



## **VIRTUAL PUBLIC HEARING SCRIPT**

### **US 81/US 287 Intersection Improvement Project**

**From north of CR 4228 to south of NRS Ranch Road**

**Wise County, Texas**

**CSJ: 0013-08-130**

**Thursday, May 26, 2022, 3 p.m.**

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**Ricardo Gonzalez, P.E., narrator**

### **SLIDE 1 – Title Slide**

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to welcome you to the May 26, 2022, US 81/US 287 from north of County Road 4228 to south of NRS Ranch Road virtual public hearing with in-person option, which has been pre-recorded. The proposed project is for US 81/US 287 from north of County Road 4228 to south of NRS Ranch Road in Wise County, Texas. We appreciate your interest in the 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 US 81/US 287 Project. The project webpage for this Virtual Public Hearing is located at [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov), Search “US 81 at CR 4228.”

## **SLIDE 3 – Agenda**

The US 81/US 287 Intersection Improvement Project Virtual Public Hearing will cover the public hearing purpose, project overview, environmental and right of way considerations, this is followed by an explanation of how to provide comments for the proposed project and the adjournment. The consultant team will provide the content for the remainder of the presentation, thank you for your interest in this project.

**[Manuel Calderon, Jacobs Engineering]**

## **SLIDE 4 – Virtual Public Hearing with In-Person Option**

Welcome and thank you for participating in this virtual public hearing. My name is Manuel Calderon, I am with Jacobs, and am working as a consultant on this project.

Three options are being offered to view the content and materials from this public hearing with in-person option:

- An in-person option is offered on Thursday, May 26, 2022, from 3 p.m. – 7 p.m. at the Decatur Conference Center.
- An on-line option is available at [www.TxDOT.gov](http://www.TxDOT.gov) by searching US 81 at CR 4228. Content will be available from Thursday, May 26, 2022, until Friday, June 10, 2022.
- Or you may view materials during the same time period at the TxDOT Decatur Area Office located at 1710 W US 380, Decatur, TX 76234 from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. through Friday, June 10, 2022 – please call (940) 626-3400 for an appointment.

#### **SLIDE 5 – Virtual Public Hearing Presentation in Other Languages**

If you need this presentation translated to any other language, please contact: Dr. Francis A. Smith at 817-370-6708 or [Francis.Smith@txdot.gov](mailto:Francis.Smith@txdot.gov).

#### **SLIDE 6 – 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 this US 81/US 287 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:

- Inform the public of the status of planning for the project and present the recommendations based on studies performed to date.

- Describe the project so those attending can determine the project's potential to affect their lives and property.
- 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.
- And finally, to develop a record of public views and participation to accompany recommendations for subsequent decisions. The 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 7 – We Request Your Feedback**

Following the virtual 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 the US 81/US 287 Improvement Project.

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

We understand this 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 fill out a Comment form from the public hearing and drop in the comment box at the public hearing or mail it back later.
- You can email comments to [Francis.Smith@txdot.gov](mailto:Francis.Smith@txdot.gov).

- You can also submit a written comment via mail to the Fort Worth District Office, Attention Carl L. Johnson, P.E., District Engineer, at 2501 S.W. Loop 820, Fort Worth, TX 76133.
- You may provide verbal testimony via voicemail at (940) 799-9077.
- 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 by Friday, June 10, 2022, to be part of the official virtual public hearing record.
- Questions on this project may be directed to the TxDOT project manager, Dr. Francis A. Smith, P.E. at Francis.Smith@txdot.gov or (817) 370-6708.

### **SLIDE 8 – Project Location**

The proposed project is located south of Decatur, Texas. It stretches from 0.6 miles north of County Road 4228 to 1.36 miles south of NRS Ranch Road – south of Decatur, Texas. The project is approximately 2.404 miles long.

### **SLIDE 9 – Public Involvement**

A virtual public meeting was held on July 14, 2020, you can get more information about this meeting and other project information at [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov), the image here shows a view from the virtual public meeting room that was developed for the public meeting in 2020.

The Public Hearing and associated content was available beginning Thursday, May 26, 2022.

## **SLIDE 10 – Public Hearing Notices**

Public Hearing Notices were published in the following papers: The Fort Worth Star-Telegram and the Wise County Messenger on May 11, 2022.

The Public Hearing notice was posted on the TxDOT webpage at [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov) on May 9, 2022.

Affected property owners, elected and public officials, and project stakeholders were mailed individual notices. Public Hearing Displays were available for in person viewing at the TxDOT- Decatur Area Office.

## **SLIDE 11 – Purpose and Need**

TxDOT has developed the following project purpose to guide project development: “The purpose of this project is to enhance safety, improve traffic operation and address congestion while maintaining access to the commercial and residential developments on the west side of US 81/US 287.

## **SLIDE 12 – Project Goals**

Project goals were developed based on local needs and as outlined in the North Central Texas Council of Government’s Mobility 2045 Plan. Project goals include:

- Improve mobility by adding frontage roads
- Add a grade-separated street crossing to improve access, mobility and enhance safety

- The construction of a new interchange was outlined in the Mobility 2045 Plan, it states: “National Roper’s Supply (NRS) and residential developments on the west side of US 81/US 287 generate significant traffic with a high percentage of large and/or trailered vehicles. A grade-separated facility would enhance safety for vehicles accessing these developments from US 81/US 287.”

### **SLIDE 13 – Existing Facility – No Build Alternative**

This typical section shows what the highway looks like today.

Currently, US 81/US 287 is a four-lane divided rural highway with crossovers throughout the project area. The mainlanes consist of four 12-foot general purpose lanes. There are 10 and 4-foot shoulders on the outside and inside, respectively. The right of way is 350 feet. There is currently an at grade crossing at County Road 4228.

### **SLIDE 14 –Proposed Project**

The proposed project would include: Reconstruction of the US 81/US 287 mainlanes, adding northbound and southbound one-way frontage roads and a new grade-separated crossing.

The proposed mainlanes and one-way frontage roads would each consist of two 12-foot lanes in each direction. The mainlanes would have 10-foot outside and 6-foot inside shoulders. The frontage roads would have 10-foot outside and 4-foot inside shoulders. A new grade separated crossing would be constructed at NRS Ranch Road.

[Pause to allow attendee to look at typical section]

### **SLIDE 15 – Proposed Project**

The proposed project consists of constructing a grade-separated crossing at NRS Ranch Road, as shown here.

In addition to the grade-separated crossing, mainlanes and frontage roads will be reconstructed, new ramps will be built, and improvements will be made to intersections. U-turns will be added on frontage roads at the US 81/287 NRS overpass.

### **SLIDE 16 – Proposed Project**

Typically, at a public hearing, we have a large roll-plot showing the schematic design for the project. We cannot do this in a virtual public hearing, but you can view a PDF of the schematic on the project website. You can zoom into your area of interest and see what the proposed project will look like.

The yellow shading in the schematic shows the proposed highway main lanes. The proposed frontage roads are seen in green, and the ramps are shown in purple. You can check out the legend and full schematic on the project website.

### **SLIDE 17 – Public Hearing Displays**

Full versions of the public-friendly schematic and environmental documents are available at [www.TxDOT.gov](http://www.TxDOT.gov) by searching for US 81 at CR 4228 and also at the TxDOT Decatur Area Office located at 1710 W US 380, Decatur, TX 76234. The area office is open from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. daily, you can call them at (940) 626-3400 for more information. Materials will be available through June 10, 2022.



### **SLIDE 18 – Separate Projects – Crossover Improvements**

In addition to the proposed project, TxDOT is working on a separate project that will remove or improve existing crossovers and install a new crossover along the US 81/US 287 corridor. The project will include the addition of a new riding surface to prolong the life of the existing pavement section and improvements to safety elements to enhance safety conditions for the traveling public.

The design for these crossover improvements is underway and is being coordinated with the proposed US 81/US 287 Intersection Improvement Project.

### **SLIDE 19 – Separate Projects – Crossover Improvements**

This picture shows the existing crossover at CR 4228 that will be removed. The figure on the right shows the proposed crossover improvements that will be made during the separate project.

### **SLIDE 20 – Separate Project Schedule**

Here is the current schedule for the crossover improvement project, we anticipate the design will be finalized by Fall of 2022 and construction will begin in Spring of 2023.

The cost of the crossover improvement project is estimated to be \$21 million dollars.

We are presenting information on this separate project today, so you are aware of the other improvements planned along the corridor. Also, we welcome your feedback on aspects of all of the proposed improvements.

### **SLIDE 21 – National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**

Historically, the Federal Highway Administration, otherwise known as FHWA, reviewed and approved federally-funded projects developed by TxDOT under the National Environmental Policy Act, known as NEPA. On December 16, 2014, TxDOT was provided full NEPA approval responsibilities through a Memorandum of Understanding with FHWA. This memorandum of understanding was renewed on December 9, 2019. This review and approval process applies to this proposed project.

### **SLIDE 22 – Environmental Process**

A Categorical Exclusion (CE) process is being followed 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, Traffic Noise and Air Quality.

### **SLIDE 23 – Environmental Process**

Approximately 1.35 acres of additional right of way is required. Approximately 0.48 acres of temporary construction easements and zero acres of permanent drainage easements would be required. New denial of access would be required along the southbound exit and entrance roads where they meet the frontage road.

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

The project would impact one acre of riparian vegetation, one acre of floodplains, 7.8 acres of Edwards plateau savannah, woodland, and shrubland, 2.9 acres of tallgrass prairies, grassland, and less than one acre of crosstimbers woodland and forest habitat.

## **SLIDE 25 – Environmental Process – Wildlife**

The review of each project includes identification of habitat along and adjacent to the proposed project. During the review, habitat preferred by several species were identified to be potentially impacted, these include: Species of Greatest Conservation Need and include Woodhouse's toad, Western burrowing owl, Eastern spotted skunk, Western hog-nosed skunk, Eastern box turtle, Prairie skink, Texas garter snake, Western box turtle, Western chicken turtle, Western hognose snake, Western massasauga, Comanche Peak prairie clover, Engelmann's bladderpod, Osage Plains false foxglove, Reverchon's scurfpea, Topeka purple-coneflower, and Turnip-root scurfpea.

State Threatened species - the Texas horned lizard; and, the project may also impact a Candidate for Federal Listing, the Monarch butterfly. BMPs will be implemented for each of these species to limit any potential impacts.

## **SLIDE 26 – Environmental Process – Water Resources**

Water Resources throughout the project area were considered. This table summarizes potential impacts to waterbodies and wetland features throughout the project area. A total of 0.24 acres and 330 linear feet of waterbody and wetland features may be 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 detailed design.

### **SLIDE 27 – Environmental Process- Traffic Noise**

Traffic Noise was considered for the proposed project. 5 receivers representing 13 houses within the project corridor would be impacted by traffic noise. TxDOT considered noise abatement, including the construction of noise walls. For a noise wall to be cost-effective, 25 houses would need to benefit. Only 9 houses would benefit, and therefore a noise wall is not recommended because it would exceed the threshold for cost reasonableness.

Noise levels would increase between as much as 210 to 280 feet from the right of way, depending on the location. Details are available as part of the noise report.

### **SLIDE 28 – Environmental Process – Air Quality**

The North Central Texas Council of Governments, or NCTCOG's, Congestion Management Process, or CMP, form was completed for the proposed project. The form provides information on alternative strategies to help alleviate congestion and enhance mobility throughout the area. NCTCOG's review determined this project is exempt from CMP analysis since they consider it a bottleneck improvement project.

### **SLIDE 29 – Environmental Process**

An analysis of potential community and environmental impacts was conducted. Negative impacts to Environmental Justice (EJ) or Limited English Proficiency (LEP) communities are not anticipated. Negative impacts to community facilities are not anticipated. No hazardous materials or cultural resources were identified within the project area.

### **SLIDE 30 – Environmental Process – Agency Coordination**

The following agencies were or will be coordinate with and consulted during the environmental review process: Texas Historical Society (THC), North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG), Tribal Nations, and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will be coordinated with during detailed design or PS&E.

### **SLIDE 31 – Environmental Process – Technical Reports**

The following Environmental Technical Reports can be viewed and downloaded at [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov). Search “US 81 at CR 4228.”

The list of Technical Reports includes: a wetland delineation report, surface water analysis form, Species Analysis Form and Spreadsheet, Historic Resources Project Coordination Request, archeological background study, community impact assessment, hazardous materials initial site assessment, traffic noise technical report, and a congestion management process form.

### **SLIDE 32 – Categorical Exclusion Summary**

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 33 – Right of Way**

The Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, a law passed 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 the 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 34 – Right of Way**

Each impacted property owner is offered “just compensation” for the property needed for the project. To arrive at this value, independent appraisers 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 given a minimum of 30 days to consider the offer. Right-of-Way Brochures are available on the TxDOT Website: <http://txdot.gov/inside-txdot/forms-publications/publications/landowner-rights.html>

### **SLIDE 35 – Right of Way**

Regarding properties impacted due to denial of access, 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.

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

### **SLIDE 36 – Project Timeline**

Following this Virtual Public Hearing, the proposed project anticipates an Environmental Approval by Fall 2022, Final Design and Construction schedules are To Be Determined as funding becomes available.

The approximate construction cost for the proposed project is \$42.2 million in current year dollars.

### **SLIDE 37 – Your Input Matters!**

We want your feedback on the proposed project. You can provide comments a number of ways.

### **SLIDE 38 – Submit Comments**

The public may call project staff during regular office hours or email project staff to ask questions about the project at any time in the project development process.

The public comment period closes on Friday, June 10, 2022, which is 15 days from this virtual public hearing.

Comments can be made throughout the comment period. Please ensure your comment are received by this date to be included in the official hearing documentation. The responses to your comments submitted during the comment period will be included in the public hearing summary report. This report will be posted to the TxDOT website within the next few months.

### **SLIDE 39 – Quick Contacts – Engage TxDOT Online**

Thank you for participating in our virtual public hearing. If you are interested in what is going on at the TxDOT Fort Worth District, have questions, comments or concerns, you can call the Project Manager, Dr. Francis A. Smith, P.E. at 817-370-6708. You can also follow the TxDOT Fort Worth District on Twitter and Facebook.

### **SLIDE 40 – Thank You**

Thank you for participating! Don't forget to submit your comments by Friday, June 10, 2022. This concludes our pre-recorded presentation. Thank you again and please, stay safe.