

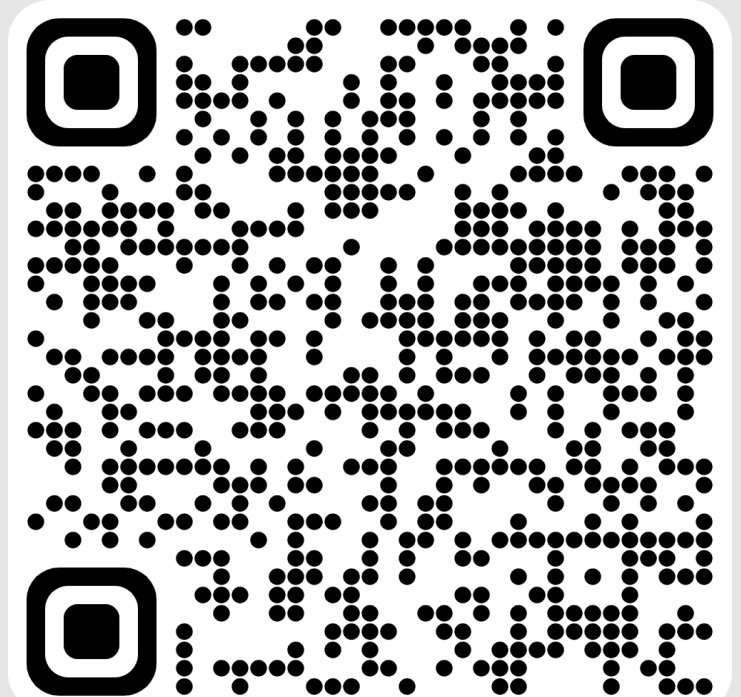
WELCOME

US 281 Blanco Relief Route Study Community Workshop #3

Monday, March 25, 2024

Blanco High School

TxDOT is hosting an in-person community workshop with virtual option to share the feedback received on six potential relief route options, present results of the evaluation and gather input on the four recommended relief route options that will be evaluated further. No formal presentation is planned, and community members are invited to come and go at their convenience.



For more information about the study and to view materials presented at the community workshop visit www.txdot.gov and keyword search “US 281 Blanco Relief Route”.

US 281 Relief Route Study Overview and History



Study Overview and Purpose:

With support from the City of Blanco and Blanco County, TxDOT has initiated the US 281 Blanco Relief Route Study to develop and evaluate preliminary relief route options to enhance safety and improve mobility along US 281 in the city of Blanco.

The purpose of this study, in collaboration with local stakeholders and the public, is to develop a relief route alignment around the city of Blanco that meets TxDOT's mission and reflects community values.

History

Nov. 30, 2021 - Letter from the City of Blanco to the Capital Area of Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) expressing support for a possible relief route study around the city of Blanco

Dec. 14, 2021 - Letter from Blanco County to CAMPO expressing support to study a possible relief route study around the city of Blanco

Sept. 29, 2022 - US 281 Relief Route Study Team collected comments at the US 281 Blanco County Project Open House

Aug. 28, 2023 – Community Workshop #1 – collected comments on study goals and potential relief routes

Nov. 13, 2023 – Community Workshop #2 – collected comments on six potential relief route options and evaluation criteria

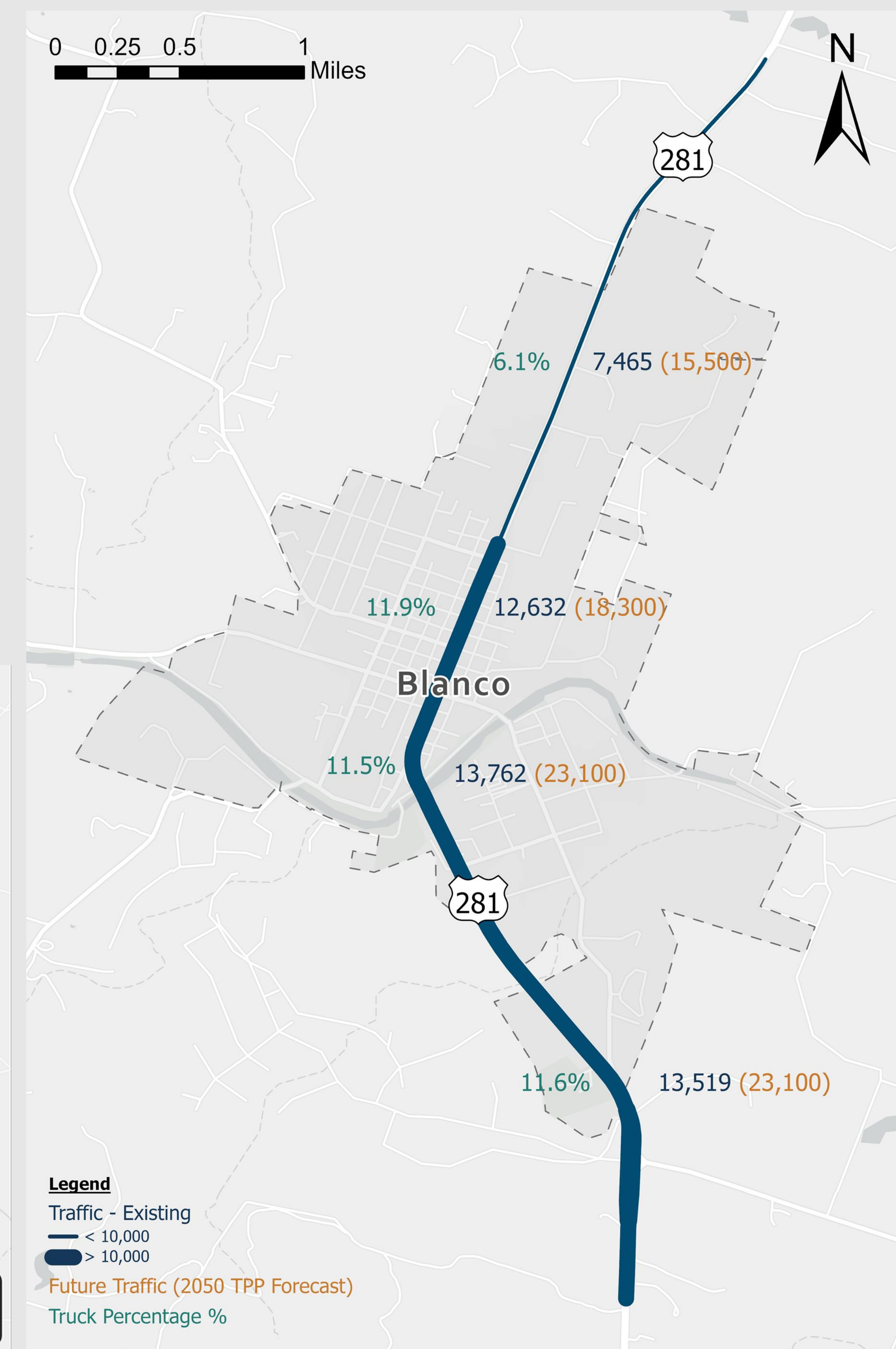
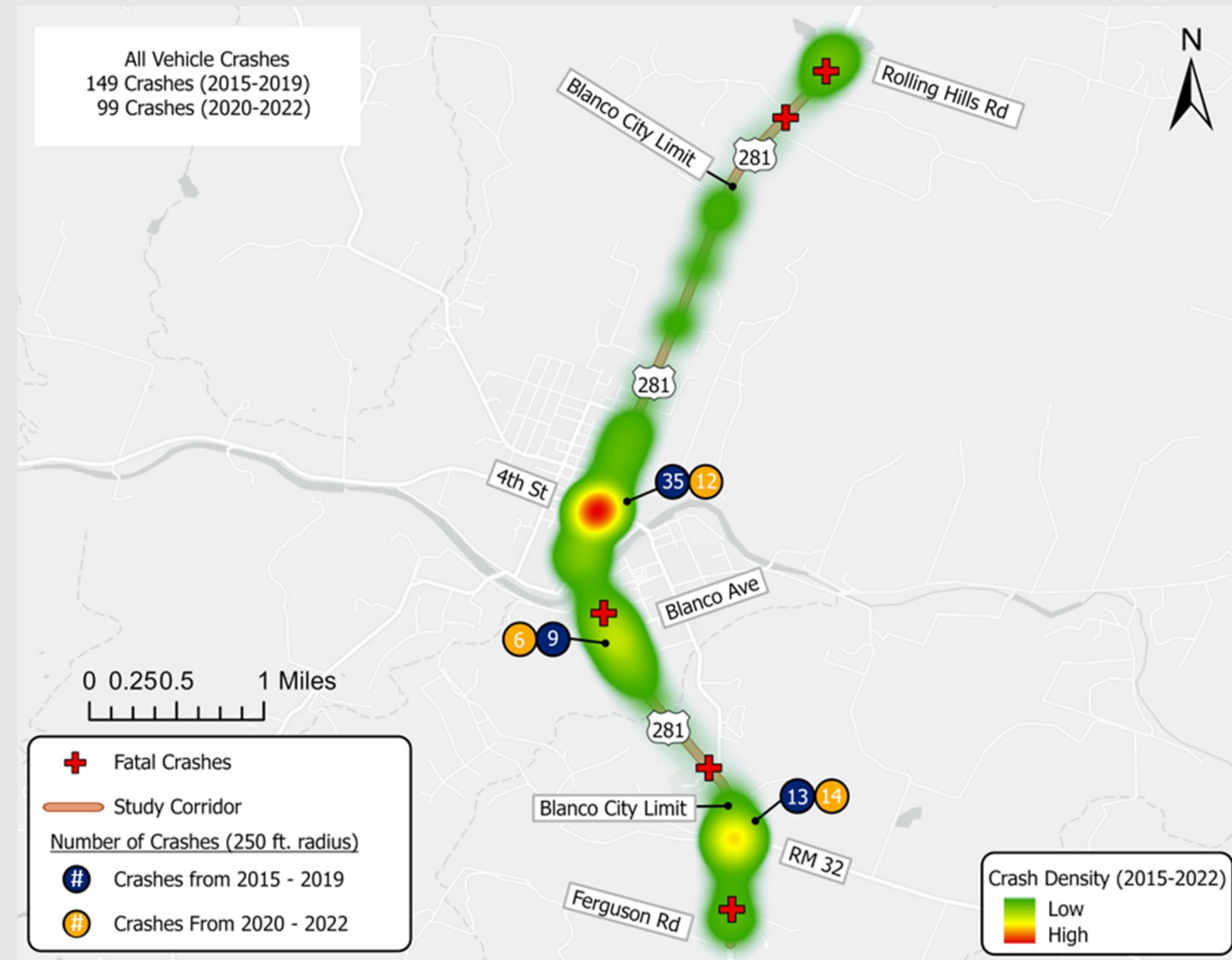
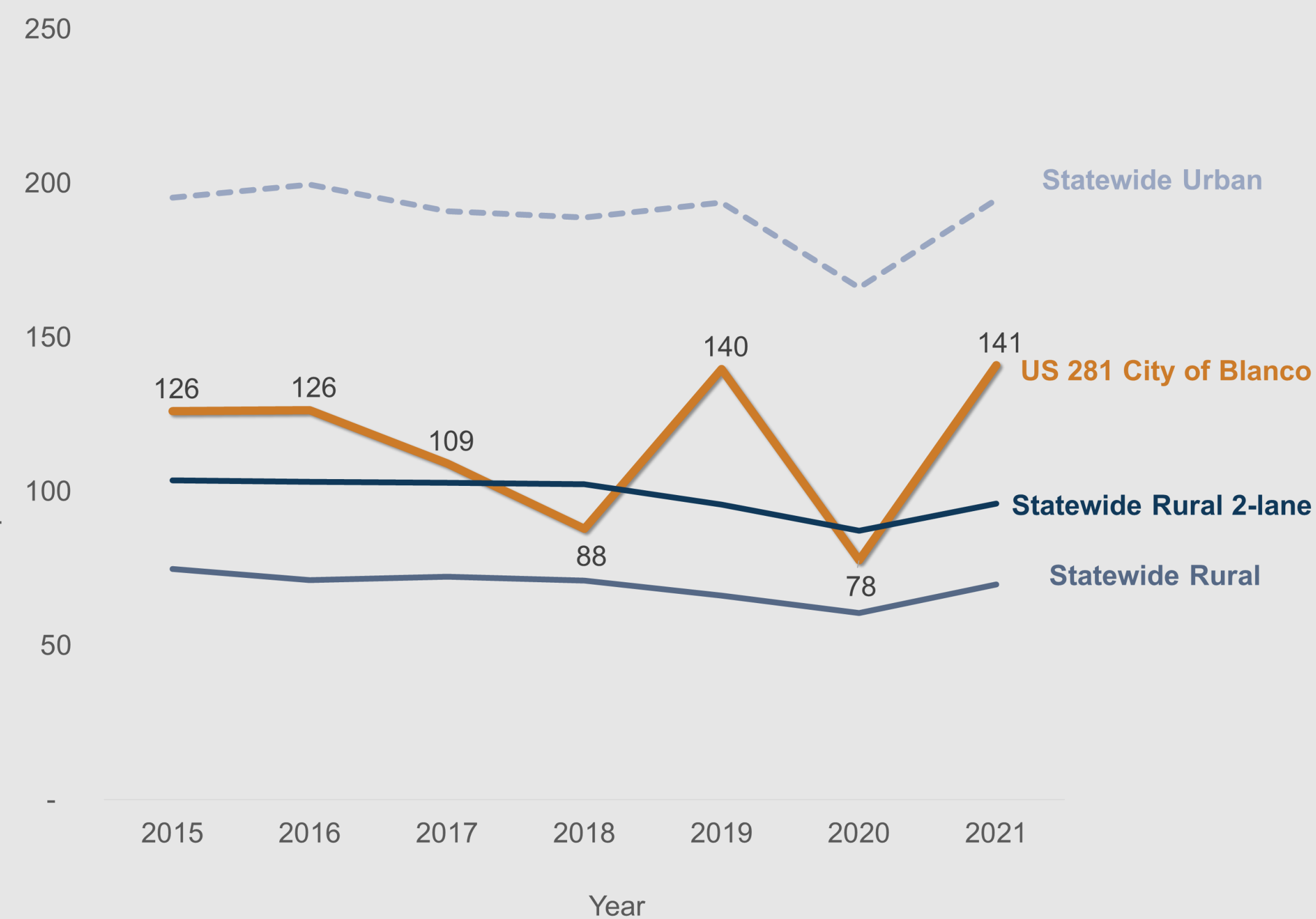
What is the problem with US 281 through Blanco?

US 281, which runs through Blanco, is included in the Texas Trunk System, National Highway System, National Highway Freight Network and Strategic Highway Network.

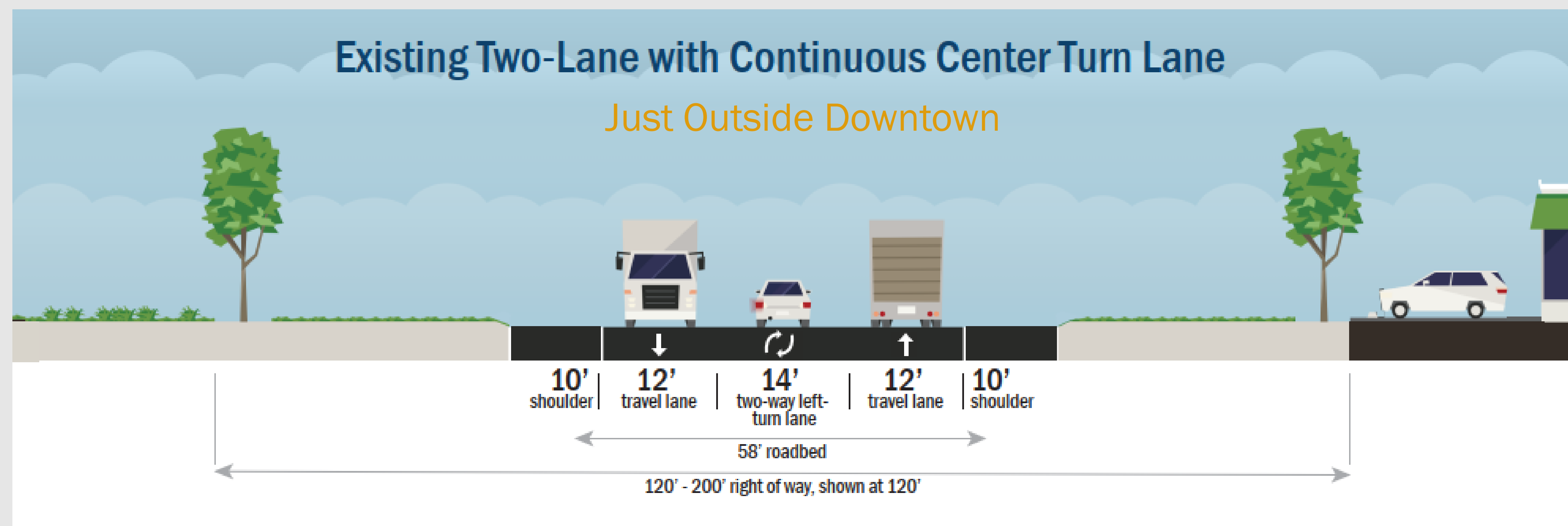
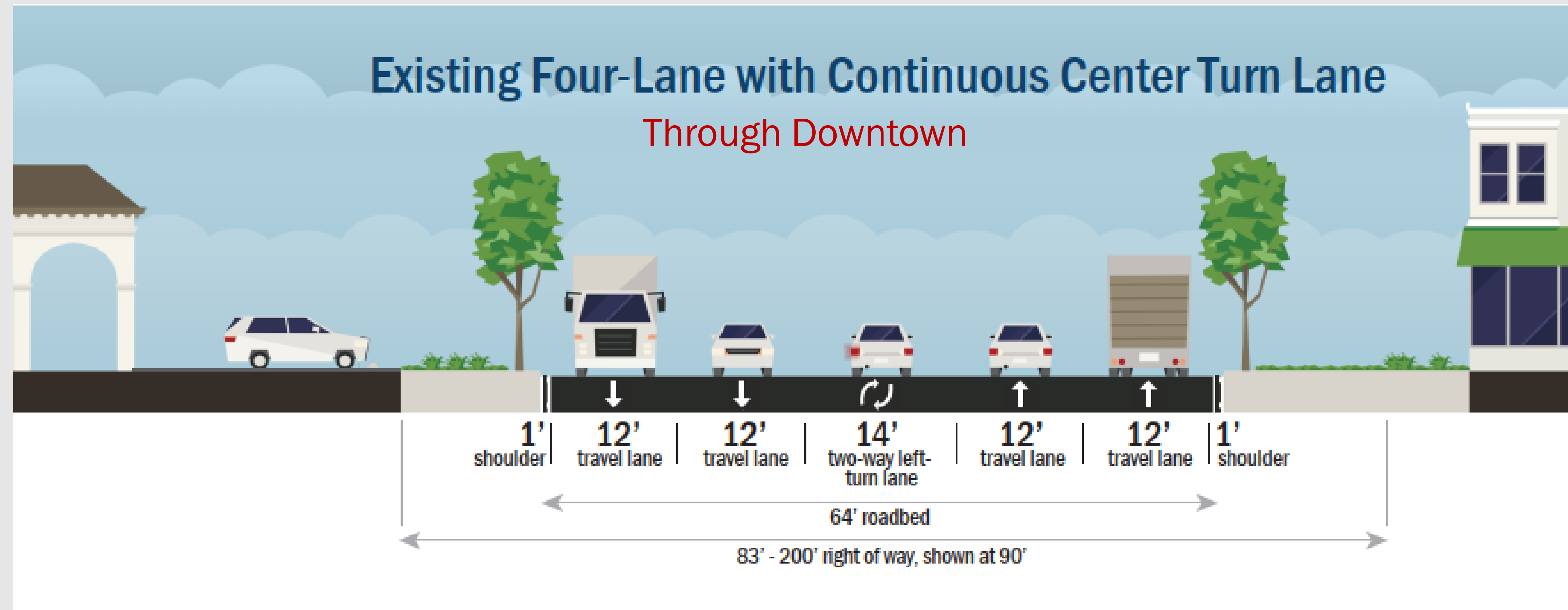
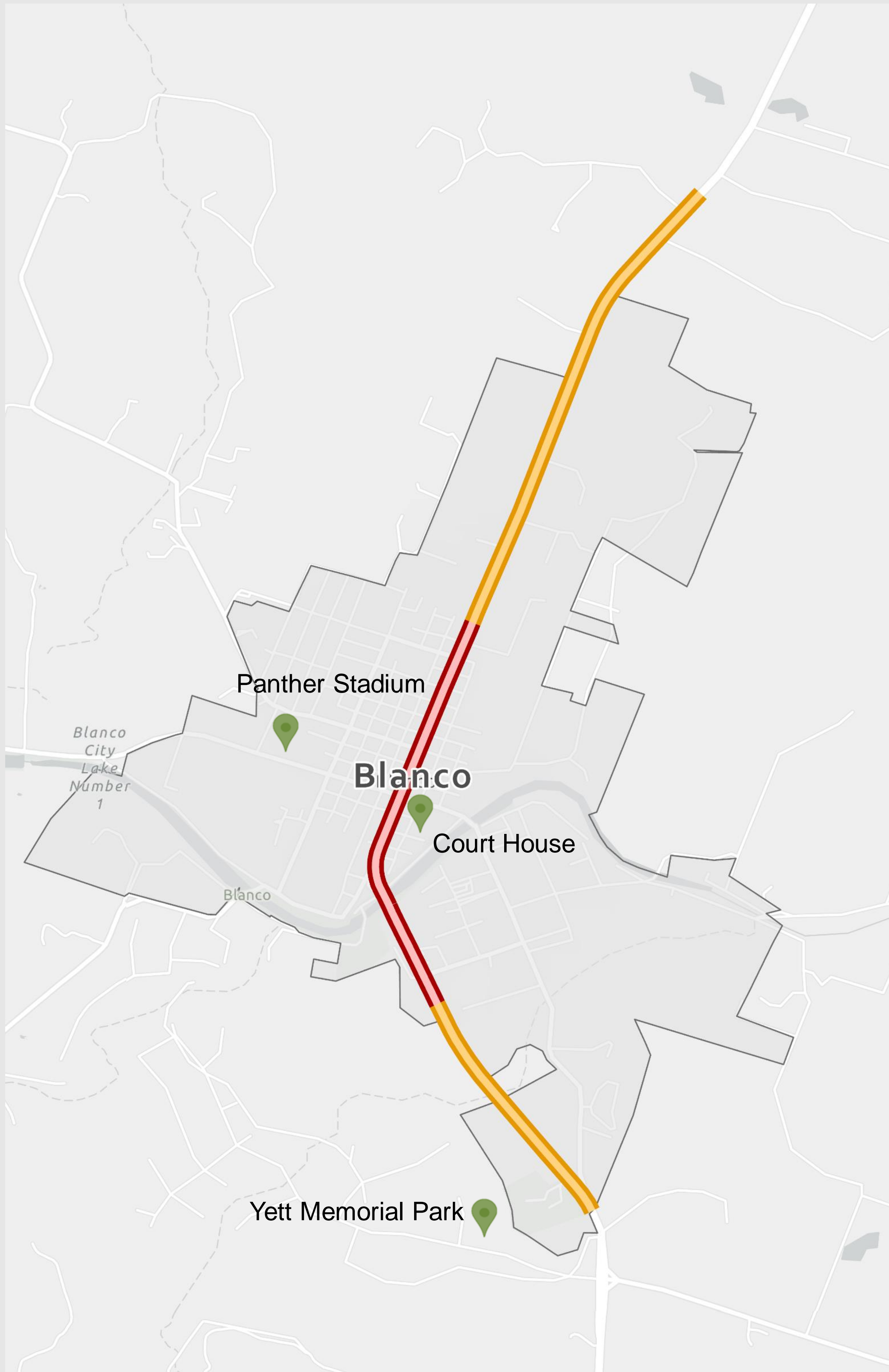
Large trucks account for 12% of existing traffic, and increase noise, pavement degradation, and safety concerns through downtown Blanco, which negatively affect the historic and community feel.

US 281 through the City of Blanco has a higher crash rate than the Statewide average for similar roads. The intersections of 4th Street, Blanco Avenue, and RM 32 have the highest number of crashes.

Crash Rates Comparison



Existing Conditions – US 281 Typical Sections



Study Overview – Anticipated Timeline*



2023

2024

	Summer	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall	
Study Milestone	Gathering Existing Conditions Information and Identification of Relief Route Options		Refinement & Analysis of Relief Route Options			Locally Recommended Relief Route Option	
Stakeholder & Public Engagement	Community Workshop #1 ■	Community Workshop #2 ■		Community Workshop #3 ■	Pop-up Community Event ■	Community Workshop #4 ■	

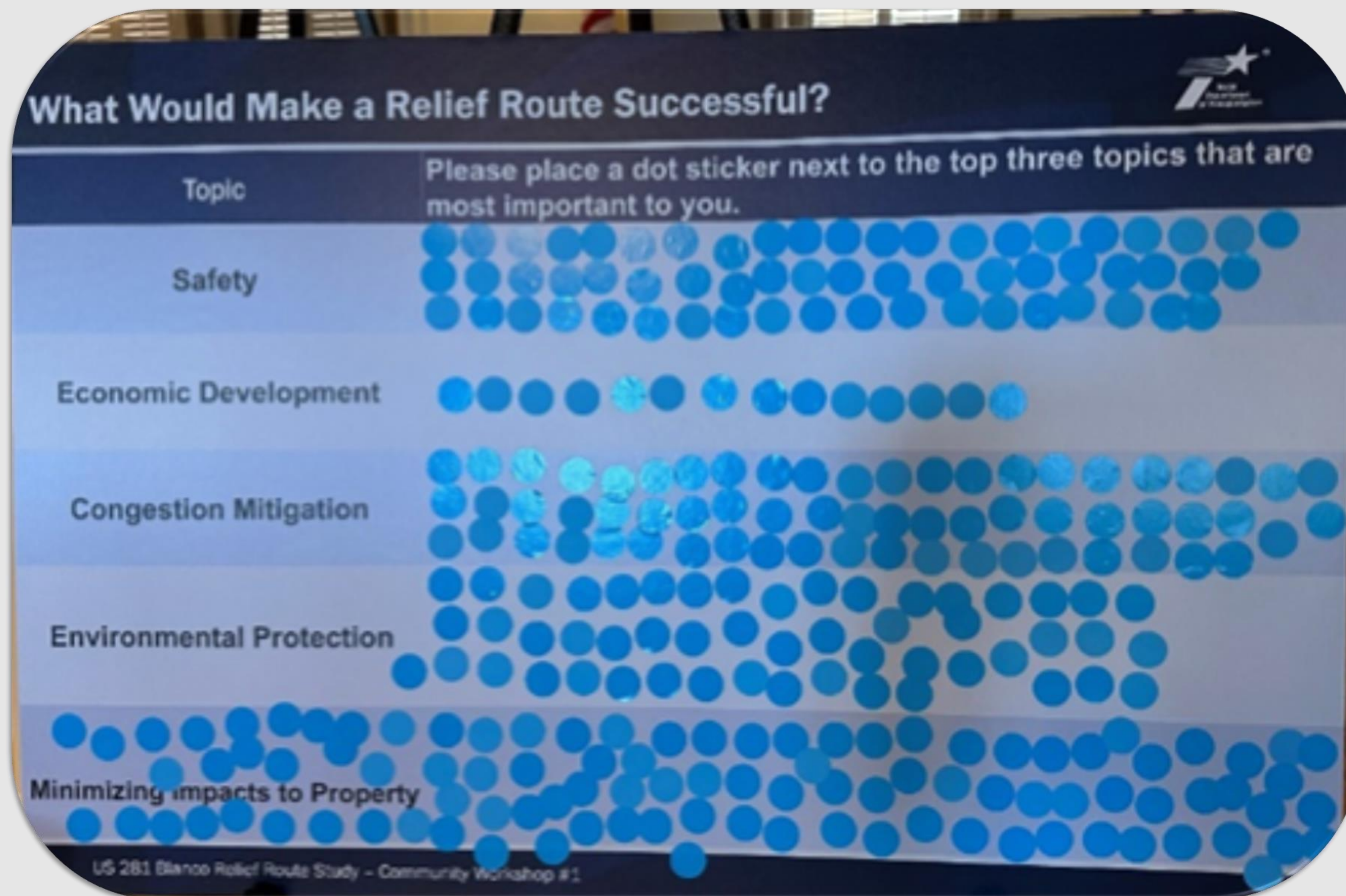
We are here

*Preliminary and subject to change



Community Feedback & Priorities

Feedback from Community Workshop #1 (Aug. 2023): Feedback from the question “What would make a Relief Route Successful?” was used to develop draft evaluation criteria and potential relief route options throughout the study.



- #1** Minimizing Impacts to Property
- #2** Congestion Mitigation
- #3** Safety
- #4** Environmental Protection
- #5** Economic Development

How will the relief route options be evaluated?

Feedback from Community Workshop #2 (Nov. 2023)

The town will naturally grow over the next 20+ years. The road needs to be far enough away to still bypass the town and not go through it.

Choose the route that impacts the least amount of residences and has a minimal distance to run.

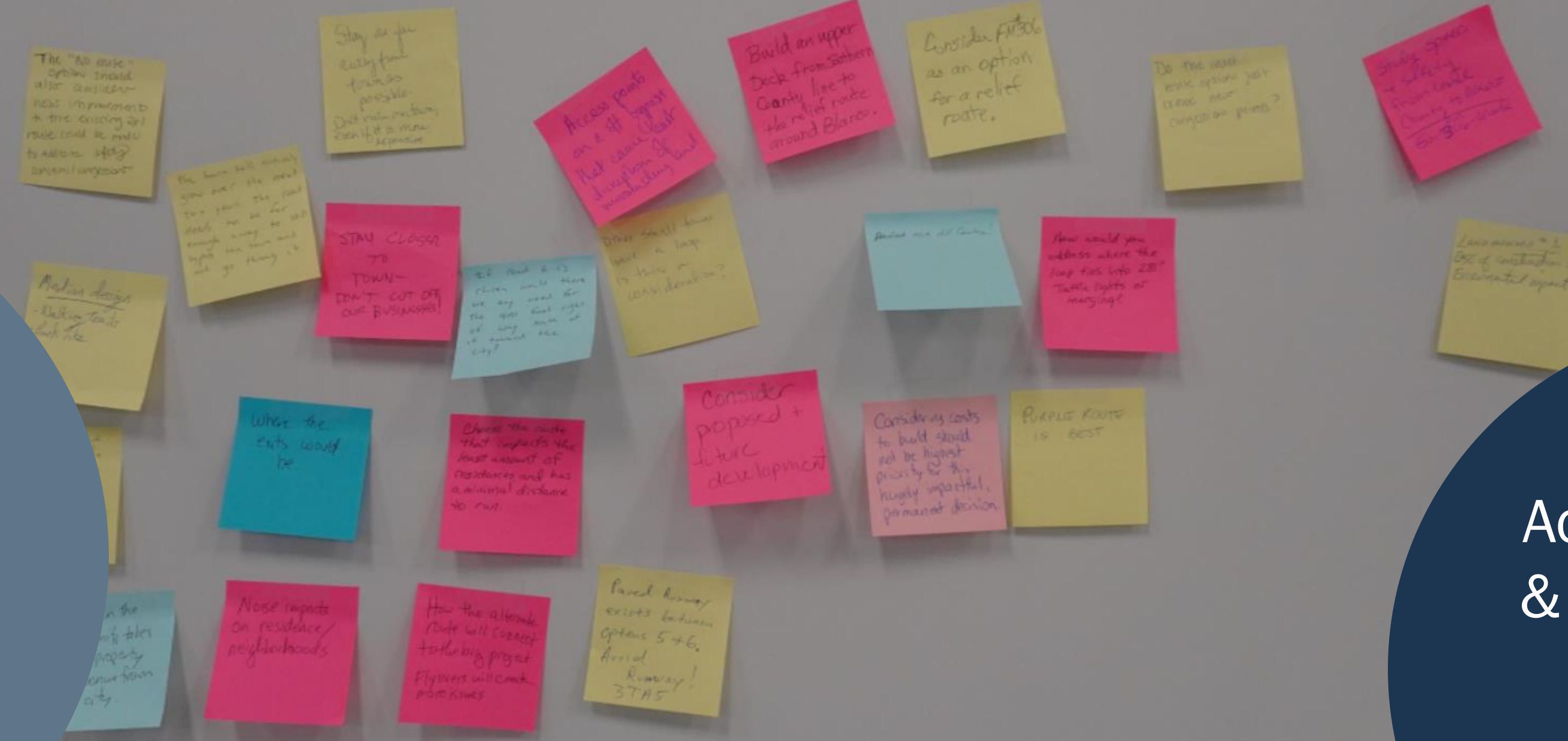
Consider proposed & future development.

Considering costs to build should not be highest priority for this hugely impactful permanent decision.

Access points on & off bypass that cause least disruption or surrounding land.

How will the relief route options be evaluated?

What are we missing? Please provide your thoughts on how the relief route options should be evaluated using post-it notes.

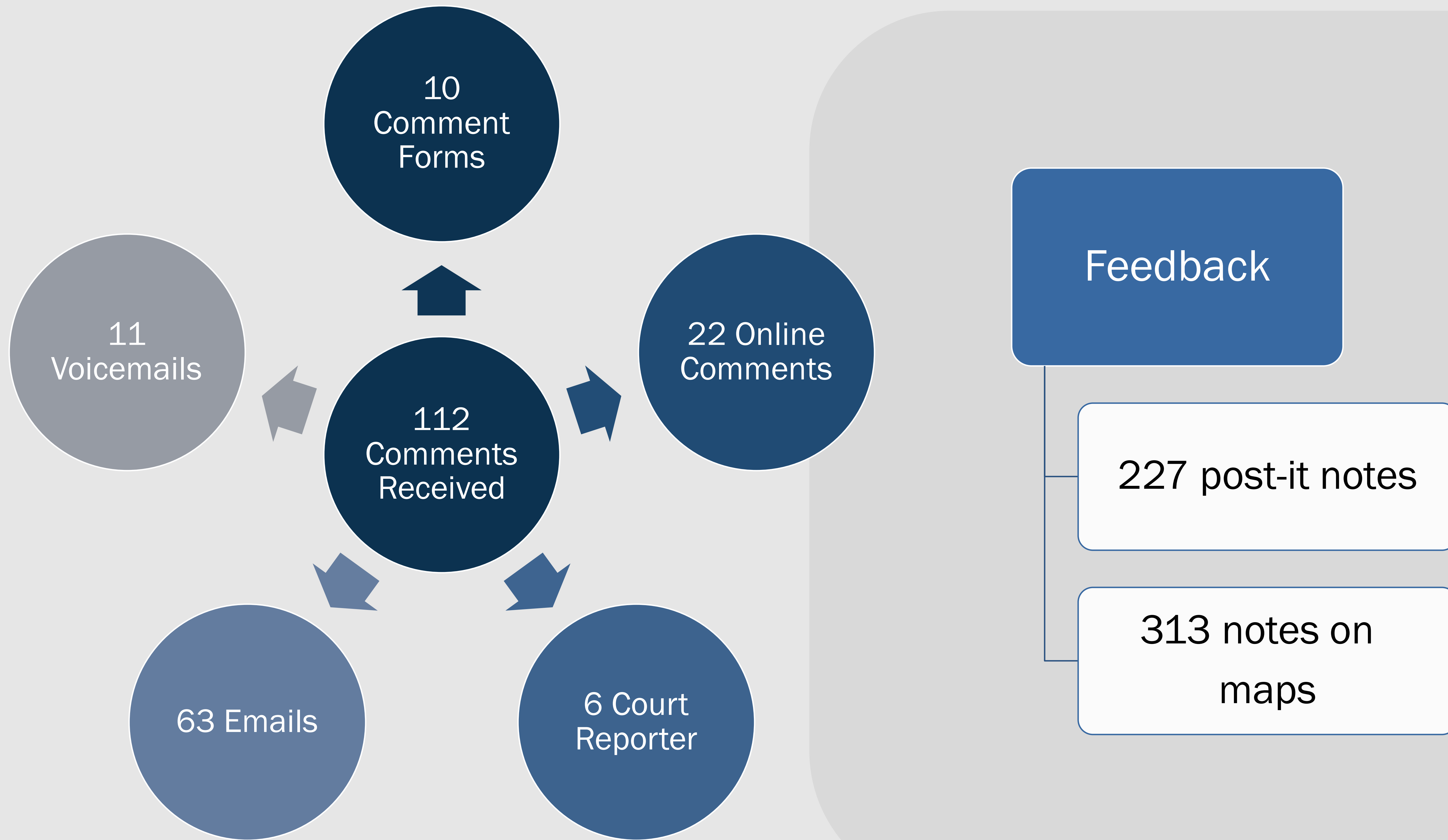


US 281 Blanco Relief Route Study – Community Workshop #2

*NOTE: Many comments addressed several themes listed above.

This feedback was used to refine draft evaluation criteria and potential relief route options.

Comments and Feedback Received and Considered



Note: Comments and Feedback Received and Considered from Community Workshop #2 (Nov. 2023)

What We Heard



Safety

- Concerns were voiced about increased traffic and safety. Multiple comments indicated that speeding, traffic and future growth will continue to make the existing route unsafe if nothing is done.

Congestion Mitigation

- Feedback indicated that whichever route meets the project goals of addressing safety and mobility, allows access to downtown businesses and provides good connections while diverting people out of downtown should be prioritized.

Impact to Properties

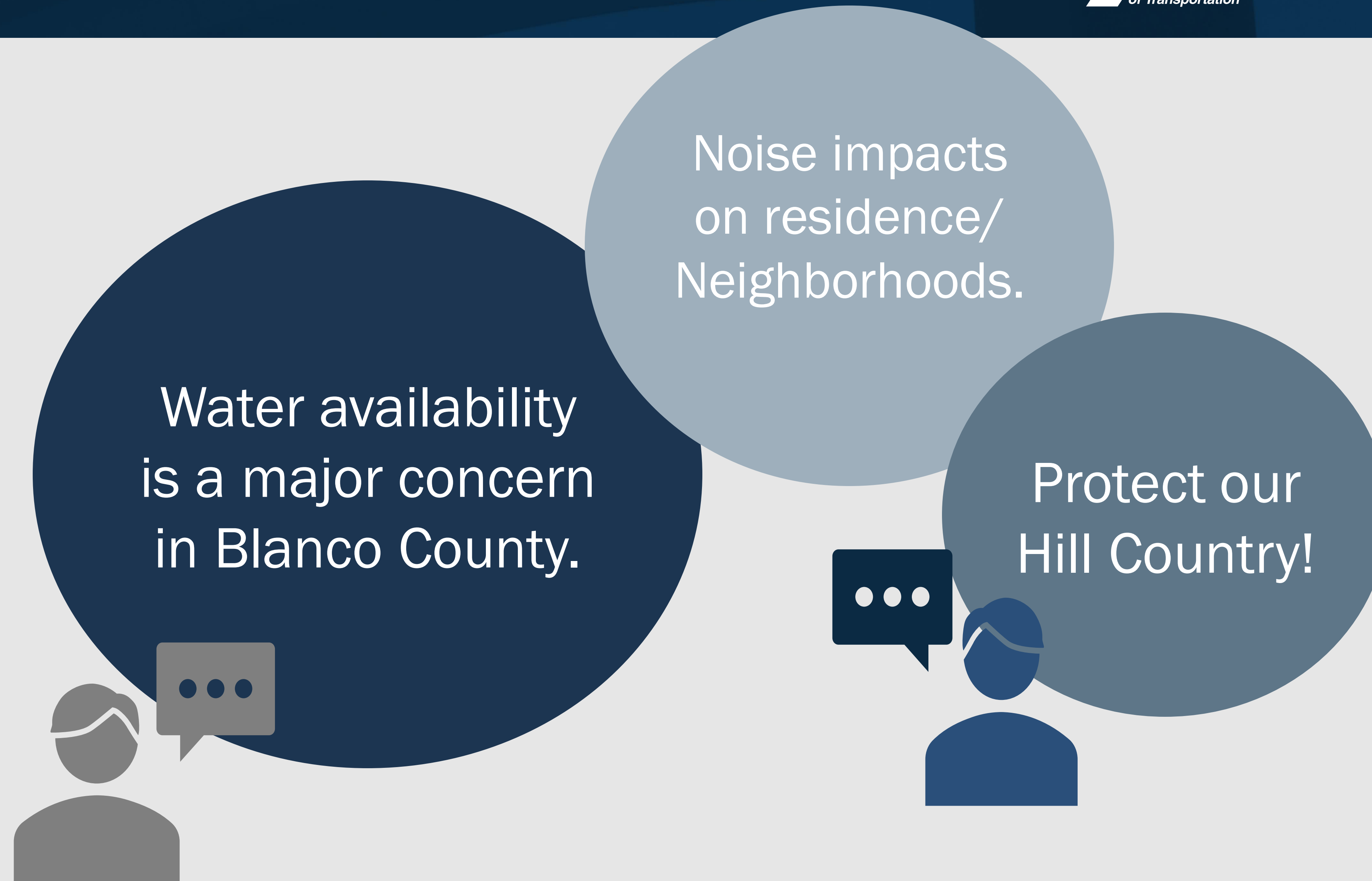
- Feedback has consistently focused on limiting impact to properties and it is clear this is a focus for the community. Feedback varied in which route people felt had the least impact as well as what that impact looked like regarding residences, businesses and farms/ranches.

Environmental

- Comments show a deep-rooted appreciation of the land and history surrounding Blanco. While people highlighted the importance of limiting property impacts in prior feedback, it appears that for many people, property impacts connect dually with limiting impact to the land, ranches and waterways.

Updated Evaluation Criteria

Feedback collected from Community Workshop #2 (Nov. 2023) was analyzed and used to update the evaluation criteria to include the following:



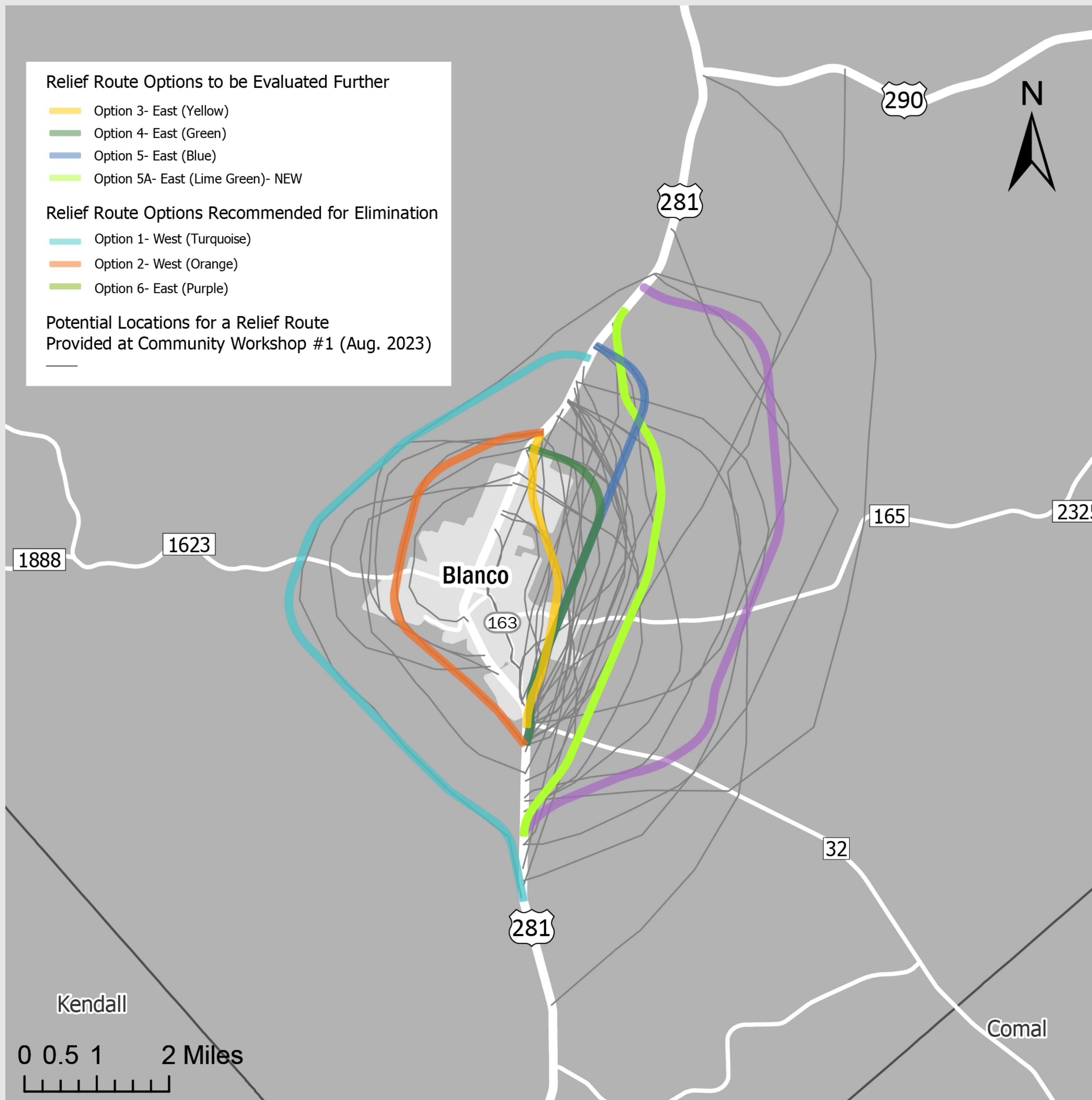
Evaluation Criteria Added

Wells

Conservation Easements

Noise Impacts

US 281 Relief Route Options



We received more than 40 potential locations for a relief route at Community Workshop #1 (August 2023). Of those 40 potential locations, seven (7) relief route options were identified, in addition to the No-Build Option (Do Nothing), to evaluate in more detail.

The potential relief route options are preliminary and can be refined as the design progresses.

Evaluation Criteria – Neutral Criteria



The following items are designated as equal or neutral in the evaluation criteria. This means the following criteria were the same across all routes and/or primarily informational when considering a route.

Historic Properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No recorded historic properties on any routes
Cemeteries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No recorded cemeteries on any routes
Texas Highway Trunk System compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All routes are compliant
National Highway System compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All routes are compliant
Strategic Highway Network compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All routes are compliant
National Highway Freight Network compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All routes are compliant
Motor vehicle level of service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• B - Reasonably free flow, but speeds beginning to be restricted by traffic conditions – all routes aside from “NO BUILD”
Noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Traffic noise outside of assumed right of way for a relief route options would not experience a noise level of 66 dB or above

Based on community feedback the following three factors are recognized as priorities within the community. Dark-skies and water demand/supply are project elements that will be considered in the environmental and/or design phase as the project moves forward.

International Dark Sky Community

- Dark-Sky lighting is a design approach that preserves and protects the nighttime environment by using properly-shielded outdoor lighting equipment that reduces light pollution outside of right of way.
- Lighting is not addressed in this phase of the study, however, will be reviewed in future phases.

Water Demand/Supply

- Current and future water supply in the Blanco area is a topic that is a priority for many people and the community.
- Considerations that impact water supply such as access and frontage roads will be determined during future project planning.

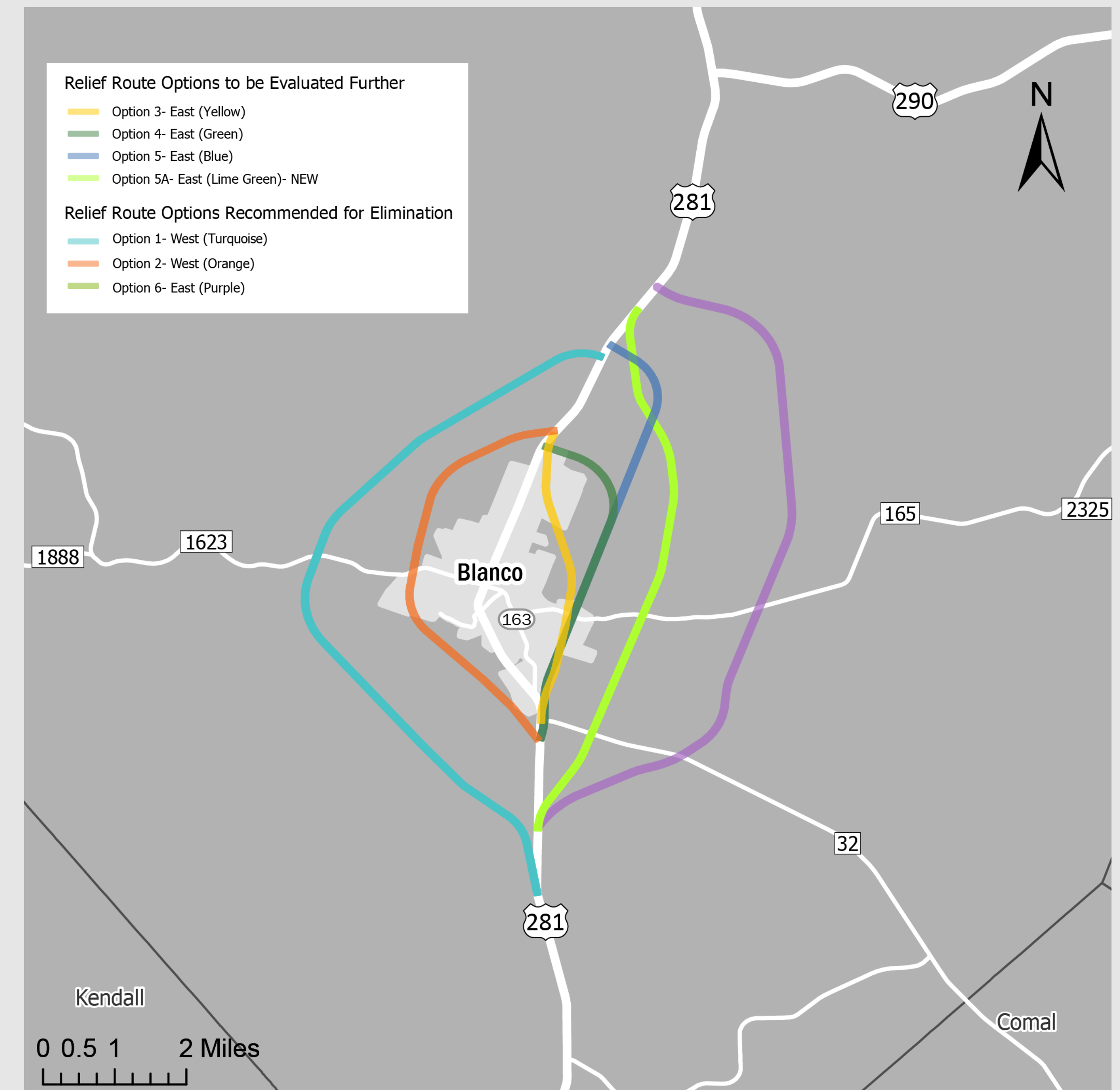
Understanding Evaluation Criteria

The following exhibits are a condensed version of the completed evaluation criteria separated by the communities top four priorities:

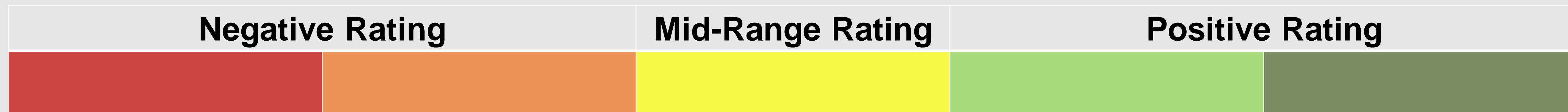
1. Safety
2. Congestion Mitigation
3. Impact to Properties
4. Environmental

Within each slide you will see the seven (7) relief route options that were evaluated.

Sections highlighted in red would typically be viewed as negative, sections in green would be viewed as being positive. Each section is color-coded to represent the highest, lowest values (red and green) with the three remaining colors representing a gradient from negative to positive.



Evaluation of Relief Routes – Safety



Criteria	No Build (2045)	Relief Route Option 1 West (Turquoise)	Relief Route Option 2 West (Orange)	Relief Route Option 3 East (Yellow)	Relief Route Option 4 East (Green)	Relief Route Option 5 East (Blue)	NEW Relief Route Option 5A East (Lime Green)	Relief Route Option 6 East (Purple)
	North - ~US 290 South- ~FM 473							
% Reduction in intersection and driveway crashes (all severities)	N/A	8%	8%	23%	19%	25%	23%	14%
Reduction in total crashes (all severities)	N/A	15%	21%	38%	35%	33%	25%	4%
Reduction in bike/ped crashes	N/A	29%	29%	48%	48%	45%	51%	37%
Reduction in fatalities and injury crashes	N/A	-5%	16%	32%	26%	21%	16%	-16%
Percentage of drivers that would use the relief route instead of existing US 281	N/A	37%	37%	54%	51%	57%	55%	45%

Evaluation of Relief Routes – Congestion Mitigation



Negative Rating		Mid-Range Rating	Positive Rating	

Criteria	No Build (2045) North - ~US 290 South- ~FM 473	Relief Route Option 1 West (Turquoise)	Relief Route Option 2 West (Orange)	Relief Route Option 3 East (Yellow)	Relief Route Option 4 East (Green)	Relief Route Option 5 East (Blue)	NEW Relief Route Option 5A East (Lime Green)	Relief Route Option 6 East (Purple)
% Reduction in travel time for passenger vehicles between forecast and existing	N/A	19%	22%	28%	26%	32%	30%	25%
% Reduction in travel time for freight between forecast and existing	N/A	19%	21%	25%	23%	27%	27%	23%
Travel time reliability: Forecasted travel time	21 min	17 min	16 min	15 min	16 min	14 min	15 min	16 min
Percent reduction in time at each traffic signal when compared to the No Build	N/A	44%	44%	62%	61%	63%	62%	57%

Evaluation of Relief Routes – Impact to Properties



Negative Rating		Mid-Range Rating	Positive Rating	

Criteria	No Build (2045)	Relief Route Option 1 West (Turquoise)	Relief Route Option 2 West (Orange)	Relief Route Option 3 East (Yellow)	Relief Route Option 4 East (Green)	Relief Route Option 5 East (Blue)	NEW Relief Route Option 5A East (Lime Green)	Relief Route Option 6 East (Purple)
	North - ~US 290 South- ~FM 473							
Amount of new right of way needed (acres)	0	493	273	187	211	268	374	465
Total parcels impacted	0	61	69	13	19	26	36	47
Total displacements - structures impacted, may include residential, commercial or agricultural structures (sheds, barns, garages).	0	25	15	3	5	8	0	3
Known conservation easements (acres)	0	53	1	0	0	0	0	20

*Impacts and Displacements: An impact means that part of the property is included in the right of way footprint. A displacement means that a structure is impacted.

Evaluation of Relief Routes – Environmental





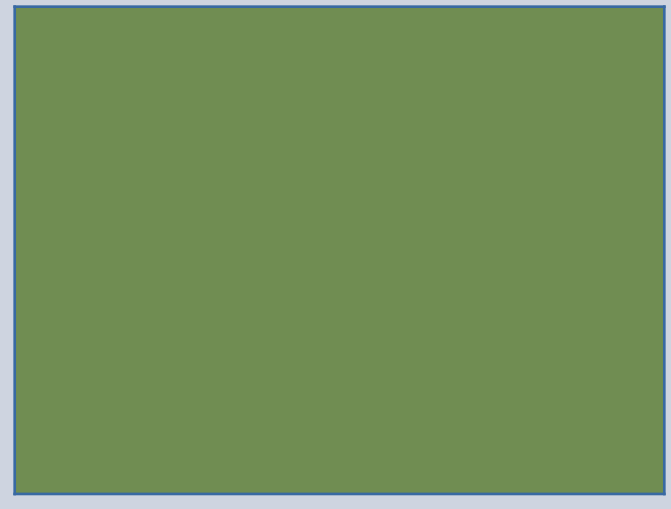
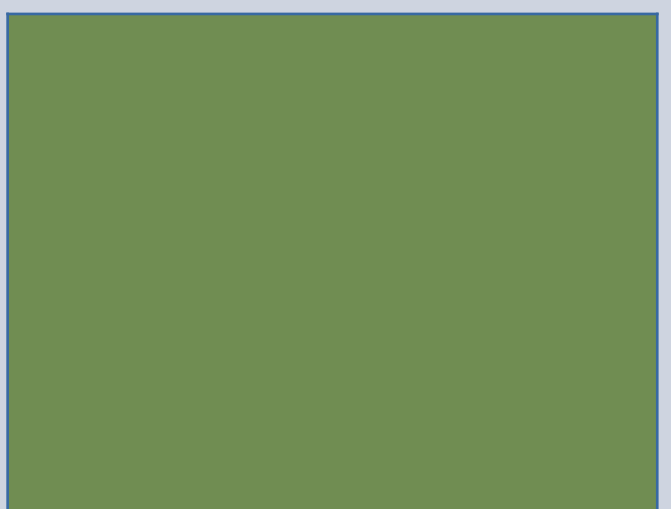

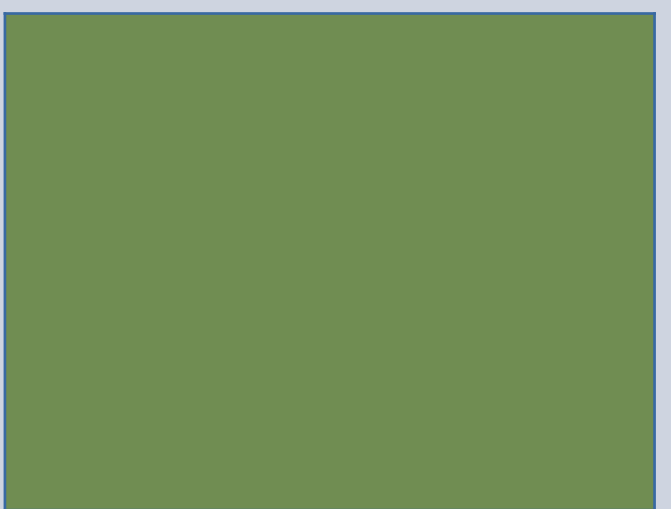
Criteria	No Build (2045) North - ~US 290 South- ~FM 473	Relief Route Option 1 West (Turquoise)	Relief Route Option 2 West (Orange)	Relief Route Option 3 East (Yellow)	Relief Route Option 4 East (Green)	Relief Route Option 5 East (Blue)	NEW Relief Route Option 5A East (Lime Green)	Relief Route Option 6 East (Purple)
Potential golden-cheeked warbler habitat (acres)	0	72	15	0	0	6	14	31
Farmland within right of way (acres)	0	91	55	32	33	61	118	134
Section 6(f) protected parkland within right of way (acres)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Section 4(f) protected parkland right of way (acres)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

Evaluation of Relief Routes – Environmental (Water)



Negative Rating		Mid-Range Rating	Positive Rating	

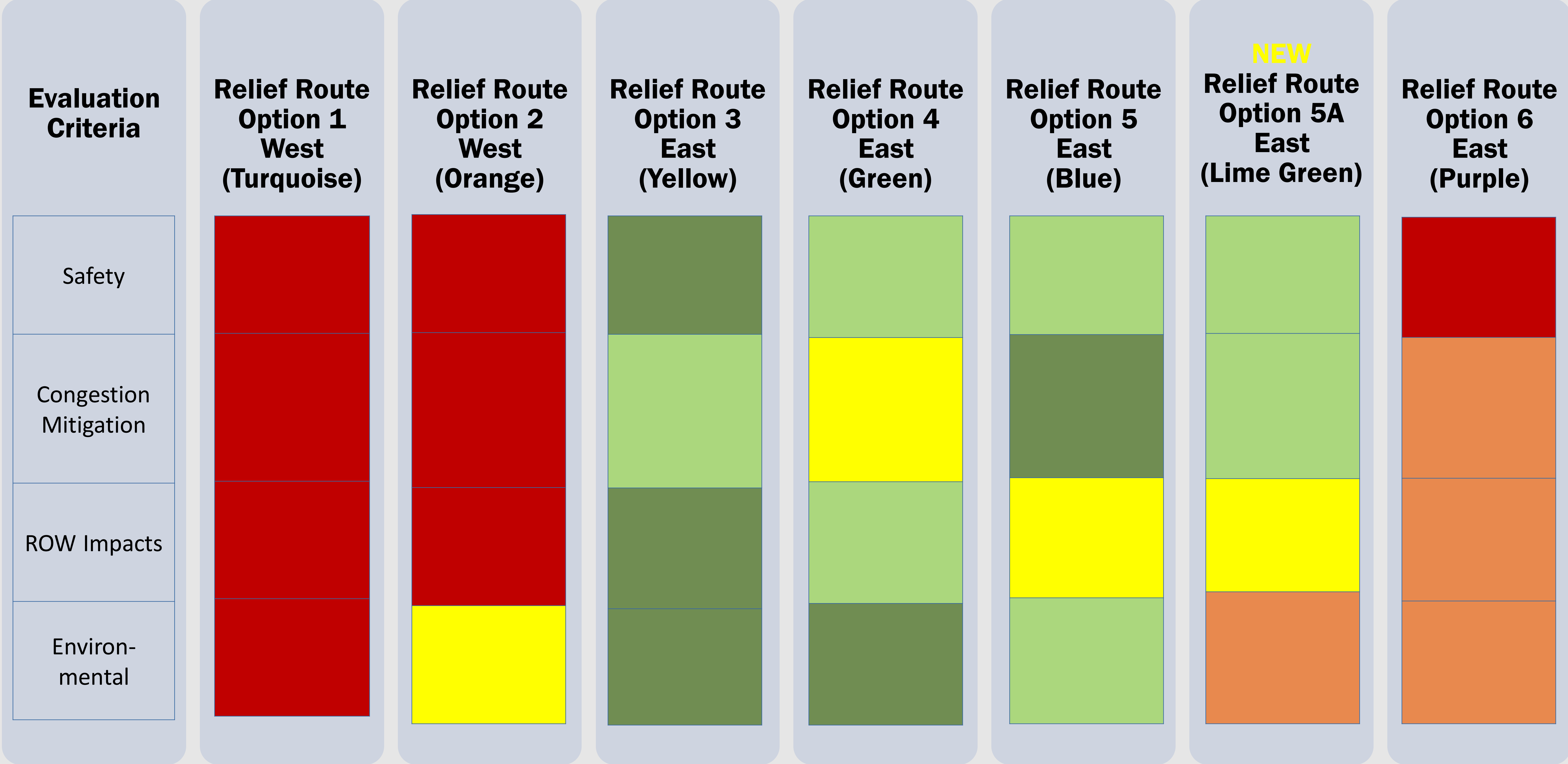
Criteria	No Build (2045) North - ~US 290 South- ~FM 473	Relief Route Option 1 West (Turquoise)	Relief Route Option 2 West (Orange)	Relief Route Option 3 East (Yellow)	Relief Route Option 4 East (Green)	Relief Route Option 5 East (Blue)	NEW Relief Route Option 5A East (Lime Green)	Relief Route Option 6 East (Purple)
Water wells within right of way (potentially displaced wells)	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Potential wetlands within right of way (acres)	3	7	4	3	3	4	6	6
Length of stream crossing within right of way (feet)	5,087	10,181	3,378	2,357	1,935	3,709	9,919	8,907
Stream crossings within right of way	23	17	8	6	4	10	20	15

Evaluation Criteria	Relief Route Option 1 West (Turquoise)	Relief Route Option 2 West (Orange)	Relief Route Option 3 East (Yellow)	Relief Route Option 4 East (Green)	Relief Route Option 5 East (Blue)	NEW Relief Route Option 5A East (Lime Green)	Relief Route Option 6 East (Purple)
Public Input						NA	

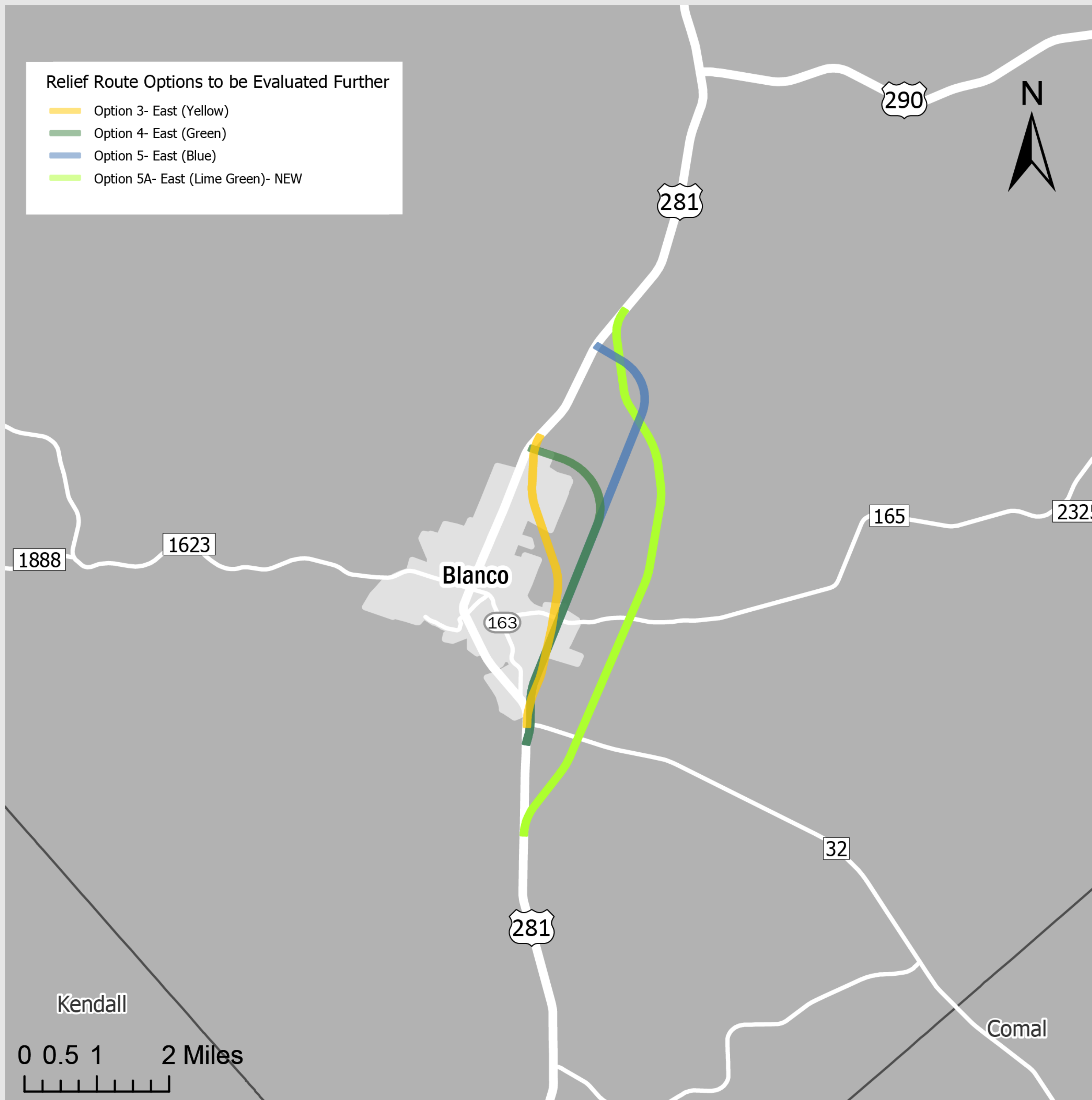
Community Feedback

- Feedback from the public collected during Community Workshop #2 (Nov. 2023) favored Relief Route Options 3, 4 and 6. *Options 3 and 4 will be recommended for further study.*
- Community feedback indicated that Option 6 was liked primarily for how far it was from the city and the thought that it wouldn't have any right of way impacts. Once the relief route options were evaluated, the data indicated that Relief Route Option 6 did not meet community priorities so has been recommended for elimination. Since the feedback indicated the community would like to see an option farther out of town, the project team created Relief Route Option 5A to reflect community feedback.

Overview of Relief Routes



US 281 Relief Route Options



Based on feedback from the community collected during Community Workshop #2 (November 2023) and the evaluation of seven (7) relief route options and the No-Build Option (Do Nothing), TxDOT recommends these four (4) routes to be evaluated further including:

- Relief Route Option 3 – East (Yellow)
- Relief Route Option 4 – East (Green)
- Relief Route Option 5 – East (Blue)
- Relief Route Option 5A – East (Lime Green) - NEW

The potential relief route options are preliminary and can be refined as the design progresses.

Relief Routes Recommended for Further Study



Relief Route Option 3 – East (Yellow)

Expected to decrease crashes
Expected reductions in travel time
Community feedback preferred routes

Lowest amount of right of way needed and parcels impacted (13) with three (3) displacements

Relief Route Option 4 – East (Green)

Expected to decrease crashes
Expected to address congestion and divert a % of traffic
Could cause five (5) displacements.

Relief Route Option 5 – East (Blue)

Expected to reduce intersection and driveway crashes
Highest % of diverted drivers and largest reduction in estimated travel time
Could impact 26 parcels with eight (8) displacements

Relief Route Option 5A – East (Lime Green) - NEW

Expected reductions in travel time and better travel reliability
Moderate right-of-way needs
Could impact 36 properties but would have no displacements

Could affect some environmental features

Note: The No-Build Option (Do-Nothing) will continue to be considered and used as a baseline comparison.

Relief Route Options Recommended for Elimination



Relief Route Option 1 – West (Turquoise)

Did NOT meet any community priorities on:
Safety & Congestion mitigation
Property & environmental impacts

Poorly favored in public feedback



Relief Route Option 2 – West (Orange)

Ranked POORLY on community priorities including:
Safety & Congestion mitigation
Property & environmental impacts

Could impact the most parcels (69)
with 15 displacements

Poorly favored in public feedback



Relief Route Option 6 – East (Purple)

Rated lowest on safety
Property & environmental impacts
Moderate congestion mitigation effects

Thoughts on Access – Community Feedback



How do you feel about access? Please provide your thoughts on whether a relief route should or should not have access (e.g., frontage roads, exits) using Post-It Notes:

On January 9, 2024, upon motion and second, Blanco City Council voted 3-2 to recommend to TXDOT that any Highway 281 relief route near the City of Blanco be:

- 1) routed outside the City's limits and ETJ;
- 2) have no exits other than the north and south interconnections directly onto 281;
- 3) have no frontage roads.

Introduction to Types of Access and Right of Way

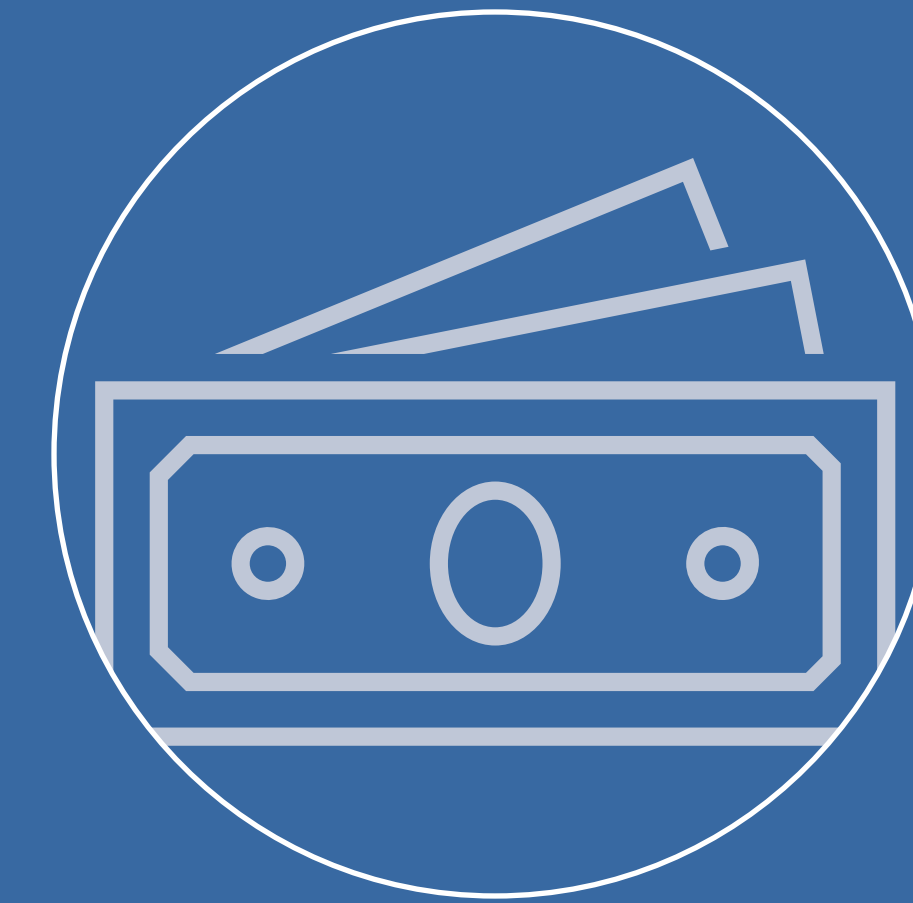
Here are some things to know about access and right of way:



Access and right-of-way recommendations vary based on the needs of the project.



Right-of-way width ranges can go up to 400 feet depending on the amount of lanes needed (i.e., frontage roads).



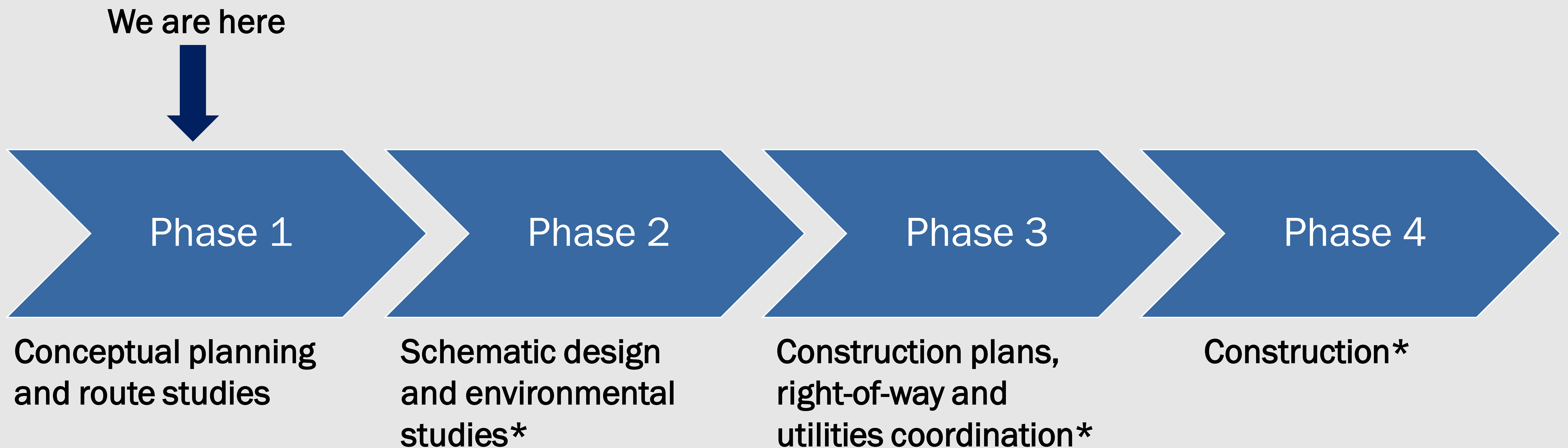
Access and right of way are impacted by a variety of different factors, including construction costs, property acquisition costs, access costs and economic development preferences of the community.



Study Overview – Purpose & TxDOT's Project Development Process



The purpose of this study, in collaboration with local stakeholders and the public, is to develop a relief route alignment around the city of Blanco that meets TxDOT's mission and reflects community values.



*Advancement to the next phase is contingent on the outcome of the previous phase and funding availability.

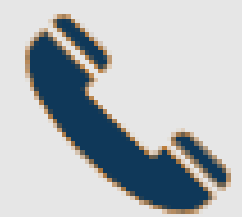
SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK



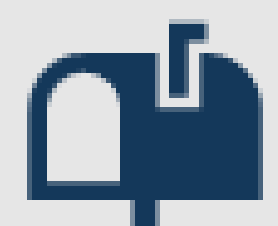
In person Submit a comment form and/or provide verbal comment via the court reporter



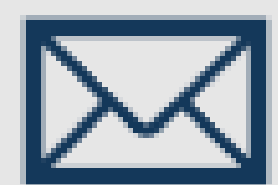
Visit TXDOT.gov and search “US 281 Blanco Relief Route”



Call (512) 298-3918 and leave a verbal comment by voicemail



Mail US 281 Blanco Relief Route Study
1608 W. 6th Street
Austin, TX 78703

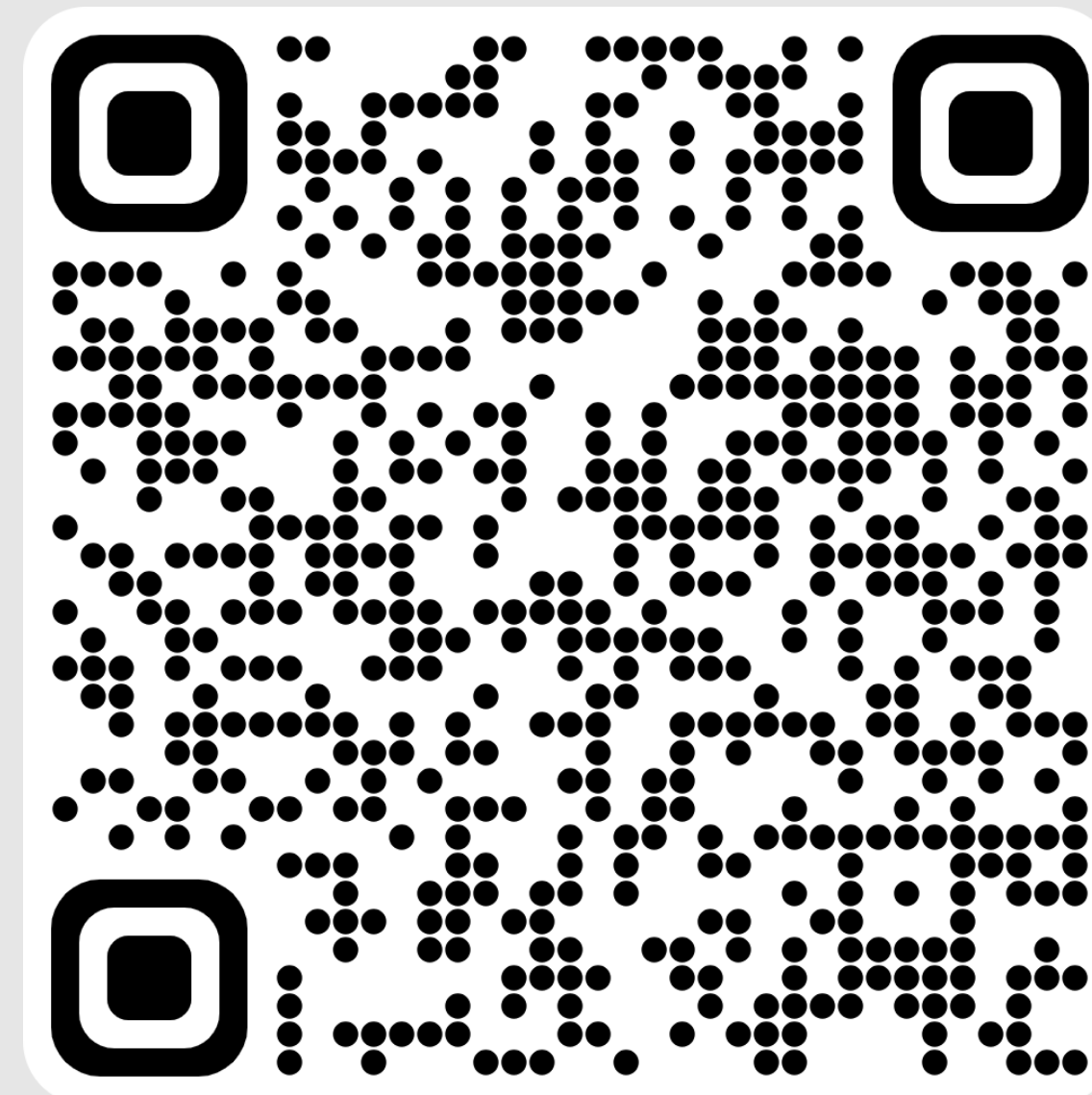


Email BlancoReliefRoute@gmail.com

If you'd like to have your comment included in the workshop summary, please submit by **Tuesday, April 9, 2024**. We will continue to collect feedback throughout the process and encourage you to share your comments through any of the above methods.

Next Steps

- The study team will compile the feedback provided from this workshop and study the four recommended options in more detail:
 - Relief Route Option 3 – East (Yellow)
 - Relief Route Option 4 – East (Green)
 - Relief Route Option 5 – East (Blue)
 - Relief Route Option 5A – East (Lime Green)
- All the workshop materials are available online at www.TxDOT.gov keyword search “US 281 Blanco Relief Route”.
- Look out for upcoming public outreach opportunities!



Go to webpage and subscribe for updates!

COMMENT

PROVIDE YOUR INPUT

COURT REPORTER

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MAP ACTIVITY

PROVIDE YOUR FEEDBACK HERE