



US 59 Diboll Relief Route (Future I-69)

Angelina County Open House Summary and Comment Response Report

March 3, 2015

Texas Department of Transportation, Lufkin District

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated December 16, 2014, and executed by FHWA and TxDOT.

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Open House Summary

An Open House was held by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to gather input regarding the US 59 Diboll Relief Route (Future I-69) in Angelina County. The purpose of the Open House was to: display and gather public feedback on updates to the US 59 Diboll Relief Route schematic; inform the public on where the US 59 Diboll Relief Route is in the project development process; and provide information regarding how the US 59 Diboll Relief Route may become Future I-69. The meeting was held on Thursday, Jan. 22, 2015 from 4-7 p.m. at the Diboll Civic Center, 601 Dennis Street, Diboll, Texas. The meeting utilized a come-and-go format which allowed citizens to review project materials and maps as well as speak to TxDOT and consultant staff on a one-on-one basis.

Project Description

In the late 1990's, TxDOT completed the environmental process and had approved schematic design plans for the Diboll Relief Route. The project consisted of a new location freeway on the east side of Diboll. The right-of-way acquisition process was begun, but was stopped due to funding limitations. In 2013, TxDOT and the I-69 Angelina and Nacogdoches Counties Committee performed a robust public outreach process to inform local citizens of the alignment options for I-69 in their counties and to solicit comments and input. They also provided recommendations on route locations, improvements and upgrades to meet Interstate standards and identify priority areas within their prospective counties. This effort resulted in the Diboll Relief Route being identified as the highest priority project in Angelina County. The originally approved design for the Diboll Relief Route is now being modified to account for changes in in the project area, changes in environmental rules, and current interstate design criteria. TxDOT decided additional public involvement is prudent to provide an opportunity for the public to comment on the updated design as well as give an update on the progress of the project.

The Open House and comment period provided an opportunity for interested citizens to review the proposed updates and provide feedback and input.

Open House Information

Display Advertisements

Display advertisements were published in *The Lufkin News* on Jan. 4, 2015, and in the *Diboll Free Press* on Jan. 8, 2015. A display advertisement was also published in Spanish in *La Lengua* on Jan. 7, 2015. Copies of the tear sheets and affidavits are included in **Attachment A**.

Additional Notification/Outreach Efforts

Various methods were used to provide notice to the public other than display advertisements in area newspapers. Copies of the notices and outreach methods are in included in **Attachment B**.

- **Postcard Mailing**

Postcard advertisements were sent to approximately 1880 addresses from the Angelina County Appraisal District listing of property owners in the project study area. The postcards were in English and Spanish and included the location and date and time of the Open House, as well as the project website. The postcard is included in **Attachment B**.

- **Water Bill Notice**
 The Open House information was included in the Dec. 23, 2014 water bills for the City of Diboll. The time, date and location information was provided under the “Special Message” section of the water bill. Approximately 1400 residents received the water bill. A copy of the water bill with the notification added is included in **Attachment B**.
- **Flyer**
 Flyers were distributed around the City of Diboll at various locations the week of Jan. 5, 2015. The flyer and the list of locations are included in **Attachment B**.
- **Letters and Emails**
 Letters and fact sheets were sent to local elected officials and local leaders within the project study area, advising them of the upcoming Open House. These letters were mailed on Dec. 29, 2014. Letters and fact sheets were also mailed to 105 adjacent property owners on Dec. 30, 2014.

 TxDOT also sent an email invitation on Jan. 8, 2015 to Angelina County representatives from the I-69 Angelina and Nacogdoches Counties Committee to invite them to attend the meeting.

 Copies of both letters and the email to the Angelina County Committee Members are included in **Attachment B**.
- **Website and Social Media Information**
 Both the TxDOT and the City of Diboll websites advertised the Open House. The websites included information on the date, time, location and purpose. The Open House was also promoted through the TxDOT Twitter and Facebook accounts. Screenshots of the websites and social media messages are included in **Attachment B**.
- **Media Advisory/News Release**
 A media advisory was distributed to local media on Jan. 13, 2015. On Jan. 14, 2015, a news release was also distributed to local media sources. Both included information about the project and the Open House details and are included in **Attachment B**.
- **Electronic Changeable Message Signs**
 TxDOT’s roadside electronic changeable message signs were placed on both the north and south bound sides of US 59 from Jan. 14-22, 2015. The changeable messages signs advertised the open house date, time and location. In addition, the Civic Center posted the Open House information on their electronic message board from Jan. 16-22, 2015 and the City of Diboll also posted information on their marquee from Jan. 8-22, 2015. Pictures of the TxDOT message sign are included in **Attachment B**.

Members of the public who attended the Open House were asked to select the method of notification they received on how they heard about the meeting on the sign-in sheets. It is important to note that some attendees did not select a notification option and others selected more than one option.

Table 1: Open House Notification Results

Method of Notification	Results
Community Flyer	4
Friend	10
Newspaper	41
Other	8
Postcard / Letter	91
Road Sign	26
Television	6

Media Coverage

Preceding and following the Open House, several media sources included stories of the meeting. Copies of this coverage are included in **Attachment C**.

Open House Format

The Open House utilized a come-and-go format allowing the public to review proposed project exhibits and discuss the study process with project staff.

Eight informational boards were displayed around the room for public viewing. The boards included: Welcome Board; Interstate Designation Status – Texas; I-69 System Status by State; Open House Purpose; Project Map; Purpose and Need; Interstate Designation Process; and US 59 Diboll Relief Route (Future I-69) Progress Update. In addition to the informational boards, there were two sets of schematics to show the US 59 Diboll Relief Route as currently proposed.

Tables were arranged in the middle of the room so attendees could have a place to fill out comment forms. Several boxes were available on the tables for attendees to leave their completed comment forms. Two computers were also set up where the public was invited to provide electronic comments. A court reporter was also available to transcribe verbal comments.

The informational boards and project schematics are included in **Attachment D**. Photographs of the Open House are available in **Attachment E**.

Registration and Handouts

Upon arrival at the Open House, attendees were asked to sign in and were offered a set of handouts which included a double-sided project fact sheet and a comment form. The Open House handout materials are available in **Attachment F**.

Attendance

A total of 261 people signed in at the Open House. Six elected officials were in attendance, representing Angelina County, the City of Burke and the City of Diboll. Sign-in sheets for the Open House are included as **Attachment G**.

Public Comments

The public was invited to submit comments on the project. Open House attendees had the option of leaving their completed comment forms in drop boxes provided at the meeting, using one of two computers set up at the meeting for an online comment, or submitting a verbal comment to a transcriber.

Comments were also accepted by mail, email and fax. Written comments were accepted if they were mailed (postmarked) by Feb. 2, 2015 to Kelly Morris, P.E., Texas Department of Transportation, 1805 North Timberland Drive, Lufkin, Texas, 75901; emailed to Kelly.morris@txdot.gov; or submitted online at www.txdot.gov/drivenbytexas/us59-angelina-nacogdoches.htm.

The submitted comment forms are available in **Attachment H**. A complete copy of the transcript of the verbal comments is included in **Attachment I**.

A total of 11 comment forms were filled out and left at the open house. Five citizens left verbal comments with the transcriber regarding the project.

In addition to the formal comments on the project, staff interacted with a number of open house attendees who verbally expressed their interests and concerns with the project. Several concerns were communicated to staff verbally including (summarized by staff following the Open House):

- Connect existing FM 2108 to the Old Diboll Highway
- Request to shift channel easement to the north to lessen impact to a specific personal property
- Access concerns
 - Emergency vehicles at FM 1818 and Mockingbird and FM 1818 and Lumberjack
 - Truck traffic on John Means Road
 - Old Diboll Highway – consider opening Easy Street and John Means Road
 - Tidwell Road
 - Existing businesses
 - Personal property
 - Distance between interchanges
 - Add emergency vehicle only access points
 - Eliminate controlled access break proposed on the north side of FM 1818 along ramps
- Schedule questions
- Drainage concerns with substructure
- Mailing list change
- Movement within right-of-way not allowed for a trailer due to city ordinances

Staff is investigating and considering each of the concerns that were discussed with open house participants and will evaluate and modify plans as needed. Some concepts will be addressed later in the project development process but are now noted in the project record. A summary of

the formally submitted comments and the feedback/input shared by the public follows in the Comment Summary and Response Report.

Comment Summary and Response Report

A total of 16 formal comments were submitted providing feedback to TxDOT on the US 59 Diboll Relief Route (Future I-69). Below are the feedback/input received from the comment forms submitted at the Open House and by mail, the verbal comments submitted at the Open House, and emails sent to TxDOT during the comment period. Each comment was read and summarized into one of eight general subcategories: Access/Traffic (access to businesses and the city and traffic impacts); Cost/Schedule (cost and schedule of the project); Economic Development/Business Related (economic and direct business impacts as related to the options available); Map Comments (comments and questions directed toward the maps used during the Open House); Personal Property (residential impacts to private properties and communities); Potential Impacts/Environmental (environmental impacts that may need to be addressed during the environmental evaluation of the project); Project Location (specific requests regarding the location of the facility); and Other/General (miscellaneous comments that do not follow any of the previous subcategories but make a general statement regarding the commenters thoughts on the project). Please note, for similar comments, a number is out to the side of those comments in (# comments) to denote how many commenters made that same comment. Verbatim comments and responses are provided below in **Table 2**.

OPEN HOUSE COMMENT FORM SUMMARY (11 FORMS)

ACCESS/TRAFFIC

- Traffic on US 59 in South Meadows is congested
- Concern for loss of access to properties that currently have access to US 59 in Burke (specifically the northwest side of US 59)

COST/SCHEDULE

- Expedite funding to support the economies of Lufkin, Burke and Diboll

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/BUSINESS RELATED

- Concern about the lack of right-of-way for property owners adjacent to the proposed route that would possibly diminish economic development

MAP COMMENTS

- On map 4 of 5, what does save and expect mean on the plot next to the Charlotte Morris plot

PERSONAL PROPERTY CONCERNS

- No buffer between I-69 and a subdivision on County Road 252
- Possibility of commercial businesses backing up to homes

POTENTIAL IMPACTS/ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

- Noise concerns

PROJECT LOCATION

- Extend FM 2108 (Airport Road) to HWY 35 (Old Diboll Highway) (four comments - various reasons noted including: local traffic relief; safety; shorter distance; crosses trucking company land)
- Prefers the project to be further east
- Suggestion to bypass the red light in Lufkin for the section that the Interstate stops at in Burke to alleviate congestion

OTHER/GENERAL

- Supports the project (two comments)
- Interested when land acquisitions and right-of-way purchases will occur
- I-69/US 59 needs more than two lanes in each direction – recommend three or four in each direction

OPEN HOUSE TRANSCRIPT COMMENTS

ACCESS/TRAFFIC

- Loaded with trucks and traffic in Lufkin now and more traffic will use the new route

COST/SCHEDULE

- Start building; no more meetings

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/BUSINESS RELEATED

- Told there will be no economic development to the city

PERSONAL PROPERTY CONCERNS

- Question on access to property with new route
- Haven't been able to sell property since 2000 because TxDOT appraised it in 1992

POTENTIAL IMPACTS/ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

- Question on if a buffer will be put in between I-69 and existing homes
- Concern about commercial development coming in behind residential

PROJECT LOCATION

- Believes will be unable to build the project so close to the railroad (Georgia Pacific) right-of-way
- Prefers the project to be farther east

Table 2: Comment Summary and Response

First Name	Last Name	Date Received	Method Received	Comment (verbatim)	Response
	Anon	1/22/15	Verbal Comment	That man over there has a house on 59 down by the Georgia Pacific corridor. I don't believe they will be able to take that railroad right-of-way. They come along there about where the dealership is. Georgia Pacific is just past that on the other side. The main line goes not over a block - be a long block, but on 59. The railroad right-of-way is about one good city block. According to the map, it is going to be right along the railroad track. I don't believe they will put the highway that close to the railroad in case something happens.	Thank you for your comment. The proposed Relief Route is designed to meet roadway and railroad offset requirements.
Jesse	Bradford	1/22/15	Comment Form	I live on CR 252 (Brookwood Drive). Proposed I 69 is within 1/4 mile of the end of our subdivision. I would prefer that it be further E. There is no buffer between the end of our road and proposed I 69. Traffic noise would be bad plus the possibility of commercial business backing right up to the homes on that end of Brookwood.	<p>Thank you for your comment. The relief route alignment was developed to minimize overall impacts. The proposed right-of-way for the project is 2,100 feet from the end of Brookwood Drive.</p> <p>A Traffic Noise Analysis was performed for the proposed relief route in the Environmental Assessment. Noise levels were determined for homes adjacent to the proposed relief route and they did not exceed levels that would create a noise impact in the area of Brookwood Drive.</p> <p>Frontage roads are not proposed along this portion of the Relief Route; preventing commercial development along the Relief Route that would back up to Brookwood Drive.</p>
	Brandon	1/22/15	Verbal Comment	This is Brookwood Drive. It is County 252, as it is shown here. There is houses that come all the way to the end of it. It is a dead end road. It shows it to be a quarter of a mile or less from these houses to the proposed I69. It's got a buffer in here. And that's back toward 59. We got a buffer which blocks a bunch of it. But where my house is, it kind of pretty much is probably open back to where it is going to be. And I didn't know if there would be any buffer put in. I would rather see it moved a little further east to make it	<p>Thank you for your comment. The relief route alignment was developed to minimize overall impacts. The proposed right-of-way for the project is 2,100 feet from the end of Brookwood Drive.</p> <p>A Traffic Noise Analysis was performed for the proposed relief route in the Environmental Assessment. Noise levels were determined for homes adjacent to the proposed relief route and</p>

First Name	Last Name	Date Received	Method Received	Comment (verbatim)	Response
				more at the end of the subdivision. But the other thing is, is there any possibility there is going to be any type of where the little spot up anywhere up there that might be a truck stop, et cetera, commercial land, that would come right up to the subdivision? That's what I was wondering. Nobody can answer that. But that's one of those deals. All right.	they did not exceed levels that would create a noise impact in the area of Brookwood Drive. Frontage roads are not proposed along this portion of the Relief Route; preventing commercial development along the Relief Route that would back up to Brookwood Drive.
Erynn	Garcia	1/22/15	Comment Form	I think it's a good idea but the section that it stops at in Burke is going to have congestion because of the red light there in Lufkin. They need to by pass all of that.	Thank you for your comment. The congestion at the signal light outside Lufkin (at FM 819) will be considered with future projects.
Isabel	Hardy	1/22/15	Comment Form	I have wanted to have a by-pass around Diboll since I moved here in 1980. I live in S. Meadows and it was difficult to get out on Fridays onto 59, now it is difficult most of the time.	Thank you for your comment.
	Johnson	1/22/15	Verbal Comment	I have got the property there. Basically the part they are going to take is the right-of-way into our property. And I assumed that they would take my access to our property. I assume they will set us up another access to our property, because this is our access that they are going to take. That was the question, because that is the access basically to our property. We have two others, which are easements. I don't know if at some later time if they could be shout out or not. That is our only access that can't possibly be tampered with and they are going to take that. I assume. Like I say, I hope that they'll give us another way to get some kind of access to our property. That's my question. And I don't guess where our property is there is not going to be any way to get off at our property. Later on. In time there would be access off the interstate into the area. Do we just have to go down and come back through another channel? Well, that's all.	Control of Access will be modified to maintain access to mockingbird from this parcel. Access to the interstate from this parcel or Mockingbird will not be provided.
John	Jones	1/22/15	Comment Form	Extend FM2108 (north Burke) to Old Diboll Hwy for local relief.	Thank you for your comment. This concept will be evaluated.
Linda	Jones	1/22/15	Comment Form	Please extend 2108 across 59 on to intersect with the Old Diboll Highway. This road is frequently used by the local folks and the extension would improve safety in that area.	Thank you for your comment. This concept will be evaluated.

First Name	Last Name	Date Received	Method Received	Comment (verbatim)	Response
Robert	Jones	1/22/15	Comment Form	Could 2108 Airport Road be extended over to Old Hwy 35 (Old Diboll Highway) for relief for traffic into Burke without the traffic turning toward Diboll and entering the US 59 Road? It would only cross the trucking company land a short distance.	Thank you for your comment. This concept will be evaluated.
	Loomer	1/22/15	Verbal Comment	Why don't they start building? Instead of having these meetings and changing everybody's mind and getting everybody upset, somebody just needs to designate the thing and start building it. This thing started in '92. They did out on 69 east in Lufkin. In '92 they started surveying with a helicopter and been having meeting ever since. I own property. I'm ready to sell property and haven't been able to sell property since 2000, because they surveyed my place and appraised it in '92. They need to just do it.	Thank you for your comment. As of this time, funding for the construction has not been identified. Once funding is identified and construction begins, it will take approximately 2 - 3 years to complete.
M.P.	McCracken	1/22/15	Comment Form	Project looks good - expedite funding to support the Lufkin/Burke/Diboll economy. I urge you to extend FM 2108 to connect with Old Diboll Highway. This will make safer entrance to US 59 North.	Thank you for your comment. The FM 2108 extension to Old Diboll Highway will be evaluated.
Charlotte	Morris-Carter	1/22/15	Comment Form	Map 4 of 5 - What does 'save & expect' mean on the plot next to the Charlotte Morris plot	Thank you for your comment. This should have been labeled "Charlotte Morris".
Travis	Thornhill	1/22/15	Comment Form	I am a home owner on Morris Rd. in Burke. My home & property are right on the creek located between both entrances to Porter Loop. I am very much in favor of this project and am very interested in when land acquisitions & purchases will take place. Thank you.	Thank you for your comment. TxDOT can resume right-of-way acquisitions that were approved by the 1999 FONSI. In areas where the right-of-way has changed since the original approved schematic, TxDOT will not be able to make purchases until reevaluation of the environmental document is complete.
	Turner	1/22/15	Verbal Comment	First they wanted to put it off for economic development. And the last three rounds they told us to pick there will be no economic development to the city. It will come right in the middle of town. We are loaded with trucks and traffic now from Lufkin and they are going to put some more traffic on it.	Thank you for your comment. The project intends to reduce overall congestion and heavy truck traffic through town, through the use of the relief route.
Mike	Waters	1/22/15	Comment Form	1) Concern in regards to adequate access to properties currently which have access from Hwy 59 - that will be lost in Burke area. Specifically churches and residents or the northwest side of current Hwy 59. 2) Concern about lack of right of way for property owners adjacent	Thank you for your comment. The need for the project includes: accident rates along US 59 in Diboll exceed the statewide average; congestion and travel delay due to heavy truck traffic and high traffic volumes; decreased mobility due to

First Name	Last Name	Date Received	Method Received	Comment (verbatim)	Response
				to proposed route that would possibly diminish economic development along the route.	<p>signalized intersections and lack of access control; and US 59 is designated for contra flow traffic from coastal areas during emergency evacuations. TxDOT's purpose for the project includes: increase safety by providing a controlled access relief route for US 59; reduce congestion and travel delay by providing and alternate route for heavy truck traffic; improve mobility by providing a controlled access facility; and provide a more efficient alternate route during contra flow and emergency evacuation conditions.</p> <p>The agency is currently evaluating access management options for the project.</p>
Peggy	Wilkins	1/22/15	Comment Form	I-69/US 59 between Houston & Lufkin needs more than 2 lanes each way - 3-4 lanes are needed as the 2 lanes at present are already loaded all the time as I make this trip for 30+ years	Thank you for your comment. The number of lanes proposed with the Diboll Relief Route has been determined through traffic studies to provide the required capacity. As future projects between Lufkin and Houston are developed traffic studies will be conducted to determine an appropriate number of lanes.