

## Slide 1:

Welcome to the Virtual Public Hearing for the FM 756 widening project. TxDOT is proposing to expand FM 756, better known as Paluxy Drive, from Jeff Davis Drive, south, to FM 344, in Smith County.

We appreciate your interest in this project and welcome each of you to provide comments about the proposal. The process for submitting comments will be explained later in the presentation.

TxDOT is conducting this virtual public hearing in conjunction with an optional in-person hearing offered on July 15, 2021, by appointment only. This virtual hearing will be available for viewing through July 30, 2021; and shares the same information as the in-person option. All material presented here can be found on the project webpage. You can view the public hearing webpage, by visiting [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov) and searching keyword "FM 756 Public Hearing" in the upper right-hand search box.

## Slide 2:

The public hearing presentation will begin with an overview of the project, followed by a review of the project's purpose and need. Next, we describe the project design, funding and anticipated schedule, followed by a description of the environmental process and study findings. Finally, we will outline how you can provide comments to the project team.

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The proposed project will be funded through a combination of federal and state funds. It is subject to the National Environmental Policy Act, which is referred to as NEPA. TxDOT prepared a draft environmental assessment (EA) to evaluate the social, economic, and environmental impacts of the proposed improvements.

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 USC 327 and a memorandum of understanding dated December 9, 2019 and executed by the federal highway administration and TxDOT.

The draft environmental assessment is available for public review. TxDOT will consider all submitted comments. Once the comment period is over, TxDOT will prepare a final environmental assessment and, if warranted, issue a Finding of No Significant Impact, or FONSI.

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TxDOT has engaged the public and elected officials throughout the development of this project.

Two open-house style public meetings were held prior to this hearing. The first meeting was held at Cornerstone Church, in Tyler on January 15, 2019. The second meeting was held at Shiloh Road Church of Christ, in Tyler on June 25, 2019.

Input from the public and stakeholders was incorporated into the project planning, as practical. The preferred alternative presented here is the final 'best-fit' design to reduce right-of-way and environmental impacts.

This public hearing is the final step in the public involvement process for the FM 756 widening project.

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The proposed project is approximately 7 miles long, stretching from Jeff Davis Drive to FM 344 in Smith County. At FM 346, the proposal includes a grade-separated interchange, with FM 756 bridging over FM 346.

The existing roadway has one travel lane in each direction with limited shoulders. The roadway traverses rolling terrain throughout the length of the project. At its northern limits, the setting is more urban with a higher density of driveway and side-street connections. As it extends to the south, the setting transitions to a rural environment.

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The FM 756 widening project is needed because the roadway is inadequate to meet future travel demands, and does not meet current design standards in regard to its alignment.

The purpose of the FM 756 widening project is to improve safety and mobility within Tyler and the surrounding communities.

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The proposed design would widen the roadway to provide two travel lanes in each direction and a continuous left-turn lane. A proposed grade-separated interchange at FM 346 would replace the existing four-way stop condition and improve traffic flow along FM 756 as well as FM 346.

The proposed improvements would also straighten the existing horizontal and vertical curves that do not meet the current design standards for the posted speed limit. These adjustments will increase drivers' sight distances and lead to safer traffic operation for all users including vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

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The project offers two distinct typical sections.

From Jeff Davis Drive south to FM 346, the proposal includes a four-lane curbed roadway divided by a 16-foot flush median.

The flush median would operate as a continuous, two-way left-turn lane. The travel lane configuration in this section would consist of 12-foot inside travel lanes, and 14-foot outside shared-use lanes to accommodate bicycle traffic.

Area to construct 5-foot, bidirectional sidewalks would also be provided. Sidewalks may be constructed separately from the roadway, depending on available funding.

Today, the existing right of way is approximately 90 feet. The new right of way (post-construction) will vary from 150 to 355 feet.

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The second typical section would be from FM 346 south to FM 344. Here the proposal offers a similar four-lane roadway configuration with a 16-foot flush median.

The flush median would still operate as a continuous, two-way left-turn lane. However, the travel lane configuration would consist of four, 12-foot travel lanes, with 10-foot outside shoulders to accommodate bicycle traffic.

Sidewalks are not proposed on the southern section given its more rural setting.

Currently, the existing right of way is 90 feet. The new right of way (post-construction) will vary from 168 to 472 feet.

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In addition to the proposed widening, the project would shift 1.5 miles of roadway to a new location west of its existing placement. The realignment is aimed at minimizing residential displacements and increasing safety by improving the roadway curvature.

This roadway would depart its current alignment just south of the proposed overpass at FM 346 and continue along a new path to approximately County Road 2173, better known as Carl Dowdy Road.

The existing FM 756 roadway would remain in place, but would be re-designated as a minor street for local access only. Its two-lane configuration would not be changed.

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Construction for the FM 756 widening project is planned to take place in three phases.

The total construction cost for all phases is estimated at approximately \$49 million dollars. Construction funds for Phase 1 are identified and may be available as early as Summer 2024. TxDOT continues to work toward funding the project's other phases.

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So, what are the next steps in the project development process?

The FONSI is the next step following this hearing, and is anticipated this Fall.

Right-of-way acquisitions and utility adjustments will follow. These activities are expected to take two to three years to complete. Work would begin in 2022. Although construction funds are only secured for Phase 1, TxDOT will secure right-of-way for the entire corridor.

Phase 1 construction is slated to begin as early as Summer 2024. Please note the dates are subject to change based on the project's development schedule and future funding forecasts.

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Numerous environmental studies were performed for the project to comply with environmental regulations and policies. They cover a wide range of topics including the ones listed here.

These studies were documented in six technical reports and are summarized in the draft EA. The draft EA and technical reports are available for public review and comment as part of the virtual public hearing. They can be found online or in-person at the Tyler District Office by request.

A wide array of natural, cultural and human environment topics are addressed. It would take considerable amount of time to review each of these in this presentation. We encourage you to review a copy of the draft EA and provide comments on any topic.

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In addition to the environmental studies, the draft EA document outlines the new right of way requirements and displacements.

The proposed widening requires approximately 145 acres of new right of way, and two acres of temporary easements. Right-of-way would be purchased from a total of 158 parcels in Smith County.

The proposed project would displace 30 single-family residences and 3 commercial facilities.

TxDOT would be responsible for acquiring all necessary right of way for this project.

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Once a right-of-way map is produced, state-certified appraisers will appraise individual parcels.

During the appraisal process, each affected landowner will receive a mailed letter on TxDOT letterhead identifying the appraiser. The appraiser will set up an appointment to inspect the property. It is highly recommended that landowners meet with the appraiser to point out any and all improvements to their property, and any tenant or easement-holders. Once the appraisal is complete, a TxDOT representative will send the official written offer for the property with a copy of the appraisal report via certified mail.

If you are displaced or have personal property displaced by the project, you will be eligible for relocation assistance. The "Landowner's Bill of Rights" and brochures titled "State Purchase of Right-of-Way" and "Relocation Assistance" can be found through the project hearing webpage. These documents will provide more information regarding the property acquisition process.

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A Finding of No Significant Impact, or FONSI, is being recommended for this project. The draft EA, approved by TxDOT's Environmental Affairs Division in June of 2021, concludes the proposed project would not significantly impact the natural or human environments under NEPA.

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All public hearing materials can be found on the FM 756 public hearing webpage located by keyword search "FM 756 Public Hearing" in the upper right-hand corner of [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov).

These materials include this recording, the script for this presentation, the proposed design schematic, the draft EA and technical reports, a comment card, and the right-of-way documents discussed earlier.

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In addition to the written documents and drawings, the project's webpage also offers a virtual video and an interactive map of the proposed improvements. The following video will demonstrate how to access and use these features:

Starting from [txdot.gov](http://txdot.gov), you can use the "Search TxDOT" box in the upper right corner to enter the keywords "FM 756 Public Hearing". The first search result will take you to the project hearing webpage. If you scroll to near the bottom of the page under "Downloads" you will see the Interactive Map and Animated Fly-Through. Please note that there will be additional download options when you visit the webpage.

Select the interactive map link to view the map. Much like Google Maps, the interactive map allows you to zoom in to specific areas that you may be interested in and see the proposal on a recent aerial image. While the interactive map will work on a mobile device, it is recommended to use a device with a larger screen. Several features to note: You can zoom using either the on-screen buttons or your mouse scroll button. For a touch-screen enabled device, you can use pinch gestures to zoom. You can pan using either a left mouse button drag or your finger with a touch device. In the Layers box, you can select which layers you wish displayed by tapping or clicking on the layer. The Layers include the recommended alternative, proposed drainage structures, structures impacted by the proposed right-of-way acquisition, an existing property boundary overlay, and various background images. If you are interested in a certain address, you can use the "Search For Address" feature in the upper right corner.

If you return to the project webpage and select the "Animated Fly-Through", a YouTube video is available that shows how the roadway would look and operate post-construction. It follows a driver's perspective of the proposed improvements from Jeff Davis Dr. at the beginning of the project, south to the end of the project at FM 344.

Both tools provide a more realistic depiction of the project, compared to the traditional engineering drawings. We encourage you to check them out.

## **Slide 19:**

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

There are four ways to give us feedback about the project. You can:

- provide verbal testimony by calling the number on the screen;
- email the project environmental coordinator at the email address on the screen;
- mail your comments via regular postage to the address on the screen;
- or, submit a comment from the "Contact Us" link, provided on the project webpage.

The verbal testimony method uses a voicemail system, which allows you to record a comment up to three-minutes long – the same amount of time provided to in-person attendees. The verbal testimony option is available until 11:59 p.m. on July 30, 2021.

Please be sure to submit your written comments, and/or verbal testimony, no later than July 30<sup>th</sup>. Responses to all comments submitted during the comment period will be included in the virtual public hearing summary report. This report will be posted to the project webpage within the next few months.

## **Slide 20:**

This concludes our presentation. TxDOT Tyler District thanks you for your participation in this virtual public hearing, and for your interest in this important safety and mobility project. Together we can build a better future.