US 59 Upgrade Shepherd to Trinity River (Future I-69) Virtual Public Hearing with In-Person Option

From 0.74 mile south of FM 223 (Church Street) to 0.70 mile north of Trinity River
San Jacinto and Polk Counties, Texas
CSJs: 0177-02-103 and 0177-02-104

Texas Department of Transportation

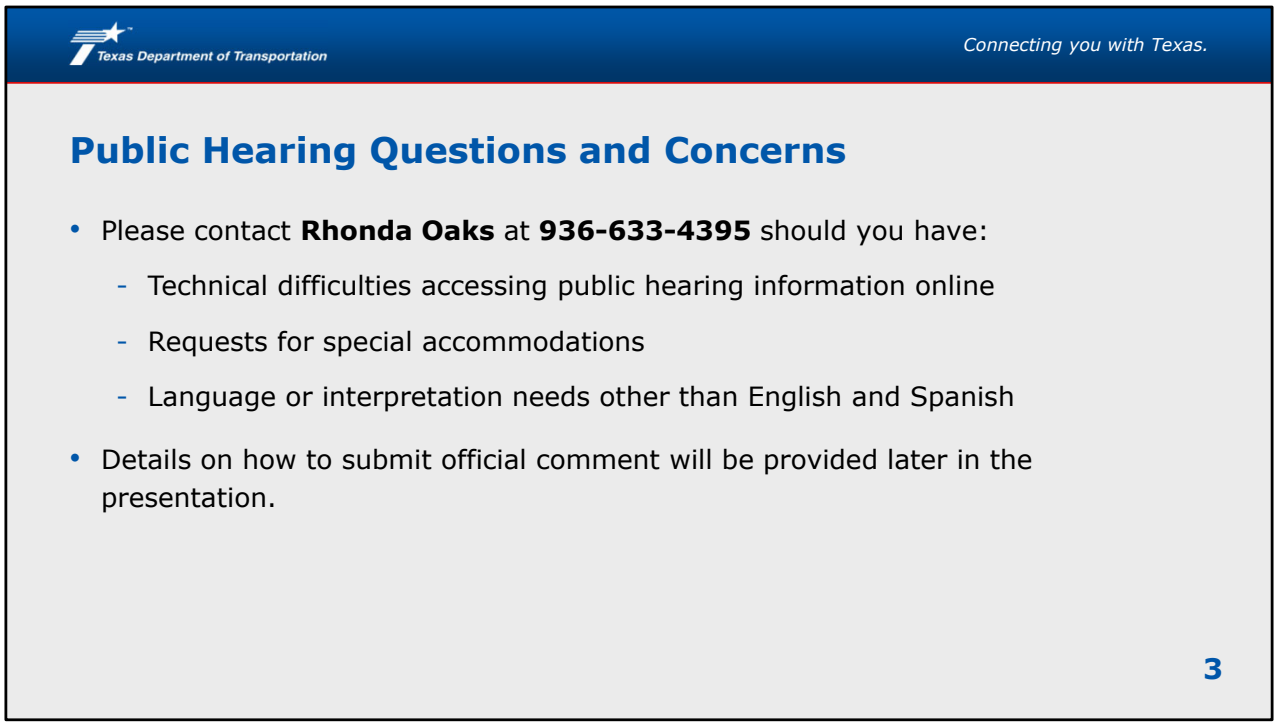
December 19, 2024

Welcome to the Texas Department of Transportation Lufkin District's public hearing for US 59 Upgrade Shepherd to Trinity River (Future I-69) in San Jacinto and Polk counties, Texas. We appreciate your interest in this project.

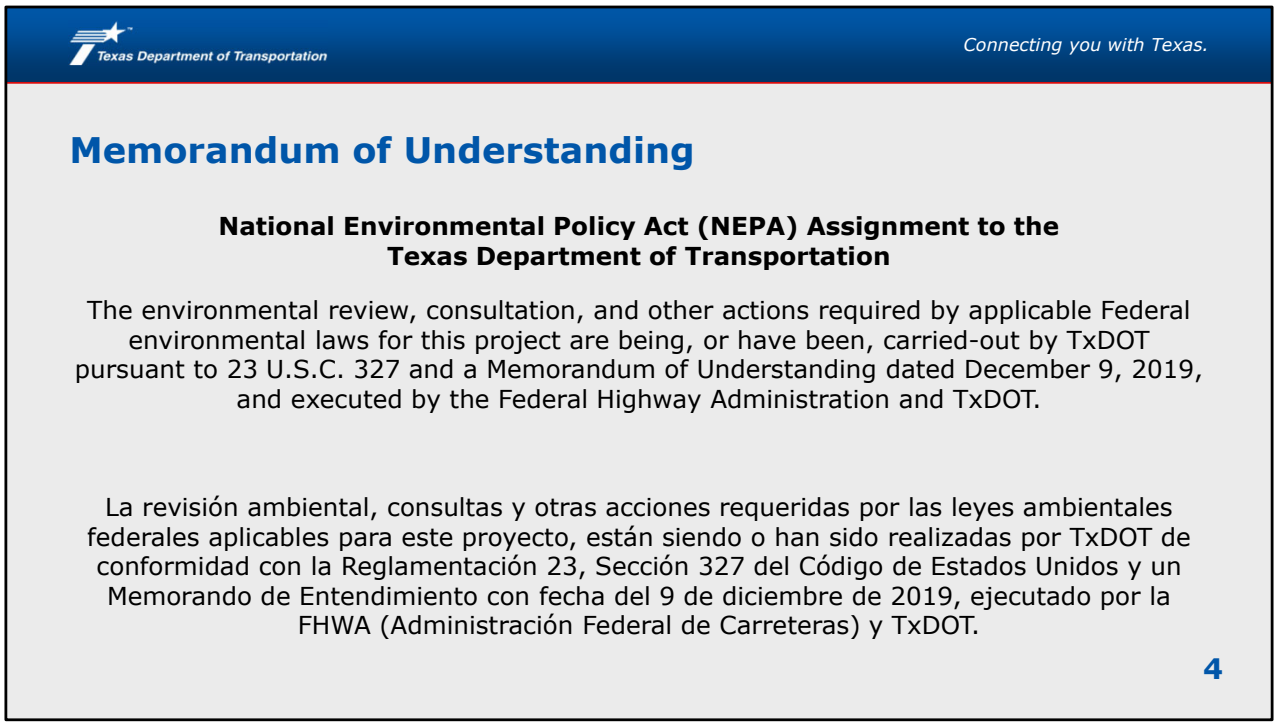
This is a pre-recorded presentation. During the video, you may pause the presentation and navigate forward or backward using your video player. The comment process for the virtual public hearing will be described near the end of this presentation.

You may also view the virtual public hearing page by visiting txdot.gov, keyword search "US 59 Upgrade Shepherd to Trinity River." There, you can find materials outlining how to comment and view maps, handouts and exhibits that were available at the in-person hearing.

November 7, 2000, was the last deathless day on roadways in Texas. That means for over two decades, at least one person has died every single day. 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. Thank you and please enjoy the rest of this presentation.



If you experience technical difficulties with the public hearing information online, please call Rhonda Oaks, TxDOT Public Involvement Officer, at 936-633-4395. You may also request special accommodation assistance accessing public hearing information and materials, and language interpretation needs other than English and Spanish. The methods for submitting a public comment on the project will be explained at the end of this presentation.



The proposed project would be funded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and is subject to the National Environmental Policy Act also known as NEPA. NEPA requires federal agencies to evaluate the environmental and related social and economic effects of their proposed actions prior to making decisions and to provide opportunities to the public to review and comment on those evaluations.

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

Here is an overview of the public outreach and notifications distributed for this Public Hearing. Materials such as maps, drawings, environmental reports, and other documents were posted to the project webpage on December 19th. Emails were sent to project page subscribers the week of December 2nd and social media posts were shared on TxDOT's pages on the weeks of December 9th and December 16th. Portable changeable message boards were placed within the project area the week of December 5th through the 19th.

3,837 postcards were mailed the week of December 2nd to mailboxes within the 77371 and 77335 zip codes.

Notices was published in English and Spanish in three newspapers: the Polk County Enterprise on November 24th, the San Jacinto News-Times on November 28th, and El Perico on November 28th.

Notices were also mailed directly to adjacent property owners, elected officials and local stakeholders the week of November 18th.

Texas Department of Transportation

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Project Overview

Limits: 0.74 mile south of FM 223 to 0.70 mile north of Trinity River

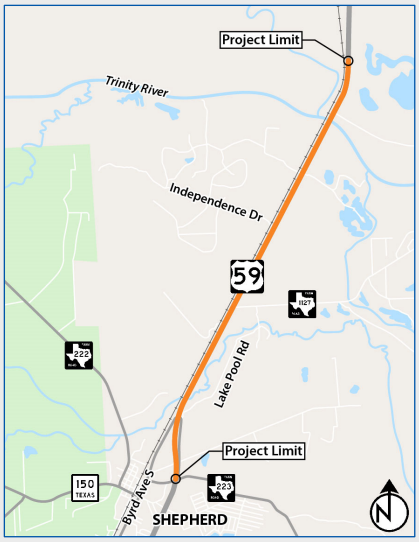
Location: San Jacinto and Polk counties, Texas

Project Length: Approximately six miles

Estimated Construction Cost:
$279.1 Million

Funding Categories: 4 and 12

Anticipated Construction Letting: 2029



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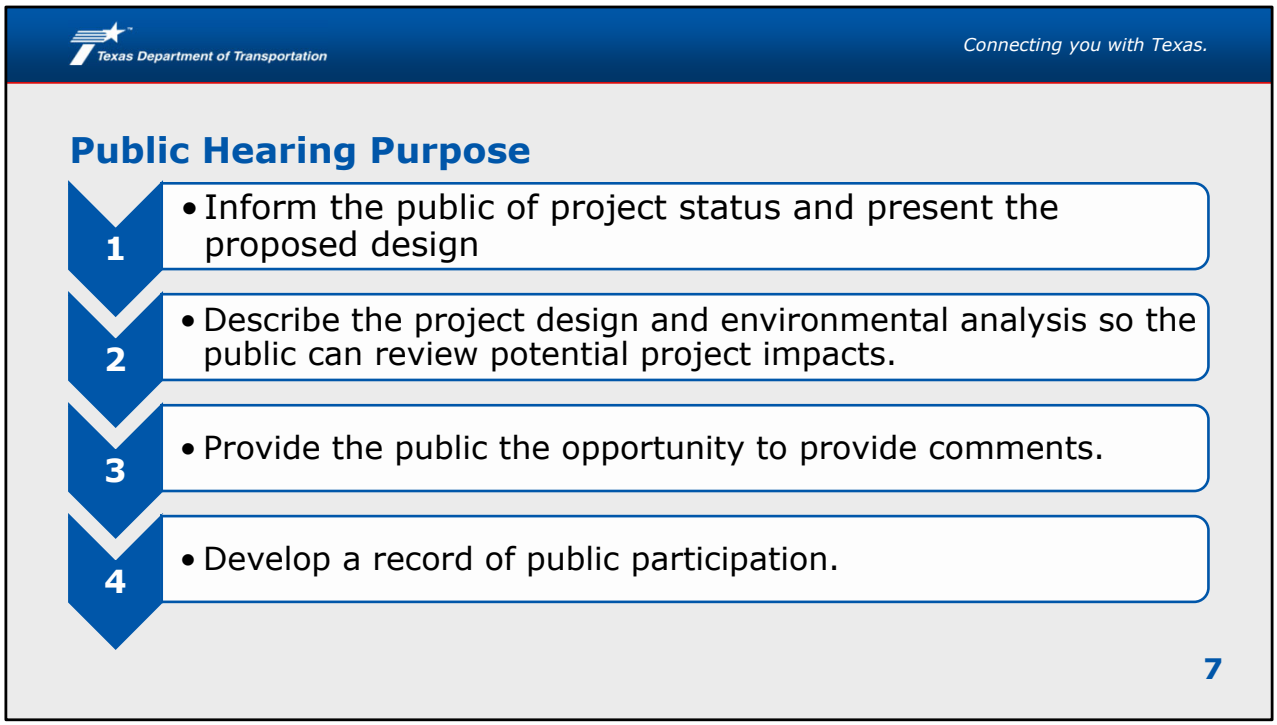
TxDOT is proposing to upgrade US 59 to interstate standards from 0.74 mile south of FM 223 (Church Street) to 0.70 mile north of the Trinity River, in San Jacinto and Polk counties. The proposed project is approximately six miles long with an estimated construction cost of $279.1 million. The project is funded through Categories 4 and 12 in TxDOT's Unified Transportation Program for construction in 2029.

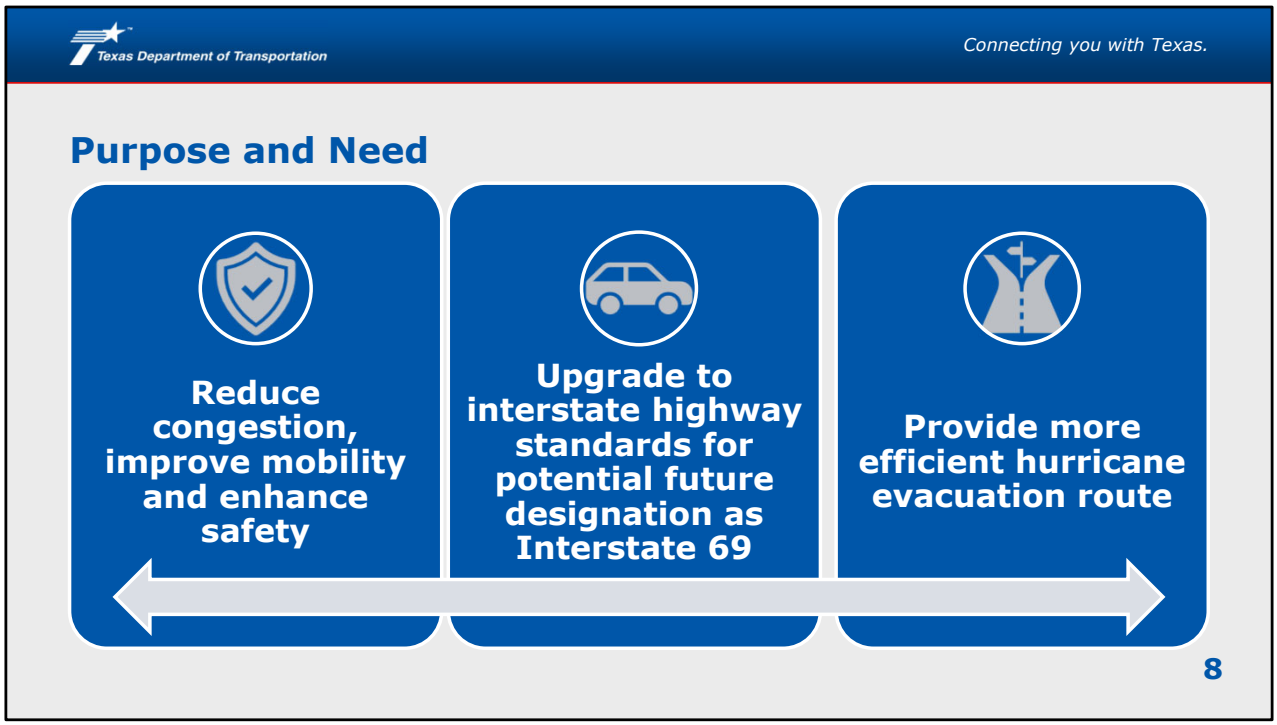


The purpose of this virtual public hearing is to:
1. Inform you about the project status and present the proposed design.
2. Describe the project design and environmental analysis so the public can review potential project impacts.
3. Provide the public the opportunity to provide comments.
4. Develop a record of public participation.

This presentation includes information on the purpose of the project; a description of the project including the design, right-of-way requirements, and schedule; and the potential environmental impacts in the area.

We encourage you to submit comments on the project. Please note that discussions with the project staff will not be included in the official record of the public hearing. If you wish to submit a comment to be part of the official record, you must do so in the ways outlined at the end of this presentation. The deadline to submit comments to be included in the meeting summary report is Friday, January 10, 2025.

This public hearing is being held to comply with both federal and state laws. Documentation of this meeting will be made available for the official record.



The US 59 within the project area does not meet current interstate design standards. Interstate criteria include: minimum design speed of 50 mph (urban areas) and 70 mph (rural areas); mainlane width of 12 feet or more; outside shoulder width of 10 feet or more and vertical clearances for bridges over US 59 should be at least 18.5 feet. However, one of the most noticeable features of interstate criteria is full control of access. This means there is no direct access to the highway mainlanes from driveways or sideroads. Access is only allowed via ramps. The purpose of the proposed project is to bring US 59 between Shepherd and the Trinity River up to current interstate design standards, including making it a controlled access roadway. The proposed project will not only provide system connectivity for future I-69 but will also reduce congestion, improve mobility, enhance safety and provide a more efficient hurricane evacuation route.

This slide outlines the public engagement TxDOT has completed for the project to date. In April of 2023, TxDOT held a virtual public meeting with an in-person option. At the in-person meeting there were approximately 53 attendees and the video presentation was viewed approximately 177 times, with 152 views of the presentation in English and 25 views of the presentation in Spanish. TxDOT received 15 total comments. The topics in the comments covered safety, traffic, property access, and the natural environment.

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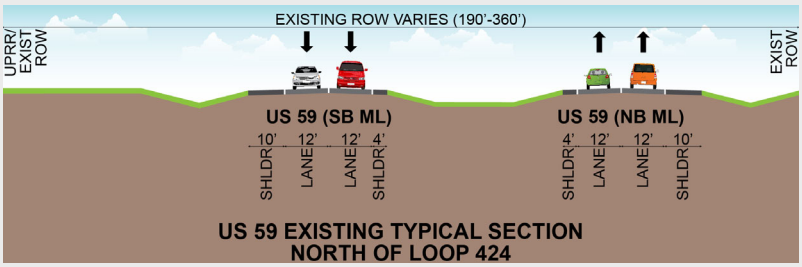
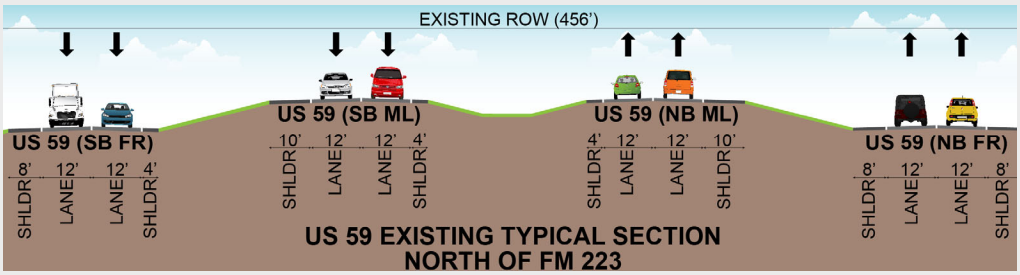
Existing Typical Section



SHLDR = Inside or Outside Shoulder
SB = Southbound
NB = Northbound

*Not to Scale



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The existing corridor consists of two 12-foot-wide travel lanes in each direction with 4-foot-wide inside shoulders and 10-foot-wide outside shoulders. The highway is divided by a grassy median that is approximately 48 feet wide. The existing right-of-way ranges between approximately 190 feet and 456 feet.

Drainage along the roadway is generally conveyed through open ditches along both sides of the roadway.

There are no accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists within the project limits.

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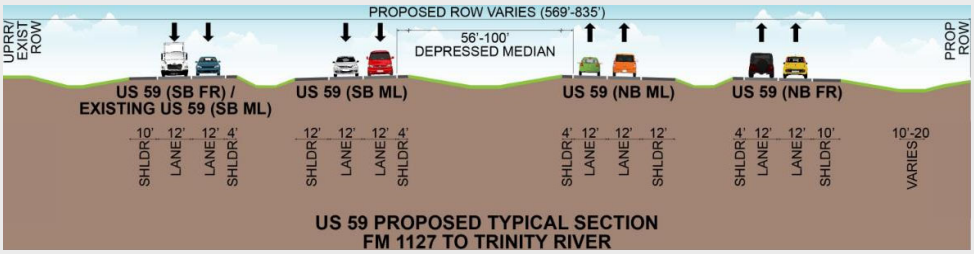
Proposed Preferred Typical Section



SHLDR = Inside or Outside Shoulder
SB = Southbound
NB = Northbound
ML = Mainlane
FR = Frontage Road

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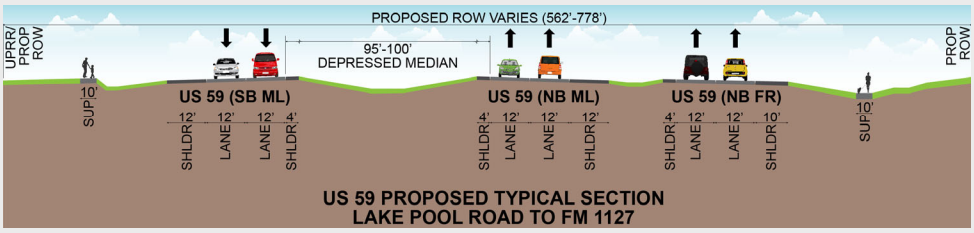

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The proposed improvements consist of two 12-foot-wide travel lanes in each direction with 4-foot-wide inside shoulders and 12-foot-wide outside shoulders. The highway would be divided by an 88 to 95-foot-wide grassy median. One-way frontage roads consisting of two 12-foot travel lanes with 10 foot outside and 4 foot inside shoulders are proposed on both sides of US 59. The proposed improvements would require an approximate 455 to 800-foot-wide corridor.

Though not shown in this typical section, the replacement of existing bridges over the Trinity River with new bridges and turnaround (U-turns) along both banks of the river is proposed. Overpasses with U-turns would also be constructed at the FM 1127 and SL 424/Lake Pool Road intersections. A U-turn will also be provided at FM 223 (Church Street) from southbound US 59 to northbound US 59.

Access to US 59 will be limited to exit and entrance ramps from the frontage road system. The improvements would be a controlled access facility that will conform with interstate standards.

Drainage along the roadway will be designed to flow into open ditches along both sides of the roadway.

The project also includes shared use paths to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists within the project limits from FM 223 to Lake Pool Road.

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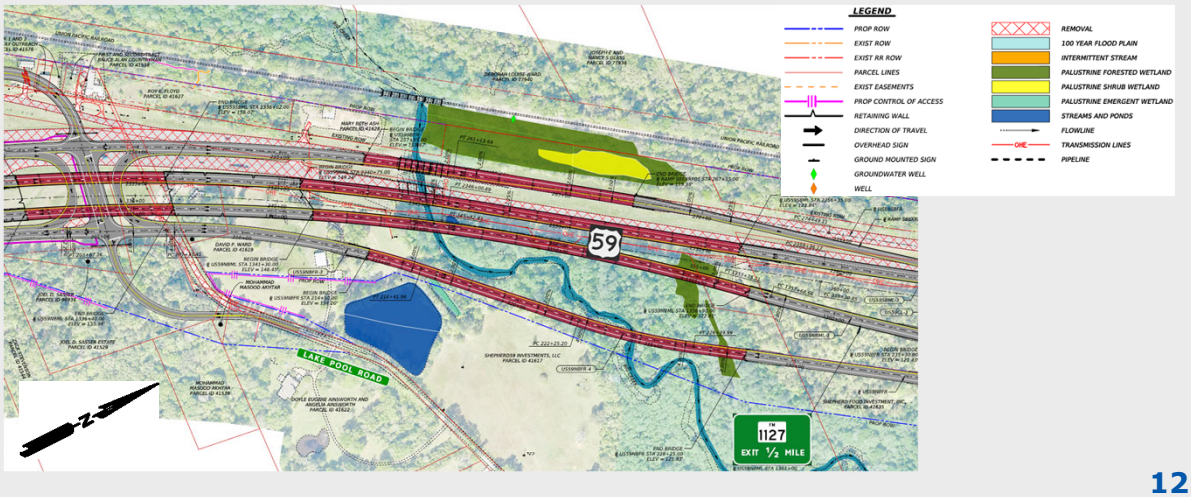
Proposed Preferred Schematic Design



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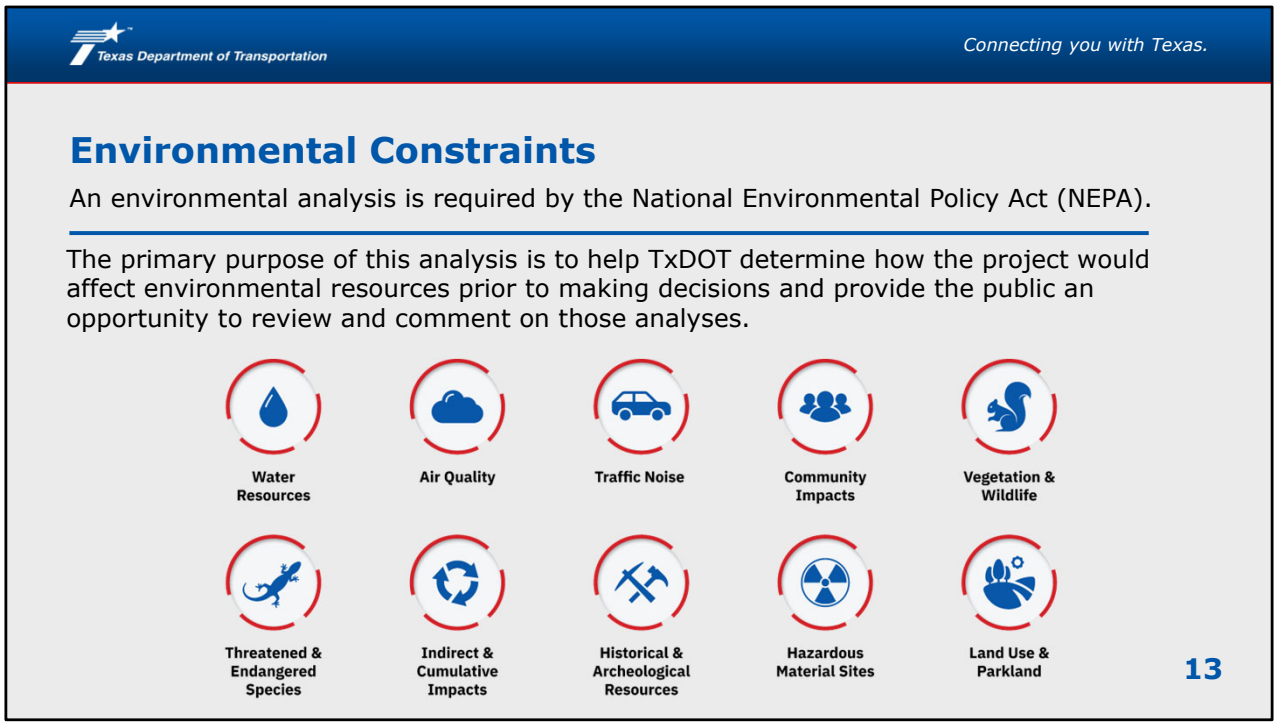
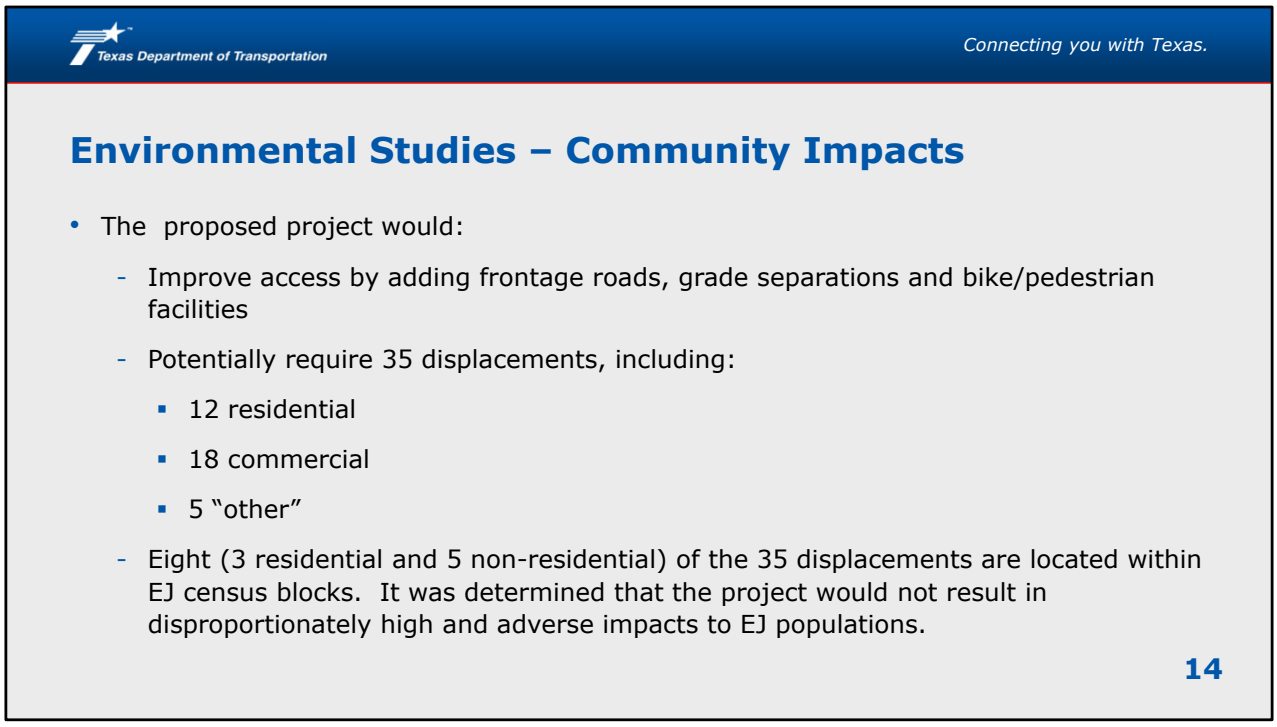
This slide shows a screenshot of a portion of the schematic and legend. Due to the limited visibility of this slide you may not be able to see everything in detail, but we wanted to bring your attention to a couple areas that we thought would help as you view the schematic on the website. Please take a minute to review the plan legend. This legend will illustrate what the various colored symbols on the schematic represent. For example, the orange dashed line represents TxDOT's existing right of way. The blue dashed line represents the proposed right of way that would be needed for this project and the red solid lines depict parcel boundaries.

To view the full schematic in more detail or to download please go to www.txdot.gov and search "US 59 Upgrade Shepherd to Trinity River." The schematic will also be available for viewing during the in-person hearing.



In the following slides, I will highlight and discuss the resources that were determined to have potential impacts resulting from the proposed project and require further analysis, permitting or agency coordination.

As part of environmental review process, natural, cultural and social resources are evaluated for potential impacts of the proposed project.

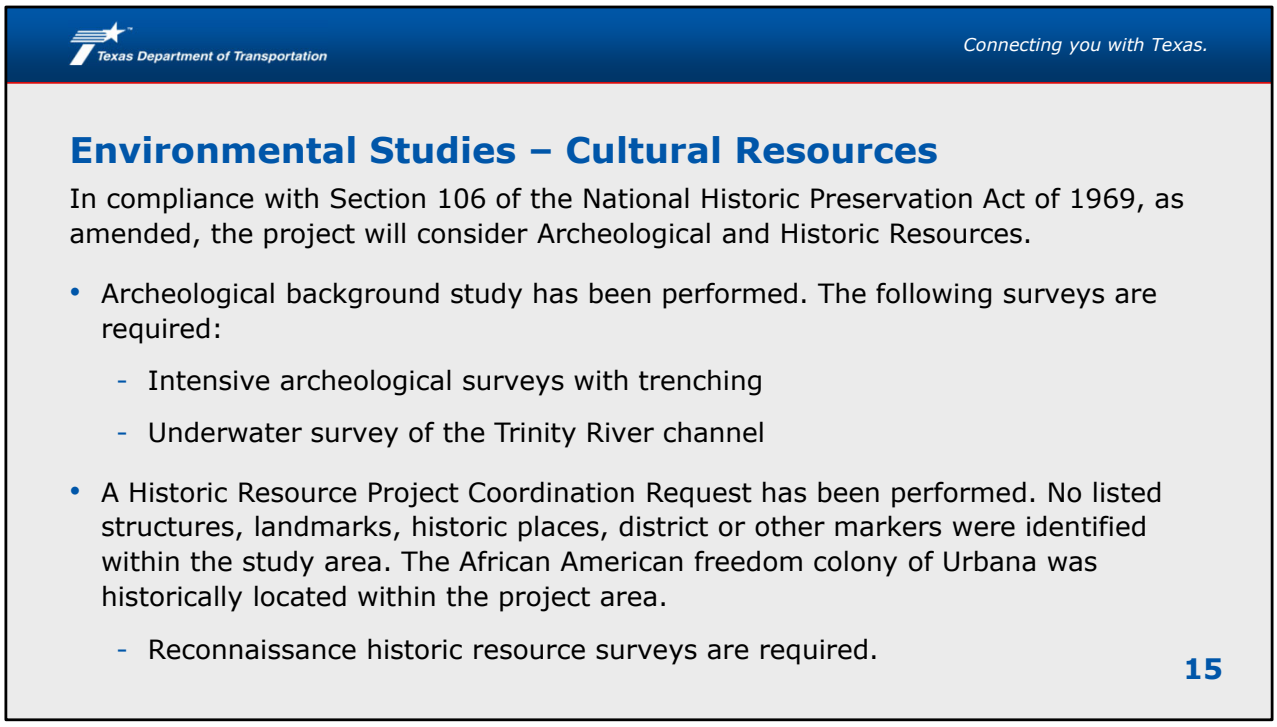


People generally access destinations by car or other motor vehicle through the facility. The project would provide benefits to the community by adding frontage roads and updating US 59 to interstate standards, improving access to residents and business owners. The project would also include bike and pedestrian accommodations along the frontage roads from FM 223 north to Lake Pool Road.

The additional right of way required for the project could result in 35 displacements including 12 residential, 18 commercial, and five buildings categorized as "other." TxDOT will work with property owners to determine if the commercial businesses will relocate.

Of the 35 total displacements, eight occur within Environmental Justice populations including three residences and five non-residences. It was determined that displacements would not result in disproportionately high and adverse impacts to Environmental Justice populations, including low-income and/or minority populations.

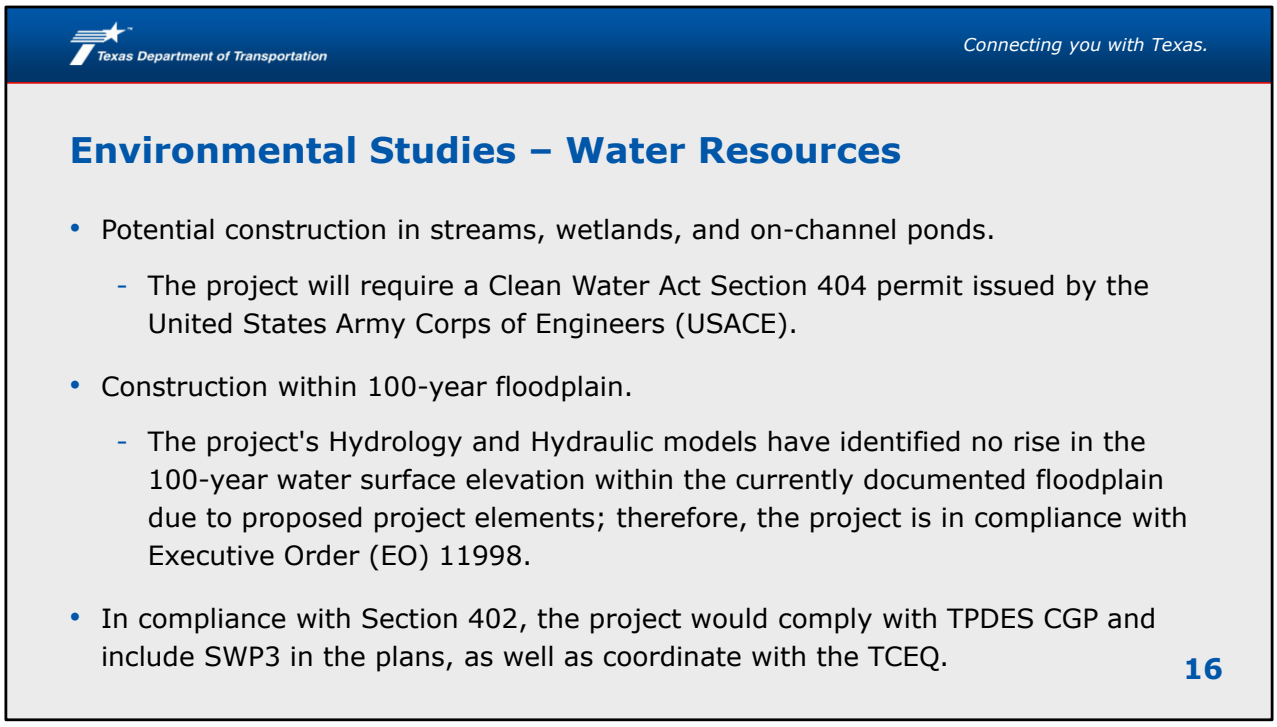
Additionally, three of the six census block groups indicate that a portion of the population speaks Spanish with Limited English Proficiency, or LEP. This portion varies between approximately five and nine percent of the population. Public Involvement Outreach methods were translated to Spanish and translators will be available during the hearing as needed.



In compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1969, as amended, the project will consider Archeological and Historic resources. TxDOT performed a desktop-based archeological study of available background information, which indicated that further field investigation is warranted. Due to the level of disturbance with the proposed activities, TxDOT had determined that the project will require an intensive archeological survey with trenching in accessible locations and an underwater survey of the Trinity River channel.

TxDOT performed an initial historic resource study of the project area and found no historically noted resources. However, the amount of new ROW warrants a reconnaissance survey. The survey will study the history of the area to determine if there are locally or culturally significant properties in the area. The area has a history of cash crop and natural gas production. Additionally, the African American freedom colony of Urbana was historically located within the project area.

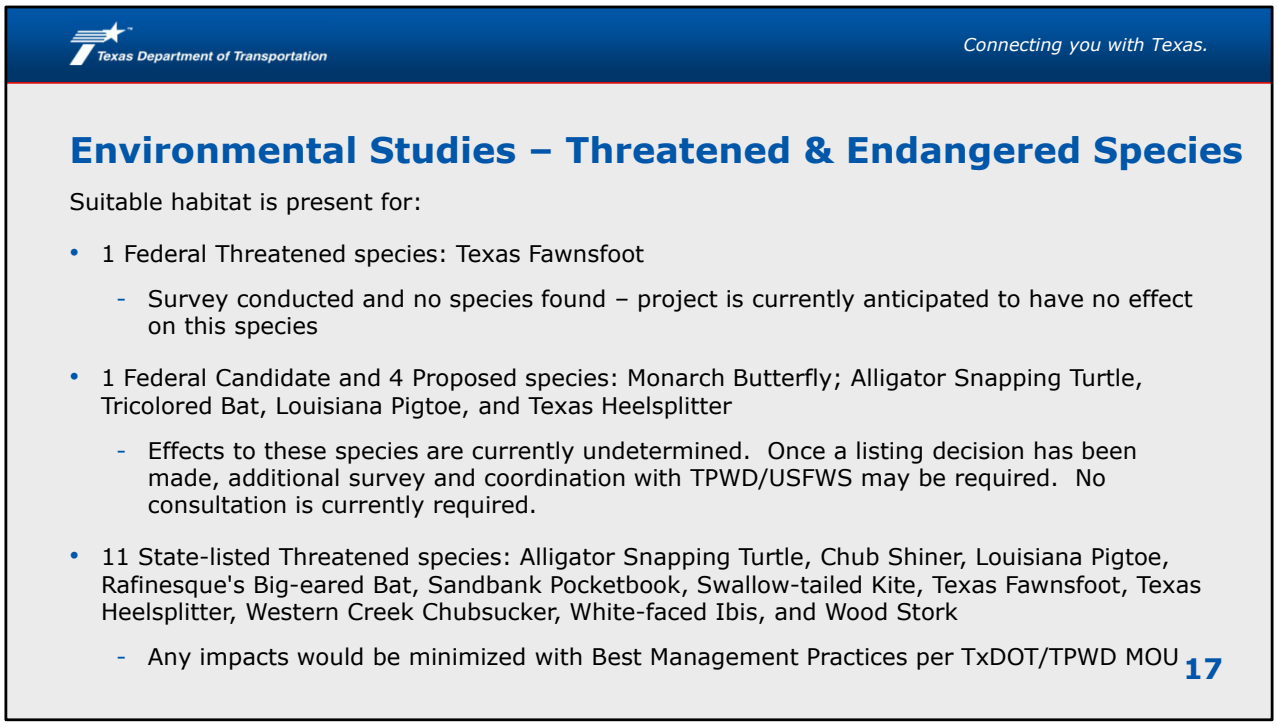
These surveys and any necessary coordination with the Texas Historical Commission will be completed prior to construction.



The project involves construction in waters of the U.S., including streams, wetlands, and on-channel ponds. The project would require a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit, such as an individual permit or a Nationwide Permit 14 for linear transportation projects issued by the US Army Corps of Engineers, with a pre-construction notification. Upon the final design, TxDOT would obtain the required permit from USACE.

The project involves construction within areas of FEMA-designated 100-year floodplain. The project's Hydrology and Hydraulic models have identified no rise in the 100-year water surface elevation within the currently documented floodplain due to proposed project elements; therefore, the project is in compliance with Executive Order (EO) 11998.

In compliance with Section 402, the project would comply with TPDES CGP and include an SWP3 in the plans, as well as coordination with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

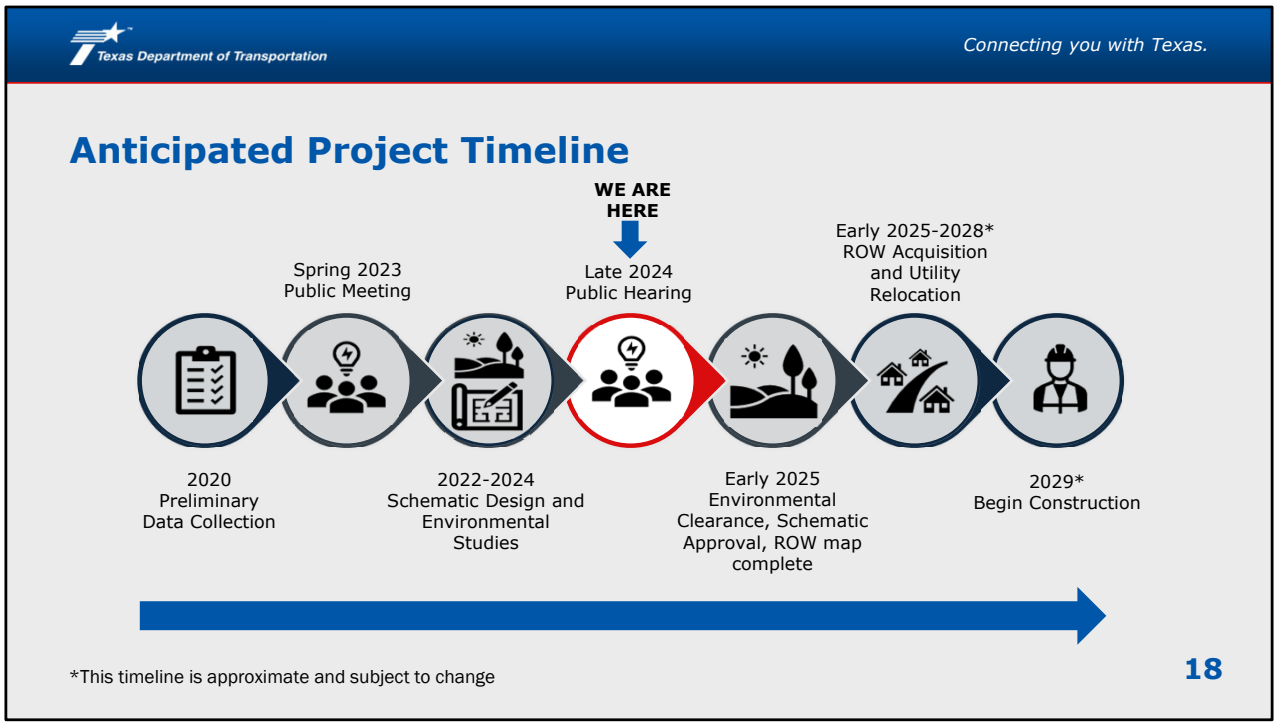


The proposed project contains suitable habitat for and may impact 11 state-listed species. Any potential impacts to state-listed species would be minimized with Best Management Practices, in accordance with the TxDOT/TPWD Memorandum of Understanding.

Suitable habitat is present for one Federal threatened species, Texas Fawnsfoot, one Federal Candidate, Monarch Butterfly, and 4 Federally Proposed species, the Alligator Snapping Turtle, Tricolored Bat, Louisiana Pigtoe, and Texas Heelsplitter.

TxDOT performed mussel surveys between November 18th and 25th to determine the presence of federally threatened Texas Fawnsfoot. No Texas Fawnsfoot or other federal proposed or state-listed mussels were found during the survey. At this time, the proposed project is anticipated to have no effect on federally threatened or endangered species; therefore, no coordination with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act is required.

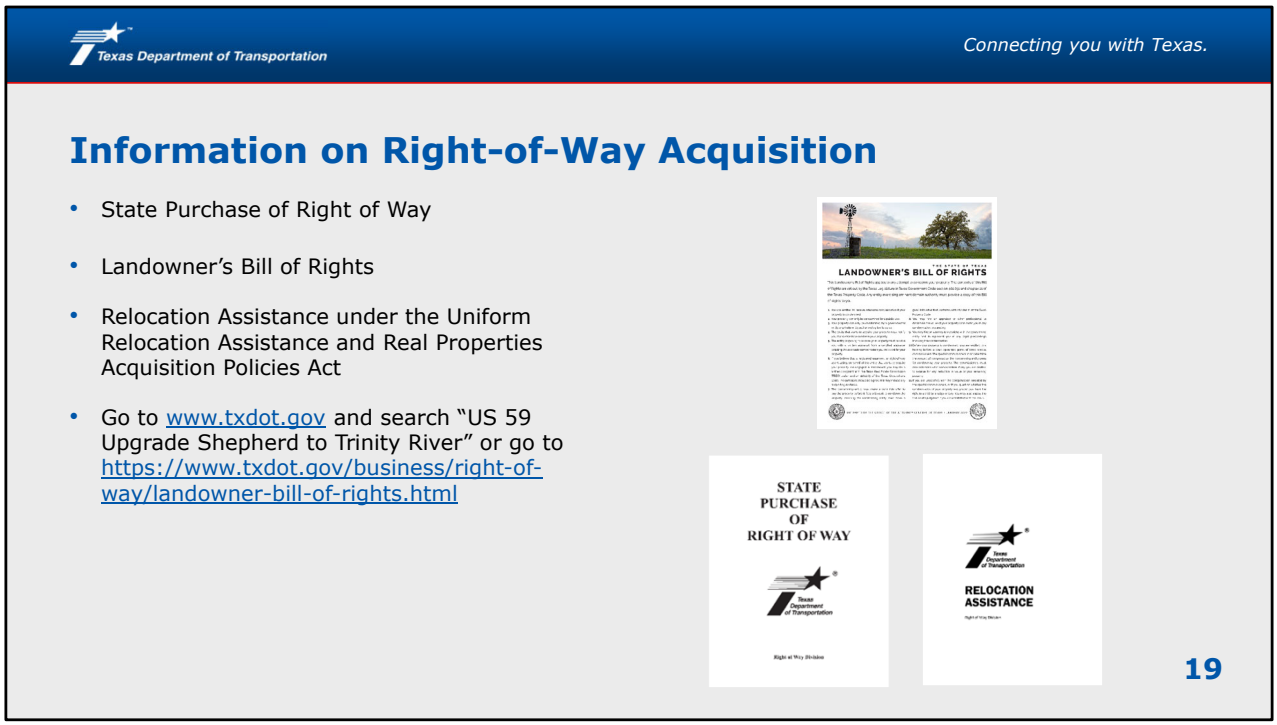
Once listing decisions are made for any federal proposed or candidate species, additional survey and Section 7 coordination may be required. The project would be reevaluated at that time.



The project timeline is as follows. Data collection began in 2020 where site visits were conducted, the roadway plans were reviewed, as-builts and the right-of-way abstract map were created, and utilities were located. Between 2020 and 2024, the project team developed the schematic design and environmental studies analysis. In addition, the project team solicited input during the first public meeting in April 2023.

Today, TxDOT is holding this public hearing to present and solicit comments on the schematic and environmental documentation. After analyzing feedback from the hearing, TxDOT will make final revisions and submit the schematic and environmental documentation for approval from TxDOT Environmental Affairs Division.

TxDOT anticipates to begin the right-of-way acquisition process, relocation of utilities and development of the detailed engineering plans and estimates in 2025. The right-of-way acquisition process and relocation of utilities is anticipated to take approximately four years. Construction is tentatively scheduled to start in 2029.



Right of way for this project would be acquired in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Properties Acquisitions Policies Act of 1970, as amended.

TxDOT has three documents which provide additional general information on the right-of-way purchasing process including topics such as appraisal, compensation, and relocation assistance. These documents may be found at the website address shown here.

The Texas Department of Transportation will be responsible for acquiring the necessary right of way for this project. Once an approved right of way map is produced, State Certified Appraisers will be hired to appraise the individual parcels. During the appraisal process each landowner will be mailed a letter identifying the appraiser. Also, a copy of the Landowners Bill of Rights will be sent certified mail to all affected property owners. The appraiser will contact the landowner to set up an appointment to inspect the property. It is highly recommended that landowners meet with the appraiser. This will allow the landowners to point out improvements such as sprinkler systems, septic systems as well as other property improvements. The landowner can also provide the appraiser information regarding tenants or easement holders. Once the appraisal is completed, the TxDOT representative will make an appointment to meet with the landowner and present a copy of the appraisal and a written offer for the property.

If you are displaced or have personal property that is displaced by the project, you will be notified of your eligibility for relocation assistance. Relocation eligibility begins upon delivery of the initial written offer to purchase right of way, and no person lawfully occupying real property will be required to move from their home, farm or business without at least 90 days written notice. Please make sure you pick up the brochure titled State Purchase of Right of Way. It will give you more information about the process we go through to acquire property. They are located at the table as you entered.

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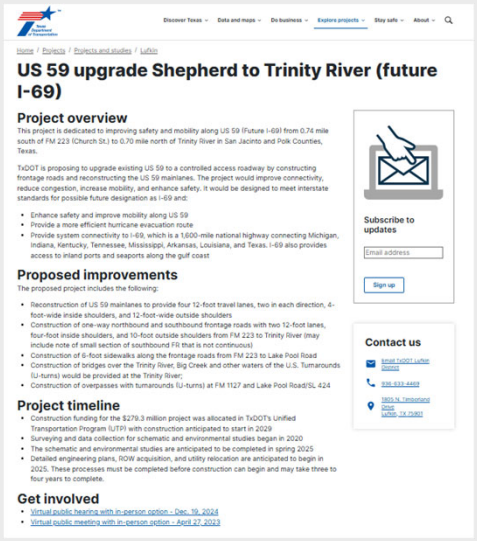
Hearing Materials

Hearing materials can be viewed by:

- Visit www.txdot.gov and search "US 59 Upgrade Shepherd to Trinity River" or scan the QR code below
- Scroll to bottom of the webpage to the Get Involved section
- Click on the link named "Virtual Public Hearing with In-Person Option – Thursday, December 19, 2024" and click on documents under the Hearing Materials Section

Scan the QR code for the project page



US 59 upgrade Shepherd to Trinity River (future I-69)

Project overview

This project is dedicated to improving safety and mobility along US 59 (Future I-69) from 0.74 mile south of FM 223 (Church St.) to 0.70 mile north of Trinity River in San Jacinto and Polk Counties, Texas.

TxDOT is proposing to upgrade existing US 59 to a controlled access roadway by constructing frontage roads and reconstructing the US 59 mainlanes. The project would improve connectivity, reduce congestion, increase mobility, and enhance safety. It would be designed to meet interstate standards for possible future designation as I-69 and:

- Enhance safety and improve mobility along US 59
- Provide a more efficient hurricane evacuation route
- Provide system connectivity to I-69, which is a 1,600-mile national highway connecting Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas. I-69 also provides access to inland ports and seaports along the gulf coast

Proposed improvements

The proposed project includes the following:

- Reconstruction of US 59 mainlanes to provide four 12-foot travel lanes, two in each direction, 4-foot-wide inside shoulders, and 12-foot-wide outside shoulders
- Construction of one-way northbound and southbound frontage roads with two 12-foot lanes, four-foot inside shoulders, and 10-foot outside shoulders from FM 223 to Trinity River (may include note of small section of southbound FR that is not continuous)
- Construction of 6-foot sidewalks along the frontage roads from FM 223 to Lake Pool Road
- Construction of bridges over the Trinity River, Big Creek and other waters of the U.S. Turnarounds (U-turns) would be provided at the Trinity River;
- Construction of overpasses with turnarounds (U-turns) at FM 1127 and Lake Pool Road/SL 424

Project timeline

- Construction funding for the $279.3 million project was allocated in TxDOT's Unified Transportation Program (UTP) with construction anticipated to start in 2029
- Surveying and data collection for schematic and environmental studies began in 2020
- The schematic and environmental studies are anticipated to be completed in spring 2025
- Detailed engineering plans, ROW acquisition, and utility relocation are anticipated to begin in 2025. These processes must be completed before construction can begin and may take three to four years to complete.

Get involved

- Virtual public hearing with in-person option - Dec. 19, 2024
- Virtual public meeting with in-person option - April 27, 2023

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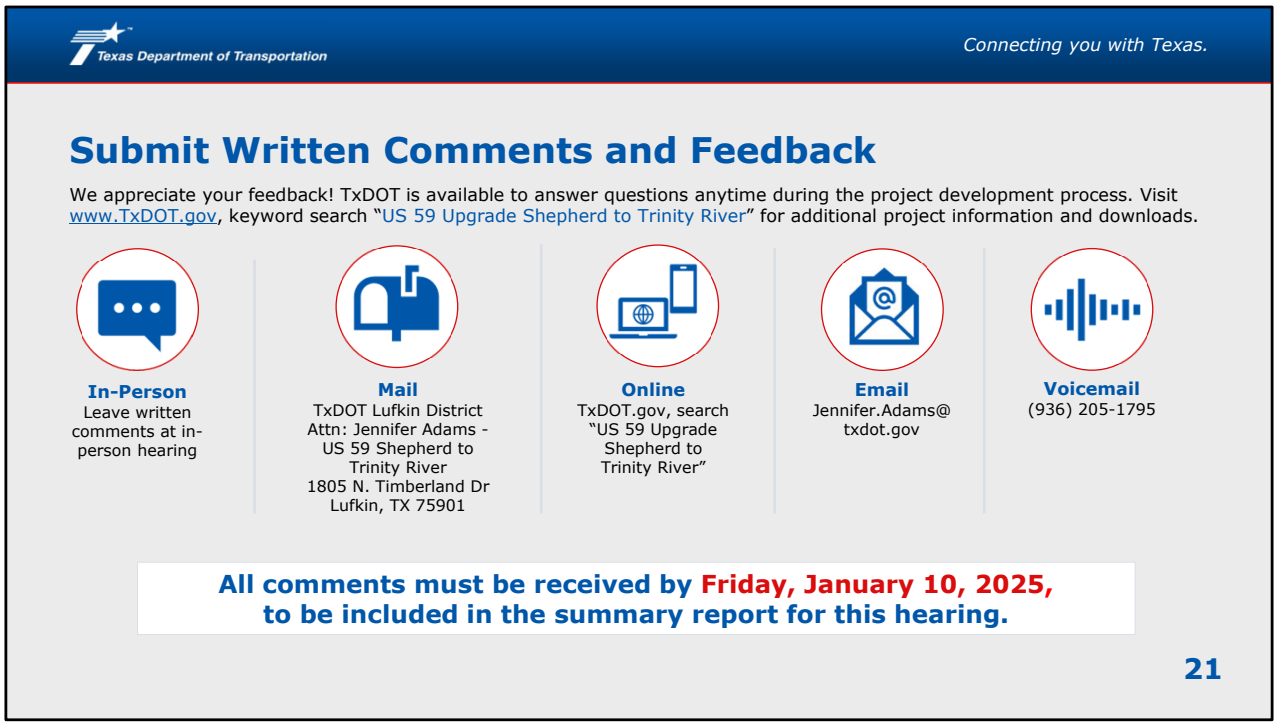
All the materials for this public hearing are available for viewing and download on the US 59 Upgrade Shepherd to Trinity River (Future I-69) project webpage by navigating to www.txdot.gov and searching "US 59 Upgrade Shepherd to Trinity River." Once on the project webpage, scroll down to the "Get Involved" section and click on the link named Virtual Public Hearing with In-Person Option – Thursday, December 19, 2024. To view public hearing materials, click on the individual documents under the Hearing Materials Section which include public hearing notice in English and Spanish, project fact sheet, schematic design, newspaper display ads in English and Spanish, this pre-recorded presentation and comment cards to submit comments.

The video presentation is in English and Spanish. If you need any technical or language assistance, please email us at Rhonda.Oaks@txdot.gov or call Rhonda Oaks, our public information officer, at (936) 633-4395.

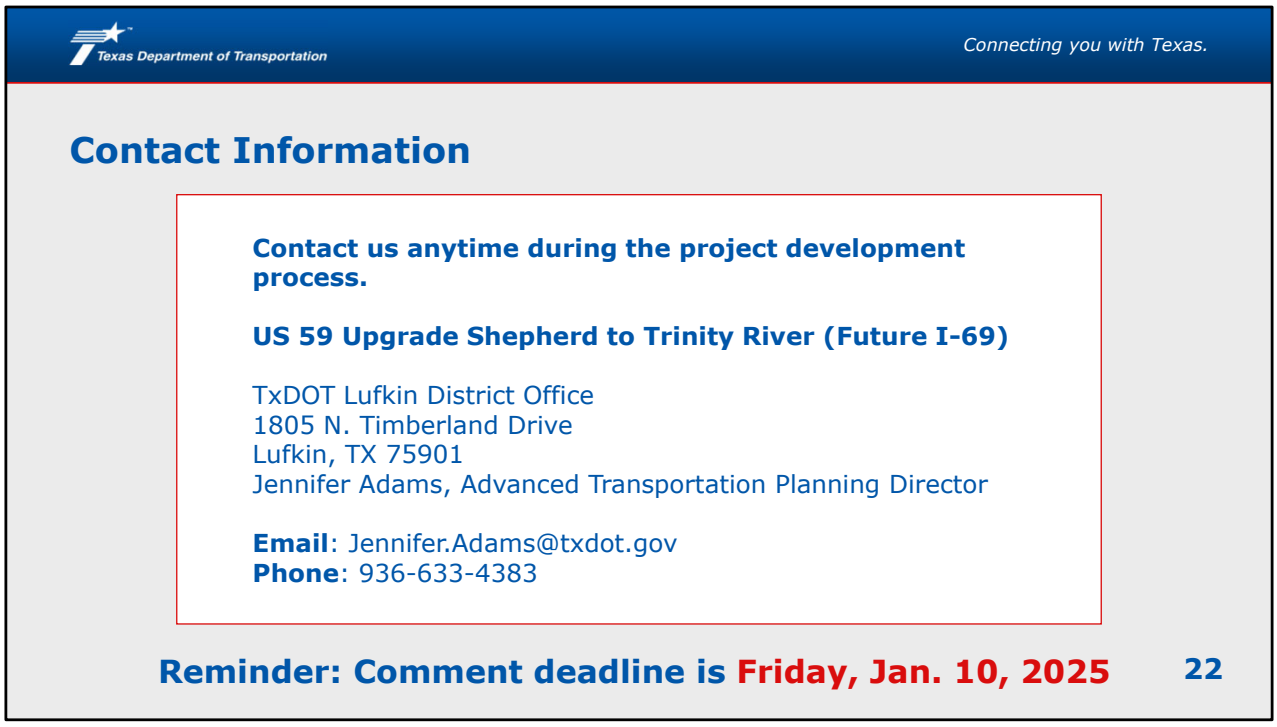


There are several ways to comment on the proposed project:

Members of the public may call 936-205-1795 to provide verbal testimony.

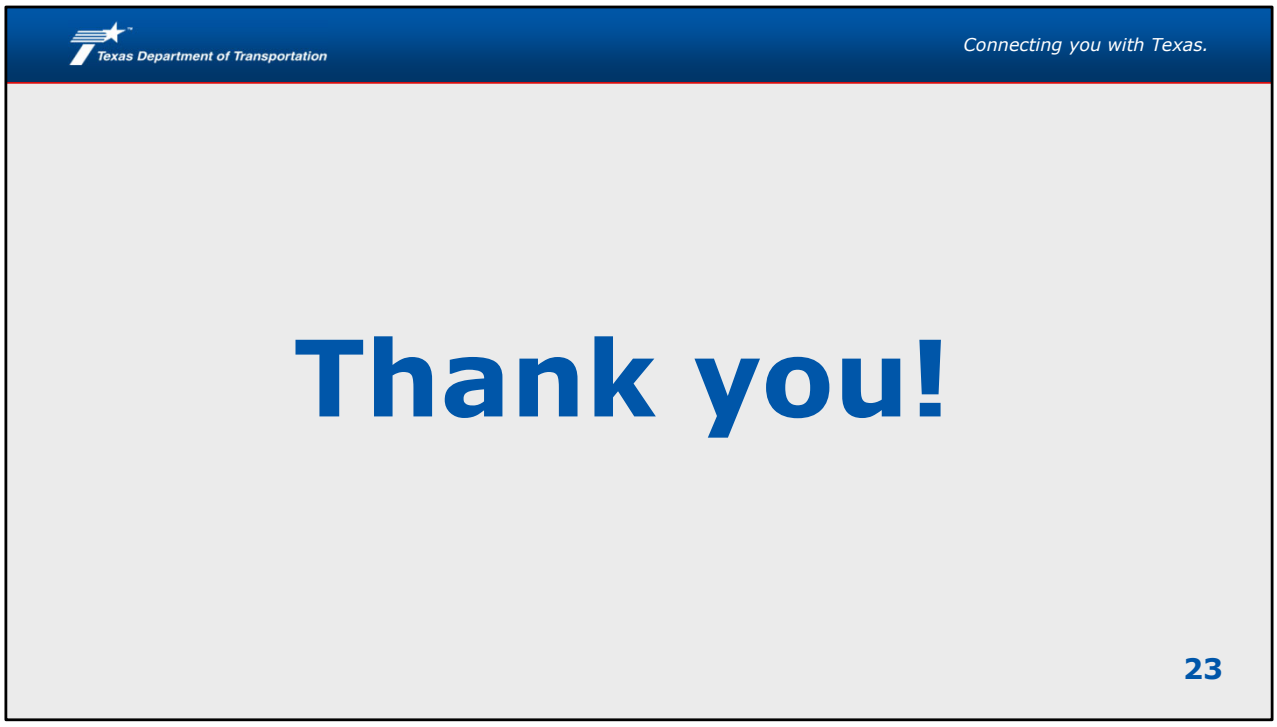
You may submit your comments in writing. There are comment forms available at the sign-in tables at the in-person public hearing. We have provided comment boxes if you choose to leave your completed form at the hearing or your comments may also be mailed or sent electronically to the addresses shown on the slide.

While comments are always welcome, they must be received or postmarked by Friday, January 10, 2025, to be included in the official hearing documentation. Responses to verbal testimony and written comments received during the comment period will be included in the Public Hearing Summary report that will be posted on the hearing webpage when completed.



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. For questions about this project, please contact Jennifer Adams, Advanced Transportation Planning Director, using the contact information shown on this slide and in the hearing materials.

Please note that discussions with the project team members will not be included in the official record of the public hearing. If you wish to submit a comment to be part of the summary report for this public hearing, you must do so formally, in the ways outlined in this presentation. The deadline to submit comments to be included in the summary report is Friday, January 10, 2025.



This concludes the video presentation for the Lufkin District's US 59 Upgrade Shepherd to Trinity River project public hearing. Thank you for your interest and participation. Please drive safely!