

VIRTUAL PUBLIC HEARING
US 81/ US 287
From Avondale-Haslet Rd to I-35W
Tarrant County, Texas
Ultimate CSJ: 0014-15-037
Phase 1 CSJs: 0902-48-579, 0014-15-033,
0014-15-034, 0014-15-035, & 0014-15-036
Thursday, June 2, 2022

RICARDO GONZALEZ, P.E., Narrator

SLIDE 1 – Title Slide

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to welcome you to the June 2nd, 2022 US 81/ US 287 public hearing. This presentation has been pre-recorded for the proposed construction project of US 81/ US 287 from Avondale-Haslet Road to I-35W in Tarrant County. We appreciate your interest in this Project and welcome each of you. Please note that you may pause this presentation at any point to allow more time to view the slides.

SLIDE 2 – Welcome

Thank you for joining us. My name is **Ricardo Gonzalez** and I serve as the **Director of Transportation Planning and Development for the Fort Worth District** of the Texas Department of Transportation, better known as TxDOT.

This public hearing, presented by TxDOT, is being provided to share information and to encourage comments from the public regarding the proposed US 81/ US 287 Project.

The project webpage for this Public Hearing is www.txdot.gov. Search “US 81/287 Avondale”.

SLIDE 3- Public Hearing Agenda

Today’s presentation will cover the project location, the need and purpose, the existing US 81/ US 287 roadway, the proposed design to US 81/ US 287, the estimated schedule, project costs, the environmental process, project timeline, next steps and the TxDOT project contact information.

SLIDE 4 – Virtual Public Hearing in Response to Public Health

TxDOT is offering this Public Hearing in two formats; virtually and in-person.

Attendees at the in-person option will be able to view this same presentation delivered in the virtual on-line public hearing, review hard copies of project materials, and leave written comments.

This presentation will cover the same information the Fort Worth District will share at the in-person public hearing. However, the comment process for a virtual public hearing is different from what we normally conduct at an in-person hearing and will be explained shortly. All project information can be found on the TxDOT website.

CONSULTANT, Narrator

SLIDE 5 – Public Hearing In-Person Displays

The in-person public hearing will be held on Thursday, June 2, 2022 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Individuals wishing to attend the in-person option are encouraged to schedule an appointment, by calling (214) 856-0269 Monday through Friday, until June 2, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. to make an appointment and receive further instructions regarding the in-person option.

The Public Hearing Layout, environmental documentation or studies, maps and drawings showing the project location and design, tentative construction schedules, and other information regarding the proposed US 81/ US 287 Project are available for download at www.txdot.gov and searching for “US 81/287 Avondale”. The information on this website is the same information being presented here.

SLIDE 6 – Virtual Public Hearing Purpose

This public hearing has been convened by the Texas Department of Transportation and is being held to receive and consider comments from the public regarding the US 81/ US 287 Project from Avondale-Haslet Road to I-35W.

You may have attended previous public hearings conducted by the Texas Department of Transportation. However, for the benefit of those of you who have never attended one, I would like to explain why and how the Department conducts a public hearing. A public hearing has four essential purposes:

1. Inform the public of the status of planning for the project and present the recommendations based on studies performed to date.
2. Describe the project design and environmental analysis so those attending can determine the project's potential to affect their lives and property.
3. Provide the public an opportunity to see information and express their views at this stage in the planning process when flexibility to respond to comments still exists and before location and design decisions are finalized.
4. And finally, to develop a record of public views and participation to accompany recommendations for subsequent decisions.

Public hearings are held in compliance with both federal and state laws. A transcript of this hearing will be made available for the official record.

SLIDE 7 – How to Submit Your Comments

Following the public hearing, the Department will proceed with the preparation of the final environmental documentation. Your statements and comments will be addressed in this document and will be given full consideration in the preparation of the final recommendation and design for this Project.

TxDOT is committed to continuing our efforts to gain public feedback about this project. We understand a virtual public hearing format is a bit different, so let's take a few

minutes and explain the comment process – which is the most important part of this video.

Comments will be accepted in a number of ways. You may submit a Comment Online by clicking the “Submit Your Comment” button on the txdot.gov website, submit a written comment via email to Saba.ElHawi@txdot.gov, submit a written comment via mail to Fort Worth District Office, Attention Carl L. Johnson, P.E., District Engineer, 2501 S.W. Loop 820, Fort Worth, TX 76133, or leave a verbal comment via voicemail at (469) 389-2603. There is a link for a PDF Comment Form that can be filled out on the computer and emailed to the address provided, or printed, filled out by hand, and then mailed to the address provided. Comments must be received or postmarked by Friday June 17th, 2022 to be part of the official virtual public hearing record.

Questions on this project may be directed to the TxDOT project manager, Saba El-Hawi, P.E. at Saba.ElHawi@txdot.gov or (817) 370-3562.

SLIDE 8 – Project Location and Need

TxDOT is proposing the construction of US 81/ US 287 frontage roads (northbound and southbound) from Avondale-Haslet Road to I-35W just south of Thompson Rd. Phase 1 of this project begins just north of Harmon Road and extends to west of I-35W, an approximate 1.3-mile-long section in Tarrant County.

The proposed project is needed because the existing US 81/ US 287 south of Avondale-Haslet Road is currently operating as a divided highway from a speed and traffic volume

standpoint, but without the safety improvements that a limited access freeway provides. There is a safety issue in that adjacent property owners have direct driveway access to the mainlanes.

SLIDE 9- Project Purpose

This project will address these safety concerns by completing this facility to operate as a limited access freeway. Adjacent property owners will have driveway access to the frontage roads instead of the mainlanes. The purpose of the proposed project is to improve safety, mobility and congestion to further update the roadway to current design standards.

SLIDE 10 – Existing Roadway

The existing US 81/ US 287 roadway consists of two 12-foot wide mainlanes in each direction with 6-foot wide inside shoulders, 10-foot-wide outside shoulders, and a 42-foot wide median. The typical right of way (ROW) width for Phase 1 is 709 feet.

There are discontinuous frontage roads along US 81/ US 287. The current frontage roads consist of either one-way or two-way lanes. The project contains interchanges at Blue Mound Road, West Bonds Ranch Road and Harmon Road.

SLIDE 11 – Proposed Roadway – Ultimate

The proposed project will add one 12-foot wide inside mainlane in each direction to address traffic capacity. To address safety issues, continuous northbound and southbound, two-lane, one way, frontage roads would be added or reconstructed so that

the roadway facility operates as a limited access freeway. In addition to the access provided by the proposed frontage roads, there are several entrance and exit ramp locations that would be adjusted to facilitate more efficient access to adjacent land uses.

SLIDE 12- Proposed Roadway- Ultimate Cont.

Willow Springs Road and Heritage Trace Parkway would be reconstructed to connect under the US 81/ US 287 mainlanes. Willow Springs Road and Heritage Trace Parkway will also be reconstructed to enhance access to the US 81/ US 287 frontage roads. Shared-use lanes will be included along the outside of frontage roads as well as both directions of every intersecting street to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists.

Frontage road connections will be constructed for Willow Springs Road, Wagley Robertson Road and Heritage Trace Parkway. Frontage road U-turns would be constructed at Willow Springs Road, Blue Mound Road, the north side of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF RR) north of Bond Ranch Road/Hicks Road and on the north-eastbound side of Harmon Road.

SLIDE 13 – Proposed Facility – Phase 1

Continuous one-way frontage roads will be constructed from north of Harmon Road to West of I-35. A northbound exit ramp that connects US 81/ US 287 to North Tarrant Parkway will be reconstructed to consist of a 14-foot wide lane with 4-foot to 8-foot wide shoulders. Two southbound ramps will serve as entrance and exit ramps respectively, connected to Harmon Road and North Tarrant Parkway.

SLIDE 14 – Proposed Bridges – Phase 1

For Phase 1- two bridges with intersectional signaling will be constructed at the intersections between US 81/ US 287, Harmon Road and North Tarrant Parkway.

The North Tarrant Parkway bridge will consist of two 12-foot wide mainlanes with two dedicated 12-foot wide left-turn lanes eastbound and westbound. There will be a 6-foot wide median. A 14-foot wide shared-use path will be constructed along each side of the bridge as well as a U-Turn Lane on the westbound side.

The proposed Harmon Road bridge will include two northeast bound 12-foot wide mainlanes and two 12-foot wide southwest bound dedicated left-turn lanes that connect to the frontage roads. A 14-foot shared-use path will be constructed on each side of the bridge. A 5-foot wide median will also be constructed.

SLIDE 15 – Utility Adjustments

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

SLIDE 16 – Projected Cost & Schedule

The US 81/ US 287 Ultimate Project is anticipated to be awarded for construction as funding becomes available, however Phase 1 is anticipated to be awarded for

construction in 2024. Phase 1 will take approximately 3 years to construct. The total estimated cost for construction of Phase 1 of the project is approximately \$35 million. The total estimated cost for construction of the Ultimate project is approximately \$227 million.

This concludes the project information and design portion of the presentation. The next few slides will provide an overview of the environmental evaluation for the proposed US 81/ US 287 Project.

SLIDE 17 – Review and Approval of Environmental Document

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 were conducted for the proposed US 81/ US 287 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.

Technical environmental documentation was approved for further processing by TxDOT and was coordinated with other public agencies. Notices for this public hearing were advertised in the *Star Telegram* on May 18, 2022 and *Fort Worth Weekly* on May 18, 2022, mailed to adjacent property owners, interested parties, stakeholders, along with public and elected officials. The notice was also published online on the txdot.gov website under “Hearings and Meetings Schedule” on June 2, 2022. The TxDOT Public Information Office also prepared a news media release to advertise the public hearing. The TxDOT technical reports are available online at txdot.gov, search the keyword “US 81/287 Avondale”.

SLIDE 18 – Public Involvement

A Public Meeting was held on Thursday, November 14, 2019 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at The LifePoint Fellowship Church in Haslet, TX. The Public Hearing is being held Thursday, June 2, 2022 as a virtual public hearing with an in-person option. The virtual public hearing will be available online from June 2, 2022 at 10 a.m. through June 17, 2022 at 11:59 p.m. The in-person public hearing is being held on Thursday, June 2, 2022 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at V.R. Eaton High School Cafeteria.

SLIDE 19 – Environmental Process

Documentation in support of a Categorical Exclusion (CE) determination is being prepared for this project in accordance with NEPA. The environmental documentation has been provided to the public and includes an evaluation of the following: Right of Way/Easements, Bicycle/Pedestrian Accommodations, Community Impacts, Vegetation, Wildlife, Water Resources, Cultural Resources, Hazardous Materials, and

Traffic Noise. Air Quality Analyses are still pending due to regional air quality planning revisions.

SLIDE 20 – Environmental Process – Bicycle/Pedestrian

Bicycle and Pedestrian accommodations were considered during the environmental process. Shared-use lanes will be included along the outside of the frontage roads to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians. These sections would consist of 10-foot wide shared-use paths. Continuous shared-use lanes would be constructed on both sides of the adjacent intersecting streets.

SLIDE 21 – Environmental Process - Vegetation

The project would have direct impacts on 0.07 acre of Agriculture, 2.54 acres of Disturbed Prairie, 0.6 acre of Riparian, 381.47 acres of Urban, 0.92 acre of Open Water, and 0.18 acre of Western Wetlands, Riparian.

SLIDE 22 – Environmental Process - Wildlife

The project may affect the Monarch Butterfly which is a Federally listed candidate species. It is anticipated that the Monarch Butterfly will be formally listed as a Federally Threatened Species by the time Phase 1 goes to construction in 2024

The project may impact the following State Threatened species: the White-faced Ibis, the Louisiana Pigtoe, the Sandbank Pocketbook and the Texas Heelsplitter.

SLIDE 23 – Environmental Process - Wildlife

The project may impact 34 species of Species of Greatest Conservation Need. BMPs and/or additional surveys are proposed to ensure the potential for impacts are minimized.

SLIDE 24- Environmental Process- Hazardous Materials

It was determined that there are 33 hazardous material sites that are of moderate risk to the proposed project. These include Automotive Facilities, Natural Gas Wells, Stockpiles, Petroleum Storage Tanks (PST) and Railroads.

SLIDE 25 – Environmental Process – Water Resources

Water Resources throughout the project area were considered. A total of 1.10 acres of waterbodies and wetlands are anticipated to be permanently impacted and 4.12 acres of streams permanently impacted.

Impacts to water resources are anticipated to be permitted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Nationwide Permit 14 - Linear Transportation Projects with a Pre-Construction Notification. Mitigation for the anticipated impacts may be necessary and would be determined during the permitting process. Final impacts to waterbodies and wetland features will be determined during the plans, specifications, and estimates (PS&E) process.

SLIDE 26 – Environmental Process – Traffic Noise

Traffic Noise was considered for the proposed project. Twenty-one of the modeled noise receivers are expected to be impacted. Of those 21 modeled noise receivers, noise abatement would be feasible and reasonable for 16. These 16 receivers represent 261 land use activity areas adjacent to the proposed project. Nine barriers are being proposed to help reduce the noise levels. The locations of recommended noise walls are shown on the public hearing layout. A noise workshop for the properties potentially benefited by the noise barriers will be held at a later date.

SLIDE 27 – Environmental Process – No Impacts

There would be no negative impacts to Community Cohesion, Cultural Resources, Environmental Justice or Limited English Proficiency communities, and State Antiquities Landmarks.

SLIDE 28 – Environmental Process – Agency Coordination

The following agencies were, or will be, coordinated with and consulted during the environmental review process: Texas Historical Commission (THC), United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG), Federal Highways Administration (FHWA), Tribal Nations and Tarrant County Historical Commission.

SLIDE 29 – Environmental Review - Conclusion

Based on studies thus far, the environmental investigations indicate that the proposed project would have no significant impact on the quality of the human environment.

Revisions may be made to the environmental documents as necessary or to address the needs of the state and federal agencies. Revisions may also be made as a result of public comments received during the comment period. After all necessary revisions are provided, a Categorical Exclusion determination is anticipated for this project.

SLIDE 30 – Environmental Process – Right of Way

Approximately 20 acres of additional right of way would be required. Control of access is required at all frontage road and ramp connections. Approximately 0.65 acre of drainage easement will be required.

SLIDE 31 – Right of Way

The Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act of 1970, a law passed in 1970 that was designed to ensure that anyone who owned property needed for a public purpose would be treated fairly, establishes guidelines for the acquisition of property and the relocation of displaced individuals and businesses.

It is the policy of TxDOT that individuals impacted by transportation systems expansion shall not be denied benefits excluded from participation or otherwise be subjected to discrimination based on the grounds of race, color, sex, age, handicaps or national origin.

SLIDE 32 – Right of Way

As stated, this project would require approximately 20 acres of new ROW, and require additional drainage easements and denial of access, which are part of the right of way acquisition process. Each impacted property owner is offered “just compensation” for the property needed for the project. To arrive at this value, independent appraisers are hired to prepare detailed appraisals and establish value.

A written offer to the property owners is made based on the value determined in the appraisals. Property owners are given a minimum of 30 days to consider the offer.

Right-of-Way Brochures are available on the TxDOT Website.

SLIDE 33 – Project Timeline and Funding

Following this Virtual Public Hearing, the proposed project anticipates an Environmental Approval by Summer of 2022, Utility Adjustments by 2023, Phase 1 Construction to Begin 2024 and Phase 1 Construction to end by 2027. Some of these dates are subject to change.

The approximate total construction project cost is \$262 Million.

SLIDE 34 – We Request Your Feedback

As mentioned earlier, comments will be accepted in four ways, which are outlined on this slide.

All comments will be fully considered and responded to in the project record and made part of the final environmental document for this proposed project. This document will then be made available for public review online at www.txdot.gov by searching “US 81/287 Avondale”.

All of your statements, comments and questions will be given careful consideration before final design features are determined. Additionally, all information developed for the proposed design is available for public inspection and copying at www.txdot.gov by searching “US 81/287 Avondale”. As a reminder, all comments must be received or postmarked by June 17, 2022.

The public may call Saba El-Hawi, the TxDOT Project Manager at (817) 370-3562 during regular office hours or email project staff at any time in the project development process.

SLIDE 35 – Adjournment

Ladies and gentlemen, we sincerely appreciate your attendance and interest concerning the proposed design of this US 81/ US 287 Project. Your questions, comments and

concerns will receive careful consideration. Please do not forget to submit your comments by **Friday, June 17, 2022**.

Thank you, this concludes the formal presentation. We are now adjourned.