



## **VIRTUAL PUBLIC HEARING**

**Interstate 35W**

**From CR 604/CR 707 to US 67**

**Johnson County, Texas**

**CSJ: 0014-03-087**

**Tuesday, December 7, 2021**

**FINAL**

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**RICARDO GONZALEZ, P.E., narrator**

### **SLIDE 1 – Title Slide**

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I would like to welcome you to the December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Interstate (I) 35W at Alvarado virtual public hearing, which has been pre-recorded, for the proposed construction project from County Road (CR) 604/CR 707 to United States Highway (US) 67 in Johnson County, Texas. We appreciate your interest in the I-35W 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 virtual public hearing, presented by TxDOT, is being provided to share information and to encourage comments from the public

regarding the proposed improvements to I-35W from the CR 604 and CR 707 bridge to US 67. The project webpage for this Virtual Public Hearing is [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov). Search "I-35W at Alvarado".

### **SLIDE 3 – Agenda**

In this presentation, the following topics will be covered: information on the virtual public hearing, a project overview, environmental overview, right of way information, the Project schedule and next steps, and the public comment process.

### **SLIDE 4 – Virtual Public Hearing - Response to Public Health**

Given the unique circumstance of the COVID-19 outbreak, along with our commitment to protecting public health during this national emergency, TxDOT is conducting this virtual public hearing to minimize in-person contact. The virtual public hearing will provide the same information as the in-person option public hearing conducted on Tuesday, December 7, 2021 including project information, the estimated timeline, the process for submitting comments and key contacts.

However, the comment process for this virtual public hearing will be 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. For health and safety reasons, we encourage the public to view the project materials displayed online to minimize in-person contact.

**CONSULTANT, narrator**

**SLIDE 5 – Virtual Public Hearing - Displays**

The public hearing layout, environmental documentation or studies, any maps and drawings showing the project location and design, tentative construction schedules and other information regarding the proposed I-35W at Alvarado project may be viewed at [www.TxDOT.gov](http://www.TxDOT.gov) by searching using the keywords “I-35W at Alvarado”. The information on this website is the same information being presented through this virtual public hearing.

**SLIDE 6 – Virtual Public Hearing - Share Your Input**

Comments on this project 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](http://www.TxDOT.gov) by searching keywords “I-35W at Alvarado”. All of your statements, comments and questions will be given careful consideration before the final design is determined. All comments are welcomed but must be received or post marked by December 22, 2021. The public may call project staff at (817) 370-6772 during regular office hours or email [Thomas.Marquardt@txdot.gov](mailto:Thomas.Marquardt@txdot.gov) or project staff at any time in the project development process.

**Slide 7 Virtual Public Hearing - Purpose**

The virtual 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 I-35W

project. 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. Present audio and visual information on proposed improvements to Interstate 35W from CR 604/CR 707 to US 67.
2. Inform the public of the project design and environmental analysis.
3. Offer the public an opportunity to provide comments.
4. And, develop a record of public engagement and collect formal statements.

This virtual public hearing is being held in compliance with both federal and state laws. A transcript of this hearing will be made available for the official record.

### **SLIDE 8 – Project Overview – Project Location Map**

TxDOT is proposing improvements to I-35W in Alvarado, Texas. The project limits are from the CR 604 and CR 707 bridge to US 67 for approximately 1.15 miles.

### **SLIDE 9 – Project Overview – Existing Conditions**

I-35W is a four-lane divided urban freeway with 12-foot travel lanes, a 10-foot wide outside shoulder and a four-foot inside shoulder with a grassy median. The existing northbound I-35W frontage road has two-way traffic with 12-foot travel lanes and is not continuous. BUS 35W which is also known as North Parkway Drive also has two-way traffic and a dedicated entrance ramp to the northbound I-35W main lanes.

### **SLIDE 10 – Project Overview - Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)**

The northbound I-35W main lanes existing conditions have a sharp curve that do not meet

current TxDOT design standards for high-speed interstate travel. In addition, the northbound I-35W frontage road is discontinuous, and the current ramps create a short weaving area for motorists. The southbound I-35W left-hand exit ramp was closed to US 67 because of unexpected slowing of traffic on the main lanes. And, the northbound I-35W main lane bridge clearance over the closed southbound ramp is deficient, not meeting current TxDOT standards, and requires removal.

### **SLIDE 11 – Project Overview - Purpose and Need**

The proposed project is needed to improve mobility and access and enhance safety through upgrading the existing conditions to meet the current design criteria. The I-35W northbound main lanes and ramps will be improved along with removing the I-35W southbound left-hand closed exit and the I-35W northbound main lane bridge over it.

### **SLIDE 12 – Project Overview - Proposed Improvements (Build Alternative)**

TxDOT is proposing the I-35W northbound main lanes be realigned and reconstructed to meet current design standards reducing or flattening the curvature of the roadway. The current discontinuous northbound I-35W frontage road would be extended to make a continuous one-way frontage road from US 67 north to CR 604/CR 707. BUS 35W or North Parkway Drive would remain with two-way traffic and join the new northbound frontage road with a “T” intersection. Existing driveways will be extended to the new frontage road to maintain access. Currently, the northbound I-35W ramps at this location create a short weaving area for motorists entering and exiting the highway. The new ramps will be relocated to an improved “X” interchange.

The southbound, left-hand I-35W exit ramp would be removed along with the northbound I-35W main lane bridge. These proposed improvements will be illustrated further in the next few slides.

### **SLIDE 13 – Project Overview - Existing and Proposed Ramps**

This graphic shows the existing ramps on the left. The right graphic shows the ramp relocation on northbound I-35W, moving the I-35W exit ramp to CR 604/CR 707 further south to join the new one-way frontage road extension and moving the US 67 northbound entrance ramp to I-35W slightly north. The BUS 35W or North Parkway Drive entrance ramp to northbound I-35W would be removed, and motorists would use the proposed relocated entrance ramp from US 67.

### **SLIDE 14 – Project Overview - Proposed I-35W Improvements**

In a high-level overview, this schematic drawing shows the proposed design improvements to the northbound I-35W main lanes and frontage road to improve mobility and access and enhance safety. The alignment of the I-35W northbound mainlanes in orange would flatten the existing curve to accommodate higher interstate speeds. The ramps shown in blue between the CR 604 and CR 707 bridge and US 67 would be relocated to reduce weaving of traffic. The purple and pink colors highlight the proposed frontage road improvements. The pink shows the existing frontage road converting to one-way, and the purple color shows the new I-35W frontage road, extending it to US 67. The existing Business 35W or North Parkway Drive would be realigned to a T-intersection at the proposed I-35W northbound frontage road. The width of the mainlanes and frontage road lanes will remain the same at 12 feet, but a portion of the frontage road will include adding a separated 10-foot wide shared-use path. These proposed improvements will be shown in greater detail in the next few slides.

### **SLIDE 15 – Project Overview - Proposed BUS 35W Connection**

This enlarged view shows in light blue the proposed new, northbound BUS 35W or North Parkway Drive T-intersection with the new I-35W northbound one-way frontage road.

The BUS 35W or North Parkway Drive cross street would remain two-way for the public to access businesses and would allow for a right turn only onto the northbound one-way frontage road. The royal blue line that extends next to the BUS 35W/North Parkway Drive T-intersection shows a 5-foot sidewalk that would be included in the project ending at the Village Park Drive existing driveway.

The red hash lines and blue diagonal lines show the existing roadway and bridge sections to be removed while the lime green color illustrates the extended business driveways to the new northbound, one-way frontage road. The blue line with hash marks next to the red hash lines showing removal of the existing roadway proposes denial of access for future driveways.

The dark green line next to the purple I-35W northbound frontage road shows a separated, 10-foot shared-use path that would be added from US 67 extending north and ending approximately 856 feet north of the BUS 35W or North Parkway Drive T-intersection.

### **SLIDE 16 – Project Overview - Proposed Redesigned Ramp**

The red hash lines in this schematic view shows the proposed project would close the current US 67 entrance ramp to the northbound I-35W main lanes. The new entrance ramp is proposed to be relocated north of BUS 35W or North Parkway Drive which will be shown in the next slide. From the I-35W mainlanes in orange, the blue proposed northbound I-35W exit ramp would provide access to CR 604 and CR 707. The proposed

exit ramp would connect with the proposed northbound I-35W one-way frontage road from US 67. Traffic would exit from the northbound I-35W mainlanes and continue north on the one-way frontage road. Northbound I-35W motorists accessing BUS 35W would exit south of US 67, stay on the frontage road and turn right onto BUS 35W. This view also proposes an opening in an existing denial of access along the I-35W frontage road just north of the US 67 intersection.

**SLIDE 17 – Project Overview - Proposed Redesigned Ramp cont.**

The red hash lines in this schematic view shows the proposed project would close the current I-35W northbound mainlane exit ramp to CR 604/CR 707. The blue highlights the proposed northbound entrance ramp to the I-35W main lanes from US 67 with the orange showing the acceleration lane onto the main lanes. The blue line with hash marks next to the I-35W frontage road near where the proposed ramp begins proposes a denial of access for a future driveway for safety purposes. The pink displays the proposed one-way frontage road, converting from two-way to one-way. The schematic also shows that there are no impacts to the CR 604 and CR 707 bridge.

**SLIDE 18 – Project Overview - Proposed Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations**

Bicycle and pedestrian accommodations were considered during the planning and environmental process. This image displays the I-35W northbound frontage road lanes and 12-foot lane width along with the proposed addition of a 10-foot shared-use path (shown in green) next to the frontage road. This shared-use path accommodating bicycles and pedestrians would extend north from US 67 and end approximately 856 feet north of the BUS 35W/North Parkway Drive T-intersection.

**SLIDE 19 – Project Overview - Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations cont.**

In addition, a five-foot sidewalk shown in royal blue would be constructed along BUS 35W/North Parkway Drive from the T-intersection with the I-35W frontage road, ending at the Village Park Drive existing driveway.

**SLIDE 20 – Environmental Overview – FHWA MOU**

TxDOT assessed the potential environmental effects of the proposed project. The NEPA process provides analyses of the potential impacts to the natural and manmade environment and helps the decision maker to make an informed decision on whether or not to proceed with the project. On December 9, 2019, TxDOT received a signed Memorandum of Understanding from the Federal Highway Administration that permits TxDOT to assume responsibility from the Federal Highway Administration for reviewing and approving certain assigned NEPA projects. This review and approval process applies to this project. This virtual public hearing, presented by TxDOT, is provided to share information and to encourage comments from the public regarding the proposed I-35W project.

**SLIDE 21 – Environmental Overview - Public Involvement**

Part of the NEPA process is conducting public involvement through proactively engaging stakeholders and seeking public input. During project development, TxDOT's public involvement has included holding a Technical Work Group Meeting on February 25, 2020 and a virtual public meeting on November 5, 2020 in order to receive public input.

## **SLIDE 22 – Environmental Overview - Public Involvement (continued)**

For the public hearing, the following outreach was conducted. Elected and public officials were mailed a notice, comment form and fact sheet on Monday, November 15, 2021. Adjoining property owners identified by using county tax rolls were mailed a notice, comment form and fact sheet on Monday, November 15, 2021. Postcards in English and Spanish, providing information on the virtual public hearing with the in-person option and how to comment, were also mailed to residents and businesses within a 1/2-mile radius of the project. Public notices were published on TxDOT's website ([www.TxDOT.gov](http://www.TxDOT.gov)) on November 16, 2021. A notice of this public hearing in English and Spanish was also published in the *Fort Worth Star Telegram* and the *Cleburne Times Review* on Thursday, November 18, 2021.

As well, the TxDOT Fort Worth District distributed a media release to advertise the virtual public hearing and in-person option. The TxDOT technical reports are available to view at the city of Alvarado and online at [www.TxDOT.gov](http://www.TxDOT.gov) by searching keywords "I-35W at Alvarado".

## **SLIDE 23 – Environmental Overview**

As part of the project scope, TxDOT tasked the engineering consultant to determine the environmental resources to be analyzed, conduct field work to determine potential impacts to environmental resources and document those findings in the preparation of the NEPA document. Documentation in support of a Categorical Exclusion (CE) determination has been prepared for this project in accordance with NEPA. The environmental documentation has been provided to the public and includes an evaluation of the following: Biological Resources, Water Resources, Community

Resources, Cultural Resources, Hazardous Materials, Traffic Noise, Air Quality and Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations.

#### **SLIDE 24 – Environmental Overview - Vegetation**

Based on the environmental analysis and studies, potential environmental impacts could be minor urban vegetation impacts within the existing right of way maintained by TxDOT. The project would not impact riparian or prairie vegetation; however, it would impact and convert 5.5 acres of urban vegetation to the roadway and 0.41 acres to the shared use path. This would be as a result of the proposed project shifting the northbound I-35W mainlanes to the west, constructing the new northbound frontage road and extension, and constructing the new 10-foot shared use path. The project would have no direct impacts to any of the vegetation types found in the Texas Blackland Prairies/Cross Timbers, which is where the proposed project is located.

#### **SLIDE 25 – Environmental Overview - Wildlife**

There are suitable habitat present with the proposed project area, and the project may impact the following Species of Greatest Conservation Need such as: Woodhouse's toad, American Bumblebee, Cave Myotis Bat, Eastern Spotted Skunk, Slender Glass Lizard, Texas milk vetch, and tree dodder. Per coordination with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, BMPs would be implemented to avoid significant impacts to these species. There is also suitable habitat present within the proposed project area, and the implementation of the project may impact the following Federal Species: Monarch Butterfly, which is a species under consideration for official listing on the federal threatened and endangered list. The project would comply with the Candidate

Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA)/Candidate Conservation Agreement (CCA) for Monarch Butterfly on Energy and Transportation Lands (Agreement) to avoid impacts to the monarch butterfly.

**SLIDE 26 – Environmental Overview – Resource Areas with No Impacts**

The environmental analysis and studies indicated there are resources that will have no impacts. The following is a brief explanation of these resources.

**Environmental Justice (EJ) or Limited English Proficiency (LEP) communities:**

There would be no negative impacts to EJ or LEP communities, and negative impacts are not anticipated. The most recent census data was reviewed to identify EJ and LEP communities. The potential impacts associated with the implementation of the project were evaluated, and there are no negative impacts anticipated.

**Hazardous Materials:** All hazardous materials identified for this project were determined to be of no environmental concern. All publicly available databases were reviewed to identify potentially hazardous materials within or in the surrounding project area. Based on this analysis, it was determined that there would be no environmental concern.

**Traffic Noise:** The land use activity areas adjacent to the proposed project currently consist of primarily commercial development. Therefore, there are no adjacent sensitive receptors (i.e. residential or recreational land uses) that would be impacted by traffic noise from the proposed project.

**SLIDE 27 – Environmental Overview – Resource Areas with No Impacts (con't)**

**Cultural Resources:** Based on the analysis, there are no historical or archaeological eligible resources in the immediate project area.

**Water Resources:** Water resource site visits were conducted to verify water bodies or wetland features. These were evaluated based on the proposed roadway footprint and thus determined that these features would not be permanently or temporarily impacted.

### **SLIDE 28 - Environmental Overview – Agency Coordination**

Through the environmental analysis and studies, coordination occurred with the following agencies: The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG), the Texas Historical Commission (THC) and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD).

### **SLIDE 29 - Environmental Overview – Technical Reports**

The following Environmental Technical Reports can be viewed and downloaded at [www.TxDOT.gov](http://www.TxDOT.gov) searching by the keywords “I-35W at Alvarado”. The Surface Water Analysis Form documents water resources within the project area. The assessment of biological resources utilizing the TxDOT Species Analysis Form and the Tier 1 Site Assessment both evaluate protected species, habitat review and ultimately facilitate coordination with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The Historical Project Coordination Request for Cultural Resources determines the amount of coordination needed with the Texas Historical Commission. An Archeological Background Study was conducted along with a Community Impact Assessment, a Hazardous Materials Initial Site Assessment and a Traffic Noise Technical Report. A Conformity Report was also conducted to conform with the Metropolitan Planning Organization’s Transportation Improvement Program and the Metropolitan Transportation Plan; and, an Open Ended (d) CE Classification Request Form was completed that documents there are no significant impacts from the implementation of the project on the environmental resources that were evaluated; thus, can be cleared environmentally through a

categorical exclusion.

### **SLIDE 30 - 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 to update them 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 31 - Right of Way**

No additional right of way or permanent easements would be required for this proposed project; however, control of access is required along the I-35W northbound frontage road. The project proposes denial of access along the I-35W northbound frontage road where the proposed ramps tie-in as referenced on Slides 15 and 16. As shown in slide 17, the existing denial of access along the corridor remains the same except for a proposed opening allowing for a future driveway on the I-35W northbound frontage road near US 67.

### **SLIDE 32 - Right of Way (continued)**

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 system 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 33 - Right of Way (continued)**

As stated, this project will not require any additional right of way or permanent easements, but it will require changes in the denial of access which is part of the right of way acquisition process.

A right of way parcel would be created in situations where no land is being acquired from an abutting property owner but denial of access is shown on the design schematic and right of way map. Acquisition of the access control, however, would only occur with the following process:

The denial of access would be appraised using the new compensation standard of material impairment of direct access. If the appraisal indicates the access denial reaches a level of a material impairment of direct access that affects the market value of the remaining property, normal acquisition procedures would be utilized to acquire a release and relinquishment of access rights. The offer would be based on the appraised value. If the appraisal indicates the access control line does not materially impair direct access and/or does not affect the market value of the tract, acquisition of the access control would not proceed. The access control for these instances would remain under the Department's police power. For more information, right-of-way brochures are available on the TxDOT Website.

**SLIDE 34 – Project Schedule & Next Steps**

This slide highlights the steps of the NEPA process and project timeline. A technical work group meeting on February 25, 2020 and a virtual public meeting on November 5, 2020 were held to seek input and feedback on the project. "You Are Here" on the timeline is this

virtual public hearing with in-person option which is being held to receive formal comments on the proposed project. It is anticipated to receive environmental approval in early 2022 and schematic approval in spring 2022 with TxDOT planning to award the proposed I-35W project to a construction contractor in August 2022. Construction would begin in the fall of 2022 with completion estimated by the end of 2023.

### **SLIDE 35 – Project Schedule & Next Steps con't**

In summary, the estimated construction cost of the proposed I-35W improvements is \$10.8 million. This proposed project is planned to be constructed within TxDOT right of way and would not require additional right of way or permanent easements, but new control of access would be required at designated areas. Utility relocations would be complete by summer 2022 with construction estimated to start in the fall of 2022. The project is estimated to be complete by the end of 2023.

### **SLIDE 36 – Share Your Input**

TxDOT values your comments on this project. The public may call project staff at (817) 370-6772 during regular office hours or email project staff to ask questions about the project at any time in the project development process. In order to provide formal comments regarding this project, you may leave a voicemail with your comments at (833) 933-0437. Or, mail your comments to the Fort Worth District Engineer Carl Johnson, P.E., District Engineer at 2501 Southwest Loop 820, Fort Worth, Texas 76133. Or, comment online at [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov) using Keywords: I-35W at Alvarado and click the box: "Submit Your Comments." You may also send your comments via e-mail to TxDOT Design Project Manager Thomas Marquardt at [Thomas.Marquardt@txdot.gov](mailto:Thomas.Marquardt@txdot.gov). Remember your comments must be submitted or postmarked by Wednesday, December 22, 2021 to be

part of the official record.

### **SLIDE 37 – Public Comment Process**

For your convenience, we invite you to view all of the information developed for this project online at [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov) Keyword Search: I-35W at Alvarado. A detailed public meeting schematic layout is also available for viewing the detail design. Other materials available for viewing are the public hearing notice, presentation, fact sheet, project map, comment form, environmental constraints map, environmental documentation, public hearing layout.

### **SLIDE 38 – Conclusion**

We sincerely appreciate your attendance and interest concerning the proposed design of the I-35W project in Alvarado. Your questions, comments and concerns will receive careful consideration. Please do not forget to submit your comments by **Wednesday, December 22, 2021**. Thank you, this concludes the formal presentation.