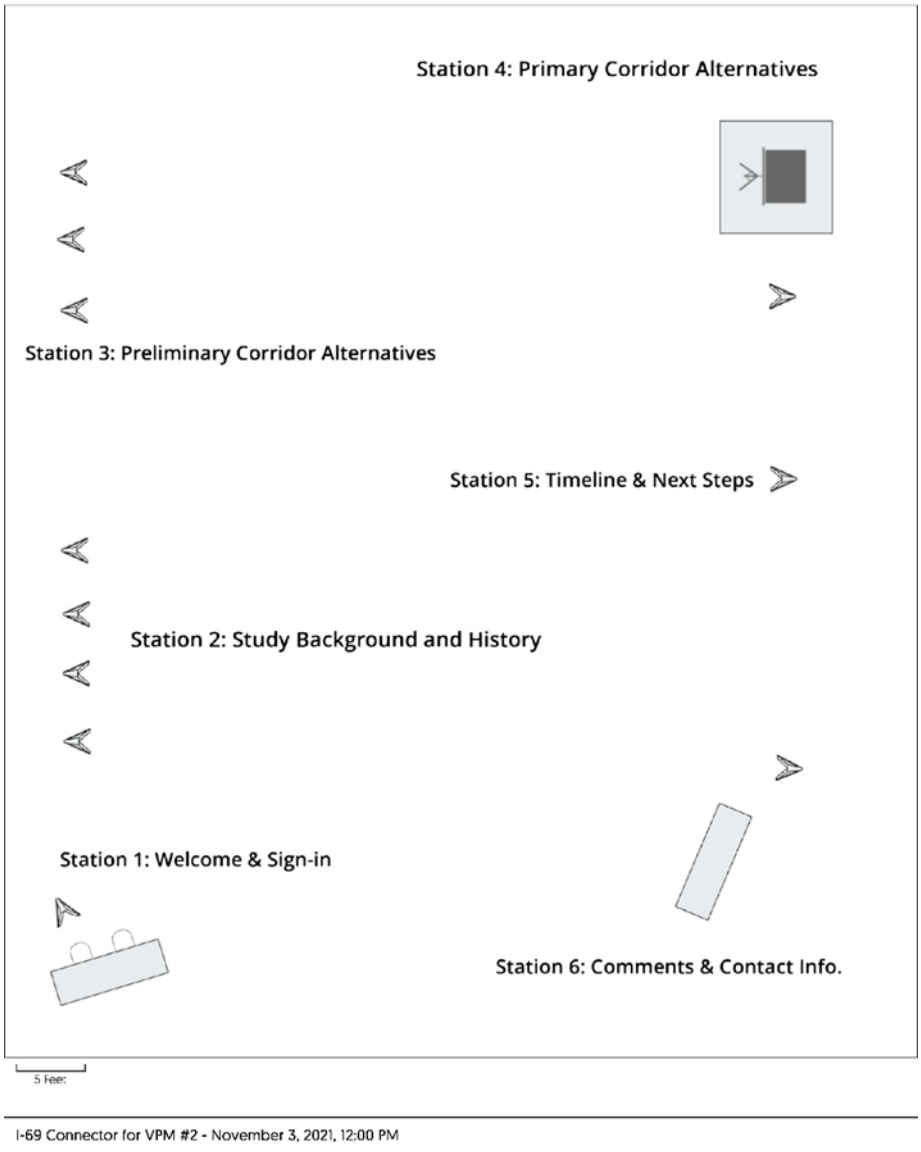
Virtual Public Meeting Room Layout



INTRODUCTION VIDEO

Welcome to the Virtual Public Meeting for the I-69 Connector Corridor Feasibility Study. My name is **Octavio Saenz, and I am the Public Information Officer for the Texas Department of Transportation (or TxDOT) Pharr District.** I would like to welcome and thank you for taking the time to view this virtual presentation for the study.

Bienvenidos a la Reunión Pública Virtual para el Estudio de Viabilidad del Corredor Conector I-69. Mi nombre es Octavio Saenz, y soy el Oficial de Información Pública del Departamento de Transporte de Texas (o TxDOT) del Distrito de Pharr. Me gustaría darles la bienvenida y agradecerles por tomarse el tiempo de ver esta presentación virtual para el estudio. Para acceder la reunión en español haga clic en el botón "En Español".

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 meeting to minimize in-person contact, if desired. TxDOT is also providing an in-person option for individuals who would like to participate in-person instead of online. Please see the notice (provided on the table) for more information on the in-person option. The presentation will cover the same information that will be shared at the in-person public meeting. Station 6 describes the methods for submitting comments, but comments can be submitted at any point during the virtual public meeting through the comment button at the bottom right of your screen.

This is the second public meeting for the I-69 Connector Corridor Feasibility Study and is intended to provide an update by reporting the current status, including corridor alternatives developed for the study.

STATION 1: WELCOME & SIGN-IN

Before we get to the details, I will provide instructions to help you navigate your way through the virtual public meeting room. This is Station 1, the sign-in station. If you have questions about using this format, please contact Gilysa Garcia at (512) 829-7133 for assistance.

This virtual public meeting has been designed to mirror a traditional public meeting, while giving you a chance to experience this meeting from the comfort and safety of your home. You will have the opportunity to learn about the proposed study by reviewing several exhibit boards. Opportunities to provide comments will be available throughout this virtual meeting room.

Let's begin with an orientation of this virtual room format. At the top left of the screen is an orange box with a dropdown menu that provides an outline of the stations in the room. At the top right there is a map of the room. If you do not see a rectangular layout, click the map icon. The numbered stations on this map align with the numbers on the dropdown menu. The blue station numbers highlighted on the map indicate which station you are currently viewing. At any time, you can use this map to move from station to station or orient yourself in the room.

At the bottom of the screen you will see several icons. The first icon to the left, labeled as the letter "i" will give more information about how to navigate around the room and what the different buttons do. The next icon to the right, shown as a "www" will take you to the TxDOT study website which includes all the materials you will see here today in the meeting. The middle icon shows you a map of the study area and where it is in the region. Next you see plus and minus icons that can be used to zoom in and out, respectively, at any time. We have included a HELP button you can click any

time. There is a comment icon in the right bottom corner of the screen. You can leave a comment in any station by clicking this button. Also, there is a pause and play button near the bottom of the screen which allows you to play and pause the narration. Finally, to move forward one station, click the arrow on the right-hand side of the screen. To move backward, click the arrow on the left-hand side of the screen. You can view all stations as many times as you'd like and replay any narration as many times as you'd like.

Now let's look at Station 1, beginning with the boards. We have the welcome board and sign in station; to zoom in on each board simply click the icon that looks like an eye. Once you are finished viewing an item, just press the "X" in the top right-hand corner to exit. You can also click the icon on the right to download the board and view it as a PDF and then print or save it to your device. You will see the same icons for all exhibits and handouts in the room.

Moving down to the table – the piece of paper on the table is where you sign in for the meeting. Please provide your contact information, so that we can keep you informed as the study progresses. We encourage all visitors to sign in. To do so, just click the pen icon under the box labeled "Sign-In".

When you are finished viewing the materials at this station either click the arrows on the right-hand side of the screen or select Station 2 from the map at the top right corner of the screen, to advance.

STATION 2: STUDY BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

As we start this next station remember to click on the eye icon beneath each board as I talk about it to see the additional information presented on each topic.

Station 2 provides a map of the study area, and a summary of the study's history.

Board 1

The first board provides a map showing the I-69 Connector study area. The study area extends from I-69C/US 281 to I-69E/US 77 and is located in portions of Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy Counties. The study area covers approximately 400 square miles.

In October of 2019 and October 2020, TxDOT met with a technical workgroup comprised of municipalities, local officials and agencies and received positive response from the group that a new connection between I-69C/US 281 and I-69E/US 77 was needed to support future population growth. The technical work group also provided information on future developments and provided input on what elements were important to consider for the study.

In December of 2019, TxDOT held the first open house meeting for the study. At that meeting, TxDOT introduced the study to the public and asked for input to help shape the study, identify challenges and possible solutions. The first meeting helped TxDOT develop the study goals and objectives, discuss constraints, gather input, provided an opportunity to learn about public concerns and issues. The study area was shown with no routes at the first public meeting.

Board 2

The second board provides the goals and objectives of the I-69 Connector Feasibility Study. The goal of the study is to examine existing and new location transportation corridor between I-69C/US 281 and I-69E/US 77.

Objectives identified for the study are to: alleviate traffic congestion on I-2, provide additional capacity and infrastructure to meet future population growth and travel demand, provide an additional hurricane evacuation route in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV), improve mobility, and enhance overall connectivity of the transportation network in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

Goals and objectives were developed with input from the first public meeting and input from the technical workgroup.

Board 3

The third board describes the purpose of this virtual public meeting. The purpose of this virtual public meeting is to provide an overview and status of the I-69 corridor planning study, review corridor alternatives developed for the study and provide the public an opportunity to provide input and comments. The corridor alternatives developed for the study includes 15 preliminary corridor routes that were initially evaluated and four primary alternative corridor routes that are recommended for further study and evaluation.

This virtual public meeting will provide an overview of the 15 preliminary routes, but will mainly focus on the four primary alternative corridor routes that are recommended for further study.

Board 4

The fourth board provides an overview of the study process. The process began with determining an appropriate study area for a potential roadway connection between I-69C/US 281 and I-69E/US 77. After the first public meeting and with input from the technical work group, 15 high-level preliminary corridors were developed. After review and evaluation, several of the preliminary corridor alternatives were eliminated; however, four primary corridors were identified and recommended for further study. With this virtual public meeting, TxDOT is soliciting input from the public on the study and the four primary corridors which will be presented later in the presentation

When you are finished viewing the boards, please advance to Station 3.

STATION 3: PRELIMINARY CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVES

As we start this next station remember to click on the eye icon beneath each board as I talk about it to see the additional information presented on each topic.

Station 3 provides an overview of the preliminary corridors and locations within the study area.

Board 1

TxDOT developed three zones for the study area. The first board provides a summary of the number of preliminary alternatives studied within each of the three zones. The south zone is generally centered on SH 107. The central zone is generally centered on FM 1925 and the north zone is generally centered on FM 2812. All preliminary corridors were developed using a 350-foot-wide footprint.

Within the south zone, seven preliminary corridors were developed. Six of these corridors were on a combination of existing roads and one alternative was entirely on new location.

Four preliminary corridor alternatives were developed in the central zone. Three of these preliminary corridor alternatives were combination on existing roads and new location. One alternative in the central zone was entirely on new location.

Within the north zone, four preliminary corridor alternatives were developed. Three of these preliminary corridor alternatives were on a combination of existing roads and new location with one of these alternatives entirely on new location.

Board 2

Board two shows the location of the 15 preliminary corridor alternatives. The seven south zone preliminary corridors alternatives are labeled S1 through S6 (shown in green) and the alternative entirely on new location is labeled as SNL (shown in pink). For perspective, S1 is located approximately 6 miles North of I-2.

The four central zone alternatives are labeled as C1 through C3 (shown in orange) and the alternative entirely on new location is labeled as CNL (shown in pink). C1 is located approximately nine miles North of I-2.

The four north zone alternatives are labeled as N1 through N3 (shown in blue) and the alternative entirely on new location is labeled NNL (shown in pink). N1 is located approximately 12 miles North of I-2.

The 15 preliminary corridor alternatives were presented to the technical work group meeting that took place in October 2020.

Board 3

The slide provides the environmental and engineering categories that were evaluated for the fifteen preliminary corridor alternatives.
A long list of environmental categories were evaluated and are shown on the board. The team identified nine priority environmental categories as they evaluated the alternatives. These nine priority environmental categories were:

1. The number of parcels potentially impacted,
2. The number of residential impacts,
3. Acres of agriculture impacts,
4. If the alternative impacted colonias,
5. Impacts to wildlife refuges or wildlife management areas,
6. Impacts to cemeteries,
7. Impacts to prime and unique farmland soils,
8. Impacts to 100-year floodplains and
9. Impacts to mapped national wetland inventory features.

The engineering categories were also evaluated and included the following:

1. Did the alternative meet the goals and objectives of the study?
2. What was the length of the corridor?
3. What are the proposed right of way requirements?
4. What is the estimated construction cost?
5. Did the corridor have any railroad crossings?
6. How many drainage or easement did each alternative cross?

7. How many transmission lines did each alternative cross?
8. If the alternative impacted any wind farms.

Board 4

Board four discusses the preliminary corridor alternatives eliminated and those that were carried forward for further study.

TxDOT evaluated each of the preliminary corridor alternatives equally using a qualitative and quantitative approach. Corridor alternatives were evaluated and ranked and the best performing alternatives were advanced for further consideration.

The north preliminary corridor alternatives were eliminated from further study because they did not perform well for reducing congestion on I-2, and were projected to carry lower volumes of traffic.

Best performing South and central corridors were carried forward because traffic studies demonstrated they would carry higher traffic volumes and provide higher traffic congestion relief for I-2.

South and central corridors with lower ROW requirements and environmental impacts were carried forward.

The detailed results of this analysis can be found in the technical memo titled "I-69 Preliminary Routes Memo" located on the TxDOT website at www.txdot.gov. keyword search "Virtual Public Meeting – I-69 Connector".

Corridor alternatives carried forward are designated as Primary Corridor Alternatives and will be discussed in the next station.

When you are finished viewing the boards, please advance to Station 4.

STATION 4: PRIMARY CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVES

As we start this next station remember to click on the eye icon beneath each board as I talk about it to see the additional information presented on each topic.

Station 4 consists of one tv and one board. Press the play button to start watching the video, once you are done click the "x" at the top right corner to exit. Next to the tv you'll see one board.

TV

At the second technical work group meeting held in October 2020, the work group and Pharr District Administration recommended that the study team analyze two additional corridors. These two corridor alternatives were added to the four primary corridor alternatives, leading to the analysis of six primary corridor alternatives. After analysis of traffic, engineering categories, and environmental criteria, the alternatives were narrowed back down to four final primary corridors. All alternatives considered were evaluated to an equal level of detail.

The first slide shows the four primary corridors alternatives recommended for further study and consideration. Alternatives were relabeled A through D to simplify route names.

Alternative A or the yellow alternative was developed based on technical work group input that encouraged usage and development of SH 107 while minimizing impacts to properties. In summary, Alternative A:

- Begins at the intersection of I-69C with SH 107
- Continues East along SH 107 until it crosses N. Tower Rd, where it stays south and connects to Alternative B
- Continues east, between Tex-Mex Rd and E. Curry Rd, then Mile 16 N Rd and Mile 15½ N Rd
- Diverts south near Rogerslacy and reconnects to SH 107
- Follows parcel lines where possible to meet San Felipo Rd
- Continues on new location north of the San Rafael Cemetery to connect with I-69E/US 77

Alternative B, the blue alternative was developed on new location, following parcel lines where possible and minimizing impact to residential properties. In summary, Alternative B:

- Begins at I-69C between SH 107/E. University Dr and E. Richardson Rd
- Proceeds east between these roadways until it crosses E. University Dr and N. Tower Rd, where it curves south
- Continues east, between Tex-Mex Rd and E. Curry Rd, then Mile 16 N Rd and Mile 15½ N Rd
- Diverts south near Rogerslacy and then runs east to connect with I-69E

Alternative C, the green alternative was developed based on the technical work group's recommendation to intersect I-69E as near to the existing Orphanage Rd as possible. Approximately the western two-thirds of this route follow the same alignment as primary corridor alternative D. In summary, Alternative C:

- Begins at I-69C between E Mile 17½ Rd/Russell Rd and E Chapin St with Alternative D
- Proceeds east until Foster Rd, where it diverts north until turning east at Terry Rd
- Continues east between E Rogers Rd and E Mile 17 ½ Rd until diverting south near FM 88
- Crosses Mile 17½ Rd before turning and proceeding east
- Diverts south near Rogerslacy
- Curves south at Hooks and Hodges Rd, then runs east to connect with I-69E

Alternative D, the orange alternative, was developed on new location, following parcel lines where possible and minimizing impact to residential properties. In summary, Alternative D:

- Begins at I-69C between E Mile 17 ½ Rd/Russell Rd and E Chapin St
- Proceeds east until Foster Rd, where it diverts north until turning east at Terry Rd
- Continues east between E Rogers Rd and E Mile 17 ½ Rd until diverting north near FM 88
- Crosses Mile 19 Rd before turning and proceeding east
- Crosses north of the IBWC floodway and Las Palomas Wildlife Management Area (WMA)
- Diverts north before connecting to I-69E to avoid the intersection of Business 77 and I-69E

TV (Board 2)

This slide shows how each primary corridor alternative would meet the goals and objectives for the I-69 Corridor Study. A rating of Low, Medium, and High was used to assess the objectives, with a value of High meaning it better met the objective and Low meaning it did not meet the objective as well. Primary corridor alternatives A and B would perform

better for alleviating traffic congestion on I-2, provide additional capacity and infrastructure to meet future population growth and travel demand as compared to alternatives C and D. It is anticipated that the four primary corridor alternatives would perform equally for improved mobility, enhancing the overall connectivity of the transportation network in the Lower Rio Grande Valley and provide an additional hurricane and evacuation route.

TV (Board 3)

The third slide provides information on the future annual average daily traffic that each alternative could accommodate and the potential number of travel lanes each alternative would have. It also depicts the proposed typical section of each primary corridor alternative, which would be a controlled-access facility, and would consist of four to six 12-foot-wide travel lanes (two to three in each direction) and two frontage roads with two 12-foot-wide travel lanes, separated from the mainlanes by a median. It is anticipated that Alternative A would serve the highest estimated amount of traffic at 80,300 in the year 2045. Additionally, Alternative A could include one additional main lane in each direction to accommodate the future traffic volumes. It is anticipated that alternatives B, C and D would all provide a similar number of travel lanes (four main travel lanes (two in each direction) and four frontage road lanes (also two in each direction). For alternatives C and D, the anticipated annual average daily traffic anticipated in the year 2045 is 44,500. Finally, Alternative B is anticipated to accommodate higher traffic at an estimated 63,650 in the year 2045.

The primary corridor alternatives were refined to include a proposed typical right-of-way width of approximately 350 feet along the corridor mainlanes and would expand to 450 feet at potential interchange locations. The potential interchange locations include nine in Hidalgo County (I-69C/US 281, FM 907, planned SH 68, FM 1423, FM 493, SH 88, FM 1015, FM 491, and FM 1425) and three in Cameron County (FM 2556, FM 506 and I-69E/US 77).

The ultimate typical section would be determined based on traffic needs.

TV (Board 4)

This slide provides the results of engineering categories evaluated for the study. The lowest values are identified in green italicized numbers and the highest values are shown in red bolded numbers.

For the length of the corridor alternatives studied, Alternative D was shown to have the shortest length at an estimated 23.2 miles while Alternative A has the longest length at 25.47 miles.

Proposed right of needs are anticipated to be the lowest for Alternative D at an estimated 1021 acres while Alternative A has the highest proposed ROW needs estimated at 1,121 acres.

Alternative A has the highest number of railroad crossings estimated at 2 while alternatives B, C, and D cross one railroad.

Drainage easement crossings are lower for Alternatives A and C, estimated at 3 while Alternative B has the highest number of drainage easement crossings estimated at 6.

Transmission line crossings are the highest with Alternative C, estimated at 6 while Alternative D has the lowest, estimated at 2.

Finally, only Alternative D is estimated to have a potential conflict with wind farms (estimated at 1).

TV (Board 5)

Finally, this slide shows the anticipated impacts to the nine priority environmental categories. The lowest values are identified in green italicized numbers and the highest values are shown in red bolded numbers

Is it anticipated that Alternative A would result in the highest impacts to parcels, estimated at 555, and impacts to residential properties (estimated at 103 acres). Alternative D would result in the lowest number of impacts to parcels, estimated at 252 and the lowest number of impacts to residential properties (estimated at 65 acres).

Agricultural impacts are estimated to be highest with Alternative C at 1,130 acres and the lowest with Alternative A (estimated at 759 acres).

Colonia impacts are anticipated to be highest with Alternative D, estimated at 10 and the lowest with Alternative C (estimated at 4).

Impacts to Wildlife Refuges or Wildlife Management Areas are estimated to be the highest with Alternative D at 9.12 acres and the lowest with Alternative B at 3.7 acres.

Impacts to Prime/Unique Farmland Soils, 100-year floodplains and national wetland inventory features are anticipated to be higher with Alternative D and the lowest impacts to these resources are anticipated with Alternative A.

None of the alternatives are anticipated to impact cemeteries.

Board 1 (next to the TV)

This board shows the four primary corridor alternatives. To see each primary alternative in more detail, click on the "Click here" icon next to each alternative. You can click on any of the map sections to view that portion of the corridor in more detail, and zoom in and out or by using the "+" and(/or) "-" signs at the bottom of the screen for a closer view of the area. You can move to different areas of the map by clicking and dragging your mouse left or right. The legend is on the bottom of the map and identifies the shading and symbols used on the map. After viewing the alternatives, please advance to Station 5 to learn about the study timeline and next steps.

STATION 5: TIMELINE

Station 5 includes one board showing the study timeline. A technical workgroup meeting and the first open house meeting for this study were conducted in 2019. A second technical workgroup meeting was held in the fall of 2020. TxDOT has also prepared an online survey for the study that will be discussed in the next station. As you can see on the board, we are currently at the second public meeting. Input received from the public will help TxDOT identify a preferred corridor alternative that may be advanced to preliminary design, environmental studies, and further public involvement. All dates are subject to change.

Eventually, the study process will conclude with identifying a recommended corridor alternative that can be further developed with an engineering schematic, environmental studies, public involvement, and detailed plans, specifications, and construction estimates. Development of an engineering schematic, environmental studies, further public involvement, and plans, specifications and construction estimates are subject to planning, programming, and available funding. At this time, construction funds have not been identified.

When you've finished viewing the timeline, please move to Station 6.

STATION 6: COMMENT AND CONTACT INFORMATION

This is the final station of the virtual public meeting. The board provides directions for submitting comments.

If you didn't already do so, please add your contact information to the sign-in sheet at Station 1 to receive updates as they are made available. To view any of the meeting materials you saw here today, simply go to www.txdot.gov and use the keyword search function at the top right of the webpage. In this box enter the keywords "Virtual Public Meeting - I-69 Connector". Your input is important to us. As shown on the board, comments can be submitted online by using the comment button at the bottom right of this virtual public meeting room. In addition, comments can be emailed to Robin Gelston at Robin.Gelston@TxDOT.gov, or comment forms can be downloaded and mailed to: TxDOT Pharr District Office, Attn: I-69 Connector 600 W. I-2 Pharr, TX 78577.

Looking at the table at this station in the virtual room there are three items. The first item on the left is a comment card. Click on the pen button to leave an electronic comment or click on the down arrow to download the comment card. You can send this card in via mail to the address shown on the board next to the table or scan and send via email. The item in the middle is a link to an online survey, when clicking you will be directed to the TxDOT website there you'll see a link to the online survey, click on the link to provide your input. The last item to the right is a file for download that contains all the materials presented at the virtual meeting. This item may take a while to download due to its size.

All comments must be received or postmarked by Friday, November 19, 2021 to be included in the official meeting documentation. Please contact Margil Maldonado, Jr., P.E., TxDOT Project Manager at (956)702-6134 or Margil.Maldonado@txdot.gov.

Comments can be made regarding the study at any time during the study development process but will not be included in the official Public Meeting record if not received within the comment period.

We thank you for taking the time to participate in this virtual public meeting. This concludes the virtual public meeting.