



Notice

**Draft Environmental Assessment Availability and
Virtual Public Hearing with In-Person Option
Farm-To-Market Road 517 (FM 517)
From State Highway 35 (SH 35) to Interstate Highway 45 (I-45)
CSJs: 1002-01-006, 1002-02-016, and 0978-01-039
Brazoria and Galveston Counties, Texas**

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is proposing to reconstruct and widen Farm-to-Market Road 517 (FM 517) from State Highway 35 (SH 35) to Interstate Highway 45 (I-45) in Brazoria and Galveston counties, Texas. This notice advises the public that a draft environmental assessment (EA) is available for public review and that TxDOT will be conducting an online virtual public hearing on the proposed project with an in-person option. **The virtual hearing will consist of a pre-recorded video presentation and will include both audio and visual components. The presentation will be posted online Tuesday, July 20, 2021, starting at 5 p.m.** To log onto the virtual public hearing go to the following web address at the date and time indicated above: www.txdot.gov, and search "FM 517 from SH 35" in the search box. If you do not have internet access you may call 713-802-5269 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, to ask questions and access project materials at any time during the project development process.

Additionally, TxDOT is providing an in-person option for individuals who would like to participate in-person instead of online. **In-person attendees will be able to view the same presentation provided at the online public hearing** which will be playing on a screen, review hard copies of project materials, ask questions of TxDOT staff and/or consultants, and leave written comments. Instructions for providing verbal or written comments are below.

The in-person option will be held on Thursday, July 22, 2021, from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Walter Hall Park Indoor Facility, 807 State Highway 3 North, League City, TX 77573. For both the virtual public hearing and in-person option, members of the public may call 713-565-7001 to provide verbal testimony immediately following posting of the virtual public hearing presentation, from 5 p.m. on Tuesday, July 20, 2021, through 11:59 p.m. on Friday, August 6, 2021. Formal written comments may also be provided by mail or email as explained below. All verbally provided testimony and timely written comments will be considered by TxDOT and included as part of the official record. Responses to verbally provided testimony and written comments will be prepared by TxDOT, included as part of the hearing and project record, and made available online at www.txdot.gov, keyword search "FM 517 from SH 35."

A public meeting was held in 2016 where two design alternatives for the proposed project were presented. After the public meeting, the project team reviewed the comments received, further evaluated design options, and refined the design to one recommended alternative. The original schematic showed the project limits from SH 35 to FM 646. In response to public comments and logical termini concerns, the project was extended east to I-45 in 2017.

The TxDOT Houston District Office proposes to reconstruct and widen FM 517 from a two-lane roadway to a four-lane divided roadway for a total distance of 9.8 miles. From SH 35 to FM 646 the improvements would include the addition of one 12-foot-wide travel lane in each direction, an 18-foot-wide raised median with turn lanes at intersections, 14-foot-wide shoulders, and 10-foot-wide shared use paths on both sides of the roadway for pedestrians and bicyclists. The total right-of-way width would be approximately 160 feet which would include approximately 30 feet of additional right of way on both sides of the roadway. The roadway would be converted to a curb and gutter drainage system with open vegetated ditches. Approximately 61 acres of additional right-of-way would be required for this section.

From east of FM 646 to I-45 the improvements would include the addition of a 16-foot-wide raised median with turn lanes at intersections and a 10-foot-wide shared use path for pedestrians and bicyclists on the north side of FM 517. This section currently has four 12-foot-wide travel lanes without shoulders. The existing right of way width would remain 100 feet in this section.

The project also would include improvements at Old Alvin Road, McFarland Road/Algoa-Friendswood Road and FM 646. Improvements at Old Alvin Road would extend approximately 440 feet to the north of FM 517 and include realignment of the intersection. Improvements at McFarland Road/Algoa-Friendswood Road extend approximately 900 feet to the north and south of FM 517 and include realignment of the intersection and construction of left and right turn lanes. Improvements at FM 646 would extend approximately 1,000 feet to the north and south of FM 517 and include construction of left and right turn lanes at the intersection.

The proposed project would, subject to final design considerations, require approximately 61 acres of additional ROW and potentially displace three commercial facilities. Relocation assistance is available for displaced persons and businesses. Information about the TxDOT Relocation Assistance Program and services and benefits for those displaced and other affected property owners, as well as information about the tentative schedule for ROW acquisition and construction, can be obtained from the TxDOT District Office by calling 713-802-5269.

The proposed project would involve construction in wetlands. Anticipated impacts to Waters of the U.S., including wetlands, consist of nine manmade ditches, Dickinson Bayou and Cedar Creek. The impacts are anticipated to be authorized by an Individual Permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

The proposed project would involve an action in a floodplain. Approximately 30 acres of the proposed project area is within the Federal Emergency Management Agency designated 100-year floodplain. The proposed project would not raise the base flood elevation to a level that would violate applicable floodplain regulations or ordinances.

The draft EA, any maps and drawings showing the project location and design, tentative construction schedules and other information regarding the proposed project are on file and available for inspection Monday through Friday between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. at the TxDOT Galveston Area Office, 5407 Gulf Freeway (I-45), La Marque, TX 77568. Project materials are also available online at www.txdot.gov, by searching "FM 517 from SH 35." These materials will also be available in hard copy form for review at the in-person option.

The virtual public hearing and in-person option will be conducted in English and Spanish. If you need an interpreter or document translator because English or Spanish is not your primary language or have difficulty communicating effectively in English, one will be provided to you. If you have a disability and need assistance, special arrangements can be made to accommodate most needs. If you need interpretation or translation services or are a person with a disability who requires an accommodation to attend and participate in the virtual public hearing or in-person option, please contact Reina Gonzalez, Project Manager, at 713-802-5269 no later than 4 p.m., Monday, July 19, 2021. Please be aware that advance notice is required as some services and accommodations may require time for TxDOT to arrange.

Written comments from the public regarding the proposed project are requested and may be submitted by mail to the TxDOT Houston District Office, P.O. Box 1386, Houston, TX 77251-1386. Written comments also may be submitted by email to HOU-piowebmail@txdot.gov. All written comments must be received or postmarked on or before Friday, August 6, 2021. Additionally, as stated previously, members of the public may call 713-565-7001 and provide verbal testimony from 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 20, 2021, through 11:59 p.m. on Friday, August 6, 2021. Responses to written comments received and public testimony provided will be available online at www.txdot.gov by searching "FM 517 from SH 35" once they have been completed.

If you have any general questions or concerns regarding the proposed project or virtual public hearing or in-person option, please contact Reina Gonzalez, Project Manager, at 713-802-5269 and reina.gonzalez@txdot.gov.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated Dec. 9, 2019, and executed by FHWA and TxDOT.