



**PUBLIC HEARING**  
**US 281 AT SH 71 INTERCHANGE**  
**BURNET COUNTY, TEXAS**  
**CSJ: 0252-02-058**  
**APRIL 9, 2026**

**SLIDE 1 – Title Slide**

Welcome to the virtual public hearing for the Texas Department of Transportation Austin District's US 281 at SH 71 Interchange Project. TxDOT is proposing safety and mobility improvements at the US 281 at SH 71 interchange in Burnet County.

The virtual public hearing will be available online and comments are being accepted through Friday, April 24, 2026.

The purpose of the public hearing is to present the environmental findings and provide an opportunity for public comment.

Additionally, since this is a pre-recorded, virtual presentation, you will be able to pause, rewind or fast forward this video at anytime.

**SLIDE 2 – Drive Like A Texan**

Because safety is a priority at TxDOT, we begin each meeting with a safety minute. Today we will highlight TxDOT's new safety campaign, Drive Like a Texan.

No matter where we start, every mile brings us closer. And as Texans, we take care of each other along the way. We lend a hand. Slow down. And take our

time. At the end of the day, we all want to get home safe. Drive like a Texan. Kind. Courteous. And safe.

### **SLIDE 3 – US 281 at SH 71 Interchange**

TxDOT has concluded a study for proposed safety and mobility improvements at the US 281 and SH 71 interchange in Burnet County. The safety and mobility improvements include replacing the current cloverleaf interchange with a turbine interchange, adding elevated structures to improve mobility through the interchange, adding frontage roads to separate high-speed through traffic from local traffic, and adding shared-use paths to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians.

Most of US 281 functions as both a local thoroughfare and commuter highway. In many cases, it is the sole access to subdivisions, businesses and schools. In addition, The Texas Freight Mobility Plan 2018 identifies US 281 as a key highway corridor being used by the agricultural industry in Texas. SH 71 is the main route from Austin into the Hill Country and towards the Highland Lakes region in Burnet County. This interchange is integral to the mobility of freight and commuters and provides access to popular travel destinations in Central Texas and local connectivity for nearby towns including Marble Falls, Horseshoe Bay, and Johnson City.

#### **SLIDE 4 – Existing Interchange - Cloverleaf**

The current interchange was built in the 1960s and does not meet current design and safety standards.

This cloverleaf interchange uses loop ramps to accommodate left-turning movements. This creates short merging areas between ramps, which can lead to more spots where drivers must quickly react. The tight curves also require slower speeds and can be difficult for trucks to navigate.

Around the interchange, US 281 is a four-lane roadway, each direction of traffic has two lanes and is separated with a grassy median. At the interchange and west of the interchange, SH 71 is an undivided two-lane roadway with one lane in each direction. East of the interchange, SH 71 is an undivided four-lane roadway with two lanes in each direction.

This project is needed because the interchange does not meet current design standards and does not provide adequate lane and ramp configurations to accommodate future traffic volumes.

#### **SLIDE 5 – Project Development Process**

The US 281 at SH 71 Interchange Project is currently in Phase 2: the Schematic Design and Environmental Study phase. Phase 1 began in 2022 with a Feasibility Study that included Alternatives Analysis. Phase 2 began in 2023 and is expected to be complete in 2026 with an environmental finding. The subsequent phases including final design, right-of-way acquisition, utility adjustments, and construction are dependent on the outcome of the previous

phase and available funding and have no specific timeline. Funding is identified for this project in the Unified Transportation Plan.

### **SLIDE 6 – Preliminary Analysis**

TxDOT began the project with a feasibility study that included researching the existing and future conditions to better understand the project needs. This preliminary analysis helped TxDOT address existing issues while also preparing for the future.

Some of the preliminary analysis work that has been completed on the US 281 at SH 71 Interchange Project includes:

- Safety analysis of the existing roadway
- Research on past and future regional population growth
- Development of future traffic projections; and
- Examining and understanding how the roadway integrates with TxDOT's statewide plan

### **SLIDE 7 – Safety Analysis**

Within the project limits, there were 95 total crashes from 2020 to 2024. Annual crashes increased from 18 in 2020 to 30 in 2024, a 67 percent increase.

Though there were no fatal injury crashes over five years, there were eight crashes resulting in serious injuries.

Most of the crashes occurred at and around the interchange, and near local access points.

The crash rate within the US 281 project limits is about three times higher than the statewide average for similar highways. The crash rate within the SH 71 project limits is over two times higher than the statewide average.

### **SLIDE 8 – Regional Population Growth**

In addition to improving safety around the interchange, TxDOT must also develop a project that accommodates future growth in the region.

US 281 is a major north/south corridor, and SH 71 connects Marble Falls to Austin. According to the US Census Bureau and the Texas Demographic Center; from 1980 to 2020, the neighboring counties of Travis, Williamson, Blanco and Llano nearly tripled in population growth. Travis County, which connects with Burnet County via SH 71, ranked ninth in national population growth from 2010 to 2020. When compared with all US counties, this regional growth is substantial.

Burnet County's population is projected to increase by 33 percent over the next 30 years. However, in that same period the regional population is anticipated to increase at a higher rate.

This regional growth is expected to translate into economic growth and traffic growth in Burnet County.

### **SLIDE 9 – Traffic Projections - US 281**

The tremendous growth in adjacent counties has contributed to traffic volumes increasing in this project area. Additionally, the number of new homes built around the interchange have generated more traffic in the project area. More homes and businesses are currently under construction and more developments in the project area are planned.

Between 2019 and 2024, the traffic on US 281 increased 25 percent to 23,900 vehicles per day north of the interchange and increased 38 percent to 14,900 vehicles per day south of the interchange. It is forecasted that traffic volumes will increase to over 32,000 and over 39,000 vehicles per day on these respective segments by the year 2034, a 64 to 117 percent increase over 10 years.

### **SLIDE 10 – Traffic Projections – SH 71**

Between 2019 and 2024, the traffic on SH 71 west of the interchange increased 21 percent to 8,800 vehicles per day and east of the interchange traffic increased 84 percent to 24,800 vehicles per day. It is forecasted that traffic volumes will increase to over 24,000 and over 32,000 vehicles per day on these respective segments by the year 2034, a 29 to 176 percent increase over 10 years.

These traffic projections account for growth of both long-distance traffic patterns and local travel demand. The existing roadway is expected to

experience safety and congestion issues with these traffic volumes if no improvements are made.

### **SLIDE 11 – Connectivity**

US 281 has been identified by multiple agencies as a critical highway within Texas and the nation connecting motorists to Marble Falls, Blanco and San Antonio.

- The National Highway System, designated by Federal Highway Administration includes the Interstate Highway System.
- The Strategic Highway Network, designated by the Department of Defense, is a network of highways which are important to the United States' strategic defense policy, which provide access and emergency capabilities for defense.
- The Texas Trunk System, designated by TxDOT, is a statewide network of rural highways that complements the Interstate Highway System and is a principal connector for all Texas cities with a population over 20,000.
- The Texas Highway Freight Network, designated by TxDOT, is the Texas portion of the National Highway Freight Network implemented by the Federal government.

SH 71 is also on the National Highway System and Texas Highway Freight Network.

## **SLIDE 12 – Alternatives Evaluated**

As part of the planning and feasibility study, TxDOT evaluated several interchange alternatives that address the project needs around the intersection of US 281 and SH 71. Four alternatives were evaluated during the project evaluation process. These alternatives are depicted on this slide with examples of similar existing interchanges.

Alternative 1, a two-level turbine interchange that allows for free-flowing traffic through and around the interchange, was selected.

The interchange alternatives were evaluated on performance metrics including traffic operations, safety, right-of-way footprint, and environmental impacts. This evaluation is summarized in an Alternatives Evaluation Matrix.

## **SLIDE 13 – Alternatives Evaluated**

TxDOT evaluated these four alternatives in the feasibility study at the beginning of 2024, and the results of the analysis are summarized in this evaluation matrix.

The turbine interchange design best serves TxDOT's goal of improving safety in the project area by eliminating left-turn conflicts at the interchange. The turbine design also best meets TxDOT's regional mobility goal by moving traffic through the interchange most efficiently. The turbine design has a smaller right-of-way footprint than the options with flyovers and is less visually obstructive than the flyover options.

The turbine interchange design was determined to be less effective for local trip operations. However, the TxDOT team has optimized the design to mitigate this initial deficiency.

Please see the exhibit board to view the evaluation matrix in greater detail.

### **SLIDE 14 – Proposed Improvements**

To address project needs, the proposed improvements for this project include:

- Replacing the current cloverleaf interchange with a turbine interchange
- Adding elevated structures to improve mobility through the interchange
- Adding frontage roads to separate high-speed through traffic from local traffic; and
- Adding shared-use paths to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians

TxDOT has developed a design schematic with these improvements incorporated.

### **SLIDE 15 – Proposed Interchange - Turbine**

The turbine interchange design provides safety improvements by eliminating the need to yield when directly connecting between SH 71 and US 281.

It features sweeping ramps that take left-turning traffic in a loop around the central highway intersection in a counterclockwise direction. Maneuvering through the turbine interchange is just like maneuvering through a standard flyover interchange. Drivers exit on the right to change highways and then take the left fork to turn left or the right fork to turn right. These diagrams

illustrate the maneuver to exit right or left to change highways. For instance, US 281 northbound traffic can directly connect to SH 71 eastbound by taking the right fork or directly connect to SH 71 westbound by taking the left fork which loops around the highway intersection.

The main difference between the turbine interchange and the flyover interchange is that the turbine ramps go over and under the highways whereas the flyovers go over both highways. The turbine interchange is a two-level interchange which is more cost efficient and less visually obstructive than constructing new multi-level flyovers often used at highway intersections.

### **SLIDE 16 – What We Heard at Previous Public Meeting**

The proposed improvements were presented at a public meeting on March 28, 2024. There were 80 in-person attendees and 251 online visitors with 55 commenters throughout the comment period. TxDOT received public feedback on a variety of topics including safety, lighting, the overpass location, noise, access concerns, and public outreach. TxDOT provided responses to the public meeting comments, evaluated suggestions, and implemented changes to the proposed design.

### **SLIDE 17 – What Has Changed**

Feedback from community stakeholders, public agencies and local governments received as part of the public meeting comment period, as well as continued analyses of the project area resulted in changes to proposed design. Changes include:

- The addition of noise walls
- Removal of the overpass at Gregg Ranch Boulevard
- Avoiding impacts to the FLATZ 830 apartment buildings
- Compatibility with the City of Marble Falls Comprehensive Plan; and
- Addition of bridges and a detention pond to improve drainage

### **SLIDE 18 – Current Public Outreach**

In order engage the public in the project development process, the following notifications were utilized:

- The notice was posted to the TxDOT website on March 9, 2026.
- Notices were mailed (and/or emailed) to
  - Elected officials on March 9, 2026.
  - Community organizations, such as schools, hospitals and emergency services; and
  - To adjacent property owners as identified from Burnet County Appraisal Districts on March 16, 2026.
- Approximately 2200 Every Door Direct Postcards were delivered to local mailboxes on March 25, 2026.
- The hearing update was displayed on roadside changeable message signs beginning April 2, 2026.
- Advertisements were published in English and Spanish, as applicable, in the following newspapers:
  - The Highlander, DailyTrib Online and Horseshoe Bay Beacon

## **SLIDE 19 – About the Environmental Study**

TxDOT performed the environmental study for the US 281 at SH 71 Interchange in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA. Throughout the study, we worked closely with community members, local officials, and public agencies to understand the area's needs. We looked at current conditions, reviewed different design options—including doing nothing—and studied how each option might affect the community and environment. Based on this analysis, we identified which option best meets the project's needs.

## **SLIDE 20 – Environmental Study Findings**

As part of the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA, process, TxDOT studied the potential environmental impacts of the proposed improvements.

The project team analyzed impacts to a variety of environmental resource areas, including:

- Air quality and traffic noise
- Hazardous materials
- Cultural resources, including historic and archeological sites
- Biological resources, including threatened and endangered species
- Water resources; and
- Social and community impacts

The purpose of the Environmental Assessment (EA) is to study the potential environmental consequences of the proposed project and determine if those

consequences warrant preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The Draft EA conclusion is that the implementation of the proposed project would not result in a significant impact on the human or natural environment. A FONSI is recommended.

The Draft EA is available for public review and, following the comment period, TxDOT will consider any comments submitted. If TxDOT determines that there are no significant adverse effects, it will prepare and sign a FONSI, which will be made available to the public.

### **SLIDE 21 – Right-of-Way Information**

Based on the proposed design improvements, it is anticipated that the project would require additional right of way. The total acreage of proposed right of way including permanent and temporary easements is **95.7** acres.

Upon environmental decision, the next project phase would involve right-of-way acquisition. This is when offers and negotiations would occur with property owners to acquire needed right of way. Right-of-way acquisition would be completed in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended.

For more information, please review brochures titled "Landowner's Bill of Rights," "Relocation Assistance," and "State Purchase of Right of Way," which are available at [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov) or by scanning the QR code on the screen. These materials contain detailed information to inform you of your rights and

to provide information about the TxDOT right-of-way acquisition process, the Uniform Act, and TxDOT Relocation Assistance Program.

### **SLIDE 22 – We Want Your Input**

TxDOT is committed in our efforts to gain public feedback about this project.

TxDOT is offering several methods for providing comments. The first way you can share your input is to submit written comments by emailing the project email address, mailing your comments to the address on your screen, or by submitting comments online at [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov). You can also provide a verbal comment. The verbal comment option is available starting at 5 p.m. Thursday, April 9, 2026, and will be available until 11:59 p.m. on Friday, April 24, 2026. Please call 512-553-2821 and leave a voicemail with your comment during that time; your comments will be recorded, and a response will be included in the public hearing summary report. The voicemail system allows you to record a comment up to three minutes long.

Most importantly, please be sure to submit your written and verbal comments on the US 281 at SH 71 Interchange Project no later than Friday, April 24, 2026. Responses to all comments submitted during the comment period will be included in the virtual public hearing summary report, which will be posted to [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov) once completed.

### **SLIDE 23 – Virtual Hearing: Materials & Input**

Materials for the US 281 at SH 71 Interchange public hearing can be found online by scanning the QR code on the screen, by visiting [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov),

keyword search “US 281 at SH 71 Interchange” or by visiting [www.txdot.gov/projects/hearings-meetings.html](http://www.txdot.gov/projects/hearings-meetings.html). Please submit your input for the public hearing by Friday, April 24, 2026. If you have any questions or need technical assistance, please contact the study team at 512-756-2316.

**SLIDE 24 – Thank You for participating!**

Thank you for participating in TxDOT’s public hearing for the US 281 at SH 71 Interchange Project. We sincerely appreciate your attendance and interest. Please take a moment to review project materials online. And remember to submit your comments on or before Friday, April 24, 2026. Your questions, comments and concerns will receive careful consideration. Thank you very much, and this concludes the public hearing presentation.