OPEN HOUSE – VIRTUAL PRESENTATION SCRIPT

US 281
FROM US 183 (LAMPASAS) TO US 84 (EVANT)
IN LAMPASAS & CORYELL COUNTIES

CSJ:0251-03-022, 0251-04-023 & 0251-05-054

SLIDE 1 – Title Slide / Welcome

Welcome to the Open House for the US 281 Lampasas to Evant Project located in Lampasas and Coryell counties, presented by the Texas Department of Transportation, (TxDOT). We appreciate your interest in the US 281 Lampasas to Evant project.

SLIDE 2 – Safety Moment #EndTheStreakTX

November 7, 2000 was the last deathless day on roadways in Texas. That means for over 22 years, at least one person has died every single day on Texas roadways. We all have a part to play to change that. This message is that reminder – to End the Streak of deaths on Texas highways. We need drivers and passengers to act more responsibly and help us reach our goal of zero deaths by 2050. Texans can play a major role in ending fatal crashes with a few simple driving habits: wear seatbelts, drive the speed limit, put away the phone and other distractions, and never drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs. So please do your part and share this message with your friends and family.

SLIDE 3 – Agenda

This Meeting has been convened by the TxDOT's Brownwood District Office and is being held to receive and consider comments from the public regarding the US 281 Lampasas to Evant Project. Today's presentation will cover the project, need and location, general project information and how to submit comments.

SLIDE 4 – Project Location

The approximately 28-mile-long US 281 corridor is located in Lampasas and Coryell Counties as noted on this Project Location Map. It spans from US 183 in the City of Lampasas northward to US 84 in the City of Evant. The widening will conclude at the south end of the town of Evant, approximately 0.4 miles south of US 84. The gold line on this map denotes the proposed project area.

SLIDE 5 – Project Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed project is to enhance safety and improve mobility while addressing the long-term needs of the corridor and the demands of a growing population. In 2020, the population of Texas was estimated to be 29.1 million. By 2050, the population is expected to surpass 42 million residents if migration continues at the same rate seen from 2010 to 2020 – an increase of over 44 percent.

US 281 was originally constructed between 1934 and 1935 and was last upgraded to provide periodic passing lanes in 2012. Improvements are needed to keep pace with the growing population and the resulting need for safe and reliable (passenger and freight) transportation options.

US 281 is part of the Texas Trunk System. The Trunk System is a network of roadways connecting cities with a population of more than 20,000 people and major ports and ports of entry. US 281 also provides an alternate route to I-35 through Texas. Its Trunk System designation and its location in relation to I-35, makes US 281 a critical facility to address the mobility needs of Texas' growing population. Improvements to US 281 are needed to satisfy Trunk System requirements and facilitate mobility.

SLIDE 6 – Crash History

The number of crashes from 2013 to 2022 is highest within the project limits at the intersections of US 183, CR 3500 and FM 581.

Fatality and serious injury crashes have occurred at numerous locations along the corridor between 2013 and 2022 as shown in the map below.

Over this period of time, there were 308 total crashes. Eleven fatalities occurred in eleven different crashes; and thirty-three serious injuries occurred in twenty-four different crashes.

SLIDE 7 – Project Review and Approval Information

Prior to December 16, 2014, the Federal Highway Administration, or 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 FHWA through a Memorandum of Understanding to review and approve certain assigned NEPA environmental documents. This Memorandum of Understanding between TxDOT and FHWA was updated on December 9, 2019. The review and approval process applies to this project.

Environmental studies are being conducted for the Project to support an environmental clearance in accordance with NEPA. These environmental analyses are necessary to identify, avoid, and minimize effects to the Human and Natural Environments.

Notices for this open house were advertised in the Lampasas Dispatch Record, The Four-County Evant Star, and on the TxDOT.gov website under “Hearings and Meetings Schedule”. The Brownwood District Public Information Officer also prepared a news media release to advertise the open house in the newspapers previously mentioned and

in the Lampasas Radiogram. Additionally, notifications were emailed to local elected officials, mailed to adjacent property owners, and an Every Door Direct postcard was sent to zip codes within the proposed project area. Project information is also available on the TxDOT.gov website.

SLIDE 8 – Project Process

There are several steps in the US 281 Lampasas to Evant Project process. Today we are conducting **Step 2** of the Project process.

Step 1 included data collection and development of the concept alternatives.

Step 2 presents the current US 281 widening concepts and explores other concept options alongside the public for review and comment during this Open House.

Step 3 initiates the US 281 draft preliminary design schematics and NEPA document and assessment.

Step 4 presents the draft preliminary design schematics at a US 281 Lampasas to Evant Open House.

Step 5 presents the final design schematics and NEPA document.

SLIDE 9 – Existing US 281

The existing US 281 typical roadway section within the overall project limits consist of one 12-foot-wide travel lane in each direction with adjacent shoulders, no center median, occasional passing lanes, and side ditch drainage. The existing right of way width varies along the corridor from 100 feet to 220 feet.

About 13 miles of the corridor has one lane in each direction without passing lanes as seen in the first image.

Another 10 miles of the corridor has a single passing lane in alternating directions as

shown next.

The remaining 5 miles of the corridor has passing lanes in both directions as seen at the bottom.

SLIDE 10 – Proposed US 281 Widening Concept

This slide presents the widening concepts currently under consideration for the corridor. The proposed widening would install two new travel lanes by converting the existing two travel lanes to one-way and constructing two one-way lanes in the opposite direction to either the east or west of the existing US 281 travel lanes.

The first image shows a proposed 4-lane divided section with a wide grassy center median to separate the traffic in opposite directions, which would be the usual configuration proposed for the corridor. The wide median also provides room for future improvements, if needed.

The second image shows a 4-lane section with a narrower flush median that would be used in constrained areas such as Evant, Adamsville and Lampasas. This section can typically fit within the existing right of way width, avoiding impacts to adjacent properties.

SLIDE 11 – US 281 Widening Alternatives (1 of 3)

To implement the proposed widening of US 281, two alternatives are being considered. The purple alternative would generally widen the right of way to the west side of the existing corridor, which is shown on the left side of this image. Another option would be to generally widen the right of way to the east side as shown with the yellow alternative to the right.

At certain points along the corridor where constraints are present to only one side of US 281, the purple and yellow alternatives may shift to the opposite side of the existing roadway from the constrained condition. Therefore, a combination of the purple and

yellow alternatives will be considered based on the completed environmental analysis in order to minimize overall project impacts.

SLIDE 12 – US 281 Widening Alternatives (2 of 3)

A preliminary layout of the purple alternative is shown here with the northern half of the corridor at the top and the southern half at bottom. The exact alignment shown here is subject to change based on further environmental and engineering analysis. Full-size roll plots of these images are available for review on the TxDOT webpage.

SLIDE 13 – US 281 Widening Alternatives (3 of 3)

This slide shows a preliminary layout of the yellow alternative, again with the northern half of the corridor at top and the southern half at bottom. The yellow alternative alignment shown is also subject to change based on further environmental and engineering analysis. Full-size roll plots of these images are available with the purple alternative plots for review on the TxDOT webpage.

SLIDE 14 – Environmental Constraints Map (1of 2)

Developing the project involves identifying environmental features that could potentially be impacted by or constrain the roadway improvements. This Project Environmental Constraints Map has been prepared to aid the designers in avoiding environmental features and / or minimizing impacts in the US 281 widening project. The graphic shown here at the top of the slide represents the north half of the corridor from Evant to Adamsville. The next slide will depict the southern half. These environmental features include businesses and residences, cemeteries, floodplains, streams, hazardous materials facilities, utility infrastructure, historic structures, houses of worship, public facilities, wildlife and species-specific vegetation. Since the scale of the constraints map is so small, a blow up of one location along the corridor is shown in the image at the bottom and depicts a couple of example constraints, such as the Pilgrims Rest Cemetery,

a residence, and an electrical substation.

We are reviewing existing data accessible to us, but we ask that you please let us know if you are aware of any additional environmental constraints not currently shown on this map. We appreciate your input.

SLIDE 15 – Environmental Constraints Map (2 of 2)

As noted previously this next slide depicts the environmental constraints in the southern half of the corridor from Simms Creek south of Adamsville to Lampasas.

SLIDE 16 – How to Provide Input

All public comments received during this open house will be fully considered and responded to in the US 281 Open House record and made part of the final documentation for this US 281 Lampasas to Evant Project. This documentation will then be made available for public review and download on the Open House website.

Your comments may be provided online, by mail, email or by voicemail as shown on this screen. Please visit the US 281 Lampasas to Evant Project webpage at www.txdot.gov and search: “US 281 Lampasas to Evant” or use your phone or tablet to scan the QR code shown here.

Comments must be received or postmarked by **Friday, March 3, 2023**, to be included in the official documentation for this Open House.

SLIDE 17 – Thank You

We sincerely appreciate your interest in the US 281 Lampasas to Evant Project. Your questions, comments and concerns will receive careful consideration.

Don't forget to submit your comments by **Friday, March 3, 2023**, and to view the project information available online.