



**Notice
Draft Environmental Assessment and Virtual Public Hearing
with In-Person Option
US 79
From I-35 to east of FM 1460 (A.W. Grimes)
CSJs: 0204-01-063
Williamson County, Texas**

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is proposing to improve and widen US 79 from I-35 to east of FM 1460 in Williamson County, Texas. This notice advises the public that a draft environmental assessment (EA) is available for public review and that TxDOT will be conducting a virtual public hearing on the proposed project with an in-person option. **The virtual hearing will begin on Dec. 4, 2020 at 10 a.m.** To log onto the virtual public hearing, go to the following web address at the date and time indicated above: www.txdot.gov. In the upper right-hand search box enter the search keywords: "US 79". Project staff will give a presentation which will be a pre-recorded video and will include both audio and visual components. Please note that the presentation will not be available on the website until the time and date listed above. Following the virtual public hearing, the presentation will remain available for viewing at the web address indicated above until Dec. 21, 2020 at 11:59 p.m. If you do not have internet access, you may call (512) 865-7945 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, to ask questions and access project materials during the project development process.

Additionally, TxDOT is providing an in-person option for individuals who would like to participate in-person instead of online. In-person attendees will be able to view the same presentation delivered in the online public hearing which will be playing on a screen, review hard copies of project materials, ask questions of TxDOT staff and/or consultants from a socially distanced approach, and leave written comments. **The in-person option will be held on Dec. 4, 2020 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at TxDOT Georgetown Area Office & Maintenance Facility, 2727 S. Austin Ave., Georgetown, Texas 78626.** Attendance at the in-person option will be by appointment only. Individuals wishing to attend the in-person option must call Patricia Kelly at (512) 659-3230 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, to make an appointment. In recognition of COVID-19, enhanced safety measures will be applied at the in-person option, including a requirement to wear a face mask, submit to a temperature check prior to entry, have an appointment, and follow social distancing practices. If anyone arrives without an appointment, they may be asked to wait outside to ensure we maintain appropriate occupancy within the hearing room.

For both the virtual public hearing and in-person option, members of the public may call (512) 647-1064 to provide verbal testimony immediately following the conclusion of the virtual public hearing presentation at 10 a.m. on Dec. 4, 2020 through 11:59 pm on Dec. 21, 2020. Formal written comments may also be provided by mail or email as explained below. All verbally provided testimony and timely written comments will be considered by TxDOT and included as part of the official record. Responses to verbally provided testimony and comments will be prepared by TxDOT, included as part of the hearing and project record, and made available online at www.txdot.gov, keyword search "US 79."

The proposed improvements include widening the existing US 79 highway to include a third travel lane in each direction and installing a raised median for safety. Improvements to intersections would include constructing an underpass at US 79/Mays Street, an overpass at US 79/FM 1460 and reconfiguring the US 79/I-35 intersection. Driveways and access points would be modified to improve safety and traffic flow. The proposed improvements also include installing shared-use paths on both sides of US 79 to improve pedestrian and bicycle accommodations.

The length of the proposed project is approximately 2.5 miles and would require approximately 10.2 acres of additional right of way. The proposed project would not displace any residential properties, but would potentially require 17 commercial displacements and two other displacements (a place of worship and a job help center). Relocation assistance is available for displaced persons and businesses. Information about the TxDOT Relocation Assistance Program, benefits and services for displacees, as well as information about the tentative schedules for right-of-way acquisition and construction can be obtained from the TxDOT district office at the address listed below.

The project has no impacts for wetlands or sole-source aquifers. The project would involve an action in a floodplain. The project area crosses the mapped 100-year Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) floodplains associated with Onion Branch. The proposed project would not increase the base flood elevation to a level that would violate applicable floodplain regulations and ordinances. The proposed project would have no adverse effect on historic properties. In accordance with 36 CFR § 800.2(d), there will be an opportunity for the public to review and comment on effects to historic properties at the hearing. The project would require right-of-way acquisition from three properties that are either listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places: the Texas Baptist Children's Home, the Henna House, and the Merrell House. At each site, the acquisition of new right of way constitutes a de minimis use of a historic site under the U.S. Department of Transportation Act Section 4(f) regulations (23 CFR 774).

The draft EA, any maps and drawings showing the project location and design, tentative construction schedules, and other information regarding the proposed project are available online at www.txdot.gov, keyword search "US 79." These materials will also be available in hard copy form for review at the in-person option.

The virtual public hearing and in-person option will be conducted in English. If you need an interpreter or document translator because English is not your primary language or you have difficulty communicating effectively in English, one will be provided to you. If you have a disability and need assistance, special arrangements can be made to accommodate most needs. If you need interpretation or translation services or you are a person with a disability who requires an accommodation to attend and participate in the virtual public hearing or in-person option, please contact Patricia Kelly at (512) 659-3230 or at patricia@nancyledbetter.com no later than 4 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2020. Please be aware that advance notice is required as some services and accommodations may require time for the Texas Department of Transportation to arrange.

Written comments from the public regarding the proposed project are requested and may be submitted by mail to Matthew Cho, P.E., Project Manager, TxDOT Austin District Office, P.O. Box 15426, Austin, Texas 78761-5426. Written comments may also be submitted by email to Matthew.Cho@txdot.gov. Additionally, as stated above, members of the public may call (512) 647-1064 and verbally provide testimony. All comments must be received on or before Dec. 21, 2020. Responses to written comments received and public testimony provided will be available online at www.txdot.gov, keyword search "US 79" once they have been prepared. If you have any general questions or concerns regarding the proposed project or virtual hearing or in-person option, please contact Matthew Cho, P.E., TxDOT Project Manager for US 79 at (512) 865-7945 or by email at Matthew.Cho@txdot.gov.

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 9, 2019, and executed by FHWA and TxDOT.