



Bradley Wheelis, Public Hearing Officer

SLIDE 1 – Welcome Slide

Welcome to the Virtual Public Hearing for the TxDOT Austin District’s US 79 Improvement Project. TxDOT is proposing to expand US 79 from I-35 to east of FM 1460 in Williamson County.

Virtual Public Hearing Option in Response to Public Health



In response to COVID-19, TxDOT has added an online public hearing option in addition the in-person public hearing offered by appointment only on Dec. 4, 2020.

This virtual public hearing and the TxDOT website provide the same information as an in-person hearing:

- Project information
- Estimated timeline
- Process for submitting comments
- Key contacts

Share facts about COVID-19

Know the facts about coronavirus (COVID-19) and help stop the spread of rumors.

FACT 1 Diseases can make anyone sick regardless of their race or ethnicity.

Fear and anxiety about COVID-19 can cause people to avoid or reject others even though they are not at risk for spreading the virus.

FACT 4 There are simple things you can do to help keep yourself and others healthy.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- When in public, wear a cloth face covering that covers your mouth and nose.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unclean hands.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

FACT 2 For most people, the immediate risk of becoming seriously ill from the virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to be low.

Older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions may be at higher risk for more serious complications from COVID-19.

FACT 5 You can help stop COVID-19 by knowing the signs and symptoms, which can include:

- Fever
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath
- Seek medical attention immediately if you or someone you know has emergency warning signs, including:
- Trouble breathing
 - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
 - New confusion or not able to be woken
 - Bluish lips or face
- This list is not all-inclusive. Please consult your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning.

FACT 3 Someone who has completed quarantine or has been released from isolation does not pose a risk of infection to other people.

For up-to-date information, visit CDC's coronavirus disease 2019 web page.



cdc.gov/coronavirus

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SLIDE 2 – Virtual Public Hearing in Response to Public Health

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, along with our commitment to protecting public health, TxDOT is conducting this virtual public hearing in conjunction with an optional in-person hearing offered on December 4, 2020 by appointment only to minimize in-person contact.

This presentation will cover the same information that the Austin District would have shared at an in-person hearing. However, the comment process will be different and that will be explained shortly. All project information can be found on the TxDOT website.

Virtual Public Hearing Agenda



- 1 Welcome
- 2 Project Overview
- 3 Environmental Overview
- 4 Project Schedule and Next Steps
- 5 Public Comment Process
- 6 Adjournment



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SLIDE 3 – Agenda

My name is Brad Wheelis and I'd like to welcome and thank you for watching this virtual public hearing that will be available through December 21, 2020. I am the Public Information Officer for the Austin District.

We'll be covering the following areas:

- A project overview;
- An environmental overview;
- The Project schedule and next steps;
- The public comment process – and again, this will be a little different than our in-person public hearings and I'll explain later

and then,

- Adjournment.



The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal 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.

SLIDE 4 – NEPA (MOU Statement)

Prior to December 16, 2014, the Federal Highway Administration, otherwise known as FHWA, reviewed and approved documents prepared under the National Environmental Policy Act, known as NEPA. However, on December 16, 2014, the Texas Department of Transportation assumed responsibility from the FHWA for reviewing and approving certain assigned NEPA environmental documents. This memorandum of understanding was renewed on December 9, 2019. This review and approval process applies to this proposed project.

This virtual public hearing is being provided to share information and to encourage comments from the public regarding the proposed US 79 Improvements Project. Notices for this hearing were published on the TxDOT website and appeared in the Round Rock Leader and El Mundo on November 19, 2020. The notice was also mailed to adjacent property owners, stakeholders and elected public officials. TxDOT also provided social media posts regarding this hearing and distributed media releases to local media outlets.



- Verbal testimony option is available from 10 a.m. on Dec. 4, 2020 until 11:59 p.m. on Dec. 21, 2020
 - Phone:
512-647-1064
- The voicemail system allows up to a three-minute testimony

SLIDE 5 – How to Submit Verbal Comments

TxDOT is committed to continuing our efforts to gain public feedback about this project. We understand this virtual public hearing format is a bit different, so let's take a few minutes and explain the comment process. Because of COVID-19, the Austin District is asking the public to provide their input through verbal and/or written comments.

The verbal testimony will be similar to an in-person public hearing. The voicemail system allows you to record a comment up to three minutes long, similar to the time provided during our standard in-person public hearing practice. The verbal testimony option is available until 11:59 p.m. on December 21, 2020. Please call the number on your screen and leave a voicemail with your comment during that time; your comments will be recorded, and a response will be included in the virtual public hearing summary report.

How to Submit Your Written Comments

1. Email:
Matthew.Cho@txdot.gov

2. Website:
[Online Comment](#)

3. Mail:
 Matthew Cho, P.E.
 Project Manager
 TxDOT Austin District
 P.O. Box 15426
 Austin, TX 78761-5426

Comments must be received or postmarked by Dec. 21, 2020 to be included in the Public Hearing Summary Report

Notice of Draft Environmental Assessment and Virtual Public Hearing with In-Person Option - US 79 from I-35 to east of FM 1460

Texas Department of Transportation - Inside TxDOT - Get Involved

- About Public Hearings, Meetings and Notices - Hearings, Meetings and Notices Schedule

Where: The virtual public hearing and in-person option dates and times are posted below.

When: The virtual public hearing will be available beginning on Friday, Dec. 4, 2020, at 10 a.m. until Monday, Dec. 21, 2020, at 11:59 p.m. The virtual public hearing will be a pre-recorded presentation with both audio and visual components and will be posted as a video on this website at the time and date listed above. Please note that all project materials can be found below under the Downloads section on this page.

The in-person option is for individuals who would like to participate in-person instead of online and will be by appointment only on Dec. 4, 2020, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the TxDOT Georgetown Area Office & Maintenance Facility, 2727 S. Austin Ave., Georgetown, TX 78626. For more information on this option, please see the description paragraph below.

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SLIDE 6 – How to submit written comments

TxDOT is also providing a written comments option. You can email the project manager, submit comments online at txdot.gov, or mail your comments to the address on your screen.

Please be sure to submit your written and/or verbal testimony comments no later than December 21, 2020. The responses to all comments submitted during the comment period will be included in the virtual public hearing summary report. This report will be posted to the TxDOT website within the next few months. We appreciate your understanding with this comment process. Now, let’s start talking about the project details.

Project Location, Need and Purpose



- Project Limits
 - I-35 to east of FM 1460/
A.W. Grimes Blvd.
 - Project length –
2.5 miles
- Project Need
 - Increase mobility and
safety along the corridor
- Project Purpose
 - Improve mobility and
safety for the traveling
public



US 79 from I-35 to East of FM 1460

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SLIDE 7 – Project Location, Need and Purpose

The project is approximately two and a half miles long and is from I-35 to east of FM 1460 on US 79 in Williamson County.

The US 79 project purpose and need is to improve mobility and safety along the corridor for the traveling public.

Project Description



- The US 79 project would include the following improvements:
 - Widening the existing US 79 highway to include an additional travel lane in each direction
 - Installing a raised median for safety
 - Constructing an underpass at the intersection of US 79 and Mays Street, an overpass at the intersection of US 79 and FM 1460 and reconfiguring the US 79/I-35 intersection
 - Modifying driveways and access points to improve safety and traffic flow
 - Installing shared-use paths on both sides of US 79 to provide improved pedestrian and bicycle accommodations
- The project schematic design is available for public review on US 79 meetings page on the TxDOT website

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SLIDE 8 – Project Description

The US 79 project would include the following improvements:

- Widening the existing US 79 highway to include an additional travel lane in each direction
- Installing a raised median for safety
- Constructing an underpass at the intersection of US 79 and Mays Street, an overpass at the intersection of US 79 and FM 1460, and reconfiguring the US 79/I-35 intersection
- Modifying driveways and access points to improve safety and traffic flow
- And installing shared-use paths on both sides of US 79 to provide improved pedestrian and bicycle accommodations

The project schematic design is available for public review on the US 79 meetings page on the TxDOT website.

Public Involvement History



- **First Open House Meeting**
– Sept. 28, 2017
- **Second Open House Meeting**
– Aug. 23, 2018

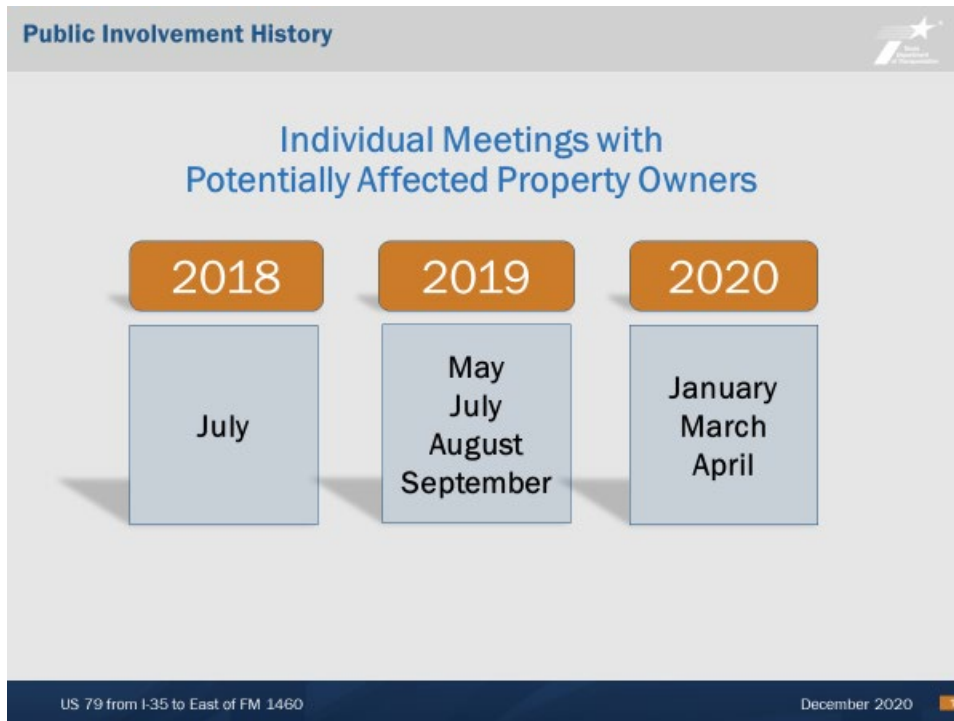


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SLIDE 9 – Public Involvement History – Open House Meetings

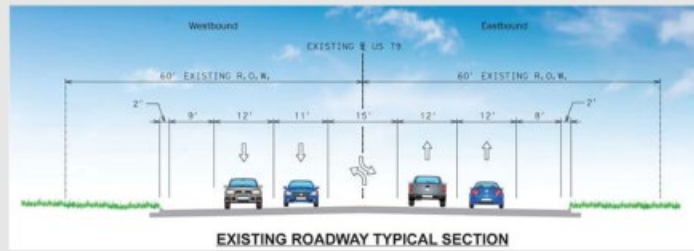
Two public meetings were held for the US 79 project prior to today's hearing. More information on those meetings can be found on the US 79 project page on TxDOT.gov.



SLIDE 10 – Previous Public Involvement History

In addition to the open houses, TxDOT actively pursued communication with potentially affected property owners along the corridor who were identified early in the project process. Over the past three years, TxDOT held several rounds of meetings directly with affected property owners to review and discuss potential right-of-way or access impacts to their properties.

US 79 Mainlanes – Existing Roadway



- US 79 is a curbed 5-lane roadway with turn lanes at the major intersections
- There are currently signals at:
 - I-35
 - Mays Street
 - Egger Avenue
 - Georgetown Street
 - Sunrise Road
 - FM 1460/A.W. Grimes Boulevard

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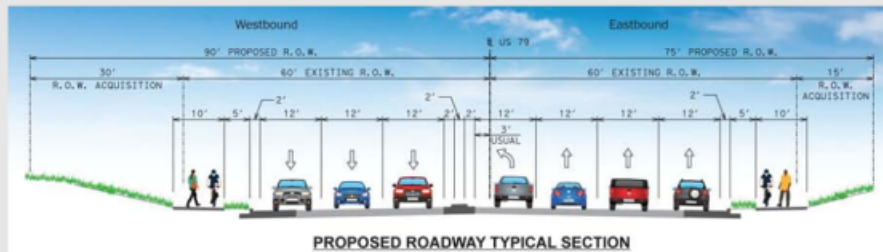
SLIDE 11 – US 79 Mainlanes – Existing Roadway

The existing US 79 is a curbed 5-lane roadway with turn lanes at major intersections.

There are currently signals at:

- I-35
- Mays Street
- Egger Avenue
- Georgetown Street
- Sunrise Road and
- FM 1460 also known as A.W. Grimes Boulevard

US 79 Mainlanes – Proposed Roadway



- US 79 is proposed to be a curbed 6-lane roadway with a raised median and turn lanes at the major intersections
- US 79 will be signalized at:
 - I-35
 - Mays Street Cloverleaf north of US 79
 - Mays Street Cloverleaf south of US 79
 - Egger Avenue
 - Georgetown Street
 - Sunrise Road
 - FM 1460/A.W. Grimes Boulevard
- While not yet warranted, US 79 will be set up for signalization at Heritage Center Circle

US 79 from I-35 to East of FM 1460

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SLIDE 12 – US 79 Mainlanes – Proposed Roadway

US 79 is proposed to be a curbed 6-lane roadway with a raised median and turn lanes at the major intersections. US 79 will remain signalized at the current locations where signals are present, however there will be two signalized intersections at Mays Street – one north and one south of US 79 at the proposed cloverleaf intersections.

US 79 will become grade separated at Mays Street and at FM 1460:

- US 79 will pass under a proposed Mays Street Bridge, and
- A proposed US 79 bridge will pass over FM 1460

There will be signals at:

- I-35
- Mays Street Cloverleaf north of US 79
- Mays Street Cloverleaf south of US 79
- Egger Avenue
- Georgetown Street
- Sunrise Road and
- FM 1460

While not yet warranted, US 79 will be set up for a signal at Heritage Center Circle. Having an intersection in this location is part of the long-range planning for the City of Round Rock.

US 79 and Mays St. Intersection – Existing Roadway



- At-grade signalized intersection with two US 79 lanes in each direction with turn lanes



US 79 from I-35 to East of FM 1460

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SLIDE 13 – US 79 and Mays St. Intersection – Existing Roadway

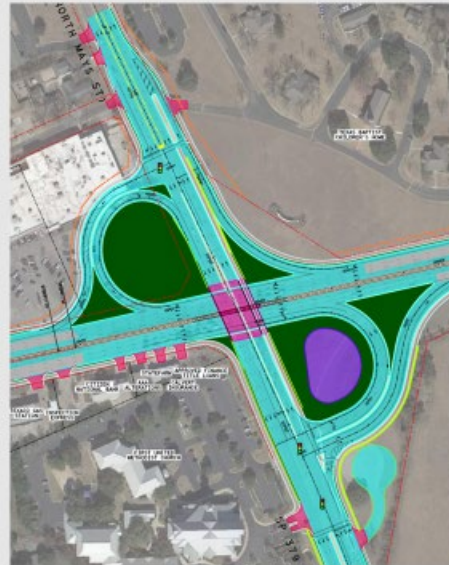
Let's take a closer look. The current US 79 and Mays Street Intersection is at-grade with two US 79 lanes in each direction with turn lanes.

With the proposed improvements, US 79 would become grade separated at Mays Street. US 79 will pass under a proposed Mays Street Bridge.

US 79 and Mays St. Intersection – Proposed Roadway



- Grade separated partial clover-leaf interchange with US 79 passing under the proposed Mays Street bridge
- Three US 79 lanes in each direction with a raised median
- The southeast cloverleaf would contain a water quality pond



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SLIDE 14 – US 79 and Mays St. Intersection – Proposed Roadway

With the proposed improvements, US 79 would become grade separated at Mays Street and would pass under the proposed Mays Street bridge at a partial clover-leaf interchange.

With the proposed improvements, US 79 would have three lanes in each direction with a raised median.

The southeast cloverleaf would contain a water quality pond to meet the water quality requirements of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

US 79 and FM 1460/A.W. Grimes Blvd. – Existing Roadway



- At-grade signalized intersection with two US 79 lanes in each direction with turn lanes



US 79 from I-35 to East of FM 1460

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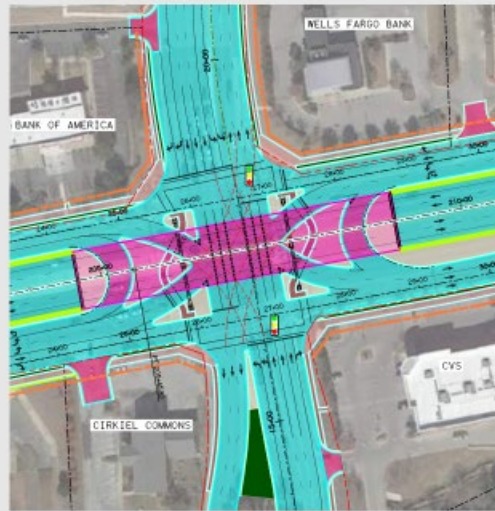
SLIDE 15 – US 79 and FM 1460/A.W. Grimes Blvd. – Existing Roadway

US 79 at FM 1460 is currently an at-grade signalized intersection with two US 79 lanes in each direction with turn lanes.

US 79 and FM 1460/A.W. Grimes Blvd. – Proposed Roadway



- Tight Urban Diamond Interchange with US 79 passing over FM 1460/A.W. Grimes Blvd.
- Two US 79 mainlanes in each direction separated with a concrete traffic barrier
- Signalization, turn-arounds, turn lanes and continuous shared-use paths provide for multi-modal traffic flow



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SLIDE 16 – US 79 and FM 1460/A.W. Grimes Blvd. – Proposed Roadway

The proposed improvements at US 79 and FM 1460 include a Tight Urban Diamond Interchange with US 79 passing over FM 1460. A Tight Urban Diamond Interchange is a compressed diamond interchange that is used in urban areas where right of way is constrained.

Two US 79 mainlanes in each direction separated with a concrete barrier would pass over FM 1460. Exit and entrance ramps from US 79 would interchange with FM 1460 at ground level.

The Design Team utilized turn-arounds to provide an alternative to traffic going through the signals. This decreases the wait time at the signals and shortens the queuing at the turn lanes. The Design Team also designed continuous shared-use paths for bikes and pedestrians.



SLIDE 17 – US 79 and FM 1460/A.W. Grimes Blvd. – Proposed Roadway

The proposed improvements at the US 79 and FM 1460 interchange include a three-span bridge that would cross FM 1460 and the turn-arounds. At grade, the interchange would provide for three lanes in each direction on FM 1460 to pass under US 79 and provide for a dual-left turn in all four directions under the bridge. The interchange would also provide signalized safety for bikes and pedestrians using the shared-use paths.



- Utility adjustments and relocations throughout the corridor are required prior to construction
- Utility adjustments will occur prior to roadway construction
- The adjustments and relocation of any utilities would be managed so that no substantial interruptions occur

SLIDE 18 – Utility Adjustments

Utility adjustments and relocations throughout the corridor are required prior to construction.

The adjustments and relocation of any utilities would be managed so that no substantial interruptions occur in utility services.

Environmental Overview



- The Draft Environmental Assessment was conducted for this project to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- A copy of the Draft Environmental Assessment and technical reports are available for public review on the US 79 meetings page on the TxDOT website
- The environmental study identified and assessed potential impacts to the natural and human environment, including:
 - Air quality
 - Archeological resources
 - Biological resources
 - Community/socio-economic
 - Floodplains
 - Geologic assessment
 - Hazardous materials
 - Historic resources
 - Indirect and cumulative impacts
 - Right of way
 - Section 4(f) (land from publicly owned parks, recreation areas, and historic-age properties)
 - Traffic noise
 - Visual/aesthetics
 - Water quality
 - Wetlands/waters of U.S.

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SLIDE 19 – Environmental Review / Impacts Addressed

The environmental study conducted for this project complies with the National Environmental Policy Act.

A copy of the Draft Environmental Assessment and technical reports that are available for public review can be found on the US 79 meetings page on the TxDOT website. The environmental study identified and assessed potential impacts due to the proposed project to the natural and human environment including the resources listed on this slide.

Two preliminary alternatives were considered but have been eliminated from further consideration. The alternatives differ in the configuration of the Mays Street and US 79 intersection. Alternative 1 proposed a conventional 6-lane divided intersection at Mays Street and US 79 and was presented as an option at the first public meeting. Alternative 2 proposed a half-cloverleaf configuration east of Mays Street at the Mays Street and US 79 intersection and was presented as an option at the first public meeting. The design would have resulted in an adverse impact to a National Register of Historic Places-eligible historic property at the northeast corner of Mays Street and US 79, the Texas Baptist Children's Home. The preferred alternative utilizes the partial cloverleaf design and avoids adverse effects at the Texas Baptist Children's Home. The preferred alternative was analyzed in the environmental assessment.

It was determined the proposed project would not result in impacts to air quality.

A Biological Evaluation Form and a Tier I Site Assessment were completed to determine impacts to threatened and endangered species and other biological resources. TxDOT has determined that the proposed project may affect two federally listed species. Coordination with the US Fish and Wildlife Service is underway. TxDOT has determined the proposed project may impact one state-listed threatened species and several species of greatest conservation need. TxDOT has coordinated with the

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and would implement best management practices to minimize impacts to state-listed species.

A hazardous materials initial site assessment was conducted for the proposed project. Further research is needed to determine potential hazardous materials concerns associated with the sites that would be displaced by the proposed project activities, or that the project would require right-of-way from. These sites would include several leaking petroleum storage tanks and one Voluntary Cleanup Site associated with a former dry cleaner.

The proposed project would not impact any known archeological sites. TxDOT historians determined that the project would have no adverse effects to historic resources.

There would be no impacts to parklands.

A traffic noise impacts analysis was conducted and determined that the proposed project would result in noise impacts to nine noise receivers. Noise walls were evaluated and determined to be feasible and reasonable at four impacted receivers. Therefore, noise barriers are proposed for incorporation into the project.

No wetlands were identified in the proposed project area. The proposed project activities would impact less than a tenth of an acre of waters of the US; therefore, the proposed project would be permitted under a US Army Corps of Engineers Nationwide Permit 14 without a Preconstruction Notification.

Again, the draft EA and environmental reports are available for your review online at txdot.gov.



■ Environmental Constraints within Project Area

- Historic properties
- Sensitive biological resources including habitat for endangered species
- Edwards Aquifer
- Waters of the U.S.

Environmental constraints were used to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts to environmental resources during the project design

Slide 20 - Environmental Constraints

The main environmental constraints within the project area are historic properties, sensitive biological resources including habitat for endangered species, Edwards Aquifer, and waters of the U.S. These environmental constraints were taken into consideration during project design to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts to environmental resources.



■ Cultural Resources

- TxDOT conducted historic resources studies to meet requirements under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act
 - Reconnaissance survey of the area of potential effects (APE) for historic resources
 - Intensive survey of three properties within the APE: the Merrell House, the Henna House, and the Texas Baptist Children’s Home
- TxDOT redesigned the Mays Street and US 79 intersection to minimize impacts to the Texas Baptist Children’s Home, a historic property eligible for the National Register of Historic Places

SLIDE 21 – Cultural Resources

Per Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, TxDOT conducted a historic resources reconnaissance survey of the **area of potential impacts or effects** (APE) for historic resources and an intensive survey of the Merrell House, the Henna House, and the Texas Baptist Children’s Home.

In order to minimize impacts to the Texas Baptist Children’s Home, a historic property eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, the project design was revised and the half-cloverleaf configuration east of Mays Street that was shown at the first public meeting has been eliminated from further consideration.



■ Cultural Resources

- The proposed project would require right-of-way acquisition from three properties that are either listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
 - Texas Baptist Children’s Home
 - The Henna House
 - The Merrell House
- At each site, the acquisition of the new ROW constitutes a *de minimis* use of a historic site under the U.S. Department of Transportation Act Section 4(f) regulations (23 CFR 774)
- Through coordination with the Texas Historical Commission it has been determined that the proposed project would have no adverse effect on historic properties

SLIDE 22 – Cultural Resources

The proposed 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 the 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. A *de minimis* impact involves the use of property that is generally minor in nature. This finding means that the project may proceed as planned.

Through coordination with the Texas Historical Commission, it’s been determined that the proposed project would have no adverse effect on historic properties.



▪ **Federally Threatened and Endangered Species**

- The western end of the proposed project is located within Karst Zone 1; however, no suitable habitat was identified within the project area as verified by a qualified karst geologist
- TxDOT has determined that the proposed project may affect but is not likely to adversely affect the federally endangered Bone Cave harvestman (*Texella reyesi*)
- Voluntary conservation measures would be implemented and are designed to protect listed species and any habitat that may be encountered during construction

SLIDE 23 – Environmental Overview – Biological Resources

The western end of the proposed project is located within Karst Zone 1; (areas known to contain endangered cave fauna). However, no suitable habitat was identified within the project area as verified by a qualified karst geologist. Potential karst habitat could be encountered during construction. If those habitats are encountered during construction, coordination with the US Fish and Wildlife Service will be initiated.

Coordination with the US Fish and Wildlife Service did not result in the identification of occupied habitat within a reasonable distance of the project area.

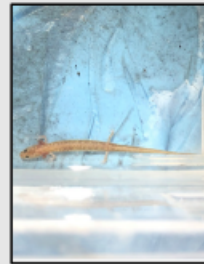
TxDOT has determined that the proposed project may affect but is not likely to adversely affect the federally endangered Bone Cave harvestman.

Conservation measures, such as minimizing excavation in non-previously disturbed areas, would be implemented, and are designed to protect karst species and habitat that may be encountered during construction.



▪ Federally Threatened and Endangered Species

- TxDOT has determined that the proposed project may affect and is likely to adversely affect the federally threatened Jollyville Plateau salamander (*Eurycea tonkawae*)
- Formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act will be completed prior to environmental clearance for this project for the above listed species



Jollyville Plateau salamander (*Eurycea tonkawae*)



Brushy Creek Trail bridge south of culvert

SLIDE 24 – Environmental Overview – Biological Resources

Through fieldwork and technical analyses, TxDOT has determined that the proposed project may affect and is likely to adversely affect the federally threatened Jollyville Plateau salamander.

The project intersects a known, occupied Critical Habitat Unit for this species. Recent surveys have confirmed the presence of this species within an existing concrete culvert located beneath the existing US 79 roadway. Although the culvert would not be directly impacted by the construction of the proposed project, water quality impacts and the potential to intersect the aquifer during construction in the vicinity of this culvert may occur. Conservation measures, such as construction of additional water quality ponds, would be implemented and would provide protection to the known Jollyville Plateau salamander location and water quality during and after construction.

Formal consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act will be completed prior to environmental clearance for this project for the Jollyville Plateau salamander and the Bone Cave harvestman. No other federally listed species would be affected. The roadway has been designed in an effort to avoid impacts to threatened and endangered species.



■ Water Quality

- The western portion of the project area overlays the Edwards Aquifer Recharge and Transition Zones
- To comply with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) Edwards Aquifer Rules, the project design includes a water quality pond to treat stormwater runoff. The pond would be located within the southwest cloverleaf at the US 79 and Mays Street intersection
- The design also includes two hazardous materials traps; one at the Onion Branch Bridge and one at the existing culvert
- A Water Pollution Abatement Plan would be prepared in accordance with TCEQ's Edwards Rules

SLIDE 25 – Water Quality

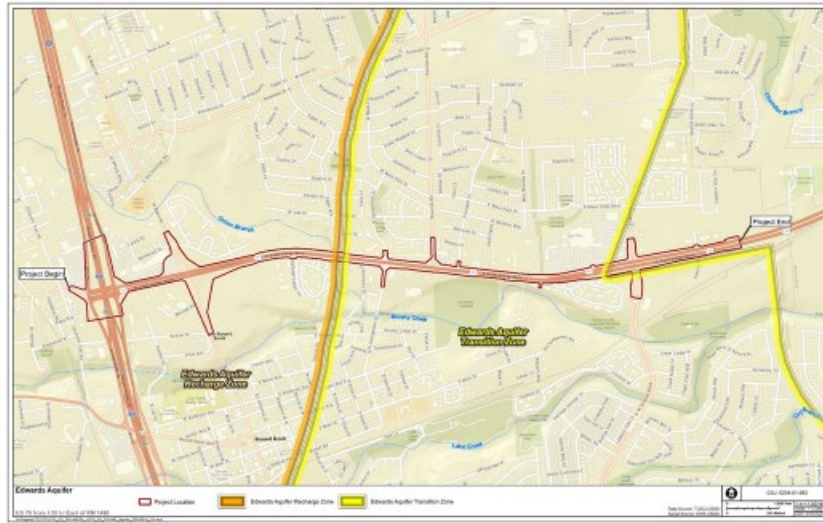
The western end of the proposed project is located over the Edwards Aquifer Recharge and Transition Zones.

To comply with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) Edwards Rules, the project design includes a water quality pond to treat stormwater runoff. The pond would be located within the southwest cloverleaf at the US 79 and Mays Street intersection.

The design also includes two hazardous materials traps; one at the Onion Branch Bridge and one at the existing culvert.

A Water Pollution Abatement Plan would be prepared in accordance with TCEQ's Edwards Rules.

Environmental Overview – Edwards Aquifer Map



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SLIDE 26 – Edwards Aquifer Map

Here is the map of the western portion of the project area that overlays the Edwards Aquifer Recharge and Transition Zones. TCEQ regulations were followed to minimize impacts to water quality and the aquifer.



■ Waters of the U.S./Wetlands

- One Jurisdictional Water of the U.S. (WOUS) was identified within the project area
 - Onion Branch Bridge widening from 98' to 122'
- Impacts to WOUS would be authorized through a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Nationwide Permit 14 without a Preconstruction Notification (PCN)
- During construction, impacts to WOUS would be minimized to the extent practical
- No impacts to wetlands or sole-source aquifers are anticipated

SLIDE 27 – Waters of the U.S./Wetlands

Our Jurisdictional Water of the U.S., make that one Jurisdictional Water of the U.S. was identified within the project area and is known as Onion Branch. Impacts to Waters of the U.S. would be authorized through a US Army Corps of Engineers Nationwide Permit 14 without a preconstruction notification. During construction, impacts to Onion Branch would be minimized to the extent practical. No impacts to wetlands or sole-source aquifers are anticipated for the proposed improvements.



▪ **Traffic Noise**

- A traffic noise analysis was conducted
- The proposed project would result in traffic noise impacts to nine representative receivers
- Noise barriers were feasible and reasonable at four impacted receivers and, therefore, are proposed for incorporation into the project
 - Steeplechase Apartments
 - Somerset Apartments
 - Rocking Horse Apartments
- A noise workshop will be held prior to construction

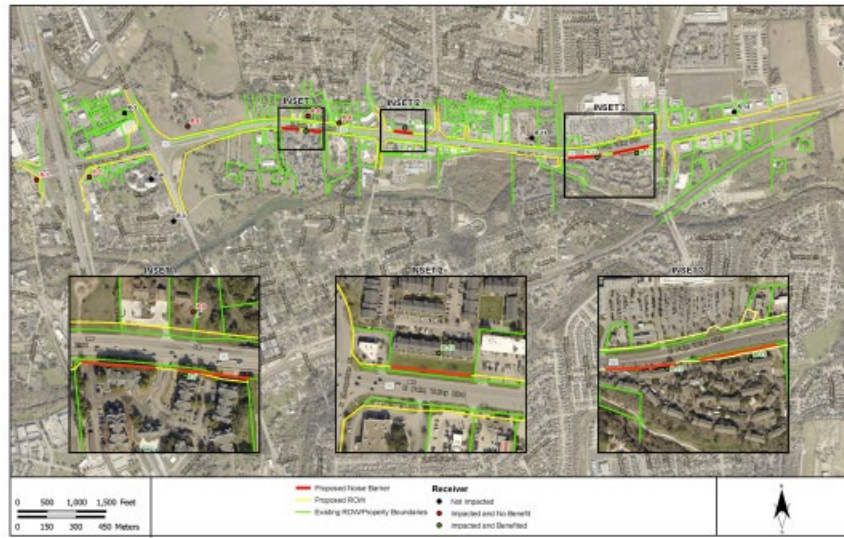
SLIDE 28 – Environmental Overview – Traffic Noise

A traffic noise analysis was conducted in accordance with TxDOT’s *Guidelines for Analysis and Abatement of Roadway Traffic Noise*.

The proposed project would result in traffic noise impacts to nine representative receivers. Noise barriers are the most commonly used noise abatement measure and were evaluated for each of the impacted receiver locations.

According to the noise model, noise barriers would be feasible and reasonable at four impacted receivers therefore noise barriers are proposed for incorporation into the project.

The final decision to construct proposed noise barriers will not be made until completion of the project design, utility evaluation, and polling of adjacent property owners. A noise workshop will be held prior to construction to solicit viewpoints of the property owners and residents associated with a proposed noise abatement measure.



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SLIDE 29 – Environmental Overview – Traffic Noise

This map illustrates the nine representative receivers that, based on the noise model, would have a traffic noise impact due to the project.

The map also shows the locations where noise barriers were feasible and reasonable and, therefore, are proposed for incorporation into the project.

-Steeplechase Apartments

-Somerset Apartments

-and the Rocking Horse Apartments

Environmental Overview – Community and Socio-economic Impacts



- According to the Community Impacts Assessment, the proposed project is anticipated to result in both positive and negative impacts to access, travel patterns and community cohesion
 - Raised medians would increase safety for turning traffic, but would also result in changes to access and travel patterns
 - The proposed project would not affect, separate, or isolate any distinct neighborhoods, ethnic groups or other specific groups
- No disproportionately high and adverse impacts to minority or low-income populations are anticipated
- The requirements of Executive Order (EO) 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, are satisfied

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SLIDE 30 – Environmental Overview – Community and Socio-economic

-A *Community Impacts Assessment* was completed in accordance with TxDOT's 2015 *Community Impacts, Environmental Justice, Limited English Proficiency, and Title VI Compliance* guidance

-According to the Community Impacts Assessment, the proposed project is anticipated to result in both positive and negative impacts to access and travel patterns for the immediate community in the City of Round Rock.

-The proposed construction of the raised medians throughout the project area would increase safety for turning traffic but would also result in changes to access and travel patterns throughout the corridor and two local cross streets.

-Two local streets (Provident Lane and Palm Valley Cove) that currently have two-way access, would no longer be able to accommodate left-hand turns due to the proposed raised median. Thus, travel time for all motorists and emergency responders wanting to access properties on these streets would increase by 1-2 minutes.

-However, other commuters would experience shorter travel times due to the increased capacity and operational efficiency of the roadway.

-Mobility and safety would be enhanced for all users of the US 79 roadway, including emergency vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians, due to the increased capacity and operational efficiency of the roadway, overpasses and intersection improvements, and continuous and connected shared-use paths.

-The proposed project would not affect, separate, or isolate any distinct neighborhoods, ethnic groups, or other specific groups as US 79 is an existing roadway.

-No disproportionately high and adverse impacts to minority or low-income populations are anticipated as a result of the proposed project.

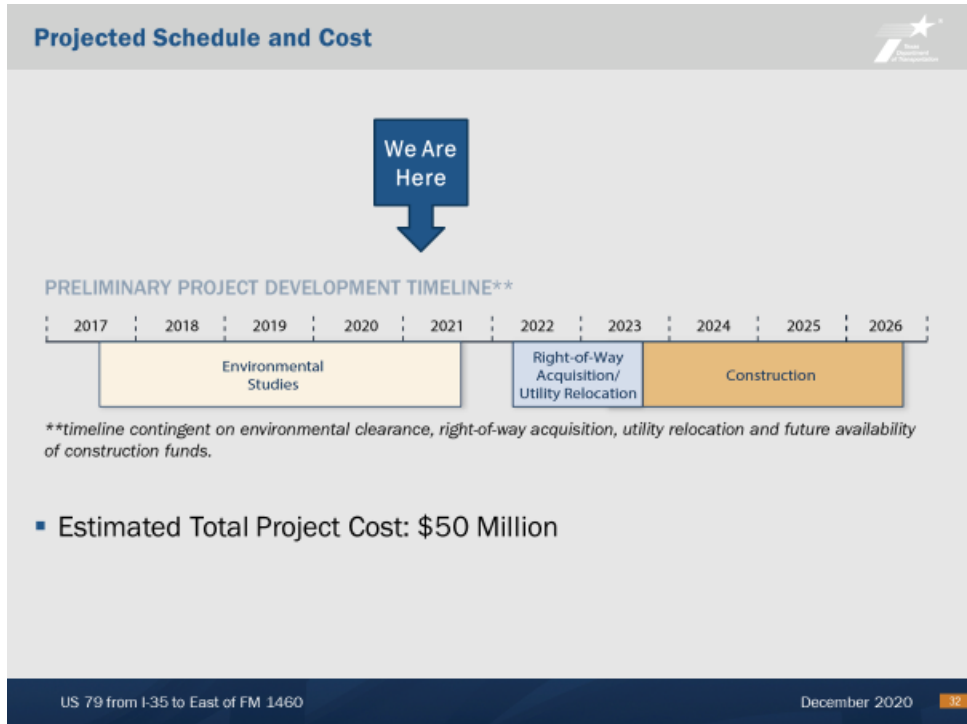
-The requirements of Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, are satisfied.



- Based on the findings in the draft EA and technical reports, implementation of the proposed project would not result in a significant impact on the human or natural environment under NEPA. Therefore, a finding of no significant impact is recommended

SLIDE 31 – Environmental Overview - Conclusion

Based on the findings made in the draft EA and technical reports, implementation of the proposed project would not result in a significant impact on the human or natural environment under NEPA. Therefore, a finding of no significant impact is recommended.



SLIDE 32 – Projected Schedule and Cost

The project schedule is shown here. The anticipated environmental study completion and National Environmental Policy Act or NEPA decision is expected in late summer 2021. The anticipated NEPA decision is contingent to US Fish and Wildlife Service consultation completion. Once environmentally cleared, Right-of-Way Acquisition and Utility relocation could begin. The project is currently unfunded but TxDOT is actively seeking funds to advance the improvements. The earliest construction could begin would be in late 2023.

This timeline is contingent on environmental clearance, right-of-way acquisition, utility relocation and future construction funding. The estimated total cost of this project is \$50 million dollars. It is anticipated that construction would last approximately 3 years.



▪ **Proposed Right of Way & Displacements**

- The proposed project would require the acquisition of approximately 10 acres of right of way
- The proposed project would not displace any residential properties
- The proposed project would potentially require 17 commercial displacements
- Two other community facilities would potentially be displaced
 - A place of worship - Iglesia Cristiana Bet-el
 - A job help center - Goodwill Central Texas—Round Rock Job Help Center

SLIDE 33 – Proposed Right of Way & Displacements

Let’s talk about the right of way acquisition process.

The proposed project would require the acquisition of approximately 10 acres of right-of-way. It would not displace any residential properties. The proposed project would potentially require 17 commercial displacements and two other displacements (a place of worship - Iglesia Cristiana Bet-el and a job help center - Goodwill Central Texas Round Rock Job Help Center), both of which are community facilities.

This right of way section will include an overview of the federal and state laws involved, and the general process and requirements for appraisal and negotiations.

The primary federal law which sets the guidelines for right of way acquisitions and relocation assistance is found in the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, commonly referred to as the Uniform Act. This law sets the standard for appraisal, negotiations and relocations and has also been incorporated into State Law as set out in the Texas Transportation Code and the Texas Property Code. For a basic review of your rights and TxDOT’s obligations, I would recommend that you visit TxDOT.gov to find brochures entitled State Purchase of Right of Way as well as the Landowner’s Bill of Rights.

TxDOT will be contracting with a consultant to coordinate acquisition and relocation activities. Independent fee appraisers will be contracted to appraise all necessary property. Affected property owners will receive written notification of the pending appraisal inspection. Appraisers will request permission to enter a property for inspection and offer the property owner, or their representative, the right to accompany them on the inspection. The appraiser will be asked to determine the value of the land to be acquired, real property improvements within the area to be acquired, and damages (if any)

to the remaining property. The written appraisal would be provided to the landowner at the time the offer is made.

Once environmental clearance has been obtained and the project has been fully authorized, TxDOT's acquiring agent would commence the acquisition process. This agent will send each property owner an offer letter along with a copy of the appraisal. That letter, together with the appraisal, would advise each affected owner as to the value of the land to be acquired, the value of any improvements within the acquisition area, and damages (if any) to the remaining property. Each property owner could accept the offer based on the appraisal or make a counter-offer based upon additional information that may affect the value of the land under consideration. If no agreement can be reached, the State would obtain authorization to proceed with eminent domain proceedings. The initial stage of the eminent domain proceeding is what is known as a Special Commissioner's hearing. In the Special Commissioners hearing a judge with jurisdiction over such proceedings would appoint three special commissioners to hear the evidence of both the landowner and TxDOT. The Special Commissioners hearing is generally informal and usually not in a court room but rather in a public meeting room. A property owner may hire an attorney to represent them in this proceeding or appear on their own behalf. Based upon the testimony given, the Special Commissioners issue an award, which would be their determination of value. Once the State has deposited the amount of this award in the registry of the court, it would have a right of possession to the property. Either the landowner or the State can appeal the award of Special Commissioners and a court proceeding would then be scheduled to resolve the issue of value.

In all cases, the property owner would be reimbursed for any reasonable, incidental expenses necessarily incurred in transferring title to the acquired property to the State.

The State of Texas is required, through the Federal and State laws that were previously mentioned, to assist persons being displaced from their homes and businesses because of highway projects.



- Verbal testimony option is available from 10 a.m. on Dec. 4, 2020 until 11:59 p.m. on Dec. 21, 2020
 - Phone:
512-647-1064
- The voicemail system allows up to a three-minute testimony

SLIDE 34 – Verbal Comments

Let's recap how you can provide input about this project.

The first way you can share your input is to provide your verbal testimony - similar to an in-person public hearing. Please call **(512) 647-1064** and leave a voicemail with your comment during that time; your comments will be recorded and a response will be included in the virtual public hearing summary report. The voicemail system allows you to record a comment up to three minutes long, similar to the time provided during our standard in-person public hearing practice.

How to Submit Your Written Comments

1. Email:
Matthew.Cho@txdot.gov

2. Website:
[Online Comment](#)

3. Mail:
 Matthew Cho, P.E.
 Project Manager
 TxDOT Austin District
 P.O. Box 15426
 Austin, TX 78761-5426

Comments must be received or postmarked by Dec. 21, 2020 to be included in the Public Hearing Summary Report

Notice of Draft Environmental Assessment and Virtual Public Hearing with In-Person Option - US 79 from I-35 to east of FM 1460

Texas Department of Transportation - Inside TxDOT - Get Involved
 - About Public Hearings, Meetings and Notices - Hearings, Meetings and Notices Schedule

Where: The virtual public hearing and in-person option dates and times are posted below.
 When: The virtual public hearing will be available beginning on Friday, Dec. 4, 2020, at 10 a.m. until Monday, Dec. 21, 2020, at 11:59 p.m. The virtual public hearing will be a pre-recorded presentation with both audio and visual components and will be posted as a video on this website at the time and date listed above. Please note that all project materials can be found below under the Downloads section on this page.
 The in-person option is for individuals who would like to participate in-person instead of online and will be by appointment only on Dec. 4, 2020, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the TxDOT Georgetown Area Office & Maintenance Facility, 2727 S. Austin Ave., Georgetown, TX 78626. For more information on this option, please see the description paragraph below.

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SLIDE 35 – How to Submit Your Written Comments

In addition to providing the verbal testimony voicemail option, TxDOT is also encouraging written comments. You can do that by emailing the project manager, mailing your comments to the address on your screen or by visiting txdot.gov and searching for the US 79 virtual public hearing. Click on “submit your comments” at the top right of the page or click on the email link at the bottom of the page.

Most importantly: Please be sure to submit your written and verbal testimony comments no later than December 21, 2020, which is 15 days after the original December 4, 2020 website posted date. As noted earlier, the responses to your comments submitted during the comment period will be included in the virtual public hearing summary report. This report will be posted to the TxDOT website within the next few months. Again, we appreciate your understanding with this comment process.



- Contact the TxDOT Austin District office with any questions about the project Monday-Friday, between 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at:

–Phone: 512-865-7945

–Email: Matthew.Cho@txdot.gov

SLIDE 36 – Quick Contacts

Don't hesitate to contact the Austin District office with any questions about the project.

You can call the number on your screen Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. or email the project manager with any questions or comments at any time during the project development process.

Thank you



Thank you for participating!

***Please don't forget to submit your written and verbal
testimony comments by
Dec. 21, 2020***



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SLIDE 37 – “Thank You” / Hearing is now Adjourned

Thank you for your participation and please stay safe! This concludes my presentation and this virtual public hearing is adjourned.