a draft copy and as a layman -- I'm not an attorney or an engineer -- in all my 20 years of reviewing national environmental policy acts, environmental assessments and EIS I've never seen a more substandard one. What you've done, Mr. Berry -- let's be honest. It's all public record -- you've turned a \$17 million road-widening project into an 85 to \$100 million project with four bridges and gateways.

**Response to Comment 18:**

*See response to Comment 17.*

**Comment 19:**

The gateways aren't any buffer to the state park, it will actually cause more sprawl. This in essence is a sprawl-building project. You'll be producing more congestion, more traffic tie-ups and more sprawl in the periphery of our city by the current design.

**Response to Comment 19:**

- *The proposed project was designed to be compatible with approved land use and the City of El Paso approved Northwest Master Plan.*
- *The indirect and cumulative impacts analysis conducted in the EA addressed reasonably foreseeable development in the project area and potential impacts to land use, vegetation, threatened and endangered species, and water resources.*

*The designation of open space and land use in northwestern El Paso is an issue outside of the scope of the proposed project and is ultimately the decision of the El Paso City Council. City Council voted against an initiative that would have created approximately 900 acres of natural open space adjoining the existing right of way of the proposed project. They also voted in favor of the proposed project as designed, including the proposed roadway referred to as Plexxar and the interchange at the proposed location for Paseo Del Norte.*

**Comment 20:**

So, again, you've turned a \$17 million road-widening project that was feasible and logical into an \$85 million project solely to help about four people, Mr. Panajo, Mr. O'Leary, Mr. Jobe, who will be supplying the material to all this project with a 460-acre quarry right next to the periphery of the state park on the boundaries and right next to Westway.

**Response to Comment 20:**

See responses to Comment 12 and Comment 17.

**Comment 21:**

I might add, Mr. Berry, that's an economically disadvantaged community. A very much Hispanic -- I'm also an environmental justice chair of the El Paso Regional Sierra Club in our chapter and I think there's some disproportional impacts for the people of Westway and Canutillo for that matter.

**Response to Comment 21:**

*A study of potential impacts to Environmental Justice populations was conducted under the proposed project. Results indicated that the project would not cause disproportionately high and adverse impacts to Environmental Justice populations in, or adjacent to, the project area. Additionally, the project objective of increasing mobility and safety represents a positive impact for neighborhoods in the general project vicinity.*

**Comment 22:**

I really have watched this from the beginning as being a member of the El Paso -- City of El Paso Open Space Advisory Board, I'm a member. Again, I'm speaking for the Sierra Club but in our presentation and also that we've had for TxDOT and also watching city council I've never seen more coercion by TxDOT, by some people -- different people promoting this project saying if we -- if city council doesn't go along with this, then if we don't go along with zoning changes and giving up land, we can lose the money. Well, we should lose the money.

**Response to Comment 22:**

FMC 12

**Comment 23:**

Yes, sir. I'll wind up.

You know, I'll go ahead and wind up my comments right now, Mr. Berry, because we're going to -- all this technical information that I would offer, we'll be saving it. We've hired an attorney -- the Sierra Club has hired an attorney. The attorney Fred McLaury, Rockwell, Allman in Austin. They're very well versed in NEPA (phonetic) law and will be reviewing this assessment. Any of you-all -- this is the last thing I'll say. Anybody that wants to donate -- this is all for the public record, the comments, of the -- to our legal defense fund, please contact any member of the Sierra Club or the executive committee and we will contest what we find wrong about this project and require --

**Response to Comment 23:**

*Comments noted for the record.*

**Comment 24:**

we hope to see a full environmental impact statement being required by the Federal Highway Administration and not just a substandard environmental assessment. Thank you, Mr. Berry.

**Response to Comment 24:**

See response to Comment 6.

**Reference ID #: 71**

**Letter:**

Dear Mr. Uribe:

**Comment 1:**

I am writing regarding the proposed Transmountain West freeway project and the Environmental Assessment. Please note that these comments are my own and do not represent the majority opinion on City Council. On May 30, 2011, the City Council voted 7 to 1 to support the project as proposed by TXDOT.

The proposed freeway will run up the side of the Franklin Mountains. The Franklin Mountains define our city. The mountains are a place just minutes from our homes where we can go to relax and exercise and enjoy being outside. That is why generations of El Pasoans have fought to preserve and protect the mountains. And that is why thousands of El Pasoans have mobilized to advocate for alternatives to the proposed freeway that will mitigate the harm to precious open space.

(Picture on original document in Appendix H)

According to the Federal Highway's guidance on the National Environmental Protection Act process, It is FHWA's policy that (23 CFR § 771 .105):

- To the fullest extent possible, all environmental investigations, reviews, and consultations be coordinated as a single process, and compliance with all applicable environmental requirements be reflected in the environmental document required by this regulation.
- Alternative courses of action be evaluated and decisions be made in the best overall public interest based upon a balanced consideration of the need for safe and efficient transportation; of the social, economic, and environmental impacts of the proposed transportation improvement; and of national, state, and local environmental protection goals.
- Public involvement and a systematic interdisciplinary approach be essential parts of the development process for proposed actions.
- Measures necessary to mitigate adverse impacts be incorporated into the action.

***Response to Comment 1:***

*The proposed project has been developed in accordance with the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 23 Highways Part 771 Environmental Impact and Related Procedures, FHWA Technical Advisory T 6640.8A, and the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Title 43 Part 1 Chapter 2 Subchapter C Environmental Review and Public Involvement for Transportation Projects. In addition, all planning, design, and environmental documents were developed in accordance with applicable state and federal laws and with TxDOT's Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) and Programmatic Agreements (PA) with the Texas Historical Commission (THC), the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), and the Texas General Land Office (GLO).*

*The project team, which included planners, engineers, natural and social scientists, and NEPA experts, used a systematic interdisciplinary planning and design approach that integrated natural,*

social, and environmental sciences. The planning process was based on need and purpose, project objectives, and engineering and environmental constraints in the project area. In addition, public involvement played an integral part in project development, and project cost and funding were considered. These planning strategies were used in the formulation and analysis of project alternatives and in the selection of a preferred alternative.

As NEPA requires, TxDOT evaluated all reasonable alternatives available, then chose Alternative 5 (Freeway) as the preferred alternative because it was the alternative that best met the need and purpose of the project while also balancing local transportation and land use needs. TxDOT also undertook an extensive public involvement process that included a Public Meeting (March 11, 2010), a Public Hearing (March 22, 2011), public notices published in English and Spanish, and various informal public outreach efforts.

TXDOT DID NOT FOLLOW FHWA'S NEPA POLICY.

**Comment 2:**

1. Alternative courses of action were eliminated for further environmental analysis and public consideration based on outdated traffic estimates not supported by the current Metropolitan Transportation Plan

**Response to Comment 2:**

FMC 11

**Comment 3:**

and on inaccurate data used to evaluate safety concerns.

**Response to Comment 3:**

Several observations were made during the public comment period regarding the conflict points data presented under the analysis of alternatives. As a result of these and other comments, the section of the EA that included Table 2.3 has been modified. One modification is to present the same conflict point data obtained from the microsimulation analysis in a more understandable format than was included in the in the EA and presented at the public hearing on March 22, 2011. Data is the same (please refer to Appendix G of the corrected EA). The only change is the way the data is presented in order to simplify the presentation. The original table presented the average number of combined vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-pedestrian conflict points for all intersections along the corridor, which was more difficult to understand. Under the new presentation, the **total** number of conflict points for all five intersections are presented for each alternative. For example (referring to Table G-3 in Appendix G of the corrected EA) under Alternative 1 (No-Build), the number of vehicle to vehicle conflicts (67) is added to the number of the vehicle to pedestrian conflicts (73) to give a total of 140 total conflict points along the corridor. A similar process was used to determine the total number of conflict points along the corridor for all five alternatives. (See Table 2.3 of the EA)

The alternatives that did not meet all of the needs and purpose of providing congestion relief and improving safety conditions were eliminated from further analysis. Based on this evaluation, it was determined that Alternative 5 (Freeway) best meets the need and purpose of the proposed project. Alternative 5 was designated the preferred alternative and was carried forward for further evaluation, as documented in the EA.

**Comment 4:**

2. An alternative that had been promoted by the public for at least eight months was not included for consideration in the Environmental Assessment.

**Response to Comment 4:**

*(Based on prior discussions between TxDOT and Representative Byrd, the comment is understood to refer to an alternative that would include the combination of Plexxar/Paseo Del Norte overpasses and references to preserving more undeveloped open space along the proposed project corridor.)*

- FMC 3

- FMC 5

**Comment 5:**

3. Throughout the process, TxDOT made it clear that the dollars committed to this project would be put at risk if any changes were made to the project. Because of this City Council was reluctant to work with the public to mitigate adverse environmental impacts based on a fear of losing the funding.

**Response to Comment 5:**

FMC 13

**Comment 6:**

This action by TxDOT had the effect of providing only two real alternatives to the public and City Council: build the freeway as proposed with no changes or no build.

**Response to Comment 6:**

FMC 8

**Comment 7:**

4. The failure to consider a transit alternative is based on false logic.

**Response to Comment 7:**

*Public transportation alternatives for meeting the mobility objectives of the project were considered; however, fixed route or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) have not been designated along the Loop 375 Transmountain corridor as a priority in the Capital Improvement Program or MPO planning documents. Further, based on the fact that transit ridership comprises 2.5 percent of total trips in all modes of transportation in the western region of El Paso as compared to approximately 97 percent for all other modes, demand does not justify a transit alternative that meets the stated needs of improving safety and mobility on this portion of Loop 375. The proposed project has been designed to accommodate future fixed route or BRT alternatives. The City of El Paso and SunMetro have not designated the Loop 375 Transmountain corridor as fixed route or Bus Rapid Transit, BRT, priority in the Capital Improvement Program or MPO planning documents.)*

**Comment 8:**

**ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS**

In the Needs and Purpose Statement, TxDOT stated that a roadway solution is needed to accommodate mobility concerns and to resolve safety concerns both regionally and locally. TxDOT evaluated five alternatives to determine whether they met the need and purpose for the project. Based on their analysis,

only two alternatives, TXDOT's preferred freeway alternative and No Build alternative were carried forward for further environmental review and for consideration by the public.

***Response to Comment 8:***

*FMC 8*

**Comment 9:**

1. Alternative courses of action were eliminated for further environmental analysis and public consideration based on outdated traffic estimates not supported by the current Metropolitan Transportation Plan

***Response to Comment 9:***

*FMC 11*

**Comment 10:**

and on inaccurate data used to evaluate safety concerns.

***Response to Comment 10:***

*See response to Comment 3.*

**Comment 11:**

MOBILITY

OUTDATED INFORMATION.

During a the City Council public hearing on the Environmental Assessment on March 5, 2010, TXDOT indicated that the current traffic volumes on Transmountain today is 17,000 cars per day. TXDOT estimated that in 2015 when the project is completed the car volume would increase to 40,000, a 57% increase in traffic volumes. TXDOT estimates that in 2035 the car trips per day would increase to 71, 000. This information can be found on page 11 of the Environmental Assessment. These were also the numbers that TXDOT reported to us at the public hearing. The basis for their estimates is the Transborder Metropolitan Plan which was adopted by the Transportation Policy Board on November 16, 2007. The Transborder MTP has been replaced by the Mission MTP which was adopted on August 10, 2010.

TXDOT used these traffic estimates in the Environmental Assessment to determine that the only alternative that could handle these volumes of traffic was a freeway (The Alternatives Analysis is described on pages 11-23 of the Environmental Assessment).

TXDOT did not use the most current traffic estimates available for Transmountain Road in the alternatives analysis for the Environmental Assessment.

***Response to Comment 11:***

*FMC 11*

**Comment 12:**

NEW INFORMATION.

Below is the information provided to me by Roy Gilyard, the director of the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization. The most current data available is from the Mission MTP which was adopted by the Transportation Policy Board on August 5, 2010.

## TRAFFIC ESTIMATES FOR TRANSMOUNTAIN WEST

### TRANSBORDER METROPOLITAN PLAN

Adopted by the Transportation Policy Board on November 16, 2007

Network year | 2015 | 2025 | 2035

Total flow | 33,000 | 47,000 | 60,000

### TXDOT ESTIMATES USED IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

EA indicates that these numbers were developed in 2009

Network year | 2015 | 2025 | 2035

Total flow | 40,000 | na | 71,000

### MISSION METROPOLITAN PLAN

Adopted by the Transportation Policy Board on August 5, 2010

Network year | 2020 | 2025 | 2035

Total flow | 18,000 | 19,000 | 31,000

The new numbers are half of what TXDOT used in their alternatives analysis.

TXDOT is proposing to build a freeway to accommodate 71,000 car trips when the latest traffic estimates indicate that there will only be 31,000 car trips by 2035.

#### **Response to Comment 12:**

*The narrative above incorrectly compares design corridor traffic projection values (referred to as TxDOT Estimates used in the environmental assessment) that have been projected for design of a transportation facility, to travel demand model traffic assignment values (referred to as TransBorder 2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (TransBorder MTP) and Mission 2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (Mission MTP) values) used for general transportation planning purposes. Additional response for use of traffic data is addressed in FMC 11.*

#### **Comment 13:**

TOO MUCH ROAD FOR DEMAND?

TXDOT is required by federal law to consider alternatives. In their alternatives analysis, they compared the performance of a freeway to the performance of four other alternatives, including an arterial and a boulevard. TXDOT analyzed the difference between these alternatives in terms of travel time, average speed, and levels of service for the corridor as well as for the intersections. (A summary of this analysis is on page 20 of the Environmental Assessment.) The problem with their analysis is that they use numbers twice the size of recent estimates to determine that the only alternative that should be considered is a freeway. Using 71,000 car trips per day, TXDOT eliminated all of the alternatives as inadequate to the task of moving that many cars.

#### **Response to Comment 13:**

*The narrative above incorrectly compares design corridor traffic projection values (referred to as twice the size of recent estimates 71,000) that have been projected for design of a transportation facility, to travel demand model traffic assignment values (referred to as recent estimates) used for general transportation planning purposes. Additional response for use of traffic data is addressed in FMC 11.*

#### **Comment 14:**

If they had used the more recent numbers, both the arterial and the boulevard would perform well, as arterials and boulevards are routinely built to successfully handle these volumes. When I became aware

of this discrepancy on March 9, 2011, I asked Mr. Berry with TXDOT to redo the analysis with the most recent numbers in order to give City Council, the public and FHWA a more accurate analysis of the alternatives. Mr. Berry committed to trying to update the information at a City Council Meeting on March 15, 2011. As of March 30, 2011, an updated alternatives analysis using the most recent data has not been made available for public review or consideration.

**Response to Comment 14:**

*A second Alternatives Analysis was performed using the MPO's Mission 2035 MTP as a starting point. The projected traffic volumes along Loop 375 resulted in values less than those utilized in the EA. The Alternatives Analysis using values based on the Mission 2035 MTP demonstrated the same outcome as the Alternatives Analysis using values based on the TransBorder 2035 MTP. Alternatives 1 through 4, including the Boulevard Concept, did not meet the stated need and purpose for the project. Alternative 5 best met the mobility and safety objectives and therefore remained the preferred alternative. A technical report documenting this Alternatives Analysis has been prepared. If and when FHWA issues a decision, TxDOT will send a broadcast email to the project mailing list when project documents are available online. An official Open Records Request can also be submitted to obtain the alternatives analysis technical report.*

**Comment 15:**

AIR QUALITY.

The El Paso region is in non-attainment for particulate matter (PM10) and in some areas of the city for carbon monoxide (CO). Under the federal air quality rules this means that the City cannot build any transportation facility which would add more pollutants than what has been budgeted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). It also means that every four years, the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has to update our Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), which is a document that reviews current demographic data and its impact on transportation demand. As part of the MTP process, the MPO models the air quality based on all of the planned transportation projects. The MPO has to prove that completing these new transportation projects will not add additional pollutants beyond what has been budgeted for the region.

The proposed project was listed in the Transborder MTP but had a different scope. The scope in the old MTP included building a climbing lane in the eastbound direction. In order to pursue the full blown freeway project, TXDOT had to make sure the project was current with the MTP and the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) to ensure that it was in compliance with air quality standards. The most current MTP is the Mission MTP adopted on August 5, 2010. That MTP only shows 31,000 car trips per day on Transmountain. 31, 000 car trips per day was modeled for conformity with our air quality budget. From page 36 of the Environmental Assessment, "With the January 28, 2011 conformity determination, FHWA determined that the existing transportation network, plus the planned projects in the 2035 MTP, would not exceed the emission budgets in the SIP."

Since TXDOT is proposing to build a road that will accommodate twice the traffic that is projected and that will therefore have twice the impact on air quality, I am concerned that we do not know the full impact on air quality.

**Response to Comment 15:**

*The proposed Transmountain West project is identified in the fiscally constrained project list of the Mission 2035 MTP (page 64) as F043X-MOD. The fiscally constrained project list ensures that the cost of all the listed projects does not exceed the revenue projected to be available for constructing those projects during the referenced time period. The description of the project in this list is consistent with that of the preferred alternative described in the EA, including all relevant geometrical and functional classification characteristics such as freeway lanes, frontage*

roads, on- and off-ramps, and the two direct connectors (westbound I-10 to eastbound Loop 375 and westbound Loop 375 to eastbound I-10) For Transportation Conformity purposes, the project is included in the travel demand and air quality models for the 2020 network analysis year of the Mission 2035 MTP. Such a time frame is consistent with the information disclosed in the EA, which states that the project would be open to traffic in 2013. The Mission MTP received a Transportation Conformity letter from FHWA on January 28, 2011, which establishes that the projects in the MTP collectively contribute to meeting all of the air quality conditions that are established by Federal and State laws and regulations. The emissions of pollutants that result from traffic patterns in future years, according to the Mission 2035 MTP, are in full compliance of air quality standards set by federal and state laws and regulations.

An approved TxDOT modeling study demonstrated that it is unlikely that a carbon monoxide (CO) standard would be exceeded as a result of any project with an average daily traffic volume below 140,000 average daily traffic (ADT). Based on project design year of 2035 and projected traffic volumes below 140,000 ADT for the proposed project, a qualitative air quality analysis was conducted in lieu of a quantitative analysis. The analysis concluded that the proposed project is not expected to result in substantial impacts to air quality. Similarly, because the design year traffic for this project did not exceed 140,000, a quantitative MSAT analysis is not required.

Regarding PM-10, on June 6, 2011, the project was reviewed by the Consultation Partners for the El Paso MPO area, which consists of representatives from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), FHWA, TxDOT, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the El Paso MPO, and representatives from the State of New Mexico transportation and environmental agencies. The Consultation Partners concurred that the project is not one of local air quality concern and, therefore, does not require a quantitative or qualitative PM-10 hot-spot analysis. The determination was based upon the fact that the project ADT and percent truck traffic are below the values that would indicate a project of air quality concern (125,000 ADT and 8 percent truck traffic), as specified in 40 CFR Part 93 (Conformity Regulation) and in EPA's Transportation Conformity Guidance for Quantitative Hotspot Analyses in PM 2.5 and PM10 Nonattainment and Maintenance Areas, December 2010. The public was notified of the results of the Consultative Partners meeting in notices published in the El Paso Times on June 12, 2011 and June 15, 2011, as well as in Spanish in El Diario de El Paso on June 15, 2011. These notices initiated a seven day public comment period and two comments were received and addressed.

**Comment 16:**

SAFETY

INACCURATE DATA. In his public comments to the media, Mr. Berry indicated that he did not believe the new information, with the lower traffic projections, would change the state's recommendation because of safety concerns. "The freeway gives fewer opportunities for people to crash into each other," said Chuck Berry, the department's district engineer."

**Response to Comment 16:**

- Mr. Berry's statement is accurate. Alternative 5 (Freeway) offers the fewest opportunities for vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-pedestrian collisions for the following reasons. First, it offers the fewest total number of conflict points along the corridor (108) compared to the other Build alternatives: Alternative 2 (140), Alternative 3 (140) and Alternative 4 (266). Second, Alternative 5 separates the total traffic along the Loop 375 corridor into higher-speed traffic traveling along the main lanes (free of conflict points because the intersections are grade-separated), and lower-speed traffic traveling along the frontage roads. The 108 conflict points occur at the intersections between the frontage roads and

*the cross streets, but the traffic along the frontage roads is only a portion of the total traffic on Loop 375. In contrast, the conflict points of the other Build alternatives occur with 100% of the traffic that travels along Loop 375. These two conditions apply even if the overall traffic numbers along the corridor are lower.*

- See also response to Comment 3.

**Comment 17:**

The only measure that TXDOT used to measure safety was the number of conflict points at intersections. Based on this measure, TXDOT said that none of the alternatives was safe except for the freeway because it contained the fewest conflict points at intersections. (Page 20 of the EA summarizes TXDOT's findings from the alternatives analysis.) TXDOT has since admitted that they did not provide an accurate number of conflict points for the freeway. They only counted half of the freeway intersection for their model thus significantly underestimating the number of conflict points. TXDOT has since revised those numbers indicating that at the full interchanges there are 10 vehicle to vehicle conflict points and 14 vehicle to pedestrian conflict points. This is a total of 24 conflict points. Based on the new numbers and TXDOT's logic that conflict points are the only measure for safety to be considered, the freeway is the 2nd most dangerous option after the boulevard. If accurate numbers had been provided, other alternatives might emerge to be considered for further analysis and to be considered by the public.

**Response to Comment 17:**

*The alternatives analysis described in the EA considers two (not one) Measures of Effectiveness to evaluate the safety aspects of each of the five Alternatives: Number of total conflict points and average maximum queue length at all intersections. In addition, and as a result of public comments, the same data regarding number of conflict points for the different alternatives is now presented in a more understandable format (please refer to Response to Comment 3) under the corrected EA. Under this format, Alternatives 1,2 and, 3 have a total of 140 conflict points along the corridor; Alternative 4 has 266, and Alternative 5 has 108. Of all four Build alternatives, Alternative 5 is the one that has the lowest number of total vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-pedestrian conflict points along the Loop 375 corridor. In terms of average queue length, the EA describes how long queues at intersections create safety concerns, especially for traffic traveling westbound. Vehicles traveling at high speeds down a five to seven percent grade as they come down the mountain would suddenly encounter the queue of idle vehicles waiting to travel through the signalized intersections. The simulation results show that the average queues for Alternatives 2 through 4 are 1496 ft, 1620 ft, and 1578 ft respectively. This represents more than a quarter of a mile. In contrast, the average queue for Alternative 5 is 425 ft. Furthermore, under Alternative 5, (please refer to Appendix G of the EA) the queue at the State Park entrance is zero ft, which allows vehicles traveling westbound to adjust their speed as the grade decreases beyond the Park entrance.*

**Comment 18:**

INADEQUATE MEASURES TO ASSESS SAFETY.

In TXDOT's Need and Purpose section, the following was determined to be a local safety concerns resolved by the proposed freeway:

- Safety concerns at intersections and driveways, as well as unprotected turning and passing movements. Other alternatives could resolve the need provided as stated in the Environmental Assessment and might have had better safety outcomes for roadway users, especially vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and bicyclists, had other safety measures been included in the alternatives analysis. For example, speed and traffic volumes were not measured in considering the best safety outcomes for roadway users. Traffic

volumes are the primary determinants of crash frequency, while traffic speeds are the primary determinants of crash severity. In the proposed freeway option, all of the conflict points occur at the intersection of major arterials and frontage roads. These roads tend to carry traffic at high volumes and high speeds. The proposed boulevard option would have local access roads that would function in much the same way as frontage roads, however they tend to carry less volumes of traffic and at much slower speeds than freeway frontage. These local roads are slower because they are narrower and often accommodate parked cars which can further slow traffic. Since either the frontage roads or the local access roads are the areas where there is the most conflict with pedestrians and bicyclists, it is important to make this area the safest by slowing traffic.

The following boulevard concept for Transmountain was developed by the City of El Paso's consultants working on updating the City's Comprehensive Plan. As you can see the local roads are narrower with short distances across to accommodate pedestrian movements. They are also built to accommodate street parking.

(Picture on original document in Appendix H)

Analyzing speeds and the impact on safety is particularly important for this roadway as it is currently used as recreational path for bikers, runners and walkers and is projected to be built to accommodate these roadway users, regardless of the alternative. Higher speeds result in very poor outcomes for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians. (See graph below.) In crashes between pedestrians and vehicles at 40 miles per hour, the likelihood that the pedestrian will die is 85%.

(Graph on original document in Appendix H)

**Response to Comment 18:**

*The alternatives analysis conducted for the proposed improvements considered a boulevard design (Alternative 4) that was developed using common features described in the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) guidance entitled Context Sensitive Solutions in Designing Major Urban Thoroughfares for Walkable Communities (ITE 2006) as well as the El Paso Smart Code (City of El Paso 2008). The alternative would consist of a central roadway conveying through-traffic movement with raised landscaped medians separating two directions of travel in addition to the medians separating the central roadway from access lanes. Access lanes would consist of narrow, one-lane, low-speed one-way streets including on-street parking and possibly a shared vehicle/bicycle lane. All intersections along the Loop 375 corridor would remain at-grade and would have traffic signals as traffic volumes warrant them. However, the Alternatives Analysis documented in the Environmental Assessment demonstrated that a boulevard facility would not meet the mobility and safety needs of the area under the projected traffic volumes for the years 2015 or 2035.*

*Alternative 4 (Boulevard Concept) would separate higher speed traffic on the mainlanes from slower traffic on the access lanes, which is a desirable condition to achieve. The access lanes would allow for safe right turns in and out of adjacent properties, but would present challenges at intersections by creating a large number of conflict points between vehicles and pedestrians. This alternative showed a modest improvement in travel time over the existing facility (or No-Build), but the length of the resulting queues along Loop 375 at the intersections (Please refer to Table G-2) Appendix G extend well over 1000 ft, which creates gridlocked traffic conditions in the year 2035. The analysis showed a notable increase in the number of vehicular and pedestrian conflict points compared to any other alternative (266), as well as a queue length exhibited along the corridor and, more importantly, at the Park Entrance Road and the proposed Paseo del Norte Road*

*intersections, that would represent a potential safety concern to vehicles traveling downhill in a westbound direction as they reach a queue of idle vehicles on the mainlanes.*

*In response to comments received on the Environmental Assessment after it received a Satisfactory for Further Processing (SFP) from FHWA, a second Alternatives Analysis was performed using the MPO's Mission MTP as a starting point. The projected traffic flows along Loop 375 resulted in lower volumes than those utilized in the EA. However, even at the lower levels, the Alternatives Analysis demonstrated the same outcome. Alternatives 1 through 4, including Alternative 4 (Boulevard Concept), did not improve safety along the corridor. They continued to show the same number of conflict points.. Alternative 5 (Freeway) demonstrated that it was the only alternative that meets the mobility and safety needs, and it remained the preferred alternative.*

**Comment 19:**

Other aspects of safety that were not analyzed in the EA was the length of pedestrians and bicyclists trips across lanes of traffic, and the fact that boulevard creates an opportunity for a bikeway/pedestrian path that is uninterrupted by any vehicle conflicts except at intersections.

**Response to Comment 19:**

*The alternatives analysis included in the EA addresses two types of vehicle conflicts, in addition to the potential for rear end crashes caused by long queues waiting for traffic signals in its safety analysis. The boulevard alternative, as described by the commenter, proposes to locate the hike and bike trails in the median area between the boulevard main lanes and access road (see RID 71 in Appendix H). The suggested location would expose the pedestrian or bicyclist to adjoining higher speed traffic on the main lanes toward the trail's inboard side, in addition to the lower speed traffic on the boulevard access road toward the trail's outboard side. In this manner, the commenter proposes to remove the conflict between driveways and the proposed hike and bike paths. Where this is an option, it was not considered in the proposed project alternatives analysis because the hike and bike trail user would be exposed to one half of the highway traffic, or all the traffic traveling in one direction, when the trail is placed between the main lanes and access road. The proposed project locates the hike and bike path next to the right-of-way line, as far away from the frontage road traffic as possible, exposing the user to low density driveway volumes and adjoining frontage road traffic which would result in lower volumes of traffic than one half of the traffic on the highway. The proposed placement of the bike/hike trail is consistent with the City's land use development planning for the corridor.*

**Comment 20:**

TXDOT has not yet negotiated a deal with property owners about how many entrances they will have from their property onto the frontage road but each point of access will be a conflict point between vehicles and pedestrians or bicyclists. These many points of conflict for private property access make the hike/bike trail more dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists and might make it less attractive to use. Because of high speeds and the emphasis on moving many motorists, freeways make for poor and unsafe multimodal facilities. The boulevard would provide an option for bicyclists and pedestrians for a path that is not interrupted by driveways accessing private property.

The following is a picture of the local roads and uninterrupted bike/pedestrian path on a boulevard.

(Picture on original document in Appendix H)

**Response to Comment 20:**

*Developers must submit their driveway plans through the TxDOT Access Management Process in order to secure required driveway permits. At that time, the appropriate regulatory and advisory signage would be required at driveways to advise vehicular traffic of pedestrians and bicyclists.*

**Comment 21:**

ALTERNATIVES ELIMINATED USING OUTDATED AND INACCURATE INFORMATION.

The result of TxDOT using outdated and inaccurate information was that TxDOT failed to meet its obligation to provide alternative courses of action that would be evaluated so that decisions could be made in the best overall public interest based upon a balanced consideration of the need for safe and efficient transportation; of the social, economic, and environmental impacts of the proposed transportation improvement; and of national, state, and local environmental protection goals. If they had used the traffic estimates in the most recent MTP as the basis for their traffic projections and if they had not underestimated the number of conflict points for the freeway, the public and City Council would have had more options to consider to balance concerns about meeting mobility while preserving a very important scenic corridor through our mountain.

**Response to Comment 21:**

*FMC 11*

**Comment 22:**

2. An alternative that had been promoted by the public for at least eight months was not included for consideration in the Environmental Assessment.

Many community advocates concerned about the impact of the freeway on an important scenic corridor and on the mountain landscape proposed a compromise to TxDOT at least a year ago. Eliminate the final overpass closest to the State Park and preserve the land owned by the City as natural open space. The overall impact of this alternative would be to increase the length of the scenic corridor by as much as 3/4 of a mile on the eastern end of the project closest to the State Park. This alternative would still be a freeway facility with overpasses but by removing the Paseo del Norte Overpass and the frontage roads necessary to accommodate the overpass, it would remain at grade and would only require a minimal right of way until the Plexar overpass. It would also reduce the number of required overpasses from four to three.

I put forward this compromise to the City Council consideration on October 5, 2010.

Despite the fact that there is overwhelming support (documented in 3 petitions containing more than 1,400 signatures each) for this alternative, TxDOT failed to include it in their EA as an alternative to be considered. They included a boulevard for consideration as a result of public comment but they did not include an alternative that appeared to have huge community Support and initially City Council buy in.

The City of El Paso hired a consultant to review the impacts of removing the last overpass and found that removing the last overpass results in less congestion in the service area than if the overpass is built. (The traffic study is attached for your review in Addendum 1.) As with any project, there are engineering hurdles that would have to be overcome in order to implement this option but it was never considered by TxDOT in their EA and never provided for consideration to the public.

**Response to Comment 22:**

- *FMC 3*

- *Copies of two of the referenced petitions addressed to City Council were provided to FHWA during the public hearing comment period and are included as Appendix K in the Public Hearing Summary.*
- *The City's Walter P. Moore document (WMP TIA) was an independent traffic study that the City commissioned. Following the NEPA process and standard engineering practice, TxDOT developed the traffic data for the proposed project in coordination with the El Paso MPO. TxDOT does not have an official opinion on the development and results of the WPM TIA.*

**Comment 23:**

3. Throughout the process, TxDOT made it clear that the dollars committed to this project would be put at risk if any changes were made to the project to mitigate environmental concerns. Because of this City Council was reluctant to work with the public to mitigate adverse environmental impacts based on a fear of losing the funding, This action by TxDOT had the effect of providing only two real alternatives to the public and City Council: build the freeway as proposed with no changes or no build.

***Response to Comment 23:***

*FMC 13*

**Comment 24:**

No where is this more clear than in the decision made about whether or not to preserve the City's own land as natural open space

***Response to Comment 24:***

*FMC 5*

**Comment 25:**

in order to potentially eliminate the need to build the last Overpass. City Council voted to initiate this zoning change and to hire a consultant to evaluate the need for the last overpass in a vote of 6 to 1. The mayor stated on the record that he would also support this action. TxDOT made it clear that this action would have cost the City the project funds and as a result, City Council reversed its action and voted 5 to 3 to not zone the land as open space and instead to zone it as SmartCode. And the mayor publicly advocated that the council take this action so as not to lose the funding. (In an addendum, I have provided articles and other communication documenting the threat of loss of funds by TxDOT if council were to take this action to mitigate the environmental impacts of the freeway proposal.)

***Response to Comment 25:***

- *FMC 3*

- *FMC 13*

**Comment 26:**

4. The failure to consider a transit alternative is based on false logic. On page 11 of the EA, TxDOT states "public transportation alternatives for meeting the mobility objectives of the project were initially considered; however, based on the fact that transit ridership only comprises 2.5 percent of total trips in all modes of transportation in the western region of El Paso (as compared to 93.5 percent for automobiles, 0.8 percent for bicycles, and 3.2 percent for pedestrians), demand does not currently justify a transit alternative that would meet the stated needs of improving safety and mobility on this portion of LP 375."

The reason that there are so few transit riders is because our current system has so few alternatives to car travel and because pedestrians environments, particularly along TXDOT's rights of way are hostile and dangerous. Miles of TXDOT right of way lack basic infrastructure such as sidewalks for transit users.

Current stated preference surveys performed by the El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization show that 27% of commuters in the region would take transit even if fuel costs do not increase and traffic delays do not increase and 28% of commuters in the region would take transit if fuel costs and traffic delays increased. There is pent up demand for transit alternatives but very little investment by TXDOT in meeting this demand. (These surveys are in the addendum.)

Further, it is the strategic goal of the City Council to become the least car dependent city in the Southwest.

The fact of the matter is that TXDOT did not consider a transit alternative because they don't consider or build transit solutions, and because they had already selected their alternative before the environmental process even began.

**Response to Comment 26:**

*Public transportation alternatives for meeting the mobility objectives of the project were considered; however, fixed route or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) have not been designated along the Loop 375 Transmountain corridor as a priority in the Capital Improvement Program or MPO planning documents. Further, transit ridership comprises 2.5 percent of total trips in all modes of transportation in the western region of El Paso as compared to approximately 97 percent for all other modes, demand does not justify a transit alternative that meets the stated needs of improving safety and mobility on this portion of Loop 375. The proposed project has been designed to accommodate future fixed route or BRT alternatives. The City of El Paso and SunMetro have not designated the Loop 375 Transmountain corridor as fixed route or Bus Rapid Transit, BRT, priority in the Capital Improvement Program or MPO planning documents.*

Sincerely,  
XXXXXX  
Title

Addenda:

1. Traffic Studies on the issue of removing the last overpass
2. Minutes from City Council meetings where Open Space preservation was discussed . All Council Meetings are also available online at <http://www.elpasotexas.gov/realplayer.asp>.
3. Articles and communications detailing the TXDOT threat that funds would be lost if changes to the project were made\
4. Information about the MPO's State Preference Survey
5. Communication from the public about Transmountain

*Note - The following addenda referenced in this letter are included in **Appendix H** of the Public Hearing Summary:*

1. *Traffic Studies on the issue of removing the last overpass*
2. *Minutes from City Council meetings where Open Space preservation was discussed. All Council Meetings are also available online at <http://www.elpasotexas.gov/realplayer.asp>*
3. *Articles and communications detailing the TXDOT threat that funds would be lost if changes to the project were made\*

4. *Information about the MPO's State Preference Survey*
5. *Communication from the public about Transmountain.*

**Verbal Comment:**

**Comment 27:**

I actually just have two questions for the public record. One is that -- my understanding from conversations that we had last week is that the alternatives analysis that you went through in ruling out other alternatives were based on outdated numbers from an older transportation plan. There's new numbers available that show that there's less than half of the traffic that was estimated in your -- in your analysis and we would like to know when you're going to make a new analysis available to the public so we can look at whether any of the other alternatives which would have less environmental impact and might provide more safety options for pedestrians and bicyclists, we would like to know when that might be available.

***Response to Comment 27:***

*See response to Comment 14.*

**Comment 28:**

And then the second question I had. Next week the city council is going to take some action related to sort of what our preferred alternatives might be. And kind of a building consensus in the public is, okay, we understand TxDOT wants to build this freeway, we understand that there's some need to build additional capacity in that area to address safety in that area, but what can we do to mitigate the -- the impact as you move closer to the state park and as you're climbing the mountain. And one of the evolving kind of consensus among people that are concerned about the impact to the state park and to the mountain and just to the environment in general is removing that last overpass

***Response to Comment 28:***

*FMC 3*

**Comment 29:**

and then preserving the public service land or the city's land in that area.

***Response to Comment 29:***

*FMC 5*

**Comment 30:**

And what I would like to know from you before we make that decision is if we can work with TxDOT to remove that overpass and -- and not have to face the challenge that's been presented to us that we might lose that -- that money.

***Response to Comment 30:***

*FMC 13*

**Comment 31:**

And kind of finally towards that end is that we -- we would really like to see TxDOT work on this on -- as you go to final design to work with the community to make a road that is reflective of our community values and concerns particularly as it affects the mountain and entering into the state park

**Response to Comment 31:**  
*FMC 12*

**Comment 32:**

and we would hope that you would be committed to that and work with the city council and the community to make that happen. Thank you.

**Response to Comment 32:**  
*Comment noted for the record.*

**Reference ID#: 75**

**Comment Form:**

None

**E-Mail Comment**

None

**Letter**

March 25, 2011

The Honorable John F. Cook, Mayor and  
El Paso City Council  
One Civic Center Plaza  
El Paso, Texas 79901

Honorable Mayor and Council:

**Comment 1:**

I write to share my perspective on the Transmountain 1-10 project and the Northwest Master Plan.

***Response to Comment 1:***

*Comment noted for the record.*

**Comment 2:**

I support the transportation infrastructure investment at Transmountain Road. I support it because of its focus on safety and added capacity, and because it is an integral part of the community initiative begun several years ago to create a traffic loop addressing congestion within El Paso.

***Response to Comment 2:***

*Comment noted for the record.*

**Comment 3:**

What concerns me, however, is the Paseo del Norte overpass

***Response to Comment 3:***

*FMC 3*

**Comment 4:**

and its relationship to future development in the open space adjacent to it.

***Response to Comment 4:***

*FMC 5*

**Comment 5:**

As I understand it, the Paseo del Norte overpass will help provide connectivity to and traffic distribution for future development, especially in the acreage now owned by the people of El Paso (via the PSB) but slated for development in the PSB's Northwest Master Plan.

**Response to Comment 5:**

FMC 3

**Comment 6:**

During the recent public hearing on the project a member of the public expressed the opinion that if the area within the Northwest Master Plan were to remain undeveloped - preserved in perpetuity as open space by the City Council and the PSB – there probably would be no need for the final overpass. I believe that assessment was accurate.

**Response to Comment 6:**

*The decision about whether the area within the Northwest Master plan would remain undeveloped – preserved in perpetuity as open space- is a matter for the City Council and the PSB and is a local land use issue. In addition, City Council voted against an initiative that would have created approximately 900 acres of natural open space adjoining the existing right of way of the proposed project.*

**Comment 7:**

While the PSB has been supportive of using Smart-Code for the development, that property still belongs to the public. In their resolution (attached in Appendix H), the PSB states:

*WHEREAS, the PSB carefully manages its assets which include lands held in trust for the benefit of the water and wastewater system, for the benefit of its ratepayers so as to maximize water, wastewater service and storm water management and safety.*

**Response to Comment 7:**

*Comment noted for the record.*

**Comment 8:**

That acreage is indeed an asset that needs to be managed. It needs to be managed through thoughtful public policy. And while development would certainly increase the tax base, it would also increase demands on services and infrastructure funded by local property taxpayers. More important, it would erode precious open space that should remain in its natural state.

**Response to Comment 8:**

FMC 5

**Comment 9:**

In the introduction to the City of El Paso's Green infrastructure Plan, there is an acknowledgement of the need for preservation:

*The mountains, the desert, the river ... El Paso wouldn't be the same without them. Yet as the City grows, the special places our families remember are disappearing one by one. The El Paso Open Space Plan seeks to preserve some of those special places, so that future generations have a city that is vibrant, beautiful, and truly one of best places to live on this planet.*

*The amount of remaining undeveloped land in El Paso and in El Paso County is rapidly decreasing - Of the 224 square miles within the City of El Paso (after excluding the Franklin Mountains), only 50 square miles, or less than 23%, remain largely undeveloped. Of the 1057 square miles in El Paso County, less than 250 square miles remain largely undeveloped or unused for military purposes. Land for open space must be preserved today, or it will be*

consumed over the next 20 to 40 years. ([http://www.ci.elpaso.tx.us/parks!\\_documents/green/dOCU1nentsl\\_draft%20plan/7\\_Chapter1\\_%20Introduction.pdf](http://www.ci.elpaso.tx.us/parks!_documents/green/dOCU1nentsl_draft%20plan/7_Chapter1_%20Introduction.pdf))

**Response to Comment 9:**

*Comment noted for the record.*

**Comment 10:**

Access to open space - the arroyos, natural and man-made trails, and the wildlife and flora that come with it ~ is of significant value to a community that has limited park space, a population that grapples with obesity and diabetes, and leadership that wants El Paso to be a leading American City once again. Protecting open space addresses all those issues.

**Response to Comment 10:**

*FMC 5*

**Comment 11:**

Unfortunately, our community has the dubious distinction of not protecting or preserving what makes us special and unique. Between the late 1800s and 1920s, for example, El Paso built some of the most impressive, beautiful and unique architecture in the United States. Downtown El Paso was rising, with San Jacinto Plaza at the heart of it. With respect to our downtown, my generation has seen it all: abandonment, divestment, decline, renewed interest, and now, finally, re-investment that is igniting our: much-deserved and sought-after renaissance. Those of us who acknowledge the role history plays in our success have lamented the loss of too many architectural treasures - either to disrepair or demolition.

Recent (and significant) investment in the Mills Building is transforming the area that was the nucleus of our city. A renewed and very welcome interest in reviving San Jacinto Plaza has recently arisen largely because many people recognize San Jacinto Plaza as an important symbol of El Paso's splendid past and as a logical starting point for that renaissance so many of us are working toward.

**Response to Comment 11:**

*Comment noted for the record.*

**Comment 12:**

It is with this perspective that I urge you to more fully evaluate the Paseo del Norte component of the Transmountain project

**Response to Comment 12:**

*FMC 3*

**Comment 13:**

and your commitment to natural open space. Once destroyed, open space can never be recovered. The decisions you make will forever change the landscape so many of us love - landscape that it is not an exaggeration to say shapes El Paso's identity. It is completely within your power to save this open space.

**Response to Comment 13:**

*FMC 5*

**Comment 14:**

I am keenly interested in progress, infrastructure investment and community advancement-my record as an elected official makes that abundantly clear. However, I believe that to forge ahead on this project without protecting what makes us unique and beautiful is short-sighted. Just as my generation wondered why El Pasoans accepted policies that made us a low-wage town, encouraged divestment in our downtown and central core, and displaced us from our position as a leading American City, our children will wonder why we didn't do everything possible to preserve the natural treasures of our arroyos and the foothills near them.

***Response to Comment 14:***

*Comment noted for the record.*

Sincerely,  
XXXXXX  
Title

**Verbal Comment:**

3/22/2011

**Comment 15:**

XX, and title. It's great to see so many active citizens, concerned community members here -- and I'll be documenting my comments in a letter to TxDOT and to the city council, but I think it's important to speak publicly as well as documenting my comments.

***Response to Comment 15:***

*Comment noted for the record.*

**Comment 16:**

I absolutely support the need for modern transportation infrastructure. I think you know I serve on the toll committee and we've done a lot of hard work thinking through the future and future transportation projects and there is definitely a need for investment in transportation infrastructure.

***Response to Comment 16:***

*Comment noted for the record.*

**Comment 17:**

However, many people have said today you cannot rebuild the mountains, you cannot recreate something once it's been destroyed and so it's very important that we offer thoughtful consideration to the way that these plans are drafted.

***Response to Comment 17:***

*FMC 12*

**Comment 18:**

I'm very supportive of the added infrastructure.

***Response to Comment 18:***

*Comment noted for the record.*

**Comment 19:**

I am not supportive and I'm very opposed to the final overpass, the Paseo Del Norte, for innumerable reasons which I'll document and provide to the public and to you all. And I may not have all the information that city council has and I'm in the process of trying to get as much of it as possible, but I do think that that last overpass, what it will do is essentially incentivize development in an area that should be preserved as natural open space. And I think it's important for the city council to preserve those -- that acreage as natural open space.

***Response to Comment 19:***

*-FMC 3*

*-FMC 5*

**Comment 20:**

I think it's important for city council members who voted against the natural open space to reconsider their vote.

***Response to Comment 20:***

*Comment noted for the record.*

**Comment 21:**

But I thank you all for your work, I thank the public for being here and I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

***Response to Comment 21:***

*Comment noted for the record.*

Reference ID #: 79

**Comment Form:**

None

**E-Mail Comment:**

Email: Threat to Burrowing Owls and threatened Texas Horned Lizards and other lowland habitat species by the Loop 375 Trans Mountain Road Project

**Comment 1:**

I am writing in reference to your report "Environmental Assessment – Loop 375 (Transmountain Road) from I-10 to 0.479 Mile East of the Tom Mays Unit of the Franklin Mountains State Park Entrance." My major concern with this project is how the impact of Loop 375 will encourage future development of important wildlife habitat in lowland elevation areas surrounding the Franklin Mountains and the Franklin Mountains State Park.

***Response to Comment 1:***

*It is TxDOT's understanding that the concern of this comment lies in urban development as a secondary impact (also called indirect impact). The indirect and cumulative impacts analysis conducted as part of the Environmental Assessment (EA) utilized the National Cooperative Highway Research Program Report 466 Desk Reference for Estimating the Indirect Effects of Proposed Transportation Projects. TxDOT consulted on the proposed project with the (Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the City of El Paso, the local agency responsible for land use management. The scope of the analysis was determined through field investigations, research of the City of El Paso's land use and development plans, soliciting input from local planners, and other related research. Indirect impacts were identified and quantified (as practicable) by identifying reasonably foreseeable development within the project's area of influence (AOI) and resource study areas (RSA). The AOI for indirect impacts and RSAs for cumulative impacts to land use, vegetation and wildlife habitat, and water resources, were defined through consideration of the project travel shed, resource distribution, and notable features within the area. Reasonably foreseeable development was defined as projects or undertakings located within the AOI and RSA that are listed in long-range transportation planning documents, as well as projects that were identified through consultation with City of El Paso planning staff, and those undertakings that have been planned and/or platted. Reasonably foreseeable transportation projects listed in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) were identified within the established AOI and RSAs. The indirect and cumulative impacts analysis identified indirect impacts to land use and cumulative impacts to land use, vegetation and wildlife habitat, water resources, and air quality, and impacts were described and quantified based on the availability of information regarding the size and scope of future undertakings.*

**Comment 2:**

Because of these threats to both the wildlife on PSB lands and lands protected by Franklin Mountains State Park, the road should be redesigned to include only the four lane highway with no gateway roads

***Response to Comment 2:***

*The proposed project was planned to be compatible with the area land use and the City of El Paso proposed Northwest Master Plan. Regarding the inclusion of the "gateways," or what TxDOT understands to be frontage roads, the proposed project does include frontage roads for the operation and function of the transportation facility. The combination of the 4-lane highway*

and the frontage roads and the adjacent land use provides operational benefit to the overall corridor.

**Comment 3:**

and no Paseo del Norte interchange that would encourage future urban development threats to important wildlife habitat throughout this low elevation region including both north and south sides of the current highway, south to the developed area in West El Paso and north to the New Mexico border.

**Response to Comment 3:**

- FMC 3
  
- *The EA evaluated direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to both vegetation and wildlife through standardized methods for state and federally-funded transportation projects. The direct impacts of the future construction of Paseo Del Norte Road are not known at this time and cannot be accurately quantified until the design has been developed and the roadway footprint is finalized. At that time, the project sponsor would evaluate impacts associated with the construction of this roadway. However, the indirect and cumulative impacts analysis conducted as part of the Loop 375 EA did take the construction of Paseo Del Norte and the City of El Paso's projected land use/zoning in the area into account when estimating impacts to potentially affected resources.*

**Comment 4:**

On page 58 of your report in Table 3.14 (Threatened and Endangered Species/Species of Concern in El Paso County, Texas, and Potential Impacts), you state in reference to burrowing owls that there will be "No impact; no open grassland vegetation present in the project area." You are incorrect in making that statement in that burrowing owls are known to use desert habitat in the southwest. I personally have seen burrowing owls using creosote shrub habitat like that along Trans Mountain Road in El Paso. There are supporting references of burrowing owl use of desert habitat in the Arizona Partners in Flight Bird Conservation Plan (1999), the USFW Southwest Regional Gap Analysis Wildlife Habitat Relationship (2004) and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Report (TPWD, 2011). The TPWD report, Burrowing Owls of the Trans-Pecos and Panhandle Regions of Texas, states "They (burrowing owls) use a wide array of arid and semi-arid environments including deserts, desert grasslands, scrub and shrub-lands that contain creosote bush, mesquite, four-wing saltbush, and rabbit-brush.

The status of burrowing owls as noted in the recently published Texas Parks and Wildlife Report, Burrowing Owls of the Trans-Pecos and Panhandle Regions of Texas. 2011 is as follows: "Currently they are listed as a Species of International Conservation Concern, Endangered in Canada, Threatened in Mexico, and a Bird of National Conservation Concern by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The owls are a Species of Concern in 9 U.S. states, 3 USFWS regions, 9 Bird Conservation Regions and rated as a Species of Regional Importance (Trans-Pecos) by Partners in Flight."

**Response to Comment 4:**

*It is TxDOT's understanding that this comment is regarding direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to vegetation and wildlife. The EA evaluated direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to both vegetation and wildlife through standardized methods for state and federally-funded transportation projects. As per the standards of practice, qualified biologists knowledgeable in regional flora and fauna conducted the following assessments for the proposed project, which meet federal and state requirements (including but not limited to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)/Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between TxDOT and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) (43 TAC, Section 2.22), the National Environmental Protection*

Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321-4347), the Endangered Species Act, as amended (7 U.S.C. 136; 16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.), and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S. C. 703-712, as amended).

*A habitat assessment for protected species including species listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as threatened or endangered or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered; species that are candidates for review or listing by USFWS as threatened or endangered; species listed as threatened or endangered species by the TPWD; species protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Habitat assessments are typically conducted using a two-step approach. Step 1 includes a detailed review of remote sensing data, including a review of the TPWD's Natural Diversity Database (NDD) and USFWS's Threatened and Endangered Species Lists. A review of black and white and color infrared aerial photography, National Resources Conservation Service soils maps, U.S. Geographic Service topographic maps, USFWS National Wetland Inventory maps to determine the portions of the project area that have the potential to be considered habitat. Step 2 is based on field investigations to ground verify the results of Step 1 and modify the potential habitat maps as appropriate. If potential habitat for federally protected species is identified, avoidance and minimization measures are recommended. If the potential habitat cannot be avoided, presence/absence surveys may be required. As detailed on page 63 of the February 2011 EA, the NDD reports a population of Sneed's pincushion cactus within 10 miles of the project area. Sneed's pincushion cactus is found on limestone outcrops, and no limestone outcrops or Sneed's pincushion cactus were identified in the project area during field work.*

*If potential habitat for unregulated species (i.e., state-listed species, federal species of concern, etc.) is identified, a qualitative assessment by a qualified biologist of the type and magnitude of the potential impacts is included in the National Environmental Policy Act document. Unregulated species are not specifically protected from incidental take associated with an otherwise lawful activity. Potential habitat was identified within the project limits for the state-listed Texas horned lizard and the Chihuahuan desert lyre snake. However, as noted above, unregulated species are not protected from incidental take. Therefore, presence/absence surveys were not required or conducted.*

*Regarding the comment on the western burrowing owl, TxDOT reviewed the TPWD's "Annotated County List of Rare Species" for El Paso County, which describes habitat for the western burrowing owl as "open grasslands, especially prairie, plains, and savanna, sometimes in open areas such as vacant lots near human habitation or airports; nests and roosts in abandoned burrows." Using this description, the project area was assessed for potential habitat. In addition, existing elements of occurrence from the TPWD's NDD were obtained and reviewed, and no western burrowing owls have been recorded within 10 miles of the project area. During field investigations for the proposed project, no western burrowing owls or evidence of the species was observed. Because unregulated species are not protected from incidental take, no presence/absence surveys were performed for the western burrowing owl.*

*Potential direct impacts to habitat for these species were minimized by reducing the amount of new right-of-way utilized for the proposed project. During construction activities, the clearing of vegetation will be limited to those areas needed for construction and disturbed areas will be reseeded with native vegetation where other landscaping methods are not dictated by City of El Paso guidelines. Where possible native species of shrubs and trees will be replanted and efforts will be made to avoid impacts to roosts of migratory bats and nests and eggs of migratory birds during construction. In order to further minimize and avoid impacts, TxDOT has specified that if any of the listed species are observed during construction, the contractor's employees will be notified to cease work in the immediate area and not to disturb the species or habitat. The*

*employee will then immediately contact the project engineer. Contractors will not remove active nests from bridges and other structures during nesting season.*

**Comment 5:**

I have also seen threatened Texas Horned Lizards in the road project area and do not understand how you can state that "substantial indirect impacts are not anticipated. And that land use changes could result in indirect impacts to individual Texas horned lizards." The report should read that land use changes will result in impacts to this species and others.

**Response to Comment 5:**

*Texas horned lizards are known to exist in desert habitats along LP 375 and throughout the region. Table 3.18 on page 95 of the EA includes the following statement regarding indirect impacts to the Texas horned lizard: "Land use changes could result in indirect impacts to various state-listed rare species and individual Texas horned lizards and Chihuahuan Desert lyre snakes present within the area of influence, as well as a small amount of habitat, but this is not expected to impact these species at the population level."*

*Although induced development associated with the proposed project may occur and may impact additional Texas horned lizard habitat, surrounding areas provide large tracts of habitat that can support Texas horned lizard populations. In addition, large amounts of habitat occur in West Texas. As a result, the proposed project and potentially induced development are not expected to have a substantial impact on the Texas horned lizard or its habitat.*

**Comment 6:**

It is extremely important for both TXDOT and the Federal Highway Administration to recognize the threats to wildlife in this area.

**Response to Comment 6:**

*Comment noted for the record.*

Sincerely,

XXXXXXX

**Letter:**

None

**Verbal Comment:**

**Comment 7:**

I'm representing myself as a private citizen. My name is XX and I just want everyone to know that I have no problem with improving our roads for safety. My major concern with this project is the related impacts of development that will happen on either side of the -- of the freeway as a result of the freeway being there.

**Response to Comment 7:**

*The land use adjacent to the proposed project is a matter for the City Council and the PSB and is a local land use planning issue outside of TxDOT's statutory authority. In addition, City Council voted against an initiative that would have created approximately 900 acres of natural open space within the City's Northwest Master Plan adjoining the existing right of way of the proposed project.*

**Comment 8:**

I'm very concerned about protecting the Franklin Mountain State Park and I believe that the exchange -- the Paseo Del Norte exchange should be removed and I'd ask that you remove it because of the threat to the park.

**Response to Comment 8:**

FMC 3

**Comment 9:**

I also feel that our city's being pressured to not protect some of the natural open space that we're trying to protect because of the road project because I understand that if we delay the project to protect open space that we might lose funding and I don't think the city should be pressured in that way.

**Response to Comment 9:**

- FMC 5

- FMC 13

**Comment 10:**

I believe the city council should have all kinds of options to choose the best options for the community.

**Response to Comment 10:**

FMC 8

**Comment 11:**

I'm also very concerned about the way the project has been presented to the community. All of these pictures you have here on the TV, they show the road, but they don't show what the plan developments are as part of the Northwest Master Plan.

**Response to Comment 11:**

*The virtual video and pictures do not include commercial and residential development adjacent to the project; these items were intended to show only the improvements to Loop 375. It was not the intent of these items to project or depict future development outside of the right-of-way. The video was developed using a bird's-eye perspective that allowed for more accurate representation of area topography and scale.*

**Comment 12:**

For example, if you look at this picture that I brought, it shows what's happening on the west side. Practically all of the land on the Transmountain corridor -- on the south side of the Transmountain corridor has already been developed and there's very little open space left and I believe that this project is going to result in the destruction of that open space.

**Response to Comment 12:**

FMC 5

**Comment 13:**

And also I want everyone to know and you to know that one of the reasons why I bought the land and I -- I moved to this part of town is because I love the Transmountain Road. It's beautiful. It's part of this city. It's part of the city's natural heritage and it's going to affect my quality of life. It's going to have an environmental impact on not just my quality of life but all the people who are living in this part of town.

**Response to Comment 13:**

*Comment noted for the record.*

**Comment 14:**

And also I brought this picture of a weasel, a beautiful animal that very few people have ever seen and as a result of the project as it is now and all that related developments that will come as a result of this project, many animals are going to lose their habitat so we need to improve our roads, but we also need to take care of our natural environment and that's what I'm concerned about. I don't think that this proposal has adequately addressed the environmental impact. It's going to impact not only the natural environment, but it's going to impact the quality of life for many people in El Paso including our future ecotourism possibilities and that's why I believe that this project as it is needs to be changed and I recommend that many of the things that have already been stated by Susie Byrd and Scott Cutler as far as providing ways for wildlife to go get under the project

**Response to Comment 14:**

*Please see the response to Comments 1, 4, and 5 for details regarding future development and impacts to wildlife habitat.*

**Comment 15:**

and also ways that we can prevent future development with the Paseo Del Norte, that all these recommendations by others like the Franklin Mountains Wilderness Coalition be implemented, and I thank you for your attention.

**Response to Comment 15:**

*FMC 3*

Reference ID #: 103

**E-Mail Comment:**

E-Mail: Comments to the Environmental Assessment, Loop 375 Transmountain Road

**Comment 1:**

It is my opinion that the document as it is currently written cannot support a FONSI. This is due in particular to its inadequate evaluation of all reasonable alternatives. Secondly, based upon a statement from the project engineer it appears TxDOT had already made a decision and selected the project alternative prior to public involvement in the NEPA process

***Response to Comment 1:***

*The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) would make the final determination as to whether the project would warrant further consideration and development of additional environmental documentation. TxDOT believes, however, that the draft Environmental Assessment accurately assesses the potential direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of this project, and that the EA therefore warrants a FONSI.*

**Comment 2:**

In addition, the EA piecemeals a much larger project of which it is an integral part, that being the creation of a freeway loop around the city. This loop appears to utilize Doniphan Drive, which now is bordered by a peaceful upper valley residential community and a wetland, among other things, and generally carries local traffic; the freeway loop concept may greatly increase traffic volumes and pollution, among other negative impacts. The loop also appears to include the Border Highway, and connecting the loop will have extremely adverse negative impacts to the low income and minority community known as Chihuahueta in south El Paso. This loop Project has never been the scope of a comprehensive NEPA document, therefore this EA is clearly piecemealing the larger project of which it is a part, contravening NEPA. I therefore request that this document analyze the entire project, not just the segment along Transmountain. Enough should be known about the loop project to permit such analysis, since the loop has been in the planning stages since the 1970's, so I am told.

***Response to Comment 2:***

*The proposed project is part of a previously prepared and approved EA. On April 21, 2003 FHWA issued a FONSI for improvements to Loop 375 from State Highway (SH) 20 (Doniphan Drive) 0.168 mile north of Borderland Road to 0.13 mile west of I-10 (CSJ: 2552-01-021), from 0.31 mile west of I-10 to 1.161 miles east of I-10 (CSJ: 2552-01-029), and from 0.038 mile east of I-10 to 0.479 mile east of the Franklin Mountains State Park (CSJ: 2552-01-033). At that time, the typical section for CSJ 2552-01-033 consisted of two 12-foot travel lanes in each direction with one 4-foot and one 8-foot-wide inside shoulder, a 26-foot-wide raised median, and 10-foot-wide outside shoulders that would continue the bicycle route. Upon approval, TxDOT began implementing the projects in phases with the interchange work at I-10 (CSJ: 2552-01-029) completed in the fall of 2004. Since the time of approval, the section of Loop 375 from SH 20 to I-10 consisting of a new location roadway (CSJ: 2552-01-021) has been designated as Spur (SP) 276 and is no longer a part of the Loop 375 system. The EA for the currently proposed project from I-10 to 0.479 mile east of the Tom Mays Unit of the Franklin Mountains State Park was undertaken in order to evaluate alternatives and potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed design. The proposed project maintains its own logical termini and independent utility, and meets needs and purposes (primarily safety, mobility, and an alternate route to I-10) that are independent of the larger loop concept. The referenced "Loop" project consists of a larger overall program for the Loop 375, in its entirety, across the region. Each Loop 375 segment would have independent*

*utility and the development of each project will include an evaluation of environmental impacts. The El Paso Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO's) Comprehensive Plan provides the overall concept and system continuity for the Loop 375.*

**Comment 3:**

The Indirect and Cumulative Impact Analysis sections are well written but ultimately fail to disclose the fact that this project directly and indirectly will induce growth that may or may not occur if other viable alternatives were analyzed rather than omitted or dismissed (see below), and that this growth may have a significant impact to water resources, biota, the Rio Grande, view shed, and quality of life. Finally there appears to be a deliberate attempt to try and gloss over some of the impacts through understatement, misstatement, or omission.

**Response to Comment 3:**

*The indirect and cumulative impacts analysis utilized the National Cooperative Highway Research Program Report 466 Desk Reference for Estimating the Indirect Effects of Proposed Transportation Projects and TxDOT's Revised Guidance on Preparing Indirect and Cumulative Impact Analyses (September 2010). TxDOT consulted on the proposed project with the MPO and the City of El Paso, the local agency responsible for land use management. The scope of the analysis was determined through field investigations, research of the City of El Paso's land use and development plans, soliciting input from local planners, and other related research. Indirect impacts were identified and quantified (as practicable) by identifying reasonably foreseeable development within the project's area of influence (AOI) and resource study areas (RSAs). The AOI for indirect impacts and RSAs for cumulative impacts to land use, vegetation and wildlife habitat, and water resources were defined through consideration of the project travel shed, resource distribution, and notable features within the area. Reasonably foreseeable development was defined as projects or undertakings located within the AOI and RSA that are listed in long-range transportation planning documents, as well as projects that were identified through consultation with City of El Paso planning staff, and those undertakings that have been planned and/or platted. Reasonably foreseeable transportation projects listed in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) were identified within the established AOI and RSAs.*

*The indirect and cumulative impacts analysis concluded that indirect impacts to land use and cumulative impacts to land use, vegetation and wildlife habitat, water resources, and air quality were possible, and impacts were described and quantified based on the availability of information regarding the size and scope of future undertakings. The City of El Paso's 2025 comprehensive development plan entitled "The Plan for El Paso" sets forth the general land use concepts for the Northwest Planning Area, and shows that development in the project area will likely occur with or without this project.*

**Comment 4:**

Alternatives

Why did the EA not analyze the alternative of eliminating Paseo del Norte (hereafter "Paseo") overpass by moving Paseo to the west to intersect with Plexar and pass over 375 at that point,

**Response to Comment 4:**

FMC 3

**Comment 5:**

especially given the number (1900) of citizen signatures on a petition asking for an alternative that preserves the scenic corridor and reduces environmental impacts, seconded by city advisory board members, members of city council, and the El Paso County Judge (letter included below) requesting this option be given consideration?

**Response to Comment 5:**

*A member of the public provided two petitions to TxDOT. Land Use and Open Space planning is a local government issue that has been addressed by local government. A vote was taken by El Paso City Council that supported the development of the land owned by the City of El Paso and managed by the PSB. Copies of the petitions have been provided to the appropriate City of El Paso official.*

**Comment 6:**

It should be noted that Paseo is not a TXDOT project but a city and developer driven project. The purpose of this project can be achieved without Paseo overpass being constructed at the proposed location. It is possible that if Paseo was moved as described below impacts would be minimized.

**Response to Comment 6:**

- *FMC 3*
  
- *The EA evaluated direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to both vegetation and wildlife through standardized methods for state and federally-funded transportation projects. The direct impacts of the future construction of Paseo Del Norte Road are not known at this time and cannot be accurately quantified until the design has been developed and the roadway footprint is finalized. At that time, the project sponsor would evaluate impacts associated with the construction of this roadway. However, the indirect and cumulative impacts analysis conducted as part of the Loop 375 EA did take the construction of Paseo Del Norte and the City of El Paso's projected land use/zoning in the area into account when estimating impacts to potentially affected resources.*

**Comment 7:**

I therefore request that the EA add an alternative and carry the analysis of this alternative across the entire document, the alternative being a hybrid of Alternatives 3 and 5, specifically: remove Paseo del Norte overpass from the proposed location just west of the park, have Paseo bend west to intersect with Plexar and have Plexar cross 375 as an overpass, and eliminate the 4 lanes of frontage roads east of Plexar.

**Response to Comment 7:**

*FMC 3*

**Comment 8:**

This would preserve the scenic corridor and reduce impacts to arroyos & wildlife habitat.

**Response to Comment 8:**

*FMC 12*

**Comment 9:**

It would also, according to the traffic study commissioned by the City of El Paso and undertaken by consultant Walter P. Moore and Associates, not have a major impact on capacity, in fact, capacity may be IMPROVED. Paseo would be above capacity in 2025 if built as proposed, however no increase in loss of

capacity appears to occur if Paseo connects to Plexar as the north-south route; in fact there appears to be fewer road sections exceeding capacity with this scenario

**Response to Comment 9:**

FMC 3

**Comment 10:**

The CEQ implementing regulations for NEPA state that the alternatives section is the heart of the NEPA document. If the EA does not include an in-depth analysis of this alternative, this document will not comply with the regulatory requirements of 40 CFR 1500-1508. The same can be said for Alternative 4, Boulevard Concept, again with Paseo overpass removed and instead connected to Plexar as an overpass. Relating to the analysis of these alternatives,

**Response to Comment 10:**

- FMC 8

- FMC 2

- FMC 3

**Comment 11:**

an El Paso city representative has recently stated that the traffic data used for analysis in this EA are outdated and obsolete, and that the latest data show significantly lower projected future traffic volumes. If newer data exists it should be used rather than obsolete data. If the data is deemed controversial, use both for the analysis.

**Response to Comment 11:**

FMC 11

**Comment 12:**

Let the record show that during a TXDOT briefing on this project to the City of El Paso Open Space Advisory Board prior to the draft EA being released to the public the TXDOT representative said that there were only two choices, build the road as proposed or not have it built. The undersigned and member of this board asked this representative, given what he just said, had the decision already been made as to what the final project scope is to be? The reply was yes. Note that this seems to be a violation of NEPA in that the NEPA process wasn't even at the public review phase & TXDOT had selected among alternatives & already made their decision.

**Response to Comment 12:**

*In response to the comment regarding the selection of the preferred alternative, Mr. Berry's statement was made in reference to the preliminary results of the alternatives analysis conducted as part of the draft Environmental Assessment being developed at that time. However, Mr. Berry/TxDOT acknowledged that the decision is not final until FHWA issues a final determination. Since that time, TxDOT has overseen an expansive public involvement program to elicit public comment and input, including a complete set of responses to each public comment. FHWA will carefully consider the EA, the public involvement process, and the project record before reaching any final conclusions.*

**Comment 13:**

Indirect and Cumulative Impacts Analysis

These sections are very well written, however TXDOT did not bring the analysis to the logical conclusion – there will be significant impacts caused by induced growth, especially to water resources, the Rio Grande, biota, the view shed, and quality of life. It is about time that TXDOT acknowledge that building major highways causes development and population expansion geographically. There has been considerable press given to this fact by at least one city representative (Susie Byrd for one) and by concerned citizens. It will also facilitate the construction of the rest of the loop with concomitant impacts. These effects may be significant and must be addressed in an EIS.

***Response to Comment 13:***

*See response to Comment 3.*

**Comment 14:**

Aesthetics

The EA emphasizes the importance of the scenic corridor to El Pasoans by stating “The scenic view shed of the Franklin Mountains State Park and from the park south and west towards the Rio Grande and the Mexican border has been identified as a notable feature within the project AOI. Because northwestern El Paso is undergoing relatively rapid development (as demonstrated in Section 1.2.1 of this EA), maintaining the natural aesthetic of areas surrounding the Franklin Mountains has become an important issue for public interest groups, elected officials, and the City of El Paso.” However, the EA insults our common sense by going into tedious techno babble to try to show the project and its indirect effects won’t impact the corridor or view shed and states “A visual impact analysis of the proposed improvements was conducted (Section 3.12) and revealed that the scale and dominance of the roadway were determined to be compatible with the project surroundings due in large part to the fact that a distinct transportation corridor within the identified visual assessment units has already been established by the existing roadway. This corridor would not be substantially altered or realigned under the proposed design.”

In reality the impacts to the scenic corridor & view shed are significant. The planned freeway will consume 387 feet of right of way, almost 9 times the width of the current road. Approximately 187 acres of land running upside the mountain will have to be scraped and graded and turned to accommodate the new freeway, not to mention the adjacent induced development. So much for scenic corridors. TXDOT is in denial about visual impacts; for example “not expected to alter the visual character of the project area”. And the project area “is already dominated by the I-10 transportation corridor and industrial and commercial properties”. These are so far away you can barely see them in the distance. The construction scars and development induced by this project will be immediately adjacent to the roadway. The roadway is a scenic corridor – it is the view from the roadway that was considered important. How can this be anything but destroyed? Transmountain still has the scars of scrape and fill after what – almost a half century? At Paseo there will be 8 (12?) lanes and 6 lanes intersecting. How can this be anything but visually disruptive! This truly a biased document. For what it’s worth, there will be a significant impact on the scenic corridor. Just look at the cover picture – open desert and mountain now, soon to be scraped white scars and overpasses. This impact would be reduced by selecting the (omitted) alternative of moving Paseo overpass to Plexar.

***Response to Comment 14:***

*FMC 12*

**Comment 15:**

“Continuous lighting would be installed between I-10 and the proposed Paseo Del Norte Road.” Will this lighting be Dark Sky compatible? Will there be impacts to view shed of the park at night? How was this determined?

**Response to Comment 15:**

*The lighting design for the project was based on TxDOT Dark Sky Standards and no high mast lighting would be included. As stated in the EA, continuous lighting would introduce illumination to areas in the eastern portion of the project where little to no lighting currently exists. This illumination would change the night-time visual landscape in the project area, but is not expected to adversely impact campers or those using the Franklin Mountains State Park for night-time recreation due to the distance of the roadway from camping sites in the Tom Mays Unit (approximately 0.7 mile) and the undulating topography of the area (as depicted in project photographs).*

**Comment 16:**

Land Use

Please clarify that the project will not affect the proposed Mountain to River Trail along Flow Path 41A.

**Response to Comment 16:**

*According to the following link, Flow Path 41A would not be affected by the project as it is north of the proposed improvements to Loop 375.*

<http://www.elpasotexas.gov/engineering/floodzones.asp>

**Comment 17:**

Wildlife and Vegetation

The EA states that "Through coordination with TPWD, it was determined that the desired [animal] crossing locations were west of the Tom Mays Unit of the Franklin Mountains State Park on private property and would require restricting access rights on these properties" This statement appears to be inaccurate, please clarify - land from the state park down to the west is public land owned by the city under PSB management. According to the latest response from TXDOT there may be a wildlife crossing on the WEST side of Paseo, in the area slated for development! Please explain what medium size or larger mammal will exist in C-2 zoned construction and the logic for selecting this location.

**Response to Comment 17:**

- *TxDOT assumes the comment regarding "access rights on these properties" is referring to whether or not the construction of a wildlife crossing on PSB land would require the restriction of access rights. The drainage crossing that may also be utilized by large mammals is located west of the Loop 375/future Paseo Del Norte Road intersection, as referenced in the February 2011 EA. The use of the term "private property" was intended to describe that access right agreements may exist on properties adjacent to the project. This area adjacent to the crossing is currently undeveloped; however, City of El Paso land use decisions would determine the density, type, and location of potential future development. Additional details regarding why the currently proposed crossing was selected are provided in FMC 1.*

- FMC 1

**Comment 18:**

The EA further states: "A review of crash data for the last three years also revealed that more recorded accidents on LP 375 were caused by domestic animals than mule deer or other wild animals." Ms. Balin, the Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife urban biologist, contacted TXDOT a number of times in an

attempt to find out where these data came from but to no success (Lois Balin, pers. comm.). This appears to be an attempt at downplaying this very serious safety issue. Note that Ms. Balin knew of at least five deer-vehicle collisions in about the first 5 weeks of 2010 (Lois Balin, pers. comm.). Given that deer-vehicle collisions are a serious safety issue, request that the EA disclose the number and types of collisions and source(s) of the cited data.

**Response to Comment 18:**

*A review of the State's Crash Record Information System (CRIS) revealed that of the eight recorded vehicle-to-animal crashes on LP 375 between January 2006 and May 2010, three were related to wild animals and five were related to domestic animals.*

**Comment 19:**

Table 3.14., Threatened and Endangered Species/Species of Concern in El Paso County, Texas, and Potential Impacts, states that habitat for the burrowing owl is grassland, and states that there will be no impact since there is no open grassland in the project area. TXDOT apparently didn't seek input from local or regional biologists, otherwise they would know that these birds can occasionally be encountered throughout the El Paso area in non-grassland vegetation, although they are not necessarily common. I have seen them in the project area (where they likely nest in burrows in the sides of arroyos), rather commonly in mesquite coppice duneland, and in drainage pipes and electrical conduit. Therefore the EA should note that there is potential for impact to this species. *Peniocereus greggii* is notoriously difficult to locate when dormant – it looks just like a creosote twig. Intensive survey is usually required to find individuals. The EA should note that any conclusion that the project won't impact this species is somewhat speculative based on lack of intensive survey, unless of course such survey was undertaken. Request the EA specify hours of field survey for each species so the reviewer can appreciate the degree of uncertainty associated with claims of no impact.

**Response to Comment 19:**

*Regarding the comments on wildlife and vegetation, the EA evaluated direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to both vegetation and wildlife through standardized methods for state and federally-funded transportation projects. As per the standards of practice, qualified biologists knowledgeable in regional flora and fauna conducted the following assessments for the proposed project, which meet federal and state requirements (including but not limited to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)/Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between TxDOT and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) (43 TAC, Section 2.22), the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321-4347), the Endangered Species Act, as amended (7 U.S.C. 136; 16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.), and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S. C. 703-712, as amended).*

*A habitat assessment was conducted for protected species including species listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as threatened or endangered or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered; species that are candidates for review or listing by USFWS as threatened or endangered; species listed as threatened or endangered species by the TPWD; and species protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Habitat assessments are typically conducted using a two-step approach. Step 1 includes a detailed review of remote sensing data, including a review of the TPWD's Natural Diversity Database (NDD) and USFWS's Threatened and Endangered Species Lists. A review of black and white and color infrared aerial photography, National Resources Conservation Service soils maps, U.S. Geographic Service topographic maps, USFWS National Wetland Inventory maps to determine the portions of the project area that have the potential to be considered habitat. Step 2 is based on field investigations to ground verify the results of Step 1 and modify the potential habitat maps as appropriate. If potential habitat for federally protected species is identified, avoidance and minimization measures are*

*recommended. If the potential habitat cannot be avoided, presence/absence surveys may be required. As detailed on page 63 of the February 2011 EA, the NDD reports a population of Sneed's pincushion cactus within 10 miles of the project area. Sneed's pincushion cactus is found on limestone outcrops, and no limestone outcrops or Sneed's pincushion cactus were identified in the project area during field work.*

*If potential habitat for unregulated species (i.e., state-listed species, federal species of concern, etc.) is identified, a qualitative assessment by a qualified biologist of the type and magnitude of the potential impacts is included in the National Environmental Policy Act document. Unregulated species are not specifically protected from incidental take associated with an otherwise lawful activity. Potential habitat was identified within the project limits for the state-listed Texas horned lizard and the Chihuahuan desert lyre snake. However, as noted above, unregulated species are not protected from incidental take. Therefore, presence/absence surveys were not required or conducted.*

*Regarding the comment on the western burrowing owl, TxDOT reviewed the TPWD's "Annotated County List of Rare Species" for El Paso County, which describes habitat for the western burrowing owl as "open grasslands, especially prairie, plains, and savanna, sometimes in open areas such as vacant lots near human habitation or airports; nests and roosts in abandoned burrows." Using this description, the project area was assessed for potential habitat. In addition, existing elements of occurrence from the TPWD's NDD were obtained and reviewed, and no western burrowing owls have been recorded within 10 miles of the project area. During field investigations for the proposed project, no western burrowing owls or evidence of the species was observed. Because unregulated species are not protected from incidental take, no presence/absence surveys were performed for the western burrowing owl.*

**Comment 20:**

Due to the lack of Chihuahuan Desert natives proposed by TXDOT to be used as landscaping for the project, and to the originally proposed use of the highly invasive *Parkinsonia aculeata*, I request that the landscape plants be listed and impacts analyzed in this EA.

**Response to Comment 20:**

FMC 6

XXXXXX

**Reference ID #: 113**

**Letter:**

Mr. Antonio Uribe, Jr., P.E. April 1, 2011

District Design

Texas Department of Transportation

13301 Gateway Blvd. West

El Paso, Texas 79928 e-mail: ELP\_Loop375West@txdot.gov

Regarding: Texas Department of Transportation-Loop 375 (Transmountain West, CSJ 2552-01-033)  
Public Hearing Comments

Dear Mr. Uribe:

**Comment 1:**

My firm represents the El Paso Regional Group (Rio Grande Chapter) of the Sierra Club regarding the Transmountain Highway expansion project referenced, above. As part of that representation, I have reviewed and had technical authorizes review the February 2011 Environmental Assessment ("EA") for the project. This letter sets out the Club's comments on the EA. Accompanying this letter is an Attachment A. It is a memorandum to me from Mr. David Simon, a recognized authority on the impacts of urbanization on high-desert terrains and, especially, on parks in those terrains. Mr. Simon's memorandum discusses at more length most of comments offered, here, and the Club incorporates his entire memorandum into its comments.

As you doubtless know, at least in a general way, EAs are miniature Environmental Impact Statements ("EISs"). Federal courts in the Fifth Circuit, the one containing Texas, have characterized EAs this way: An EIS must contain "a detailed statement of the expected adverse environmental consequences of an action, the resource commitments involved in it, and the alternatives to it." *Kleppe v. Sierra Club*, 427 U.S. 390, 96 S. Ct. 2718, 2726, 49 L. Ed. 2d 576 (1976). An EA, on the other hand, is prepared in order to determine whether an EIS is required. [citation omitted]. An EA is a "rough-cut, low-budget environmental impact statement" intended to determine whether environmental effects are significant enough to warrant preparation of an EIS. *Id.* (internal quotation marks omitted). An EA must "include brief discussions of the need for the proposal, of alternatives . . . , of the environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternatives, and a listing of agencies and persons consulted." 40C.F.R. § 1508.9(b).

*Spiller v. Walker*, 1998 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 18341, at 29 (W.D. Tex. Aug. 25, 1998) (granting injunction; citing to *Sierra Club v. Espy*, 38 F.3d 792, 802-03 (5th Cir. 1994)).

Importantly, if an action subject to NEPA may have a significant impact on the environment, then, the project proponent must prepare an EIS. The Fifth Circuit appellate court has stated it, thusly: If, after receiving the parties' evidence, the court concludes that the proposed project may affect significantly some human environmental factor, it must require the agency to prepare an EIS. The court, therefore, need not determine whether the proposed program would degrade the environment but merely whether the project might affect negatively and significantly a single environmental factor.

Citizen Advocates for Responsible Expansion (I-CARE) v. Dole, 770 F.2d 423, 433 (5th Cir. Tex. 1985)(emphasis added).

**Response to Comment 1:**

Comment noted for the record.

**Comment 2:**

It is Sierra Club's overall position that the EA for this proposed project was a little too low-budget.

**Response to Comment 2:**

*TxDOT has concluded that the EA faithfully analyzes the direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of this project, and that the potential impacts are not significant enough to require an EIS. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) would make the final determination as to whether the project would warrant further consideration and development of additional environmental documentation.*

**Comment 3:**

It failed to adequately analyze the noise,

**Response to Comment 3:**

*The February 2011 EA utilized FHWA's standard of practice traffic noise modeling software to calculate existing and predicted traffic noise levels using traffic data derived from the TransBorder 2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). This noise model takes into account various land use categories, including developed land use, parks, and recreational areas. Noise receiver locations were identified at two commercial properties located in the western portion of the project.*

*On July 13, 2011 TxDOT formally adopted new traffic noise guidelines entitled, TxDOT Guidelines for Analysis and Abatement of Roadway Traffic Noise. Projects not approved by July 13, 2011 were required to comply with the policy; therefore, the noise analysis has been revised in accordance with the new guidelines. The July 2011 TxDOT noise guidelines established updated Noise Abatement Criteria (NAC) for various land use activity areas; therefore additional representative receivers were included in the most recent noise assessment, including a school, a residence, a restaurant, and a trailhead located near the Franklin Mountains State Park.*

*Results of the analysis using the most current traffic data available (Mission 2035 MTP-derived volumes) indicate an increase in noise levels as compared to the previous TransBorder MTP-based analysis; however, the proposed project would not result in a traffic noise impact (see table below for results).*

<b>Representative Receiver</b>	<b>NAC Category</b>	<b>NAC Level</b>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Predicted 2035</b>	<b>Change (+/-)</b>	<b>Noise Impact</b>
<i>R1 School*</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>46</i>	<b>+3</b>	<i>No</i>
<i>R2 Residence*</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>48</i>	<b>+2</b>	<i>No</i>
<i>R3 Commercial</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>57</i>	<b>+3</b>	<i>No</i>
<i>R4 Restaurant</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>63</i>	<b>+3</b>	<i>No</i>
<i>R5 Trail**</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>59</i>	<b>+2</b>	<i>No</i>

Based on the analysis, a 3 dBA increase is expected at three representative receivers (school, commercial, and restaurant properties) and a 2 dBA increase is expected at the remaining two representative receivers (a residence and a trailhead). According to the TxDOT 2011 Guidelines for Analysis and Abatement of Roadway Traffic Noise, a 3 dBA increase is barely a perceptible change to the human ear.

Much of the surrounding land use in the Loop 375 project area is undeveloped. There is no NAC for undeveloped land; however, to avoid noise impacts that may result from future development of properties adjacent to the project, local officials for land use control programs would ensure, to the maximum extent possible, no new activities are planned or constructed along or within the impact contours. The impact thresholds for these land use categories (66 dBA for Categories B and C and 71 dBA for Category E) are established by FHWA. Impact contours for Categories B and C were defined as 65 feet from the right of way line and 15 feet from the right of way line for Category E.

The results of both the TransBorder and Mission 2035 MTP-based traffic noise analyses indicate that the proposed project would not result in a traffic noise impact. In order to avoid noise impacts that may result from future development of properties adjacent to the project, local officials for land use control programs would ensure, to the maximum extent possible, no new activities are planned or constructed along or within the impact contours.

**Comment 4:**

visual,

**Response to Comment 4:**

FMC 12

**Comment 5:**

vegetation and wildlife,

**Response to Comment 5:**

The EA evaluated direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to both vegetation and wildlife through standardized methods for state and federally-funded transportation projects. As per the standards of practice, qualified biologists knowledgeable in regional flora and fauna conducted the following assessments for the proposed project, which meet federal and state requirements (including but not limited to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)/Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between TxDOT and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) (43 TAC, Section 2.22), the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321-4347), the Endangered Species Act, as amended (7 U.S.C. 136; 16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.), and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S. C. 703-712, as amended).

A habitat assessment was conducted for protected species including species listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as threatened or endangered or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered; species that are candidates for review or listing by USFWS as threatened or endangered; species listed as threatened or endangered species by the TPWD; and species protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Habitat assessments are typically conducted using a two-step approach. Step 1 includes a detailed review of remote sensing data, including a review of the TPWD's Natural Diversity Database (NDD) and USFWS's Threatened and Endangered Species Lists. A review of black and white and color infrared aerial photography, National Resources Conservation Service soils maps, U.S. Geographic Service topographic maps, USFWS National Wetland Inventory maps is conducted to determine the portions of the

project area that have the potential to be considered habitat. Step 2 is based on field investigations to ground verify the results of Step 1 and modify the potential habitat maps as appropriate. If potential habitat for federally protected species is identified, avoidance and minimization measures are recommended. If the potential habitat cannot be avoided, presence/absence surveys may be required. As detailed on page 63 of the February 2011 EA, the NDD reports a population of Sneed's pincushion cactus within 10 miles of the project area. Sneed's pincushion cactus is found on limestone outcrops, and no limestone outcrops or Sneed's pincushion cactus were identified in the project area during field work.

If potential habitat for unregulated species (i.e., state-listed species, federal species of concern, etc.) is identified, a qualitative assessment by a qualified biologist of the type and magnitude of the potential impacts is included in the National Environmental Policy Act document. Unregulated species are not specifically protected from incidental take associated with an otherwise lawful activity. Potential habitat was identified within the project limits for the state-listed Texas horned lizard and the Chihuahuan desert lyre snake. However, as noted above, unregulated species are not protected from incidental take. Therefore, presence/absence surveys were not required or conducted.

Potential direct impacts to habitat for these species were minimized by reducing the amount of new right-of-way utilized for the proposed project. During construction activities, the clearing of vegetation will be limited to those areas needed for construction and disturbed areas will be reseeded with native vegetation where other landscaping methods are not dictated by City of El Paso guidelines. Where possible native species of shrubs and trees will be replanted and efforts will be made to avoid impacts to roosts of migratory bats and nests and eggs of migratory birds during construction. In order to further minimize and avoid impacts, TxDOT has specified that if any of the listed species are observed during construction, the contactor's employees will be notified to cease work in the immediate area and not to disturb the species or habitat. The employee will then immediately contact the project engineer. Contractors will not remove active nests from bridges and other structures during nesting season.

**Comment 6:**

and cumulative (mostly, urbanization-inducing) impacts of the proposed project.

**Response to Comment 6:**

The indirect and cumulative impacts analysis conducted as part of the EA utilized the National Cooperative Highway Research Program Report 466 Desk Reference for Estimating the Indirect Effects of Proposed Transportation Projects and TxDOT's Revised Guidance on Preparing Indirect and Cumulative Impact Analyses (September 2010). A summary of the analysis is presented below.

Transportation's purpose is moving people and goods from one place to another, but transportation systems also contribute to the community character, affect the natural and human environment, and support economic development planned by the community. The proposed project was developed in response to the City of El Paso's current and future land use designations as well as the MPO's Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). The MTP is designed to promote consistency between transportation improvements and local planned growth and economic development patterns. TxDOT consulted on the proposed project with the MPO and the City of El Paso, the local agency responsible for land use management. The scope of the analysis was determined through field investigations, research of the City of El Paso's land use and development plans, soliciting input from local planners, and other related research. Indirect impacts were identified and quantified (as practicable) by identifying reasonably foreseeable

development within the project's area of influence (AOI) and resource study areas (RSA). The AOI for indirect impacts and RSAs for cumulative impacts to land use, vegetation and wildlife habitat, and water resources, were defined through consideration of the project travel shed, resource distribution, and notable features within the area. Reasonably foreseeable development was defined as projects or undertakings located within the AOI and RSA that are listed in long-range transportation planning documents, as well as projects that were identified through consultation with City of El Paso planning staff, and those undertakings that have been planned and/or platted. Reasonably foreseeable transportation projects listed in the MTP and Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) were identified with the established AOI and RSAs.

The indirect and cumulative impacts analysis concluded that indirect impacts to land use and cumulative impacts to land use, vegetation and wildlife habitat, water resources, and air quality were possible, and impacts were described and quantified based on the availability of information regarding the size and scope of future undertakings. Reasonably foreseeable development within the AOI and RSAs is anticipated to occur regardless of whether the project is constructed. In TxDOT's assessment, none of the direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts were determined to exceed the threshold of significance for each affected resource.

**Comment 7:**

It did not well-enough study the "Section 4(f)" (parkland) impacts of the proposed project; the Section 4(f) standard is that one must take a "hard look" at the parkland impacts, so there is less tolerance for the "roughness" in the cut an EA makes on this analysis than would be the case, were there no parkland involved.

**Response to Comment 7:**

Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966 stipulates that FHWA cannot approve any program or project which requires the use of any publicly owned park, recreation area, or wildlife or waterfowl refuge, or any land from a historic site of national, state, or local significance unless there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use and all possible planning to minimize harm resulting from such use is included, or unless such a use is considered de minimis. In accordance with Section 4(f), FHWA determined that the project would not result in an impact to Section 4(f) regulated properties. Although the project would require reconfiguring the entrance to the publicly owned Tom Mays Unit of the Franklin Mountains State Park, the entrance is located in TxDOT-owned right-of-way. No improvements would be undertaken on TPWD-owned property. Access to the park would be maintained throughout the construction period of the proposed project; therefore, it was determined that the project would not alter the long-term or short-term function of the park. As such, work within existing ROW would not result in a use of protected Section 4(f) property and a Section 4(f) analysis is not required.

A majority of the proposed project limits are located outside of the western boundary of the Franklin Mountains State Park, while a portion of the proposed project is bordered by the boundaries of the park. The western 3.1 miles of the project is located west of the park boundary and approximately 0.5 miles is flanked by the park boundaries on both the north and south sides of the roadway. Since the park was created after the existing highway right-of-way was in place, the limits of the park exist on both sides of the highway and have always been bisected by the existing transportation right-of-way.

**Comment 8:**

The EA's elimination of alternatives for analysis was arbitrary. These failings, viewed individually or, especially, in sum, result in an EA that cannot justify the "will not impact" conclusion the EA reaches; its FONSI recommendation cannot be accepted, because it is unsupported. An EIS must be prepared.

**Response to Comment 8:**

- FMC 8
- See response to Comment 2.

**Comment 9:**

The following paragraphs itemize the shortcomings the Sierra Club finds in the EA. As earlier noted, most of these are developed at more length in Attachment A, the Simon memorandum.

**Response to Comment 9:**

*Responses to the "Simon memorandum" are included as part of this comment-response document. (see Comments 23-47) .*

**Comment 10:**

The consideration of alternatives is the "heart" of an EIS (40 CFR § 1502.14), so elimination of an alternative from further consideration is a matter meriting particular scrutiny.

**Response to Comment 10:**

FMC 8.

**Comment 11:**

Project Need: The EA's determination that the project is needed is based primarily on the February 2009 projection of traffic volume on the project.

**Response to Comment 11:**

- *The EA includes a discussion of the need for mobility and safety improvements in terms of future population projections, regional mobility needs, crash data, as well as traffic projections within the project limits.*
- FMC 11

**Comment 12:**

That projection is for a 2015 traffic count of 40,000 ADT and a 2035 ADT of 71,000. The EA, p. 35, acknowledges the Mission 2025 Metropolitan Transportation Plan. That Plan, which was approved August 5, 2010, and for which a FHWA has demonstrated transportation conformity with the El Paso area plan for National Ambient Air Quality Standards attainment and maintenance, specifies the project as one carrying 18,000 ADT in 2020 and 31,000 ADT in 2035. So, whereas one may argue that TxDOT need not use the best available data in its environmental analyses, one may not argue it may use outdated data, when it simultaneously acknowledges the existence of more recent approved data. The EA's determination of "need" is, under this circumstance, arbitrary. (Additionally, the approval of an EA that contemplates roughly 130% more traffic on a roadway than has passed muster under conformity analysis and that does not present a de novo conformity analysis based on the larger traffic count fails to adequately analyze the air quality impacts of the proposed project.)

**Response to Comment 12:**

FMC 11

**Comment 13:**

Alternatives: The foregoing discrepancy between the projected traffic flows on Loop 375 means that TxDOT, which relied on the larger traffic flows to support its elimination of various alternatives to its preferred configuration for the project, has arbitrarily constrained the alternatives available to it in this EA.

Basically, the high traffic counts relied upon dictate the purpose the project is to serve. If the purpose is artificially defined, the alternatives analysis is largely made nugatory. As the courts have put it (speaking in the EIS context): “If the agency constricts the definition of the project's purpose and thereby excludes what truly are reasonable alternatives, the EIS cannot fulfill its role. Nor can the agency satisfy the Act. 42 U.S.C. § 4332(2)(E).” *Simmons v. United States Army Corps of Eng'rs*, 120 F.3d 664, 667 (7th Cir. 1997).

***Response to Comment 13:***

- *FMC 11*
- *See response to Comment 2.*

**Comment 14:**

Noise Impacts: The EA falls short in truly evaluating noise impacts. The EA indicates that no noise receiver locations were monitored on the eastern portion of the project area, only at the western-most end, and none in section that includes Franklin Mountains State Park. Under FHWA methodology, these sections should have been classified in Land Use Activity Categories B and C, as indicated in the unnamed table on page 35 of the EA. The EA fails to establish baseline noise levels and predicted future noise levels in these areas, which are the most sensitive of the entire project area.

Some portions of the project area within Franklin Mountains State Park contain trails and scenic view points that are close to Loop 375. With increased traffic that the roadway is expected to carry, noise impacts are likely to increase. Additional analytic tools should have been used to evaluate noise impacts, particularly within Franklin Mountains State Park. The FHWA noise impact model downplays significance of natural quiet values in parks.

***Response to Comment 14:***

*See response to Comment 3.*

**Comment 15:**

Visual Impacts: The narrow dimensions of the Visual Units barely suffice to evaluate the direct impacts of the proposed action and fail completely in terms of evaluating and protecting scenic quality, as well as indirect and long-term visual aspects. The discussion and three images taken from photo points A, C, and R to evaluate impacts to Visual Units 1 and 2 were inadequate and the photographs in the EA (Photographs A and C) do not represent a true analysis of effects. The EA should have included more photo points within the two most sensitive Visual Units, #1—the Tom Mays Unit of the Franklin Mountains State Park and #2—Franklin Mountains State Park south of LP 375, including photo points from various areas utilized by the public adjacent to and near Loop 375.

The determination of effect and compatibility should have been supplemented by quantitative surveys of park visitors or by a similar evaluation tool. Public and resource impact will be increased by expanded road corridor, and park visitors are likely to be more sensitive to increased impacts on visual quality in this protected area.

The EA's argument that future growth in the area of the proposed project will change the character of that area, such that the visual impacts of the proposed project, itself, will be less significant than present conditions suggest assumes a fact not established or, even, realistic: that the proposed project, itself, does not largely shape the changes in the character of the area in which the project sits.

Without question, the widening of Loop 375 in the project area is likely to facilitate and accelerate the development that will create significant negative visual impacts on the Park.

**Response to Comment 15:**

- FMC 12
- FMC 5

**Comment 16:**

It will also define the corridor of industrialization and commercialization of this area. So, for example, the video of the proposed project – a CGI aerial fly-over of the project’s length – that TxDOT has posted on its web site for this project is affirmatively deceptive. That video does not show any of the commercial or industrial or, even, residential development that will line (i.e., be located because of the Loop along) some or all of the expanded Loop 375 and, of course, be visible to anyone in the area in the future.

**Response to Comment 16:**

*The proposed project visualization video was prepared in order to communicate proposed project design and scope to the public who would otherwise only have opportunity to review engineering drawings to understand the proposed project. It was not intended to reflect future development. In addition, development approvals and land use decisions are made by the City of El Paso and are subject to change over time. It would not be possible for TxDOT to accurately depict future development.*

**Comment 17:**

Vegetation/Wildlife Impacts: The EA underestimates and does not fully evaluate the impacts on wildlife from the proposed project. The total area of permanent disturbance from the project is not trivial, but the EA does little to acknowledge the broader negative impacts of road-building on biodiversity and the increasing constraints and stresses that roads such as Loop 375 will place on protecting biodiversity, especially given the impacts climate change is bringing to the Chihuahuan Desert. The fragmentation and isolation of habitat in the park created by the road expansion from proposed project will have serious long-term negative consequences for wildlife in Franklin Mountains State Park. These impacts are not fully acknowledged or assessed in the EA. Indeed, habitat fragmentation, widely acknowledged as one of the greatest threats to wildlife the high desert, is barely discussed at all in the EA.

**Response to Comment 17:**

- See response to Comment 5.
- *It is widely understood that roadway and vehicle traffic contribute to wildlife mortality and habitat fragmentation. Please see FMC 1 for details regarding TxDOT’s proposal for wildlife crossings associated with this project.*

**Comment 18:**

Instead of following comprehensive approaches for wildlife mitigation, TxDOT has proposed to build a single culvert and to place “extra signage” along the roadway. This does not effectively address or evaluate wildlife issues. The EA relies only on “a review of crash data for the last three years” with respect to direct impacts on wildlife. Crash data are unreliable and flawed in that they do not capture or assess true traffic impacts on wildlife or on all species of wildlife.

**Response to Comment 18:**

- FMC 1
- *The EA assessed potential impacts to threatened and endangered species and species of concern (as listed by TPWD), and determined that the project would not result in substantial impacts to these species. (See response to Comment 5). As referenced in the*

*EA, crash data indicated that more animal-related crashes were attributed to domestic animals than large mammals. TxDOT was unable to obtain additional data regarding the location and frequency of incidents with non-regulated large mammal species, such as mule deer, within the project limits.*

**Comment 19:**

Furthermore, the EA should have analyzed the entire Transmountain Road in its de-bottlenecked state and proposed strategies to mitigate wildlife impacts on the entire portion that traverses the Park.

***Response to Comment 19:***

*The indirect and cumulative impacts assessment considered impacts to vegetation and wildlife. See response to Comment 5.*

**Comment 20:**

Indirect and Cumulative Impacts: The EA fails to evaluate in a meaningful way the impact of a freeway, such as the proposed Loop 375 expanded freeway, in directing population and commercial growth. Where growth occurs in an area is significant, independent of whether the growth would occur, at all, in the area. The cumulative effects of this proposed project and other projects, such as other Loop 375 improvements and the Northeast Parkway, were not, but should have been at least generally, evaluated.

***Response to Comment 20:***

*See response to Comment 6.*

**Comment 21:**

Section 4(f) evaluation: The EA undertakes no examination as to whether this proposed project is so conceptualized as to minimize, as compared to reasonable and prudent alternatives, harm to parkland and wildlife refuge areas.

***Response to Comment 21:***

*See response to Comment 7. The project would not require the use of any wildlife or waterfowl refuges.*

**Comment 22:**

In conclusion, this EA is too much “a rough-cut, low-budget environmental impact statement” to support a determination that environmental effects of the proposed project are sufficiently significant to warrant preparation of an EIS.

***Response to Comment 22:***

*See response to Comment 2.*

Sincerely,

XXXXXX, for

the El Paso Group of the Rio

Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club

**ATTACHMENT A (aka “Simon memorandum”)**

**Comment 23:**

You have retained me to review the February 2011 Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) for proposed improvements to Loop 375 (Woodrow Bean—Transmountain Highway) in El Paso, Texas. (TxDOT project CSJ: 2552-01-033.) I have over 25 years experience with conservation and park/protected area issues at the local, state, and federal level, and most recently served for eight years as Director of New Mexico State Parks. (See attached statement of Professional Qualifications)

**Response to Comment 23:**

*Comment noted for the record.*

**Comment 24:**

I have reviewed the above-referenced document. **In my professional opinion, the EA is deficient, particularly with respect to assessing impacts on sensitive park resources, such as visual quality, natural quiet, and wildlife, and in its failure to consider the extent to which the project will alter the context of the area in which it will lie.** Much information on user perceptions is purely conclusory and certain serious long-term biological impacts are improperly dismissed. The EA seriously errs in its conclusion that a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is warranted. This project will actually have significant short- and long-term effects both on the local area and the region.

**Response to Comment 24:**

*See response to Comment 2.*

**Comment 25:**

**I believe an EIS should be completed for the Loop 375 project.** Within the past decade, at least sixteen FHWA-related road projects in Texas have required preparation of an EIS. ([http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/projdev/active\\_eis.asp](http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/projdev/active_eis.asp)) TxDOT has completed an EIS on projects with smaller ROWs and lesser impacts on protected natural areas. For example, TxDOT did a full EIS on the SH 121 project, which was a four- to six-lane divided road with a right-of-way (ROW) of 220 feet.

**Response to Comment 25:**

*See response to Comment 2.*

**Comment 26:**

This proposed road project affects an area from I-10 to about 0.5 miles east of the Franklin Mountains State Park entrance, a distance that includes approximately 3.6 miles of main lanes and approximately 2.1 miles of frontage roads. The proposed improvements will consist of expanding the current two-lane undivided roadway to a four-lane divided roadway with two-lane frontage roads. The improvements also include four grade separated intersections, two direct connectors from I-10 to Loop 375, and a pedestrian-bicycle trail.

The minimum ROW width would be 350 feet (EA, Figure 3.3). The proposed project will entail two 12-foot travel lanes in each direction with 4-foot wide inside shoulders, 10-foot wide outside shoulders, and a 38-foot wide inside unpaved median. The total amount of project ROW needed would be 185.1 acres and includes an additional 41.2 acres of new ROW. The ROW footprint and geometric design also provides for future expansion to six main lanes from Northwestern Drive to east of Paseo del Norte Drive.

**Response to Comment 26:**

*Comment noted for the record.*

**Comment 27:**  
**Review of Environmental Assessment**

The EA itself is flawed in key areas. In particular, the EA fails to fully analyze impacts on wildlife, visual quality, noise, and cumulative effects. The EA underestimates the intensity and severity of the impacts, which will adversely affect unique characteristics and resources of the area, specifically Franklin Mountains State Park and this portion of the Chihuahuan Desert.

***Response to Comment 27:***

- *See response to Comment 5 regarding impacts to wildlife.*
- *See FMC12 for response regarding visual quality.*
- *See response to Comment 3 regarding noise.*
- *See response to Comment 6 regarding cumulative effects.*

**Comment 28:**

In addition, my assessment is that the EA fails to comply with Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966, in that the Loop 375 project will “use” publicly owned park without adequately considering alternatives or incorporating all possible planning to minimize harm on the park land.

At approximately 24,200 acres (37 square miles), Franklin Mountains State Park is one of the largest urban parks in the nation. The Park is also a significant protected area within the Chihuahuan Desert ecoregion. When one of the very reasons for the establishment of Franklin Mountains State Park was a reaction to road building and development in the Franklin mountains (Texas Parks & Wildlife website, <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us>), it is ironic that TxDOT has failed to fully evaluate the impacts from its own road building activities on the Park.

***Response to Comment 28:***

*The proposed project would not require right-of-way from the Franklin Mountains State Park. See response to Comment 7 regarding Section 4(f).*

**Comment 29:**

In my opinion, the EA’s preliminary findings should require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act and its implementing regulations (42 U.S.C. 4371 et seq; NEPA regulations, 40 CFR §§ 1500-1508) as the proposed project will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. An EIS is also necessary since the project will establish a precedent for future land use decisions in the area that will also have significant effects, and the project will have significant cumulative effects.

***Response to Comment 29:***

- *See response to Comment 2 regarding the preparation of an EIS.*
- *Future land use is determined by planning decisions made by local officials and is beyond the statutory authority of TxDOT and the scope of this NEPA evaluation. The proposed project was developed to be consistent with local and regional transportation and land use plans.*

**Comment 30:**  
**Noise Impacts**

The EA analyzes noise impacts from traffic in Section 3.5. TxDOT utilizes the FHWA approved “Guidelines for Analysis and Abatement of Highway Traffic Noise” (July 2007). FHWA traffic noise modeling is used to ascertain existing and predicted noise levels. (EA, Table 3.7, page 34) The EA concludes “the proposed Build Alternative [would] (sic) not result in a traffic noise impact.” In fact, the EA states that noise impacts in portion of the project area (western sections) would actually decrease, presumably from smoother, high-speed traffic flow and a reduction in idling and vehicle speed changes, though the EA does not explain this sufficiently.

***Response to Comment 30:***

*Comment noted for the record.*

**Comment 31:**

The EA falls short in truly evaluating noise impacts. Under the FHWA methodology, eastern sections of the project within and adjacent to Franklin Mountains State Park should have been classified in Land Use Activity Categories B and C, as indicated in the unnamed table on page 35. The EA completely fails, however, to establish baseline noise levels and predicted future noise levels in these areas, which are the most sensitive of the entire project area. The EA indicates that no noise receiver locations were monitored on the eastern portion of the project area—only at the western-most end—and none in section that includes Franklin Mountains State Park. (EA, Page 143, Figure 4.2, Appendix A.)

***Response to Comment 31:***

*See response to Comment 3 for discussion of a new representative noise receiver location in the eastern portion of the project area.*

**Comment 32:**

Some portions of the project area within Franklin Mountains State Park also contain visitor use areas close to Loop 375, such as trails and scenic view points. Thus, the EA cannot conclude that noise impacts will not occur to the Park under either absolute or relative criterion. It seems likely that existing noise levels are at or approaching the threshold level for Category B lands (66 dBA). With increased traffic that the roadway is expected to carry, noise impacts are likely to increase.

***Response to Comment 32:***

*See response to Comment 3 for discussion of new representative noise receiver located at a trailhead within the Franklin Mountains State Park.*

**Comment 33:**

Moreover, more fundamentally, the FHWA noise impact model downplays significance of natural quiet values in parks. Federal policy determinations about transportation noise have relied heavily on dose-response data that relate level of physical exposure to reported annoyance, usually averaged in some way. The mathematical modeling of impacts, as determined by physical noise levels, oversimplifies and limits the understanding of noise effects in crucial ways. It can undervalue social and psychological variables that determine when a given noise level generates annoyance in a particular individual or particular setting. For example, more than absolute levels, percent time audible of noise and other measure of the consistency and persistence of noise can be useful evaluators of the preferences of and impacts on park visitors. Additional analytic tools can be and should have been used to evaluate noise impacts, particularly within Franklin Mountains State Park. The above flaws should be rectified through more in-depth data collection and modeling in an EIS.

**Response to Comment 33:**

*See response to Comment 3.*

**Comment 34:**

**Visual Impacts**

The EA divides the project area into four “Visual Units” for the purpose of assessing visual impacts. While the entire route of the Transmountain Road is a designated “scenic corridor” per El Paso ordinance (EA, page 68), two of the EA’s Visual Units (# 1—Tom Mays Unit of the Franklin Mountains State Park, and #2—Franklin Mountains State Park south of LP 375) are most important in terms of protecting the visual quality of the park and a high quality experience for park visitors. The eastern portion of Visual Unit #3, the Loop 375 roadway corridor, however, remains integral to the visual quality of the area, as it has expansive, mostly unimpacted views in nearly all directions and provides the visual foreground to Franklin Mountains State Park. Without unimpacted views in Visual Unit #3, the natural resources and setting of the Park itself is diminished and adversely affected. From the standpoint of both evaluating and protecting visual quality, the narrow dimensions of the Visual Units barely suffice to evaluate the direct impacts of the proposed action, but fail completely in terms of evaluating scenic quality, as well as indirect and long-term visual impacts.

**Response to Comment 34:**

*Comment noted for the record.*

**Comment 35:**

To evaluate impacts to these Visual Units 1 and 2, the EA offers discussion and three images taken from photo points A, C, and R. The EA concludes: “The scale and dominance of the roadway were determined to be compatible with the project surroundings due in large part to the fact that a distinct transportation corridor within the identified visual assessment units has already been established by the existing roadway.” (EA, p. 76) I find this analysis inadequate and also believe that that TxDOT draws the wrong conclusion from its own analysis in terms of the project’s future impact on visual quality of the area.

The photographs in the EA (Photos A and C) are helpful in showing some of the project’s context, but do not represent a true analysis of effects. The EA should have included many more photo points within the two most sensitive Visual Units, including photo points from various areas utilized by the public adjacent to and near Loop 375, such as parking lots, developed areas, trails, and scenic viewpoints. The EA dismisses visual impacts from Loop 375 on the main developed facilities in the Tom Mays Unit due to the distance of the campground (0.7 miles) from the road, but the road is, in fact, visible from several points within the campground as well as from other points in the park used by visitors. Moreover, the TxDOT video presented to the public as part of background information on the project actually depicts the expanded Loop 375 as a central and dominant visual feature, with a large visual impact, in the park entrance zone.

**Response to Comment 35:**

*Comment noted for the record. Photographs included as part of the **summary** of the visual impact analysis were intended to be representative and do not reflect the entire body of knowledge utilized in preparation of the analysis.*

**Comment 36:**

The subsequent EIS should present photo simulations of the project as it would appear post-construction in this area. This is analysis that is technically feasible to do that the EA fails to include. Moreover, the determination of effect and compatibility should have been supplemented by quantitative surveys of park

visitors. Utilizing background information and visual simulations, park visitors—who will be the most important arbiters of visual impacts in these two Visual Units—should have been asked to react to potential future conditions. Again, this is entirely within the realm of possibility for an environmental document (such techniques have become standard components of using the scientifically-based “Limits of Acceptable Change” or “Visitor Experience Resource Protection” approaches now in use to assess impacts to parks), and such analysis should be part of a subsequent EIS that does not fail to utilize state-of-the-art assessment tools. The road corridor is certainly established, but public and resource impact will be increased by expanded road corridor. Park visitors are primarily seeking a respite from the sights and visual overload of the heavily urbanized landscape in the El Paso area, and therefore are likely to be more sensitive to increased impacts on visual quality in this protected area.

**Response to Comment 36:**

*The virtual simulation video of the roadway was intended to depict the project post-construction. This video was made publically available on-line and was shown at the public hearing. Public input on all aspects of the project, including visual impacts, was solicited during both the public meeting and public hearing. Public concerns were carefully considered and incorporated into the project design where feasible.*

**Comment 37:**

The EA does conclude, however, that the Loop 375 project is tied to other changes to the environment in the area that will have even more dramatic negative effects on visual/scenic quality in the area of Franklin Mountains State Park:

The conversion of undeveloped areas to commercial or residential uses as a result of predicted growth in the project area could result in a change in the aesthetic character of the native vegetation surrounding the project, outside of the boundaries of the Franklin Mountains State Park. . . It is anticipated that the most substantial post-construction visual impacts within the project area will result from future development in the region. As discussed in Section 1.2.1, northwestern El Paso is expected to experience measurable population growth in the next twenty to thirty years regardless of whether or not the roadway improvements are undertaken. These growths will likely result in new development and the conversion of currently undeveloped land to developed uses. As more people move to the area, the visual character along the LP 375 roadway corridor is expected to change. Existing viewsheds may be altered by the conversion of native vegetation to developed uses. . . Increased future development and urbanization could alter the existing visual character of the region, creating a more uniform urban character in the project vicinity. The conversion of undeveloped areas could reduce the natural visual continuity of the region by disrupting currently unobstructed scenic viewsheds. However, if future development is undertaken in a manner that is harmonious with the existing visual elements and patterns in terms of form, line, color, texture, dominance, scale, diversity, and continuity, beneficial effects could be realized.” (EA, pages 69, 76)

**Response to Comment 37:**

*Comment noted for the record.*

**Comment 38:**

The major flaw in this argument is the assumption that the visual impacts in the project area will be similar whether or not the Loop 375 improvements are constructed. Without question, the widening of Loop 375 in the project area is likely to facilitate and accelerate the development that most certainly will create significant negative visual impacts on the Park.

Similarly, the EA fails to discuss alternatives within the overall scope of the project that could actually (1) require referenced standards to limit or mitigate visual impacts (and other environmental impacts) from such development and/or (2) adjust the project or its elements in order to create additional open space buffers around the Park that would better protect visual quality from both Loop 375 and the attendant impacts from development it would engender. Alternatives that eliminate the large overpass closest to the Park (at Paseo del Norte), for example, would reduce visual impacts as well as create opportunities to set aside open space and enhance protection for the designated scenic corridor.

**Response to Comment 38:**

- *Please see FMC 8 and FMC 11 for comments related to alternatives. As detailed in both the alternatives analysis in the EA and in the updated Mission TDM-based alternatives analysis, which considered various measures of effectiveness related to the need and purpose of the project to improve local and regional mobility and safety, the Freeway Alternative was determined to best meet the need and purpose of the project and was thus carried forward for detailed assessment along with the No Build Alternative.*
  
- *Please see FMC 5 for comments related to protecting open space. Future land use and the preservation of open space are issues determined by local planning decisions and are beyond the statutory authority of TxDOT and the scope of this NEPA evaluation.*

**Comment 39:**

**Vegetation/Wildlife Impacts**

The EA properly recognizes (e.g. EA, page 52) that the Chihuahuan Desert in which the Loop 375 project is located is one of the most biologically rich desert eco-regions in the world, alive with large mammals, birds, reptiles and an unmatched diversity of cactus species. Besides cacti, many desert plants, fish, and reptile species in the Chihuahuan Desert show rather localized patterns of endemism and exhibit high turnover of species with distance—the hallmark of a biologically rich eco-region.

According to the EA (Page 52, Section 3.8.1) approximately 134.3 acres of existing vegetation would be impacted by project construction. Of this, 49.6 acres would be converted to roadway and 84.7 acres would be disturbed by construction and would eventually be converted to vegetated right-of-way.

The EA has a survey of vegetation within the project area and a lengthy discussion of the distribution and potential impacts on Federally Listed/Candidate Threatened and Endangered Species, State-Listed Threatened and Endangered Species, and other Rare Species. With respect to Federal and State T/E and rare species, the EA concludes that the project would “have no effect on federally listed/candidate species” (EA, page 63), that “the Texas horned lizard and the Chihuahuan desert lyre snake could be impacted by removal of some habitat” but that the habitat loss would be “small compared to the expanse of suitable habitat located throughout the region” (EA, page 63), and that there are potential impacts to some species of concern (e.g. as hawks, falcons, bats) that would be “limited to disruptions from construction and removal of a small amount of potential foraging habitat and disruption of potential roosting areas (culverts).” (EA, page 64)

In summary, TxDOT states:

The impact of this project to the existing vegetation and wildlife may be viewed in terms of short-term impacts resulting from disturbance during construction and long-term impacts resulting from permanent habitat modification. The native vegetation in the project area is predominantly Creosote Shrub and does not provide critical habitat for any federally or state-listed threatened or endangered species known to occur in the region. *Any transient wildlife would only be impacted*

*temporarily and no long-term impacts to any species or populations are anticipated.* (EA, p. 54; emphasis added)

**Response to Comment 39:**

*Comment noted for the record.*

**Comment 40:**

The EA, however, underestimates and does not fully evaluate the impacts on wildlife from the proposed project. Dismissing impacts on potential habitat for T/E species can incorrectly assume that certain restoration activities may not take place that would make those areas more attractive to sensitive species. Also, to minimize impacts on habitat for certain regionally rare species because of an “expanse of suitable habitat” when only “approximately 1,250 acres” of such habitat is within the project’s “Area of Influence” (EA, page 90) makes a large and risky leap of faith that the existing habitat is, in fact, sufficient for the long-term.

The total area of permanent disturbance from the project is not trivial, but the EA does little to acknowledge the broader negative impacts of road-building on biodiversity, and the increasing constraints and stresses that road such as Loop 375 will place on protecting biodiversity under the forces and the uncertainty that climate change is bringing to the Chihuahuan Desert. TxDOT takes insufficient affirmative responsibility for its role in averting or mitigating impacts on biodiversity.

The Chihuahuan Desert ecoregion contains few protected areas designed primarily for conservation of biodiversity. Only 2.5% of the ecoregion is under formal protection, a remarkably low total for such a large, sparsely populated area. Fragmentation of habitats through urban development, roads, fences, and conversion has curtailed the seasonal and wider nomadic movements of many species (such as ungulates) and their associated predators, and is having long-term detrimental effects on other many other species large and small—which face reduced and isolated populations, smaller ranges, degraded habitat, and barriers to genetic mixing. Protecting patterns of the extraordinary beta-diversity of the Chihuahuan Desert, which is widely distributed among basins, isolated springs, mountain ranges and other “niche” habitats, requires a network of reserves that captures the complex distributional patterns of many endemic species. There must be core reserves, wildlife/biodiversity-friendly land management outside protected areas, and connectivity to maintain important ecological processes and wide-ranging species. (Ecoregion-Based Conservation in the Chihuahuan Desert: A Biological Assessment, World Wildlife Fund and others, 2000).

Typically, higher elevation and riparian areas are identified as potential corridors because such areas have already been set aside or are often more feasible to designate for conservation purposes. Lowland habitats, however, are likely to have been equally or more important corridors in many ecoregions prior to their alteration in many parts of the world. Wherever possible, conservation landscapes should combine lowland and montane areas, even if the lowland elements are degraded (e.g. creosote scrub, like the Loop 375 project area) and require extensive restoration.

**Response to Comment 40:**

*See response to Comment 5.*

**Comment 41:**

Although the presence of federal and state T/E species within the 10-mile area of the Loop 375 project considered for wildlife values, the study area—most notably Franklin Mountains State Park—abounds in birds, reptiles, and small mammals. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) notes the presence of golden eagles, a variety of hawks, the occasional falcon, and a variety of bats and owls. The

Franklins are the only known location in Texas for a number of plant species, including the Southwest barrel cactus. (<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us>)

While Loop 375 obviously already exists on the landscape, construction of the proposed project will result in a dramatically expanded road that will be an impenetrable barrier to the movement of virtually all (non-avian) wildlife. This, combined with other roads and development barriers, will fragment habitat and isolate the Park. This will have serious, long-term negative consequences for wildlife in Franklin Mountains State Park and its environs, condemning its wildlife to decline; these are impacts that the EA does not fully acknowledge nor assess.

Though the EA recognizes that certain obvious aspects of the Loop 375 project will be detrimental to wildlife (e.g. restrict movement and increase road kill), TxDOT has mostly ignored the broader ramifications and dismissed public input and requests from the TPWD regarding design elements to reduce wildlife impacts. The EA states: “Concerns were raised by TPWD, public officials, and members of the public during the public involvement process regarding large mammal fatalities along LP 375. TxDOT evaluated the possibility of constructing wildlife crossings along this portion of LP 375 and determined that the *crossings were not feasible*. [Emphasis added]

Instead of a comprehensive approach to addressing wildlife impacts, TxDOT is proposing to install only a single 10' x 20' arched pipe drainage culvert crossing near the proposed Paseo Del Norte Road extension and to place “extra signage” along the roadway. The projected efficacy of this solution in a ROW of 350 feet encompassing six lanes of road is unknown. There are no other significant express commitments to mitigate impacts on small mammals and reptiles, or to study the impacts of the road on wildlife over time. In a project with a total estimated cost of \$84 million dollars, it is unfortunate that TxDOT cannot invest a few percentage points of the cost into wildlife mitigation, other than a single culvert and ineffective signage. Dozens of road projects throughout the nation now do so and the FHWA and many of its state transportation department partners are proud of these efforts. ([www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/wildlifecrossings](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/wildlifecrossings)). In its current incarnation, the Loop 375 project is not one to be proud of in terms of evaluating and addressing wildlife issues.

**Response to Comment 41:**

- *See response to Comment 5.*
  
- *It is widely understood that roadway and vehicle traffic contribute to wildlife mortality and habitat fragmentation. Please see FMC 1 for details regarding TxDOT's proposal for wildlife crossings associated with this project.*

**Comment 42:**

Indeed, due to the Loop 375's project's inseparable connection to the rest of the Transmountain Road (through and east of Franklin Mountains State Park), and the results of the project—which will result in increased vehicle traffic on 375, to be an adequate environmental document, the EA should have analyzed impacts on wildlife of the entire Transmountain Road and proposed strategies to mitigate wildlife impacts on the entire portion that traverses the Park.

**Response to Comment 42:**

*The indirect and cumulative impacts assessment considered impacts to vegetation and wildlife. See response to Comment 5.*

**Comment 43:**

The EA relies only on “a review of crash data for the last three years” with respect to direct impacts on wildlife. (EA, page 32, 54). Crash data is unreliable and flawed in that it does not capture or assess true

traffic impacts on wildlife nor all species of wildlife. The EA fails to look comprehensively at all data sources, including trapping and road kill studies involving all types of animals (including reptiles), and fails to evaluate the differences in impact between a two-lane road (present condition) and a four- to six-lane road with a 350 foot ROW. The new road's increased capacity to carry more traffic, and its role as a catalyst for land development and habitat destruction will in itself create more impact and the road will become both an impenetrable barrier and a complete killing zone for wildlife.

**Response to Comment 43:**

- *Regarding the use of crash data, see response to Comment 18.*
  
- *Please see FMC 8 and FMC 11 for comments related to alternatives. As detailed in both the alternatives analysis in the EA and in the updated Mission TDM-based alternatives analysis, which considered various measures of effectiveness related to the need and purpose of the project to improve local and regional mobility and safety, the Freeway Alternative was determined to best meet the need and purpose of the project and was thus carried forward for detailed assessment along with the No Build Alternative.*

**Comment 44:**

**Indirect and Cumulative Impacts**

Depending on the project, certain environmental documents must analyze indirect and cumulative impacts. Appropriately, this EA contains such a discussion (EA, pages 82- 115).

To summarize, the EA makes the following points: (1) population and growth projections identified by the City of El Paso point towards continued growth within the "Area of Influence" (AOI); (2) such growth is likely to take place irrespective of whether the Loop 375 project is built; (3) continued development will likely result in the conversion of undeveloped land to residential, commercial, and industrial uses; (4) as a result of growth and development, indirect and cumulative impacts to land use, scenic quality, vegetation, threatened and endangered species, water resources, and air quality are likely to be substantial; and (5) enforcement of, and/or changes to City of El Paso's zoning and building restrictions and decisions with respect to controlling the density, type, and rate of future development will have a major affect on ultimate impacts within the AOI and may reduce cumulative impacts.

**Response to Comment 44:**

*Comment noted for the record.*

**Comment 45:**

The EA states that "population and growth projections indicate that much of the expected development in the area would occur regardless of whether or not the improvements to LP 375 were implemented." (EA, page 113) This statement diminishes the role that road projects play in affecting markets for land development and in subsidizing urban growth. The Loop 375 project is a vital element in the actualization of regional growth scenarios and the project will share responsibility for the significant, negative environmental impacts that growth will create.

The EA states that "Impacts related to residential and commercial growth are not expected to occur within the boundaries of the Franklin Mountains State Park." (EA, page 112). This statement is incorrect. Impacts will occur within the Park due to land conversion from residential, commercial and industrial development that will bring degrade scenic quality, vegetation, wildlife habitat, natural quiet, water resources, air quality, and dark night skies. Impacts in all these areas will affect park resources over the short- and long-term within the Park, and will negatively affect the visitor experience.

**Response to Comment 45:**

*Future land use and the preservation of open space are issues determined by local planning decisions and are beyond the statutory authority of TxDOT and the scope of this NEPA evaluation. The proposed project was developed to be consistent with local and regional transportation and land use plans.*

**Comment 46:**

In addition, some additional elements of the cumulative effects analysis are lacking:

- The EA acknowledges, but does not fully assess, the cumulative effects of other current and projected projects affecting Loop 375. The Loop 375 project addressed in this EA is actually part of a larger network of improvements to LP 375. There are apparently nine TxDOT projects planned for LP 375 (EA, page 1), not all of which are considered in the cumulative affects analysis.
- The EA does not assess the contribution to cumulative impacts of the proposed "Northeast Parkway." The Northeast Parkway is a proposed 21-mile long, limited access highway connecting Loop 375 in northeast El Paso to I-10 in Anthony, NM, which is envisioned as a diverting large amounts of traffic—truck traffic, in particular—from the I-10 route through El Paso. The tentative preferred alternative (Alternative C), would utilize NM 404 along the north side of Franklin Mountains State Park. Apparently, a "Tier 1" environmental document for this project has been prepared and is now under review by TxDOT, NMDOT, and FHWA. ([www.TxDOT.gov/project\\_information](http://www.TxDOT.gov/project_information)) If constructed as currently outlined, the Northeast Parkway would mirror Loop 375's negative impacts in terms of sealing off the northern end of Franklin Mountains State Park with another impenetrable barrier to wildlife movement, and possibly stimulating further land development and habitat loss in that area.

**Response to Comment 46:**

*The analysis did consider other planned and programmed transportation projects within the indirect impacts area of influence and cumulative impacts resource study areas, as detailed on page 110 of the February 2011 EA. The proposed Northeast Parkway project is located outside of the AOI and RSA boundaries defined for this analysis (as reflected in Inserts 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the EA).*

**Comment 47:**

**Section 4(f) Considerations**

Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966 prevents FHWA from approving a project which "requires the use of any publicly owned park, recreation area, or wildlife or waterfowl refuge, or any land from a historic site of national, state, or local significance unless there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use and all possible planning to minimize harm resulting from such use is included, or unless such a use is considered de minimus."

The proposed Loop 375 project will use public park land, both directly and indirectly. All possible feasible and prudent alternatives to the project, including smaller roadways and use of transit-based solutions (in whole or part) based on updated vehicle traffic projections for El Paso are as well as design modifications, have not been considered. All impacts on Franklin Mountains State Park have not been adequately assessed and all possible planning to minimize harm to Franklin Mountains State Park has not been completed

**Response to Comment 47:**

*The proposed project would not require right-of-way from the Franklin Mountains State Park. See response to Comment 7 regarding Section 4(f).*

## **Section 4**

# **Public Hearing Transcript**

1 Hall, 2 Civic Center Plaza, El Paso, Texas.

2 The environmental document and the project  
3 information are available on both the TxDOT and the city  
4 of El Paso websites.

5 We will now begin the public comment  
6 session. Please state your name and address and what  
7 group you represent, if applicable, for the court  
8 reporter. Following your comments, please yield to the  
9 next speaker.

10 I'd like to mention again that we will not  
11 address the questions during the comment period. All verbal  
12 and written comments and questions presented will be  
13 addressed in and made part of the final environmental  
14 document and in the public hearing summary report submitted  
15 to TxDOT and the Federal Highway Administration.

16 I will call on our elected officials first  
17 that wish to make comments. Those that I have indicated  
18 here, the first that I would start with would be City  
19 Representative Susie Byrd. If you would take -- the  
20 microphone is right here next to the computer station.

21 Following Ms. Byrd I'm going to invite -the  
22 next speaker would be Ms. Laure Searls. If you would just  
23 be ready. Thank you.

24 MS.tBYRD: I actually just have two  
25 questions for the public record. One is that -- my

1 understanding from conversations that we had last week is  
2 that the alternatives analysis that you went through in  
3 ruling out other alternatives were based on outdated  
4 numbers from an older transportation plan. There's new  
5 numbers available that show that there's less than half of  
6 the traffic that was estimated in your -- in your analysis  
7 and we would like to know when you're going to make a new  
8 analysis available to the public so we can look at whether  
9 any of the other alternatives which would have less  
10 environmental impact and might provide more safety options  
11 for pedestrians and bicyclists, we would like to know when  
12 that might be available.

13 MR. BERRY: Okay.

14 MS, BYRD: And then the second question I had.  
15 Next week the city council is going to take some action  
16 related to sort of what our preferred alternatives might  
17 be. And kind of a building consensus in the public is,  
18 okay, we understand TxDOT wants to build this freeway, we  
19 understand that there's some need to build additional  
20 capacity in that area to address safety in that area, but  
21 what can we do to mitigate the -- the impact as you move  
22 closer to the state park and as you're climbing the  
23 mountain. And one of the evolving kind of consensus among  
24 people that are concerned about the impact to the state  
25 park and to the mountain and just to the environment in

1 general is removing that last overpass and then preserving  
2 the public service land or the city's land in that area.  
3 And what I would like to know from you before we make that  
4 decision is if we can work with TxDOT to remove that  
5 overpass and -- and not have to face the challenge that's  
6 been presented to us that we might lose that -- that  
7 money. And kind of finally towards that end is that we -we  
8 would really like to see TxDOT work on this on -- as you go  
9 to final design to work with the community to make a road  
10 that is reflective of our community values and concerns  
11 particularly as it affects the mountain and entering into  
12 the state park and we would hope that you would be  
13 committed to that and work with the city council and the  
14 community to make that happen. Thank you.

15 MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comment.

16 Next, Ms. Laure Searls. I hope I got -- I  
17 think it's Lori.

18 MS. SEARLS: You did. You did really good.  
19 Thank you.

20 Laure Searls, Canutillo community citizen.  
21 I've lived in El Paso since 1965 and I really, I'd like to  
22 ask who is here. Could I see a show of hands. Who thinks  
23 this is a good idea? With the overpasses and the whole way  
24 they've presented it? I see some hands go down but a few  
25 up.

1 I just feel so strongly that we have to be  
2 secure and sure when we make a decision like this. You  
3 don't make mountains every day. This is our heritage. This  
4 is our children's heritage. I know that we need extra  
5 lanes on the road up there, there's no doubt about that,  
6 but all the enhancements of overpasses, that will visually  
7 obstruct our mountains, the view that we have from the  
8 valley. It's -- it just seems unconscionable to destroy  
9 what we have without giving further thought to it and, you  
10 know, in our consciences knowing that that's our greatest  
11 pull. We always want people to come here and visit and be  
12 tourists. You know, if it looks like a commercial freeway  
13 going through our beauty, I don't really see that  
14 happening.

15 I agree that you've got to  
16 have -- you know, we need four, maybe six lanes up there,  
17 but I sure don't agree with the overpasses. Thank you so  
18 much.

19 MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comment.

20 Mr. Sergio Coronado with the Canutillo School  
21 ISD trustee. Mr. Coronado.

22 And next I'll call on -- representing the  
23 office of State Senator Jose Rodriguez, Corinne Chacon.  
24 Mr. Coronado.

25 MR. CORONADO: Thank you.

For the record, I'm here as a community

1 member, okay, not on behalf of the board of trustees.

2 My opinion is obviously as most of the people  
3 are really in favor of having this, I guess, expansion of  
4 our roadway up here. It's definitely

5 necessary. Some people may quarrel about the overpasses and  
6 obstruction, but you know what? There's ways to do this  
7 right, folks. And other -- other communities -Arizona, for  
8 example, Phoenix, the way they do these projects are very,  
9 very nice so you don't have to sacrifice both just because  
10 you get the overpasses. And I see an improvement lately in  
11 our area in starting to do that in terms of the way these  
12 overpasses are done. It's been a long time coming and I  
13 think we can do a better job. That doesn't mean that we  
14 need to scrap it altogether. I'm in favor of this  
15 expansion. I think that there's a fine medium that we can  
16 find in between in terms of do we need some of those  
17 overpasses? Yes, we do. You know, not only that, some of  
18 these access roads actually create a better buffer for the  
19 state park than some of the other alternatives and I'd  
20 rather have that in certain places as an alternative than  
21 one of the other alternatives. So in terms of the plan that  
22 -- that's been proposed, it's not perfect, but I think I  
23 support it and I think we need to do this as soon as  
24 possible.

25 That's one of the other things that I'm

1 definitely in favor of getting it done as quick as  
2 possible. One of the things is is that Canutillo High  
3 School and the El Paso Community College, I mean, there's a  
4 proposed -- been a proposed roadway that goes -initially it  
5 was a extension of Loop 375, this same area, and now it's  
6 been converted into a spur that will run behind El Paso  
7 Community College and the high school to give us access --  
8 another access off the community college and the Canutillo  
9 High School towards the rear and I don't see that happening  
10 unless we get this project done and we get it done quickly.  
11 And we've been promised that for quite some time and the  
12 thing that's been delaying this is -- some of things  
13 they've told us is that the city has delayed in the  
14 acquisition of the rights-of-way for that area which goes  
15 along one of those arroyos behind El Paso Community College  
16 and the high school. You know, I think we need to get this  
17 done and that's really my position. Thank you.

18 MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comments,  
19 sir.

20 Next Ms. Corinne Chacon representing the  
21 office of Senator Jose Rodriguez.

22 MS. CHACON: Good evening, everyone. I'm  
23 going to read a letter from the senator, just a few key  
24 sentences. And of course this is based on his

1 understanding of the information as presented as the  
2 representative has requested any additional information or  
3 updated information, of course he would like to be able to  
4 review that.

5 Dear Mayor Cook and Director Saenz, I write  
6 to you today to extend my support to the Texas Department of  
7 Transportation's Transmountain West/Interstate 10 project in  
8 El Paso. This project is an important component to the  
9 overall transportation infrastructure of our community and  
10 its construction will vastly improve the connectivity of  
11 Loop 375 between west and northeast El Paso. Expanding  
12 Transmountain will greatly improve safety and reduce  
13 congestion by allowing travelers to bypass downtown and  
14 connecting the two sides of town that would otherwise take  
15 much longer to access.

16 The project represents a true public-private  
17 partnership which includes new public amenities that will be  
18 constructed simultaneously with the road. While the  
19 project's impact on the environment is also a concern, I  
20 have come to the conclusion that on balance, this project  
21 will beneficially enhance El Paso's development as a smart -  
22 - smart growth community.

23 I appreciate your consideration of my  
24 position and I hope you will include my letter as part of  
25 the public hearing record. Thank you very much.

1 MR. BERRY: That concludes the list of  
2 elected officials who have -- that I have who would like  
3 to speak. Did I miss anyone?

4 I would like to call on the speakers in the  
5 order that they registered to speak.

6 Scott Cutler. And then if you might be -get  
7 ready, please, Mr. Joel Guzman.

8 Scott Cutler.

9 MR. CUTLER: Hello. My name is Scott  
10 Cutler. I'm here as a private citizen.

11 I have five comments that I'd like to make.  
12 One is I would like to encourage TxDOT to consider having  
13 an optional plan developed that takes into consideration  
14 the city's open space land on either side as being left as  
15 open space because if that's not to be developed in the  
16 future, then that should impact where the Paseo Del Norte  
17 overpass is put or should be eliminated because there would  
18 be no need for it so by having an alternate plan, no time  
19 would be lost in starting the project that would allow the  
20 lower parts of the road to be developed.

21 Secondly, I'd like to ask that the -- that  
22 TxDOT consider putting in an underpass for the state park  
23 entrance, find some way, either below or above the  
24 existing area if there's not a suitable spot, to be able  
25 to have an underpass that people would be able to use to

1 access the park rather than having some sort of an overpass  
2 or as is proposed right now to have eastbound traffic have  
3 to cross two lanes of oncoming traffic to get into the park.  
4 I think there should be some way to find a way to create the  
5 roads, the underpass so that it could be done at grade and  
6 allow traffic to be able to get in there safely.

7 Third, everyone's talking about this being a  
8 part of Loop 375 that will provide access for truck traffic  
9 to get from the east side to the west side or the west side  
10 to the east side. Transmountain Road is really not a  
11 suitable place to encourage truck traffic. If you you ride  
12 on it now you\_ \_know that if you get behind a truck they're  
13 going slow because it's very steep. And I know there have  
14 been proposals in the past or discussions about doing the  
15 loop up **through** the 404 -- Highway 404 that would take  
16 people from the east side going up past McCombs and that  
17 area and then crossing over to I-10 which would be a much  
18 more suitable area for truck traffic to go either going east  
19 or west. It would also allow for all of the development that  
20 goes on at Fort Bliss and around the airport to have an  
21 easier grade to get either east or west.

22 MR. BERRY: You have less than a minute,  
23 sir.

24 RASBERRY & ASSOCIATES CERTIFIED COURT REPORTERS  
25 300 EAST MAIN, SUITE 1024, EL PASO, TEXAS (915) 533-1199

1 MR. CUTLER: Thank you.

2 I would also question the level of service  
3 assumption that were made in that if the land on either  
4 side of Transmountain -- city land is left as open space,  
5 then that should reduce the level of service which would  
6 reduce the need for a lot of the infrastructure.

7 An then lastly the visual impact analysis  
8 that you did, at least from my perspective, what you  
9 proposed is not leaving this as a scenic corridor either  
10 for bikers, hikers or for people traveling. You lose the  
11 whole impact of a scenic byway with all of the overpasses,  
12 the trees that have eliminated the open space that we  
13 currently have. Thank you.

14 MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comments,  
15 sir.

16 Next we have Mr. -- next we have Mr. Joel  
17 Guzman. Mr. Joel Guzman. And then following would be  
18 Rick Lobello.

19 MR. GUZMAN: I actually put down "maybe" on  
20 the -- whether I was going to speak or not.

21 MR. BERRY: Okay.

22 MR. GUZMAN: I support the project as -- I  
23 think I want to talk about the staff that's been involved  
24 so for, city department, the planning department, the  
25 streets department, the PSB, TxDOT has been very involved.

2 There's been a lot of work to this point and ultimately  
3 it's a policy matter of -- of which way this goes but from  
4 all the multiple private owners of land along  
5 Transmountain there's been a lot of heavy lifting, a lot  
6 of consultants that we've worked with so far and  
7 philosophically I support the project, but I just wanted to  
8 point out that -- point out, rather, that there's been a  
9 lot of work to this date. That's all. Thank you.

10 MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comment.

11 Next speaker is Rick Lobello or Lobello.

12 MR. LOBELLO: Lobello.

13 MR. BERRY: And then following Mr. Lobello  
14 will be Gerald Telles.

15 MR. LOBELLO: I'm -- I'm representing myself  
16 as a private citizen.

17 MR. BERRY: If you'd state your name and  
18 your address.

19 MR. LOBELLO: My name is Rick Lobello and I  
20 just want everyone to know that I have no problem with  
21 improving our roads for safety. My major concern with this  
22 project is the related impacts of development that will  
23 happen on either side of the -- of the freeway as a result  
24 of the freeway being there. I'm very concerned about  
25 protecting the Franklin Mountain State Park and I believe  
that the exchange -- the Paseo Del Norte exchange

1 should be removed and I'd ask that you remove it because  
2 of the threat to the park. I also feel that our city's  
3 being pressured to not protect some of the natural open  
4 space that we're trying to protect because of the road  
5 project because I understand that if we delay the project  
6 to protect open space that we might lose funding and I  
7 don't think the city should be pressured in that way. I  
8 believe the city council should have all kinds of options  
9 to choose the best options for the community. I'm also  
10 very concerned about the way the project has been  
11 presented to the community. All of these pictures you  
12 have here on the TV, they show the road, but they don't  
13 show what the plan developments are as part of the  
14 Northwest Master Plan.

15 For example, if you look at this picture  
16 that I brought, it shows what's happening on the west side.  
17 Practically all of the land on the Transmountain corridor -  
18 - on the south side of the Transmountain corridor has  
19 already been developed and there's very little open space  
20 left and I believe that this project is going to result in  
21 the destruction of that open space. And also I want  
22 everyone to know and you to know that one of the reasons  
23 why I bought the land and I -- I moved to this part of town  
24 is because I love the Transmountain Road. It's  
25 beautiful. It's part of this city. It's part

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1 of the city's natural heritage and it's going to affect my  
2 quality of life. It's going to have an environmental impact  
3 on not just my quality of life but all the people who are  
4 living in this part of town. And also I brought this  
5 picture of a weasel, a beautiful animal that very few people  
6 have ever seen and as a result of the project as it is now  
7 and all that related developments that will come as a result  
8 of this project, many animals are going to lose their  
9 habitat so we need to improve our roads, but we also need to  
10 take care of our natural environment and that's what I'm  
11 concerned about. I don't think that this proposal has  
12 adequately addressed the environmental impact. It's going  
13 to impact not only the natural environment, but it's going  
14 to impact the quality of life for many people in El Paso  
15 including our future ecotourism possibilities and that's why  
16 I believe that this project as it is needs to be changed  
17 and I recommend that many of the things that have already  
18 been stated by Susie Byrd and Scott Cutler as far as  
19 providing ways for wildlife to go get under the project and  
20 also ways that we can prevent future development with the  
21 Paseo Del Norte, that all these recommendations by others  
22 like the Franklin Mountains Wilderness Coalition be  
23 implemented, and I thank you for your attention.

24 MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comments,

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1 sir.

2 Next we have Mr. Gerald Telles. Next we  
3 have Mr. Gerald Telles, followed by Stephanie Sotelo.

4 MR. TELLES: My name is Gerald Telles and I do  
5 commute every day to and from the northeast to the west  
6 side. I do support TxDOT's current plan as it stands;  
7 however, I would -- probably would like to go ahead and see  
8 an on-ramp for those people who are going to be commuting to  
9 Las Cruces in the future so I would recommend an 1-10 west  
10 ramp and I didn't see that in the proposed current plan,  
11 but I see that more people are going to be commuting in the  
12 future from Las Cruces or from New Mexico and I do believe  
13 that this plan is necessary because we do have a tremendous  
14 amount of traffic right now on Transmountain and the plan  
15 will also provide another -alleviate some of the traffic  
16 that's currently on 1-10.

17 And as far as the overpasses, I do believe  
18 that TxDOT has done quite a bit of changes in making these  
19 overpasses more attractive and I would like to keep the  
20 beauty that we have in the mountains, but I do believe that  
21 TxDOT is addressing that issue and I am happy with the  
22 current plan so I do support it. Thank you.

23 MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comment, sir.

24 Stephanie Sotelo. And then I have a "maybe" for Ms.

25 Lois Balin. You might be thinking about whether

1 you're going to make a comment or not.

2 MS. SOTELO: Hi. Yes. I am Stephanie  
3 Sotelo and I just totally dislike this idea. I don't like  
4 destroying mountains or destroying natural habitats such as  
5 the environment of the animals. You -- do you even think  
6 about what you're going to do to the animals' environment?  
7 Is this just sheer greed? And think of the questions, what  
8 -- what is the mountain about? Like it's about beauty, it's  
9 about preserving the environment and the creation of God.  
10 You know what I mean? Like why  
11 would you want to destroy that. It's so beautiful. I  
12 don't want Transmountain to be once-upon-a-time thing.  
13 You know what? Like it has to be -- this -- Transmountain  
14 is the heart and the jewel of El Paso and if you destroy  
15 it, it's just -- we're nothing. You know what I mean? It's  
16 terrible. That's *what* I've got to say.

17 MR. *BERRY*: Thank you for your comment.

18 Lois Balin. Ms. Lois Balin marked a "maybe."

19 Next speaker is Lety Sotelo, a "maybe." Do I  
20 see a hand for Lety Sotelo?

21 And then the next speaker is Lynn  
22 Fitzgerald.

23 MR. FITZGERALD: Is that good? Can you hear  
24 me?

1 MR. BERRY: Yes, sir.

2 MR. FITZGERALD: Lynn Fitzgerald, Franklin  
3 Mountain Wilderness Coalition and EPAS. I have a few  
4 comments I'd like to make regarding this situation.

5 I asked Chuck Berry a number of times at city  
6 hall and a number of places, "Is this a freeway or is this  
7 a *highway*?" I never got a real answer so I would like him if  
8 he can sometime in the near future -- and I know you're not  
9 going to answer it tonight, but I'd like you to do that  
10 sometime in the near future because you can't turn left on  
11 freeways. Okay? Period. So that means if we're going up the  
12 mountain and we want to turn left into the park, we can't  
13 have -- we can't have an off-ramp there unless we go  
14 underneath. But a left-lane turning is ridiculous and out  
15 of the question.

16 Secondly, we need a public hearing in the --we  
17 have a forum here tonight, but I'd like to have a forum  
18 sometime in the very near future for all of us that are  
19 opposed to this or have different views so we can solidify  
20 all these views an ideas and make it hopefully workable and  
21 right for all of us. And I'd like Susie Byrd to help --  
22 help us with that. If you would, Susie. Anyway. Let me read  
23 some of these comments that I have here.

24 We need two more lanes. I think anybody  
25 that's against two more lanes is kind of unrealistic. Two

1 more lanes should have been done a long time ago. The whole  
2 thing should have been two -- four lanes all the way down  
3 the 1-10. Why they stopped at three miles up the I-10, I  
4 have no clue and nobody's ever given me a reason for that.

5 The most important thing I think we need to  
6 get out of this -- this meeting is we really don't need to  
7 spend all this money on this project. We need to take that  
8 money and use an alternative and the alternative as far as  
9 I'm concerned is Anthony Gap. And I know that we have --  
10 we've heard that New Mexico doesn't want to foot the bill  
11 or doesn't want to participate. Well, we don't need New  
12 Mexico to do it, we need to do it ourselves. Because I can  
13 guarantee you in ten years that -- that area coming over the  
14 mountain is going to be so congested you won't be able to  
15 get through there.

16 MR. BERRY: You have a little less than one  
17 minute, sir.

18 MR. FITZGERALD: And the -- the area coming to  
19 and from Mexico, if you haven't been over that way and a  
20 lot of El Pasoan's haven't been there, they've already  
21 expanded from Las Cruces all the way down to the Texas  
22 line. They've already expanded their freeway, the 1-10.  
23 Okay?

24 Let's see. You mentioned something about

1 expanding to six lanes as we're coming down the -- coming  
2 off from the east side going west. Is that true? Are you  
3 going to go six lanes? We've got four lanes. Are we going  
4 to go -- as we get down the mountain, are we going to be  
5 six lanes or not? That's another question I have.

6                   Anyway. The Tom Mays Park, I already  
7 mentioned that. It's ridiculous to turn left. If you're  
8 going to turn left there, whether it's a highway or a  
9 freeway, you can sit there and grow old waiting to turn  
10 left and the traffic is -- is really big.

11                   MR. BERRY: Your time is up. You want to  
12 wind up, sir, please?

13                   MR. FITZGERALD: Yes, I would.

14                   Anyway. I would like to say this in  
15 closing. That we need to save our mountain. It's the  
16 only mountain we've got and when it's gone, it's gone,  
17 folks. And if you want to bastardize it, do so. Thank  
18 you.

19                   MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comments,

20

21                   Mr. Bob Sumrall, followed by Mr. Carlos

22

23

24

25

1 The only thing that's wrong with this project is it should  
2 have been done ten years ago. From here on out, if you want  
3 to -- if you want any of the first four options, go drive in  
4 the northeast, go look at Transmountain on the west -- or  
5 the east side of the mountain. Look at what a boulevard  
6 does. If you like the pollution, good, that's what you're  
7 going to get. You're going to get bumper-to-bumper traffic,  
8 you're going to sit through red lights multiple times just  
9 like they're doing in the northeast right now. If that's  
10 what you want, turn the project down. I don't want that. I  
11 don't want the safety problems that you get because you've  
12 got people trying to get on and off of the streets and  
13 boulevards. Look at the -- the traffic accidents you have  
14 over there. People, think about what you're doing. It is not  
15 going to stay the way it looks today. I don't care what you  
16 do and how hard you fight it, you're going to have people --  
17 the city of El Paso doesn't stop there, the city land goes  
18 all the way out to the New Mexico state line. That's how far  
19 the city of El Paso is going. That's all the way above  
20 Anthony. So you're going to have all of those houses going  
21 and being built out there, you're going to have Wal-Marts,  
22 you're going to have all of the things that go into any city  
23 and they're all going to be built out there no matter what  
24 you want to do tonight. So the only

1 question is where is this whole thing going to go? Are you  
2 going to increase traffic and pollution? I don't want that  
3 pollution. This is a good project. It makes sense.  
4 It should have been done a long time ago. Why in the world  
5 would you build a two-lane road across there in the first  
6 place. And, yes, there are lots of trucks that drive it  
7 today. I see them all the time. It may no be the best  
8 answer, but it is certainly the best answer we have  
9 anywhere in the future.

10 MR. BERRY: You've got one minute, sir.

11 Thank you for your comments, sir.

12 Mr. Carlos Zuniga. And then following  
13 Mr. Zuniga will be Mr. David Osborn.

14 MR. ZUNIGA: My name is Carlos Zuniga.  
15 Actually, I wrote a letter to the editor which came out a  
16 couple of Saturdays ago on Transmountain so I think  
17 anybody who read it knows my position.

18 We need to find another alternative to this  
19 project. As that young lady said a little while ago -and  
20 she'll be here long after we're all gone -- you know, we're  
21 going to wind up with another Crazy Cat area. As far as  
22 I'm concerned, that's an eyesore. That's what's going to  
23 happen to Transmountain. Your development is going to do  
24 that -- not yours but --

25 I'm here representing myself -- excuse me.

1 And actually my mother who died two years ago, she used to  
2 live in northeast. I've lived in the upper valley most of  
3 my life so I traveled Transmountain all the time with her  
4 to doctors' offices or to and from her house and she always  
5 used to say Transmountain is the best thing about El Paso.  
6 She was 86 when she died and actually when she died, from  
7 the funeral home in downtown El Paso, I had the funeral home  
8 drive through Transmountain across for her last ride to the  
9 church. I mean, those are the kind of things that count,  
10 it's not just the freeways. We're going to lose all that.  
11 You know, people keep talking about -- comparing us to  
12 Arizona. That mountain isn't an Arizona mountain. I've been  
13 to Arizona plenty of times and no freeways look good,  
14 believe me. We need to preserve the mountain the way it is  
15 forever. Thank you.

16 MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comments.

17 Mr. David Osborn, followed by Mr. Shane  
18 Boyd.

19 MR. OSBORN: My name is David Osborne. I'm a  
20 board member of the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce and  
21 I would like to thank TxDOT and all their staff for all the  
22 contributions you've made to El Paso and what you'll do in  
23 the future. I just have a few quick comments and I also  
24 thank everybody for their opinions tonight and I respect  
25 everybody's opinion.

1           The chamber is in favor of this project for a  
2 few simple reasons, it will help safety concerns that are  
3 valid today and are only going to get worse. Our population  
4 growth including Fort Bliss is going to continue as we grow  
5 our community here. It's going to improve mobility and  
6 alleviate congestion which we already have and we need to  
7 get that under control. I do like the project because it is  
8 being constructed with both hiking and bike trails and I'm  
9 100 percent for that and we need to do the best job we can  
10 to not just do it on this project but many projects in the  
11 future for all of our community members. And I would just  
12 like to say, I think we can work together on this. Someone  
13 said that earlier. We need to -- this project needs to be  
14 done. It's past due. I want to see us work together. And  
15 finally the business community thinks this project is very  
16 important for the future of our community. Thank you.

17           MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comments,  
18 sir.

19           Mr. Shane Boyd marked "maybe." And that would  
20 be followed by Mr. Richard Teschner. Mr. Teschner. You have  
21 a "yes." Would you like to speak? And following Mr.  
22 Teschner will be Mr. Jim Tolbert.

23           MR. TESCHNER: I am Richard Teschner,  
24 Franklin Mountains Wilderness Coalition, et cetera.

1 Time and time again it has been pointed out  
2 that an underpass is needed so that people driving east on  
3 Transmountain can enter Tom Mays without having to stop and  
4 then wait for a break in the westbound traffic that is  
5 coming down the mountain at 70 miles per hour or more. The  
6 TxDOT plan is deeply flawed in that grade level access to  
7 Tom Mays will now be even more dangerous than it presently  
8 is. An underpass must be added to the design. If none is  
9 added, the TxDOT plan should be rejected on those grounds  
10 alone. Thank you.

11 MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comments,  
12 sir.

13 Mr. -- I think it's Heather McMurray --  
14 possibly Heather Murdock, McMurray.

15 MS. McMURRY: It's McMurray.

16 MR. BERRY: Heather McMurray. Did I get the  
17 Heather right?

18 MS. McMURRY: Yes.

19 MR. BERRY: I'm sorry. Heather McMurray. I  
20 have Mr. Jim Tolbert signed up to speak also.

21 MS. McMURRY: I think he's in front of me.

22 MR. BERRY: Okay. Mr. Tolbert.

23 I'm sorry. I got everybody out of order  
24 with that one.

25 MR. TOLBERT: Thank you, Mr. Berry.

1 MR. BERRY: Ms. McMurray, you're up next.

2 MR. TOLBERT: Yeah. Thank you, sir.

3 Jim Tolbert. And as the one who helped  
4 spearhead the petition drive, I am a representative of the  
5 Franklin Mountain Wilderness Coalition.

6 And very simply all I wanted to say is that  
7 our main issue has been to preserve some open space and  
8 we're a little bit concerned -- not a little bit, we're a  
9 lot concerned that city council really failed to pay  
10 attention to this issue because they were afraid the  
11 \$85 million was going to go away. And so a very important  
12 issue of preserving that land, preserving that natural  
13 space, natural environment, the ecosystem, the real hike  
14 and bike trails, not just simply the concrete and asphalt  
15 trails, has all not been considered. Now, we had nearly  
16 1,900 people sign two petitions. Prior to that we had a  
17 petition that called for preserving all of the west side  
18 master plan and there were nearly 2,000 -- or there were  
19 2,100 people that signed that and there were an additional  
20 2,000 people who signed online. So my point is is that this  
21 represents a major value of El Pasoans and we'd like to see  
22 it addressed and it can be addressed if we move things like  
23 Paseo Del Norte to the west to where Plexxar might be, it  
24 can be addressed by making a safer entrance into the state  
25 park and it can be addressed in -- in a

1 myriad of other ways especially how we build roads  
2 appropriately. I -- I don't think anyone opposes making the  
3 improvements that are necessary, but I do think that people  
4 want to see building done appropriately. I think we can  
5 have the best of all possible worlds. I think we can have a  
6 world that honors the development that needs to -- that  
7 will take place, but I also think at the same time we can  
8 honor the natural open space and I think that's the part  
9 that has not really been paid attention to in this whole  
10 matter.

11                   And with all due respect, if people really  
12 want to know what -- what the land is going to look like  
13 after the road development -- inappropriate develop- --  
14 inappropriate road construction and development all you  
15 have to do is go walk the Pat O'Rourke Trail down along  
16 Resler. You can see the buildings going up there now.  
17 People no longer have the view of the mountain. They have a  
18 view of condos, apartments, whatever, so that's a great  
19 deal of what it's going to look like. And, again, with all  
20 due respect, TxDOT seems to build roads like McDonald's  
21 builds golden arches and I think we can do better. Thank  
22 you.

23                   MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comments,  
24 sir.

25                   Ms. McMurray.

1 MS. McMURRY: Hello, Mr. Berry and audience.  
2 My name is Heather McMurray and I am a certified high  
3 school science teacher and -- and I have a master's in  
4 biology.

5 I work on a lot of different issues in our  
6 region and my feeling on this is that this is a pork barrel  
7 spending project whose costs have already exploded from the  
8 initial proposals. I feel that taxpayers will end up  
9 footing the bill for business on this and that, had the  
10 TxDOT and the planners stuck to just simply widening this  
11 road, we would have been all right but instead all these  
12 bridges have been proposed and ele- -- this elevated thing  
13 with pylons and -- and Lord knows what else.

14 I am concerned that the plans for bridges  
15 leave out support for our state park's wildlife by  
16 encouraging more roadways around this area north and south  
17 further isolating the plants and animals in those areas  
18 from reaching other natural areas and our river. I'm  
19 concerned that a new 450-acre rock quarry which isn't on  
20 your maps back there, by the way, but you show a little old  
21 dump, but there's a 450-acre rock quarry sprung up right  
22 between our state park and the outlet mall, it's visible  
23 from Transmountain Road. It's there to support projects  
24 like this and to save its fuel cost so it can be  
25 competitive. I'm concerned that the new BNSF Railroad,

1 Santa Teresa modular offloading facility will be  
2 offloading rail traffic from Santa Teresa, New Mexico, to  
3 this new facility to semi trucks. These will link to one  
4 of these proposed bridges and you're not telling people.  
5 It will probably link --

6 MR. BERRY: You have less than a minute  
7 left.

8 MS. McMURRY: -- to the Plexxar -- to  
9 Artcraft and Plexxar and they can then send those trucks  
10 if they want to to the climb across Transmountain. I  
11 agree that something else needs to be proposed and that  
12 this isn't the right project for it.

13 MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comments.

14 Mr. Richard Dayoub followed by Ms. Judy  
15 Ackerman. Okay. Mr. Dayoub is deferring.

16 Ms. Judy Ackerman.

17 MS. ACKERMAN: Good evening. Mr. Chuck Berry,  
18 TxDOT, all your staff, I want to thank you profusely for  
19 having this public forum. The idea of getting public input  
20 and the fact that you are soliciting public input is huge  
21 and I really appreciate it.

22 I support additional lanes on Transmountain  
23 Road. I think they're absolutely necessary for safety,  
24 but I have several concerns with the current plan and I'll  
25 mention three or four of them.

1 First is the entrance to the Tom Mays section  
2 of the state park. It has already been addressed, but I  
3 feel this is really an important issue because the Franklin  
4 **Mountains** State Park are such a huge asset to  
5 El Paso. This is a destination location for people coming  
6 to El Paso to enjoy our state park and the entrance is  
7 simply not safe, it's not adequate so that's a big *concern*  
8 that needs to be addressed.

9 The concept of animal crossings. I greatly  
10 appreciate that you have added an animal crossing and I  
11 understand it's because of the comments that you got at the  
12 last forum and I really appreciate that you're responsive  
13 to the public needs and I understand that there is a plan  
14 for an animal crossing that will be a 10-by-20 feet with a  
15 dirt bottom and that is really wonderful. The only  
16 difficulty is that it is located in the commercial district  
17 where it will be in the middle of the big box stores so a  
18 little difficulty there. I would recommend that it be  
19 somewhere else and that there many of them and not just for  
20 the animals. You're not -- some people say, "Hey, it's  
21 animals. Who cares." Well, it's people that die  
22 when they intersect with those animals as they cross  
23 Transmountain Road. So for safety issue in addition to  
24 preserving the animals I think it's really important. And I  
25 understand that animal crossings cost money. It's much

1 easier to put a culvert but here's a way you could save  
2 some money so that you can put it towards animal crossings  
3 and that would be with the elimination of Paseo Del Norte.  
4 We've had many reasons why we need to eliminate it and I  
5 believe -- I've been told that each of those huge  
6 interchanges where you have things going up and down and  
7 around and on- and off-ramps and lots of space and -- each  
8 one of those costs in the neighborhood of 7 to \$8 million  
9 so you can eliminate one and build some more animal  
10 crossings.

11 MR. BERRY: You have less than a minute,  
12 ma'am.

13 MS. ACKERMAN: Okay. That would take me to  
14 number 4. I haven't heard this one mentioned yet. And that  
15 is the -- how close the various on and off and  
16 interchanges are to each other. I believe there is a  
17 national standard recommendation for how close those  
18 things are. So if you talk about 10 then the next one is  
19 Northwestern, then comes Resler, then comes Plexxar, then  
20 it's Paseo Del Norte and guess what, they're too close,  
21 it's not safe so I recommend you eliminate some and I  
22 thank you very much for your time.

23 MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comment,  
24 ma'am.

25 Mr. Bill Addington followed by -- could be

1 Adan Benuska or Dan Benuska.

2 MR. ADDINGTON: Good evening, Mr. Berry. Thank  
3 you. For the record, my name is that Bill Garrett  
4 Addington. I'm representing the Rio Grande Chapter of the  
5 Sierra Club as well as the El Paso Regional Sierra Club  
6 Group. With all due respect, I've -- we have analyzed the  
7 environmental assessment since before it was issued by  
8 TxDOT, we had a draft copy and as a layman -- I'm not an  
9 attorney or an engineer -- in all my 20 years of reviewing  
10 national environmental policy acts, environmental  
11 assessments and EIS I've never seen a more substandard one.  
12 What you've done, Mr. Berry -- let's be honest. It's all  
13 public record -- you've turned a \$17 million road-widening  
14 project into an 85 to \$100 million project with four  
15 bridges and gateways. The gateways aren't any buffer to the  
16 state park, it will actually cause more sprawl. This in  
17 essence is a sprawl-building project. You'll be producing  
18 more congestion, more traffic tie-ups and more sprawl in  
19 the periphery of our city by the current design. So, again,  
20 you've turned a \$17 million road-widening project that was  
21 feasible and logical into an \$85 million project solely to  
22 help about four people, Mr. Panajo, Mr. O'Leary, Mr. Jobe,  
23 who will be supplying the material to all this project with  
24 a 460-acre quarry right next to the periphery of the state  
25 park on the

1 boundaries and right next to Westway. I might add, Mr.  
2 Berry, that's an economically disadvantaged community. A  
3 very much Hispanic -- I'm also an environmental justice  
4 chair of the El Paso Regional Sierra Club in our chapter  
5 and I think there's some disproportional impacts for the  
6 people of Westway and Canutillo for that matter.

7 I really have watched this from the  
8 beginning as being a member of the El Paso -- City of El  
9 Paso Open Space Advisory Board, I'm a member. Again, I'm  
10 speaking for the Sierra Club but in our presentation and  
11 also that we've had for TxDOT and also watching city  
12 council I've never seen more coercion by TxDOT, by some  
13 people -- different people promoting this project saying if  
14 we -- if city council doesn't go along with this, then if  
15 we don't go along with zoning changes and giving up land,  
16 we can lose the money. Well, we should lose the money.

17 MR. BERRY: You have less than a minute,  
18 sir.

19 MR. ADDINGTON: Yes, sir. I'll wind up.  
20 You know, I'll go ahead and wind up my comments right now,  
21 Mr. Berry, because we're going to -- all this technical  
22 information that I would offer, we'll be saving it. We've  
23 hired an attorney -- the Sierra Club has hired an attorney.  
24 The attorney Fred McLaury, Rockwell, Allman in

1 Austin. They're very well versed in MIPA (phonetic) law  
2 and will be reviewing this assessment.

3 Any of you-all -- this is the last thing I'll  
4 say. Anybody that wants to donate -- this is all for the  
5 public record, the comments, of the -- to our legal defense  
6 fund, please contact any member of the Sierra Club or the  
7 executive committee and we will contest what we find wrong  
8 about this project and require -- we hope to see a full  
9 environmental impact statement being required by the  
10 Federal Highway Administration and not just a substandard  
11 environmental assessment. Thank you, Mr. Berry.

12 MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comment.

13 Dan Benuska or Adan Benuska. It looks like  
14 Mr. -- B-E-N- -- or it could be Ms. -- B-E-N-U-S-K-A.  
15 Okay. We'll come back around.

16 Mr. Raul Amaya, followed by a "maybe" by  
17 Antonio -- Mr. Antonio Gonzalez.

18 MR. AMAYA: Good afternoon, everyone. My  
19 name is Raul Amaya. I'm here on behalf of the Franklin  
20 Mountain Wilderness Coalition.

21 First of all, I'd like to say that I love the  
22 Franklin Mountains. I'm a lifelong El Pasoan. I've  
23 climbed all over those mountains since I've been a little  
24 boy. I'm a 60-year-old man now. I've climbed both of the

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1 peaks, the north peak and the south peak. I've seen deer in  
2 the Franklins, foxes, eagles, some friends of mine said they  
3 saw a mountain lion the other day over there on the east  
4 side. It's El Paso's preeminent tourist attraction  
5 and it's just -- it's unbelievable that we might be messing it  
6 up. So my ideal project would be a combination of options 2  
7 and 5 with the following caveats. Yes, we need two more  
8 lanes but eliminate the Paseo Del Norte overpass. Build an  
9 underpass at the entrance to Tom Mays Park and we do not  
10 want the land on either side of Transmountain Road east of  
11 Gasline Road up to the entrance of Tom Mays Park to ever be  
12 sold or developed and it should be designated as natural  
13 open space. Thank you.

14 MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comment.

15 Mr. Gonzalez and then followed by Richard  
16 Bonart. Mr. Gonzalez? Dr. Bonart. Then followed by  
17 Sharon Bonart.

18 MR. BONART: Rick Bonart and I represent the  
19 Borderland Mountain Bike Association.

20 It's been mentioned several times regarding  
21 the safety of the park entrance but what hasn't been  
22 mentioned is as early as 2004 I believe I came to your  
23 office and we had discussed alternate routes, removing the  
24 overpass that you proposed there, but you didn't proceed  
25 with the alternate which was to build a spur road into the

1 park and I would like to see that addressed. Similarly,  
2 about a year ago, we had a meeting with someone from TxDOT  
3 that came out and talked about a proposed wildlife hike and  
4 bike corridor that went under the -- at the culvert to the  
5 entrance of Tom Mays Park and that was not mentioned in the  
6 environmental assessment and I would like to see that  
7 placed in that document. And then where did Plexxar come  
8 from? It's mentioned in the environmental assessment and a  
9 TIA that was done by the city as coming from the northwest  
10 or synonymously the west side master plan; however, that  
11 document does not contain that -- that overpass. The west  
12 side master plan is actually far east of the proposed  
13 Plexxar site. Plexxar is not even in the current city's  
14 MTP.

15           And then one question that I think needs to  
16 be addressed is can open space be spared without any damage  
17 to your project for the financial involvement. And a big  
18 question for me is why were the five options not publicly  
19 vetted? We've only been able to see options 1 and 2. There  
20 hasn't been credence to those.

21           And then somebody also mentioned the AASHTO  
22 standards. On page 807 of your current AASHTO standards,  
23 the distance between the ramps is proposed to be at least  
24 one mile apart and you have not -- you have not met that  
25 standard. And as I addressed before and talked to your

1 people before, what's going to happen to the right-of-way  
2 for bicycles during the construction phase? And when you  
3 build your bike path, how many -- how many times will you  
4 bisect that path between the access roads and the business  
5 that will be along that -- that avenue.

6 MR. BERRY: You have about a minute left,  
7 sir.

8 MR. BONART: Sure. And as far as the indirect  
9 impacts, one of the things that was left out tonight was the  
10 air quality. Well, what -- what parameters did you use to  
11 determine air quality and *why* wasn't that mentioned tonight  
12 and why isn't it -- isn't it completely diagnosed in your  
13 environmental impact statement or your environmental  
14 assessment? And then I'll -- then another thing is, although  
15 I had asked you many times to present some slides, no one  
16 ever got back to me as to why I was not able to do that.

17 MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comments,  
18 sir.

19 Ms. Sharon Bonart followed by Mr. Brent  
20 Sanders.

21 MS. BONART: Good evening. I'm Sharon  
22 Bonart and I'm tall. Okay. Is that okay?

23 Several of the items that I'm concerned about  
24 have already been mentioned. It hasn't been brought

1 up though that there's -- according to the plan that has  
2 been presented there's four overpasses within a three-mile  
3 area. That seems a little excessive. But there's been  
4 several people talking about the unsafe left turn into  
5 Franklin Mountain State Park but no one has mentioned the  
6 unsafe left turn coming out of Franklin Mountain State  
7 Park. So if you're coming out and you're going to make a  
8 left turn or you're going to make a right turn, you know,  
9 it's unsafe. There needs to be a better way of getting in  
10 and out of Franklin Mountain State Park. I understand that  
11 a prior concern -- a prior concept of using an access road  
12 to go into the mountain -- Franklin Mountain State Park has  
13 been understudied but because there are some archeological  
14 factors that that has been shelved or put away.

15           Also, when I viewed your representation that  
16 you made to the city council -- I happen to be a geek and I  
17 like to watch those things -- I noticed that you have a  
18 flyover going from Interstate 10 to 375, but you didn't  
19 show a flyover coming back from 375 to Interstate 10. Maybe  
20 I just didn't see it. The other thing that I noticed, that  
21 the exits for each of the four roads are after the  
22 overpasses for the road. I mean, that doesn't make sense.  
23 You usually get off for a road prior to that road but then  
24 again, you know --

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1                   And also there's no entries on your  
2 presentation going from the west to the east so you can get  
3 off the road, but you can't get on 375. My concern on the  
4 flyover is I go to northeast every day and that set of  
5 flyovers over there has really changed what used to be  
6 somewhat attractive to me, kind of like what you'd see in  
7 Houston. Thank you.

8                   MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comments,  
9 ma'am. Mr. Bret Sanders, followed by Mr. Charlie Wakeem.

10                   MR. SANDERS: Hello. Thank you guys for  
11 giving us the opportunity to talk. I'm Brent Sanders and  
12 I'm from the Borderland Mountain Bike Association. I'm a  
13 fourth-generation El Pasoan. I love El Paso. I find it  
14 interesting that a project that has touted itself on  
15 safety, safety at Plexxar, safety at Paseo Del Norte,  
16 safety at Resler, safety at the I-10 interchange,  
17 completely eliminated safety at the state park entrance. I  
18 find that quite interesting. Whose interests were we  
19 taking into account when we were looking into safety  
20 issues.

21                   I also heard some comments about relieving  
22 congestion. I have lived in El Paso basically my whole  
23 life. The most congested areas I've been in El Paso are  
24 where there are gateways along the freeway. The longest  
25 line that we have in El Paso is the gateway paralleling

1 1-10, Hawkins, Lee Trevino, so why is it building this  
2 gateway going to be relieving traffic and making  
3 Transmountain safer? Those are also the most dangerous  
4 intersections that we have in the city.

5 I worry this project is going to only benefit  
6 a few of the -- a few people in El Paso at the expense of  
7 all of our tax dollars and at the expense of our beautiful  
8 mountains. Those of us against this freeway, as it is being  
9 presented bisecting our beloved mountains, are not trying  
10 to halt development in the city that we all love but rather  
11 we want to preserve our mountains while still encouraging  
12 businesses to locate to this scenic beautiful desirable El  
13 Paso that we all love. We don't want to completely stop  
14 this project. We need a compromise. We need something  
15 that's going to benefit all of El Paso, not just a few El  
16 Pasoans which is the way it's being presented right now.

17 Bike riders don't like to ride on gateways  
18 by the way, guys. That's not something that's desirable  
19 for us. So thanks for thinking of us, but we want real  
20 bike lanes, scenic bike lanes and safe bike lanes. Thank  
21 you guys.

22 MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comments. Next  
23 we have Mr. Charlie Wakeem, followed by Lyda Ness-  
24 Garcia.

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1 MR. WAKEEM: Good evening, Mr. Berry, ladies  
2 and gentlemen. I'm Charlie Wakeem. I live at 741 Somerset  
3 Drive and I also serve as chairman of the Open Space  
4 Advisory Board. And as you know, Mr. Berry, January of 2010,  
5 the Open Space Board first looked at this project. We had a  
6 presentation by TxDOT. There were a couple of developers  
7 there and preliminary it was -- we thought this was a good  
8 project. We didn't have the full plans, we didn't vet it, we  
9 didn't examine it at that time. We were told that it would  
10 come back to us at a later date when it was completed and in  
11 August, quite a bit -- while later it went directly to the  
12 city council, this project, to our surprise because we  
13 didn't get to see the final plans, but it came to us shortly  
14 thereafter. And after examining it we discovered one thing -  
15 - and this is something we didn't choose, I didn't choose  
16 it, Mother Nature did it -- that at Gasline Road, the EPNG  
17 service line road, and you can see this on any topographic  
18 map, the scenic foothills of the Franklin Mountains begin  
19 right there. The El Paso Natural Gas Company picked the  
20 right location to put its gas line and that's in the foot of  
21 the foothills or where it is flatter. Above that they didn't  
22 want to go over hillsides and down arroyos, up and down  
23 steep canyons and arroyos. West of the Gasline Road is  
24 relatively flat and suitable for development and frankly

1 already privately owned. We're fortunate in that most of  
2 the land east of the Gasline Road except for about 100  
3 yards is our land, yours and mine, city land managed by the  
4 Public Service Board. And this is an important scenic  
5 corridor because there are two major hillsides on either  
6 side of the Franklin Mountain -- the Transmountain Road and  
7 a mayor arroyo which you saw in the video. And these,  
8 according to the west side master plan, would be  
9 obliterated and this is why this is so important to us.  
10 Nature picked this, not us, not you. This is Mother Nature.  
11 And the TxDOT plan encourages development by using the  
12 freeway style and running Paseo Del Norte across the scenic  
13 corridor. We propose the widening of Transmountain Road  
14 east of the corridor to be at grade, whether it's four  
15 lanes, six lanes or eight lanes, whatever it takes to  
16 handle the capacity of traffic is necessary.

16 MR. BERRY: If you could wind up. The time is  
17 expiring, please.

18 MR. WAKEEM: Yes, sir. So this is what is  
19 important to us. Of course we had -- we as a board had a  
20 concern about the -- the entrance of the state park, the  
21 left-turn lanes would be dangerous and the wildlife  
22 crossing. The last concern I had as an individual is I've  
23 been hearing 70,000 vehicles per day number in 2025 and

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1 then now it's all of a sudden changed to 30,000 a day.  
2 Let's get our numbers right so we can build the right  
3 roadway. Thank you.

4 MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comment, sir.

5 Ms. Lyda Ness-Garcia sent word that she  
6 would not be speaking. The next speaker is Ms. Jennifer  
7 Barr, followed by Mr. Bob Geyer.

8 MS. BARR: My name is Jennifer Barr and I'm a  
9 mother, a wife, a business owner and usually a devil's  
10 advocate, but when I see a visual impact assessment that  
11 says that there is none expected other than the addition  
12 of trees to the right-of-way, I can't help but be  
13 astonished. I wonder how many people here think the  
14 Transmountain corridor as existing is beautiful?

15 How many people here think the Transmountain  
16 corridor as proposed will be beautiful?

17 Okay. That's aesthetics. I'm not  
18 addressing obviously traffic -- traffic concerns, but I  
19 just wanted to address that visual impact assessment.

20 The landscape plans for this project which I  
21 have seen demonstrate very little regard for the native  
22 flora and fauna of the region and seem not to be designed  
23 by a landscape architect. With such a large-scale project,  
24 it seems TxDOT should require some degree of professional  
25 input on landscaping. Certainly landscape

1 architects are employed by TxDOT, albeit not in this  
2 district, and could design these plans with local input. I  
3 cannot imagine a plan that would scrape the existing  
4 terrain of native Yucca, Ocotillo, Lechuguilla, Creosote  
5 and cacti in favor of plants that have no place on this  
6 roadway such as golden lanimas (phonetic) and lantana.  
7 cannot imagine a plan that would spend money on quarried  
8 rock and weed barrier when native seeding and salvaged  
9 plants could replicate the beauty found in Franklin  
10 Mountain State Park. I cannot imagine what Ladybird  
11 Johnson would have said to see this, our city's most  
12 cherished and beautiful public roadway converted to rock,  
13 concrete and asphalt. Thank you.

14 MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comment,  
15 ma'am. Mr. Bob Geyer, followed by Alan Turnello.

16 MR. GEYER: Bob Geyer. I also represent the  
17 Sierra Club. There's a lot of us around so you'd better  
18 watch out.

19 Anyway. I -- most of what I was here to say  
20 has been said already but the traffic counts that were used  
21 for this, 71,000 trips per day and now it's coming in that  
22 it should have been 31,000, I don't even see how an  
23 environmental assessment could be submitted like that and  
24 much less accepted by Federal Highway Administration and I  
25 would hope that would throw it out right away.

1           The other thing is the entrance to the park,  
2 that's been brought up that why not use a flyunder -- I  
3 think that's the term that's been talked about to go  
4 underground and access the park in a safe manner. And if  
5 you're going to have other elevated intersections and  
6 exits, do the same down there at Northwestern and also at  
7 Resler. And we certainly don't need another Paseo Del Norte  
8 extended or a Plexxar which is not even on the MPO master  
9 plan, as you well know, and so how can it be included in  
10 the environmental assessment? I don't know. Bill spoke  
11 earlier about a \$17 million project they should have stuck  
12 with and just continued the roadway the way it is and yet  
13 we're now at some- -- way up there and of course we all  
14 know that once again developers are controlling this city.  
15 We had a very progressive city council, I felt, such as Ms.  
16 Byrd who I thought we were going to get away from that in  
17 this town, but they've gotten involved and they're  
18 controlling this situation and, you know, we even -- I even  
19 see two Jobe trucks out in the parking lot here outside the  
20 building. They can hardly --

21           MR. BERRY: You have --

22           MR. GEYER: -- they can hardly wait to load p  
23 and start making money for their new quarry out there.  
24 just think it's disgusting that developers are still

1 controlling this town and that we need to make it best --  
2 what's best for everybody. And like Ms. Barr said, how  
3 could the environmental assessment say there's not a  
4 disservice to the aesthetic quality we see when we look at  
5 the mountain. It's just a sad situation. Thank you.

6 MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comments,  
7 sir. Mr. Alex Turnello, followed by a "maybe" from  
8 Katherine Brennard.

9 MR. TURNELLO: Hi. My name is Alan Turnello  
10 and I'm here representing myself and every other person in  
11 El Paso that is a child at heart. Kids love the mountains,  
12 we need the mountains. I've got a brochure here that the  
13 city of El Paso did a very good job putting together.

14 It's the visitor's convention and tourist  
15 pamphlet. All it talks about is the beauty of El Paso.

16 MR. BERRY: Try and use the microphone.

17 MR. TURNELLO: Where is the beauty of El Paso  
18 that they talk about in this brochure if we're turning  
19 Transmountain into a freeway? Nobody likes to ride  
20 mountain bikes on cement. That is not mountain biking.  
21 Nobody likes to go down to the river and see the river  
22 empty but that's the way it is. Sometimes you have to have  
23 water in the river, the rest of the time it's being used  
24 for irrigation. Nobody likes to see the river empty, I  
25 doubt anyone would like to see Transmountain

1 loaded with cars, 18-wheelers and stuff that doesn't need  
2 to be on that road. Frankly, I don't think it takes a  
3 genius to see why the gravel pit is being opened up out  
4 there. Also, it's not a mystery as to why Santa Teresa is  
5 trying to get the module plan built out there. I think it's  
6 just a grand scheme of being able to allow all that traffic  
7 off the corridor to come into El Paso and out of El Paso.  
8 None of that traffic is staying here, it's going through El  
9 Paso. Thank you.

10 MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comment, sir.

11 I apologize. I think it's -- Katherine is  
12 the first name and the last name is Brennard, I believe.  
13 Katherine Brennard. Is that right? Brennard. Brennan.  
14 Katherine Brennan. Maybe not.

15 Mr. Larry Nance signed up to speak, followed  
16 by Robert Ardovino.

17 Mr. Nance? Mr. Robert Ardovino, followed by  
18 Mr. Roy Gilyard.

19 MR. ARDOVINO: Good evening and thank you  
20 for having this presentation.

21 I'm very concerned about very -- about many  
22 parts of this proposed freeway project up through the  
23 Transmountain corridor. The state park is one of our best  
24 assets in this city. As we know tourism is something that  
25 El Paso needs and camping up there is a really special

1 thing to do with kids. And I understand it's a dangerous  
2 road as it is, but I don't see how this helps alleviate  
3 the danger. When you camp up there you -- you enjoy  
4 everything there is to enjoy about El Paso and the  
5 mountains. Building a freeway through this will not help  
6 that situation. I think the project as it's proposed is  
7 an antiquated way to develop and design roadways. I wish  
8 that TxDOT would use smart growth principles like the  
9 people in this city want to see you-all do for this road.  
10 I'm not encouraged that the design to the entrance to the  
11 state park is at all safer even with the traffic we have  
12 now or the traffic that's proposed to come. I'm also not  
13 encouraged and would encourage TxDOT to reinvestigate the  
14 location of the wildlife crossing. It seems to me like the  
15 wildlife is up in the mountains and needs to cross the road  
16 close to up the mountains, not where the proposed  
17 development is. I do not believe we need to have  
18 development occur above the foothills of this road, like  
19 Mr. Wakeem said, above Gasline road. They chose the best  
20 path to put that in because it was the most obvious and I  
21 don't think we need development above that road. That's  
22 where the beauty starts and that's where the freeway should  
23 end. Thank you very much.

24 MR. BERRY: Thank you very much for your  
25 comment. Mr. Roy Gilyard. I think that's the last

1 speaker that I have that signed up.

2 MR. GILYARD: Thanks, Chuck, for letting me  
3 be the last speaker. I hope --

4 MR. BERRY: Your name and --

5 MR. GILYARD: I'm Roy Gilyard. I'm the  
6 executive director of the El Paso Metropolitan Planning  
7 Organization --

8 MR. BERRY: Thank you.

9 MR. GILYARD: -- also known as the MPO which  
10 is responsible for developing regional long-range  
11 transportation plans. I have a policy board, some of the  
12 members are here tonight. I just want to go on the record  
13 as stating that the policy board supports this project as  
14 well as completing the entire loop. That is the MPO's  
15 number one priority project.

16 The MPO is a regional transportation agency.  
17 We have to look regionally and not at a project by project.  
18 We have a regional transportation system that's over 1,200  
19 square miles. We live in a community -- in an international  
20 community that by 2035 will have 3.2 million people in it,  
21 that's including Juarez, El Paso and Southern New Mexico. I  
22 want all of you to just stop for a second and -- and think  
23 where you were at in August of 2006 when the worst flood  
24 that hit El Paso since 1912. How did you get home from work  
25 that day? Interstate 10,

1 closed. You had no alternative route to take. This is about  
2 -- this is about building a multi-mobile transportation  
3 system that gives you alternative routes whether there's a  
4 flood -- maybe it won't be a flood the next time but every  
5 day out there on the freeway there are wrecks, there are  
6 18-wheelers that are turned over, there's automobiles that  
7 roll over. How do you get from one side of this city to the  
8 other in an east-west direction? You only have, on the west  
9 side of town, Mesa, you have I-10, portions of Paisano.

10 That's it. And so as  
11 long as this community continues to grow, and it will, I  
12 don't think city council or anyone else is going to stop  
13 issuing building permits, then you're going to have to  
14 continue to expand your transportation system. This segment  
15 of Transmountain Road is a very important vital link to a  
16 much bigger transportation system that we have to design  
17 today so that we can stay ahead and not wait 25 years from  
18 now and ask, "Why didn't they do the planning back in 2011  
19 for our needs?"

20 MR. BERRY: You have less than a minute,  
21 sir.

22 MR. GILYARD: It will be too late. Thank  
23 you.

24 MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comment, Mr.  
25 Gilyard.

1                   Anyone else that would like to come forward  
2 to make a comment or sign up to make a comment? Rearing  
3 none --

4                   MS. ESCOBAR: May I?

5                   MR. BERRY: Yes, ma'am.

6                   MS. ESCOBAR: Thank you, Mr. Berry. It's  
7 great to see --

8                   MR. BERRY: *Your* name, please, ma'am, for  
9 the record.

10                   MS. ESCOBAR: Veronica Escobar, El Paso  
11 County judge.

12                   It's great to see so many active citizens,  
13 concerned community members here -- and I'll be documenting  
14 my comments in a letter to TxDOT and to the city council,  
15 but I think it's important to speak publicly as well as  
16 documenting my comments. I absolutely support the need for  
17 modern transportation infrastructure. I think you know I  
18 serve on the toll committee and we've done a lot of hard  
19 work thinking through the future and future transportation  
20 projects and there is definitely a need for investment in  
21 transportation infrastructure. However, many people have  
22 said today you cannot rebuild the mountains, you cannot  
23 recreate something once it's been destroyed and so it's  
24 very important that we offer thoughtful consideration to  
25 the way that these plans are

1 drafted. I'm very supportive of the added infrastructure. I  
2 am not supportive and I'm very opposed to the final  
3 overpass, the Paseo Del Norte, for innumerable reasons  
4 which I'll document and provide to the public and to you  
5 all. And I may not have all the information that city  
6 council has and I'm in the process of trying to get as much  
7 of it as possible, but I do think that that last overpass,  
8 what it will do is essentially incentivize development in  
9 an area that should be preserved as natural open space. And  
10 I think it's important for the city council to preserve  
11 those -- that acreage as natural open space. I think it's  
12 important for city council members who voted against the  
13 natural open space to reconsider their vote. But I thank  
14 you all for your work, I thank the public for being here  
15 and I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

16 MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comment,  
17 ma'am.

18 I do have one more person signed up.  
19 Mr. Richard Armijo signed up to speak. I believe you're  
20 the last one that I have signed up.

21 MR. ARMIJO: Thank you, Mr. Berry.

22 My name's Richard Armijo. I'm a native El  
23 Pasoan, born and raised. I love the mountains and I love  
24 El Paso. I'm also a person that lives in El Paso and uses  
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all the facilities that are available and I'm one of the people here that drives Transmountain every day.

This project is long overdue. I'm glad they're doing it because it's going to improve safety for people that do have to use Transmountain in their daily commute. There have been issues that I've seen where people have been hurt or injured, both drivers in vehicles and people walking on the side of the road or biking so I think that some of the things I've seen here will address that. I realize there may be some modifications necessary to -- to the design and I'm sure that they're going to work through that but what I see from TxDOT is -- actually, I'm pretty impressed. I think this will end up improving, you know, traffic flow for people that have to use it and I -- the only thing I don't see -- once again as one other person mentioned it -- was a flyover that would tie in from Transmountain onto -- going north into Las Cruces.

El Paso is growing. You know, we'd all like to keep a small, little town image, but, you know, we're having to deal with the people that are moving here that love the town too. I'm hoping that I see this come to pass in the near future where people will be able to use the road efficiently. I don't think it's going to affect the view of the mountain. I see more damage from these

1 warehouses right here along the freeway than from a short  
2 little corridor of three miles going up that way. So once  
3 again, I support the project. Thank you.

4 MR. BERRY: Thank you for your comment.

5 Is there anyone else that would like to sign  
6 up to speak. Hearing none --

7 I'd like to conclude the public hearing and  
8 then we can address questions. Thank you for your  
9 understanding.

10 If you would like to submit your comments in  
11 writing, you may do so by completing a comment card and  
12 either submitting it tonight in one of our comment boxes or  
13 by mail at a later time. Please note if you choose to mail  
14 or e-mail your comments at a later date, they must be  
15 postmarked no later than April 1, 2011, to be included in  
16 the public record. Written comments may be mailed to Tony  
17 Gelacio -- the name spelled up on the slide -- P.E.,  
18 project engineer, 16360 Park Ten Place, Suite 230, Houston,  
19 Texas, 77084 or e-mailed to [elp\\_loop375west@txdot.gov](mailto:elp_loop375west@txdot.gov). As a  
20 reminder, the deadline for written comments is April 1st,  
21 2011.

22 All of your statements, comments and  
23 questions will be given careful consideration before final  
24 design features are determined. All information developed  
25 in regard to the proposed project is available for public

1 inspection and copying at the TxDOT El Paso District Office  
2 at the address shown on the slide. If there are no further  
3 speakers, we will close this public hearing. I  
4 would like to thank Principal Hurd and his staff and you  
5 for participating in the process. It is 9:00 p.m. and the  
6 hearing is now adjourned. Thank you very much for  
7 attending.

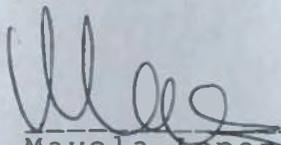
8 (Hearing concluded at 9:00 p.m.)  
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CERTIFICATE

1  
2 THE STATE OF TEXAS )  
3 )  
4 COUNTY OF EL PASO )  
5

6 I, Mayela Lopez, a Certified Shorthand Reporter  
7 in and for the State of Texas, do hereby certify that this  
8 transcript is a true record of the proceedings, and that  
9 said transcription is done to the best of my ability.  
10

11 Given under my hand and seal of office on this  
12 25th day of March, 2011.  
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16 \_\_\_\_\_  
17 Mayela Lopez, Texas CSR 8259  
18 Firm Registration No. 384  
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21 My Commission Expires: 12/31/12  
22  
23  
24  
25