



PUBLIC HEARING
US 96
JASPER AND SABINE COUNTIES, TEXAS
CSJS: 0064-06-057, 0064-07-044, 0064-08-062
APRIL 23, 2026

SLIDE 1 – Title Slide

Welcome to the Texas Department of Transportation public hearing for US 96 in Jasper and Sabine counties. We appreciate your interest in the project and thank each of you for your participation.

This is a pre-recorded presentation. During the video, you may pause and navigate forward or backward using your video player.

You may also view the virtual public hearing page by visiting www.txdot.gov, keyword search "US 96 from RE 255 to Loop 149." There, you can find materials outlining how to comment and view maps, handouts and exhibits that were also available at the in-person hearing.

If you need accommodations or language assistance to review materials or submit a comment, please contact the Beaumont District at 409-898-5732 or bmtprojects@txdot.gov. Services are provided at no cost.

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 – Table of Contents

In this presentation we will cover several topics regarding the US 96 Project in Jasper and Sabine counties. We will begin by detailing the public outreach and notifications as well as the purpose of the public hearing. We will continue with an overview of the study, including its location and objectives. This presentation will also look at the existing conditions and proposed improvements for this corridor and provide an overview of the area's environmental findings that are documented in the project's Draft Environmental Assessment that is being made available for public comment.

Finally, we will explain the anticipated timeline for this project, and how you can provide input.

SLIDE 4 – Project Location

TxDOT is proposing to upgrade US 96 from Recreational Road 255 to Loop 149. The proposed project is approximately 7 miles long and is located in Jasper and Sabine counties.

SLIDE 5 – Timeline

The US 96 project began in 2019. In November of that year, a Value Engineering Study was conducted to improve quality, minimize cost, simplify

construction, enhance safety, and meet environmental goals for the existing study on the project. The schematic was modified following the study and online public engagement began in the Fall of 2020. Based on this input, a preferred alternative was identified in 2021, and the project design was refined in 2022 to address feedback.

SLIDE 6 – Previous Public Outreach

For the original public outreach in 2020, three Build Alternatives and the No Build Alternative were presented as an online engagement survey. The survey was conducted from Oct. 5, 2020, through Dec. 11, 2020, and provided the public preliminary details such as estimated costs, proposed right-of-way acreage, and potential displacements. The alternatives were also evaluated against other engineering and environmental criteria based on TxDOT's design criteria and state and federal environmental regulations.

In the survey, respondents were asked to rank priorities for the project, rate proposed alternatives, and add comments and/or markers to an interactive comment map. A total of 555 commenters responded to the survey and 981 markers were placed on the interactive comment map. The majority of comments referenced safety and traffic issues, as well as hurricane evacuation concerns.

A summary of this outreach is available on the project website.

SLIDE 7 – What is the Purpose of the Public Hearing

Since 2022, TxDOT has been diligently working through the environmental study phase. While regional funding challenges necessitated a shift in the original timeline, TxDOT remains committed to delivering this project as resources become available.

Currently, we are at the end of the environmental phase with the public hearing serving to present the Draft Environmental Assessment document and gather feedback from the public.

The purpose of this public hearing is to:

- Inform the public about the project status and present the preferred alternative for US 96
- Present the project design and environmental analysis results as well as review potential project impacts
- Offer the public an opportunity to provide comments on the Draft Environmental Assessment document, and
- Develop a record of public participation

This presentation includes information on:

- The purpose and need of the project
- A description of the project, including the proposed design
- Potential environmental impacts in the area
- Potential right-of-way requirements, and
- The overall project schedule

TxDOT encourages you to submit comments on the project. Please note that discussions with project staff will not be included in the official record of the public hearing. If you wish to submit a comment to be part of the official record, you must do so in the ways outlined at the end of this presentation. Comments must be submitted by Friday, May 8, 2026, to be included as part of the official record.

This public hearing is being held and will be documented in compliance with both federal and state laws.

SLIDE 8 – Public Outreach and Notifications

To notify the public about this public hearing, TxDOT used the following outreach notification methods:

- The public hearing notice was posted on www.TxDOT.gov on March 24, 2026.
- Elected Official Letters were mailed on March 24, 2026.
- Notices were also mailed to adjacent property owners and other local stakeholders on April 3, 2026.
- In addition to these mailings, postcards were sent to approximately 7,600 area postal addresses on April 7, 2026.
- Finally, the public hearing notice was published in both the Jasper Newsboy on April 8, 2026, and the Sabine County Reporter on April 9, 2026.

SLIDE 9 – Project Purpose and Need

US 96 currently serves as a hurricane evacuation route and a major freight corridor for East Texas.

Improvements to US 96 between Recreational Road 255 and Loop 149 are needed to accommodate projected traffic and freight growth. No action taken would result in increased congestion and reduced mobility on this segment of roadway.

The purpose of this project includes:

- Reducing future congestion by widening the existing roadway.
- Improving safety with a wider median, improved sight distance, and enhanced pedestrian accommodations.
- Enhancing regional mobility by supporting reliable north–south travel in this part of East Texas.
- Supporting hurricane evacuation operations by providing an improved northbound shoulder that can serve as an additional evacuation lane during emergency conditions.

The need of the project includes:

- Accommodating projected traffic and freight growth along this important transportation corridor.
- Improving safety for all roadway users by addressing existing operational and geometric challenges.

- Improving regional access to and from Texas ports, including Beaumont, Port Arthur, and Orange for daily transportation and freight movement, supporting economic connectivity across the region.
- Enhancing north–south mobility during hurricane evacuation events, providing additional capacity to support the safe movement of the traveling public away from coastal areas.

SLIDE 10 – Alternative Analysis

During the project development, TxDOT considered three potential Build Alternatives for widening US 96. Alternative A would widen entirely to the east side of US 96, Alternative B would widen entirely to the west side, and Alternative C would widen using either side of US 96 in different areas along the corridor.

TxDOT chose Alternative C as the preferred alternative based on existing data because it slightly reduced displacements compared to Alternative B. Alternative C also had the lowest amount of proposed right-of-way needs and the highest public support from the survey in 2020. This preferred alternative was subsequently refined into the current Build Alternative and proceeded through the environmental study along with the No Build Alternative. It was determined that the No Build Alternative did not meet the purpose and need for the project.

SLIDE 11 – Proposed Project Description

To address the project needs, the proposed improvements include widening US 96 from a two-lane undivided roadway to a four-lane divided highway with a grassy median and adding sidewalks and pedestrian facilities where necessary.

SLIDE 12 – Existing Typical Section

Typical sections are often used in transportation projects to illustrate the general appearance of a roadway. While there may be slight variations throughout the project, this description provides a general overview of US 96.

The existing typical section, within the project limits, includes a right-of-way width of 120 feet. This accommodates two 12-foot-wide lanes, one in each direction, as well as 10-foot-wide shoulders and roadside ditches on either side.

SLIDE 13 – Proposed Typical Section

The proposed typical section includes a total of four lanes, two 12-foot-wide lanes in each direction, and shoulders ranging from 4 to 12 feet wide. The proposed roadway would include a grassy median between north and southbound lanes of traffic and median openings throughout the corridor.

In addition to these proposed changes, left- and right-turn lanes will be added along some areas of the corridor.

The proposed right of way needed varies from 220 feet to 450 feet wide in some locations. The wider right-of-way area allows for a relatively flat clear zone to enhance vehicle safety on areas along the roadway that are hilly and create a greater need for increased sight distance.

SLIDE 14 – About the Environmental Study

TxDOT performed the environmental study for US 96 in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA.

This included identifying the purpose and need for the project and working with the public to understand additional needs and concerns. Through the environmental process, the team looked at current project area conditions, analyzed three Build Alternatives and a No Build Alternative, and studied how each option might affect the natural and human environments. Based on this analysis, the team identified which option best meets the project’s needs. This alternative is called the “preferred alternative.”

SLIDE 15 – Environmental Study Findings

The purpose of the Environmental Assessment is to study the potential environmental consequences to the community and the environment and determine if those consequences result in a Finding of No Significant Impact or if they warrant further environmental study and the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement.

In order to complete the Environmental Assessment, 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 Draft Environmental Assessment conclusion for US 96 from Recreational Road 255 to Loop 149 is that the implementation of the proposed project would not result in a significant impact on the human or natural environment. A Finding of No Significant Impact is recommended.

The Draft Environmental Assessment is available for public review and TxDOT will consider comments submitted. If TxDOT determines there are no significant adverse effects, a Finding of No Significant Impacts will be prepared and made available to the public.

SLIDE 16 – Environmental Studies – Community Impacts

Community impacts were studied as part of the Environmental Assessment. The Community Study Area included census blocks that are adjacent to the project area and also included the unincorporated community of Brookeland. This area was established to assess populations most likely to be directly and indirectly impacted by the proposed project.

Community impacts also identified potential displacements related to implementing the proposed improvements. Based on data collected, a total of

ten structures are estimated to be displaced with the proposed project. This includes two residential, five commercial, and three storage structures that may potentially be displaced.

Access and travel patterns were also studied. The proposed project would add capacity to US 96 by widening the roadway to a four-lane divided highway. The northbound shoulder would also be widened to 12 feet wide throughout the project area to serve as an additional travel lane in the event of a hurricane evacuation. Access to all adjacent properties and cross streets would be maintained; however, the proposed median may increase travel times, as drivers may have to continue to the nearest median break and turn around to reach their destination. Travel time increases due to the additional medians are expected to be minor, with median breaks spaced less than one mile apart.

SLIDE 17 – Environmental Studies – Community Cohesion

Community cohesion is also a key consideration in the environmental study. The proposed project would improve community cohesion by increasing north-south mobility. It will also enhance pedestrian access with the addition of sidewalks at various locations along the corridor. Bicycle access south of the intersection with County Road 209 and County Road 219 will also be improved with the proposed 10-foot-wide shoulder.

In addition to these improvements, there would also be reduced bicycle access north of the intersection with County Road 209 and County Road 219 due to the narrower southbound shoulder.

SLIDE 18 – Environmental Studies – Cultural Resources Impacts

Cultural resources were evaluated for this project. In accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act the project considered the effects on historical and archeological cultural resources.

As part of this process, TxDOT completed a reconnaissance-level Historic Resources Survey Report, which was coordinated with the Texas Historical Commission. The survey identified historic-age resources within the study area; however, all identified resources were recommended as not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. As a result, no adverse effects to historic properties are anticipated.

Archeological surveys were not conducted due to insufficient right of entry or access to all parcels within the proposed right of way. Therefore, if required, the surveys would be conducted once right of way is purchased or right of entry is granted. Coordination with the Texas Historical Commission and Tribal Nations would be conducted before construction begins.

SLIDE 19 – Environmental Studies – Protected Lands

The northern terminus of the proposed project is located south of the Sabine National Forest which required additional study for protected lands. It was determined that no impacts or use of properties protected under Section 4(f) of the United States Department of Transportation Act, Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, or Chapter 26 of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Code would occur as a result of the project.

These state and federal regulations protect the use of public lands including parks, recreation areas, historic sites, wildlife refuges, scientific areas and land purchased through the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

SLIDE 20 – Environmental Studies – Natural Resources

Natural resources are an important factor in the overall environmental study. These include water resources and threatened, endangered and rare species.

Impacts to water resources were evaluated. However, because limited right of entry was available throughout the corridor, the extent of impacts could not be verified in some areas. Therefore, additional delineation efforts may be needed if or when right of way is purchased or access is granted, in order to determine the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative to wetlands. Approximately 35 water resources and/or wetland features were identified within the project area. Impacts to these water bodies are anticipated to be authorized under Nationwide Permits with or without notification. Impacts may require authorization under an Individual Standard Permit if they exceed Nationwide Permit thresholds.

An evaluation of threatened, endangered and rare species within the project area identified habitat for the following species:

- Two federally proposed endangered species
 - The Tricolored Bat, and
 - The Texas Heelsplitter Mussel
- Two federally proposed threatened species

- The Monarch Butterfly, and
- The Louisiana Pigtoe Mussel
- Two state-threatened species including:
 - The Western Creek Chubsucker, and
 - The Northern Scarlet Snake
- 42 species recognized as Species of Greatest Conservation Need were also identified in the project area.

To mitigate potential impacts, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be implemented where practicable. At this time, consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service is not required for any of these species. Should any of these species be listed as endangered or threatened before the construction activities for this project are completed, then the project would be reevaluated and consultation with the Service will be initiated. A mussel survey will be conducted within the project area prior to construction. If any mussels are found, a salvage effort will be conducted, and the mussels will be moved.

SLIDE 21 – Environmental Studies – Noise Impacts

A noise analysis for the project was conducted. It determined that out of the 38 representative receptors, none were predicted to have noise levels that approach or exceed the Federal Highway Administration noise abatement criteria or that substantially exceed the existing noise levels. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in traffic noise impacts and noise abatement is not reasonable or feasible for the proposed project.

The noise analysis report, along with all of the technical environmental reports for the project can be found on the project webpage.

SLIDE 22 – Information on Right-of-Way Acquisition

If the project proceeds, right of way will be acquired in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Properties Acquisitions Policies Act of 1970, as amended. The proposed right of way needed for the project is approximately 125 acres. In addition, approximately three hundredths of an acre (0.03 acre) of Temporary Construction Licenses would also be required.

TxDOT has prepared three documents providing additional general information on the right-of-way purchasing process including topics such as appraisal, compensation, and relocation assistance. These documents may be downloaded by going to www.txdot.gov and searching for the words “landowner rights.”

SLIDE 23 – Next Steps and Timeline

Currently, we are at the end of the environmental phase with the public hearing serving to present the Draft Environmental Assessment document and gather feedback from the public. It is anticipated that an environmental decision will be made this year.

Following the environmental decision, final design would begin, as well as right-of-way acquisition and utility relocation, as funding becomes available.

The estimated construction cost for the project is \$106 million. This total does not include costs associated with right-of-way acquisition or utility relocations. It is anticipated that the project could be ready to let in 2031. "Ready to let" is when TxDOT notifies the construction community that a project is ready to be bid on after all right of way is acquired and utilities are relocated. Construction on a project begins after the letting process is complete.

It is important to note that this project is not currently funded. The advancement to final design, right of way, utility coordination and construction is contingent on funding availability.

This timeline is approximate and subject to change.

SLIDE 24 – We Want Your Input

TxDOT wants your feedback about this project.

You can submit your comments the following ways:

- Submitting written comments at the hearing,
- Email,
- Voicemail,
- Mailing to the address on your screen,
- Or online.

Most importantly, please be sure to submit your written and verbal comments no later than Friday, May 8, 2026, to be included in the official public hearing documentation. Responses to all comments submitted during the comment

period will be included in the public hearing summary report, which will be posted to www.txdot.gov once completed.

SLIDE 25 – Questions

If you have any questions regarding the project, please feel free to contact TxDOT project staff during regular office hours at 409-898-5805.

SLIDE 26 – Thank You for participating!

Thank you for participating in TxDOT's public hearing for the US 96 Project. We sincerely appreciate your interest. Please take a moment to review project materials online. Your questions, comments and concerns will receive careful consideration. Thank you very much, and this concludes the public hearing presentation.