



VIRTUAL PUBLIC HEARING

US 271 AND Loop 485
From: FM 16, north around Gladewater, TX
To: Upshur County line

Smith and Gregg Counties
CSJs: 0165-02-061, 0165-03-036, 0248-06-017,
3290-02-008 and 3290-02-009

May 20, 2021 through June 3, 2021

Welcome to the Virtual Public Hearing for the TxDOT Tyler District's US 271 and Loop 485 widening project. TxDOT is proposing to expand US Highway 271 from Farm-to-Market 16 in Smith County, north to the Upshur County line. The proposed improvements would follow Loop 485 around the city of Gladewater.

This virtual public hearing will be available for viewing through June 4, 2021; and is being provided to share information and to encourage public comments regarding the proposed project.

Please note, this presentation may be paused at any point to allow you more time to review the slides.

VIRTUAL PUBLIC HEARING IN RESPONSE TO PUBLIC HEALTH

TxDOT is offering this public hearing in an online format in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This virtual public hearing and the project webpage include the same information available at the in-person hearing.

Appointments for in-person viewing of project materials may be requested by calling (903) 510-9100.

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Given the unique circumstance of the COVID-19 pandemic, along with our commitment to protecting public health, TxDOT is conducting this virtual public hearing in conjunction with an optional in-person hearing offered on May 20, 2021, by appointment only, to minimize in-person contact.

This presentation covers the same information as the in-person hearing. All project information presented here can be found on the US 271 project webpage. You can view the project webpage, by viewing www.txdot.gov and searching keyword “US 271 Public Hearing” in the upper right-hand search box.

Notices for this virtual public hearing, and the in-person option, were published on the TxDOT website, US 271 project webpage, and appeared in the *Tyler Morning Telegraph* on May 2nd and the *Gladewater Mirror* on May 5th, 2021. The notice was mailed to adjacent property owners, stakeholders and locally-elected public officials.

Thank you for engaging with us online.

HOW TO SUBMIT PUBLIC COMMENTS

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Please submit your comments using any of these methods

 Leave a Voicemail	 Email Us	 Mail-in Comments	 Online Comments
903.200.1700 Available until 11:59 p.m. on June 4, 2021	Dylan.McCord@txdot.gov	TxDOT, Tyler District Attn: Advanced Project Development 2709 W. Front St Tyler, Tx 75702	Click the Comment Link on the project webpage

*Comments must be received or postmarked by **JUNE 4, 2021** to be included in the Public Hearing Summary Report*

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TxDOT is committed to continuing our efforts to gain public feedback about this project. We understand the virtual public hearing format may be new to some people, so allow me to explain how the comment process works.

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 “Comment” 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 June 4, 2021.

Please be sure to submit your written comments, and/or verbal testimony, no later than June 4th. 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.

VIEWING DESIGN SCHEMATIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION 

Project materials are available for public review at:

Project Webpage
www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/projects/studies/tyler/us271.html

TxDOT Website
www.txdot.gov and search keyword “US 271 and Loop 485”

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The design schematic and environmental documents will be discussed in this presentation. You may view them in their entirety online at:

- the project webpage
- or, TxDOT’s website, by visiting to www.txdot.gov and searching keywords “US 271 and Loop 485”.

The information found online is the same information being presented in this video.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT EFFORTS TO DATE




- **Public Meeting 1**
 - April 24, 2018
 - 107 Citizens Attended
 - Presented 3 Widening Alternatives

- **Public Meeting 2**
 - October 23, 2018
 - 90 Citizens Attended
 - Presented initial 'Best Fit' Alternative

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

Two public meetings were held prior to this public hearing. Both were hosted at the Gladewater Middle School Gym, in April and October of 2018, respectively.

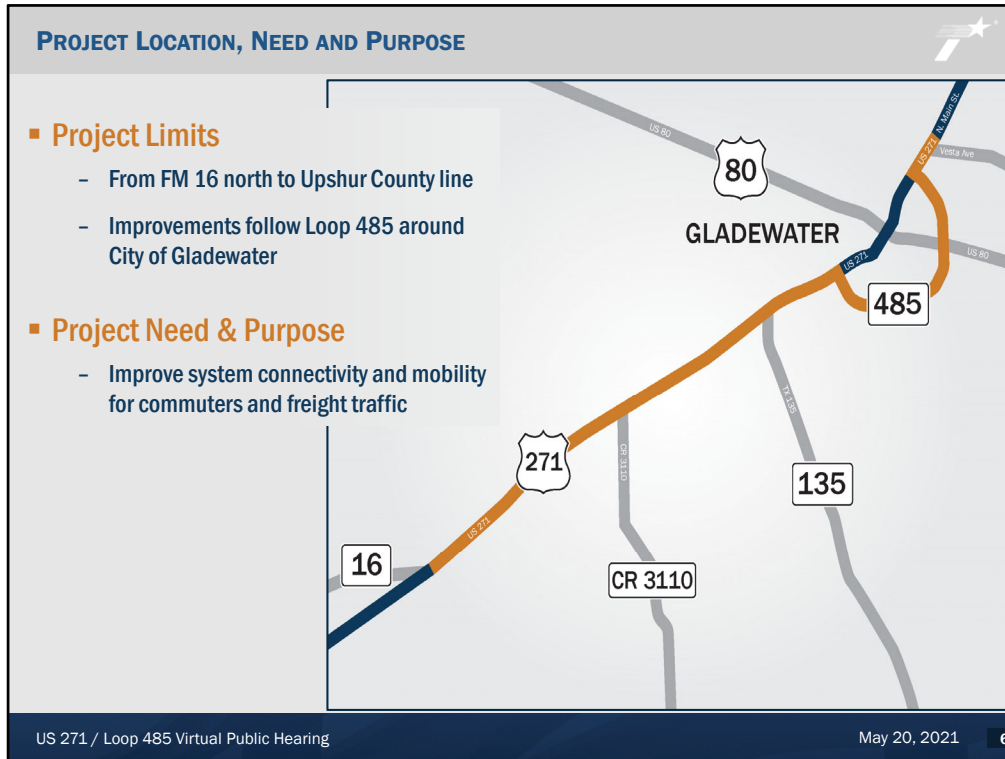
Additionally, several meetings were held with City of Gladewater, Smith and Gregg County elected officials, Gladewater Municipal Airport, Federal Aviation Administration and TxDOT Aviation Division, Longview Metropolitan Planning Organization, property owners and interested citizens concerning the project.

Input from the public received at these previous meetings was incorporated into the project planning, as practical. The preferred alternative presented in this hearing is the final 'best-fit' design to reduce right-of-way and environmental impacts.

TxDOT held an in-person public hearing at the Tyler District Office on May 20, 2021, and posted this virtual public hearing to the project webpage on the same date. This public hearing is the final step in the public involvement process for the environmental assessment of the US 271 and Loop 485 widening project.

Once the environmental assessment is approved by TxDOT, a Finding of No Significant Impact is anticipated – which would be the final environmental approval of the project. At that point, the project's final design is approved and TxDOT may proceed with right-of-way acquisitions utility relocations and ultimately construction.

Now, lets talk about the proposed project details.

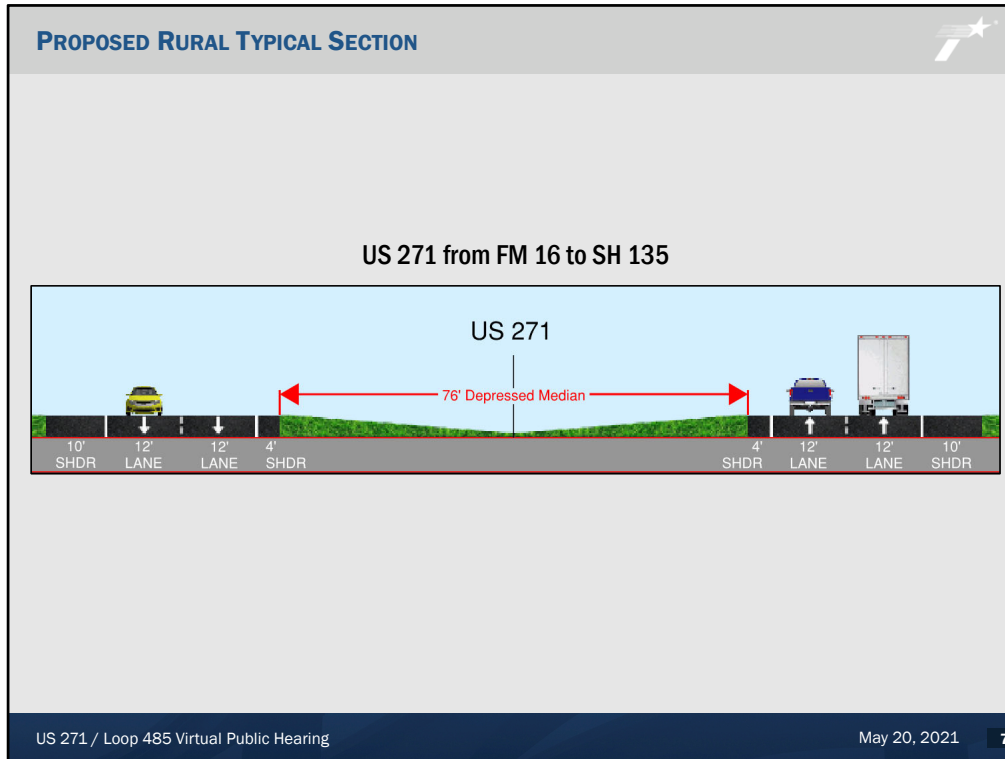


The proposed project is approximately 10.4 miles long, stretching from FM 16 in Smith County, north to the Upshur County line. The proposed improvements will follow Loop 485 around the city of Gladewater rather than continuing through the downtown area.

The project is needed to improve the corridor’s system connectivity, mobility and safety.

Most of the US 271 corridor in Texas is part of the “Texas Freight Network”. However, the project area is the only section of US 271 between Interstate 20 and Interstate 30 that is currently a two-lane highway. The reduced number of lanes in this area inhibits system connectivity with other regionally-significant highways (including SH 135 and US 80), increases congestion and reduces operational safety.

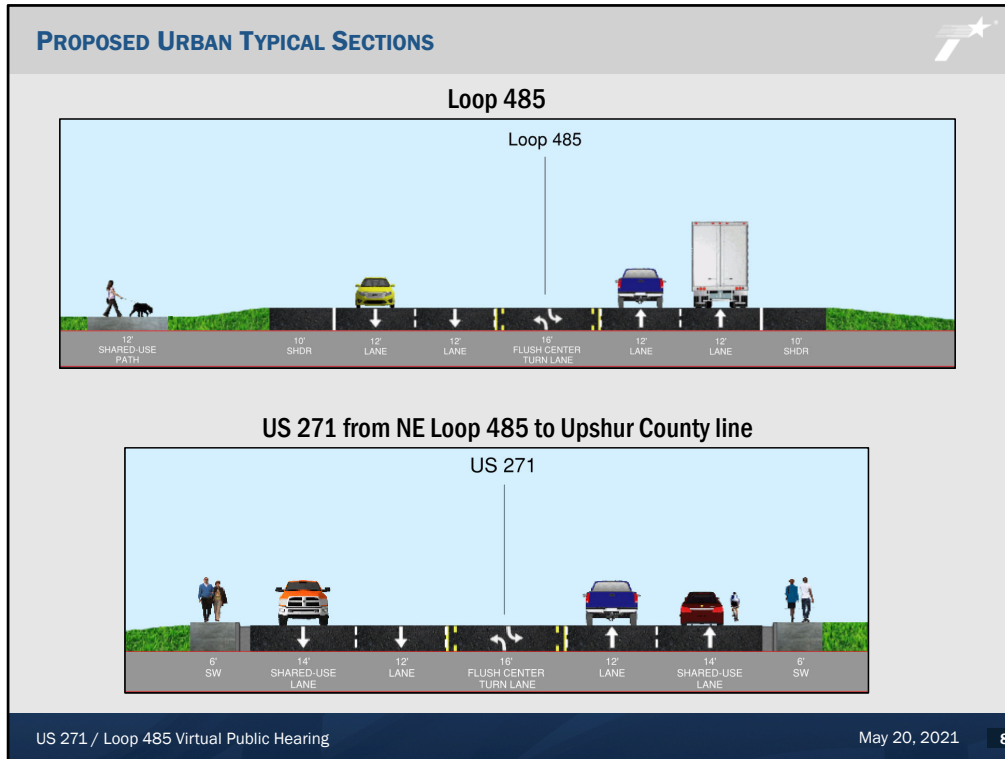
The purpose of the US 271 and Loop 485 widening project is to improve system connectivity, mobility and safety for both commuters and freight traffic.



In general, the proposed project offers two type of pavement configurations – one in the more rural areas and another for the urban setting.

The US 271 proposed rural typical section extends from FM 16 north to SH 135. It includes four 12-foot travel lanes, a 76-foot depressed median with 4-foot inside shoulders, and 10-foot outside shoulders.

Existing right of way for this stretch of US 271 is 130 feet. The new Right of way (post construction) will vary from 220- to 370-feet.




The proposed urban section along US 271 begins at SH 135 and extends onto Loop 485 to US 80. This section includes four 12-foot travel lanes, a 16-foot continuous, center left-turn lane, 10-foot shoulders with ditches, and space for a 12-foot shared-use path inside Loop 485. The pathway's construction is not included in the project's current cost estimates; however, it may be incorporated when additional funding is identified.

Existing right of way varies in this section. The new Right of way (post construction) will vary from 180- to 370-feet.

At the Loop 485 and US 80 intersection, the urban typical section will transition to a slightly narrower section. It includes two 12-foot inside-travel lanes, two 14-foot outside-travel lanes, a 16-foot continuous, center left-turn lane, with curb-and-gutter, and 6-foot sidewalks on both sides of the road.

Existing right of way in this section is 100 feet. The new Right of way (post construction) will vary from 156- to 210-feet.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION 

- **Proposed Improvements include:**
 - Widening existing roadway to four travel lanes
 - Installing 76-foot depressed median in the rural section
 - » Limits from FM 16 north to SH 135
 - Installing 16-foot continuous left-turn lane in the urban section
 - » Limits from SH 135 north to End of Project
 - Replacing Sabine River bridge while retaining the current boat ramp access
 - Replacing Union Pacific Railroad bridge


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Some of the major improvements the US 271 project includes are:

- Widening the existing roadway to a four-lane, divided highway with a depressed median in the rural area and a 16-foot continuous left-turn lane in the more urban settings.
- Replacing the Sabine River bridge while retaining the existing recreational access.
- Replacing the existing railroad bridge along Loop 485

The design schematic is available for public review on the project webpage, or at the Tyler District Office by appointment.

Now lets discuss the environmental studies performed during this project development.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA) 

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal 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 December 9, 2019 and executed by FHWA and TxDOT.

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Prior to December 16, 2014, the Federal Highway Administration, otherwise known as FHWA, reviewed and approved documents prepared under the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA. However, on December 16, 2014, the Texas Department of Transportation assumed responsibility from the FHWA for reviewing and approving certain assigned NEPA environmental documents. This memorandum of understanding was renewed on December 9, 2019. This review and approval process applies to this proposed project.

ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW

- Project's draft Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared to comply with NEPA

Archeological Resources	Biological Resources
Community/Socio-economic	Hazardous Materials
Historic Resources	Right-of-Way
Traffic Noise	Wetlands

A copy of the draft EA and technical reports are available for public review on the US 271 project webpage, or at the Tyler District Office by request.

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The draft Environmental Assessment, or EA, conducted for this project complies with NEPA.

The EA is a written document that fully describes the environmental study carried out by the project team. The team identified and assessed potential impacts to the natural and human environment, including the resources listed here.

The proposed project would not impact any known archeological sites.

A Biological Evaluation and a Tier I Site Assessment were completed to determine impacts to threatened and endangered species and other biological resources. The project team determined that the proposed project will not affect any federally listed species. TxDOT has coordinated with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and would implement best management practices to minimize impacts to state-listed species.

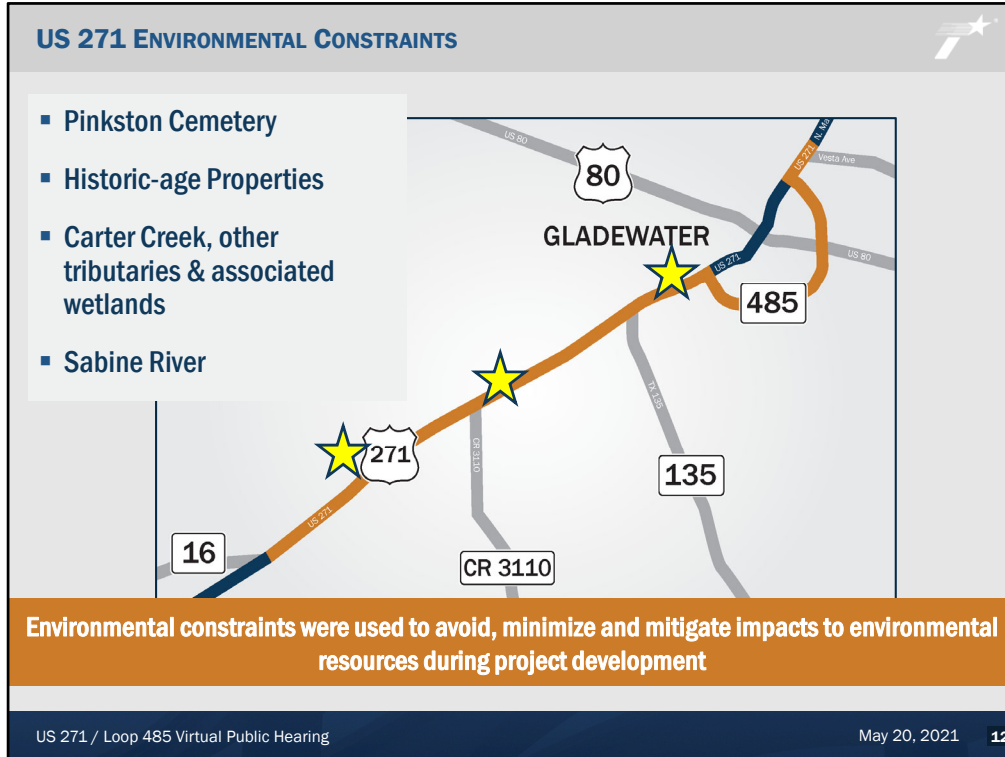
A hazardous materials initial site assessment was conducted for the proposed project. Further research is needed to determine potential hazardous materials concerns associated with the sites that would be displaced by the proposed project activities, or that the project would require right of way from. These sites would include three petroleum storage tanks, one oil/gas pipeline and one Industrial Hazardous Waste Corrective Action Site.

TxDOT historians determined the project would have no adverse effects to historic resources.

A traffic noise impacts analysis was conducted and determined that the proposed project would result in noise impacts to two receivers. Noise walls were evaluated and determined to not be feasible and reasonable at those representative locations, and therefore are not proposed for incorporation into the project.

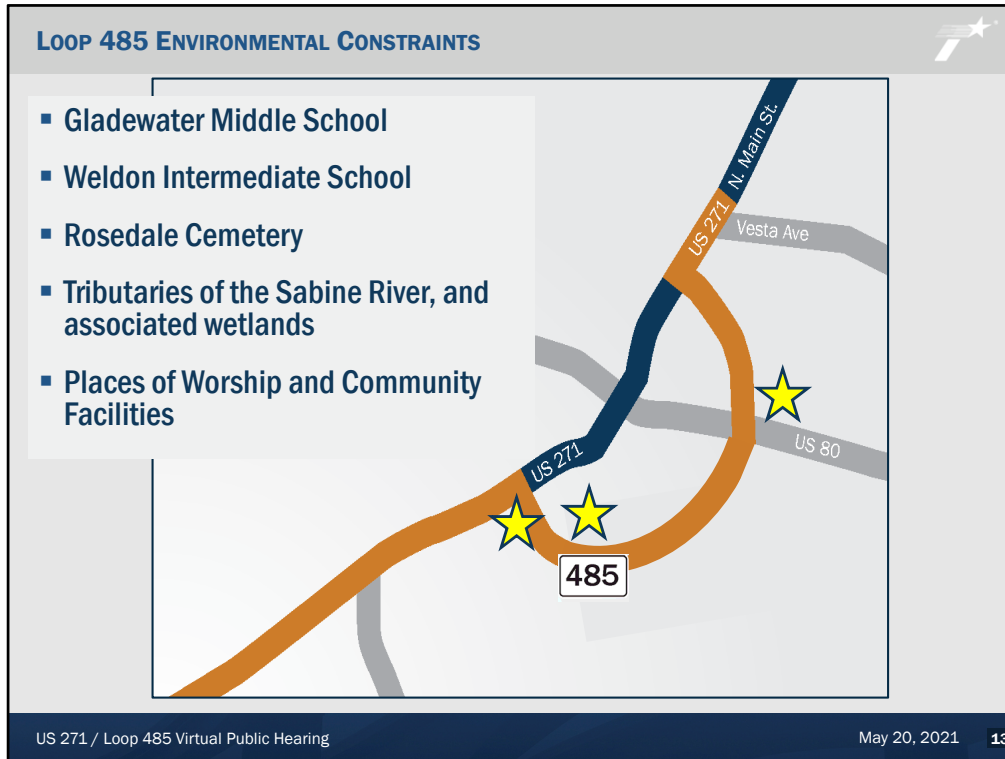
Several wetlands, along with intermittent and perennial streams were identified in the proposed project area. The proposed project activities would impact more than a tenth of an acre of wetlands, but less than half an acre of wetlands at each individual crossing. A channel realignment of Carter Creek for approximately 815 linear feet would be required near the intersection of US 271 and County Road 3110. In coordination with, and including a site visit from the US Army Corps of Engineers, a Nationwide Permit 14 with a Pre-construction Notification would be required. Wetland and stream mitigation would also be required prior to construction in those areas.

The draft EA and environmental technical reports are available for public review on the project webpage, or at the Tyler District Office by request and appointment.




The environmental constraints within the project area were considered during project design in order to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts to environmental resources.

Along the rural, southern stretch of US 271 some of these constraints included Pinkston Cemetery, several historic-age farms and homesteads, Carter Creek and other tributaries and associated wetlands, and the Sabine River.



Along Loop 485 and the northern section of US 271 some of the environmental constraints included Gladewater Middle School and Weldon Intermediate School, the historic Rosedale Cemetery (at the Loop and US 80), and additional Waters of the U.S.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCLUSION




A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is recommended

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Based on the environmental technical reports and the resulting draft EA approved by TxDOT’s Environmental Affairs Division on April 5, 2021, implementation of the proposed project would not significantly impact the human or natural environment under NEPA. Therefore, a Finding of No Significant Impact, or FONSI, is recommended.

RIGHT-OF-WAY AND DISPLACEMENTS

- **Right-of-way (ROW) impacts include:**
 - 123 acres new ROW
 - 2 acres of Temporary Easements
 - ROW and easements acquired from:
 - 79 parcels in Smith County
 - 90 parcels in Gregg County
- **Potential displacements include:**
 - 37 Single-Family Residences
 - 8 Commercial Facilities
 - 7 Non-Residential/Non-Commercial



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Now let's look at the project's new right-of-way requirements.

The proposed widening requires 123 acres of new right-of-way and two acres of temporary easements. Right-of-way would be purchased from a total of 169 parcels – 79 parcels are within Smith County, and 90 parcels are located in Gregg County.

The proposed project would displace 37 single-family residences, 8 commercial buildings, and 7 other non-residential and non-commercial structures, including the Starrville/Friendship Water Supply Company pump station.

TxDOT would be responsible for acquiring the necessary right-of-way for this project. Once a right-of-way map is produced, state-certified appraisers will appraise individual parcels.

During the appraisal process, each affected landowner will be mailed a letter identifying the appraiser. An appointment to inspect the property will be made. It is highly recommended that landowners meet with the appraiser to point out any and all improvements to the 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 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.

The "Landowner's Bill of Rights" and a brochure titled "State Purchase of Right of Way" can be found on the US 271 project webpage. These documents will provide more information regarding the property acquisition process.



Construction for the US 271 and Loop 485 widening project is planned to take place in three phases.

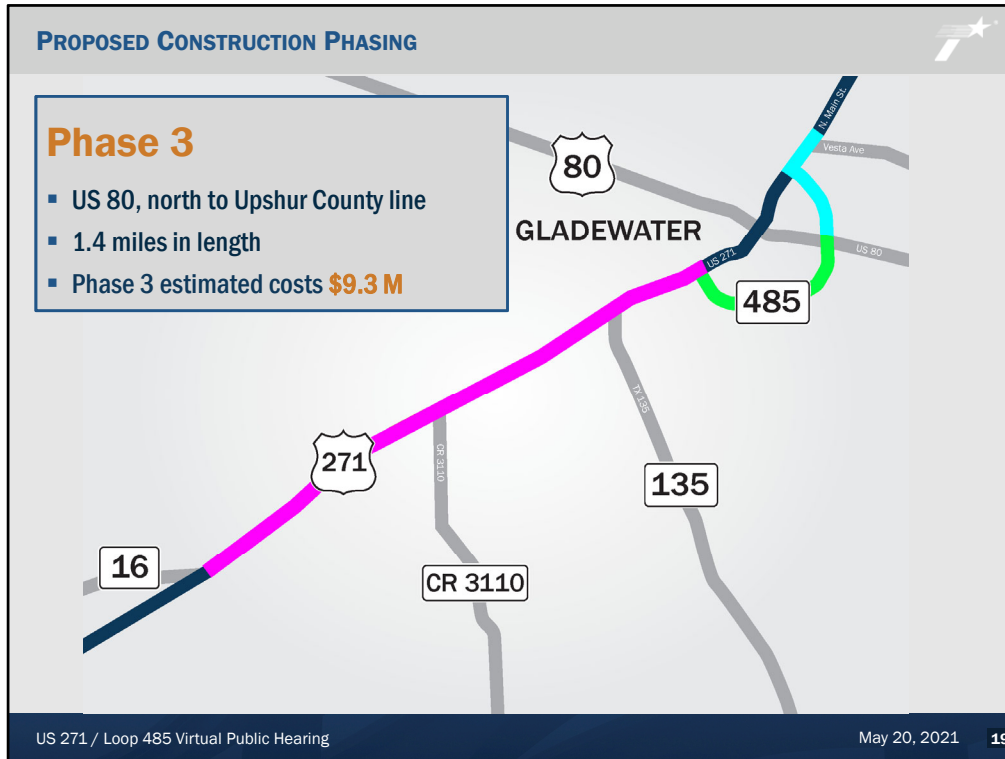
The total construction cost for all three phases is estimated to cost 79.5 million dollars. Funding for this project is identified and secured.



Phase 1 would comprise of the US 271 section from FM 16 in Smith County, north to the South Loop 485 intersection.

This phase would be approximately 6.9 miles and include the divided, depressed-median roadway, the SH 135 intersection and the Sabine River bridge construction.

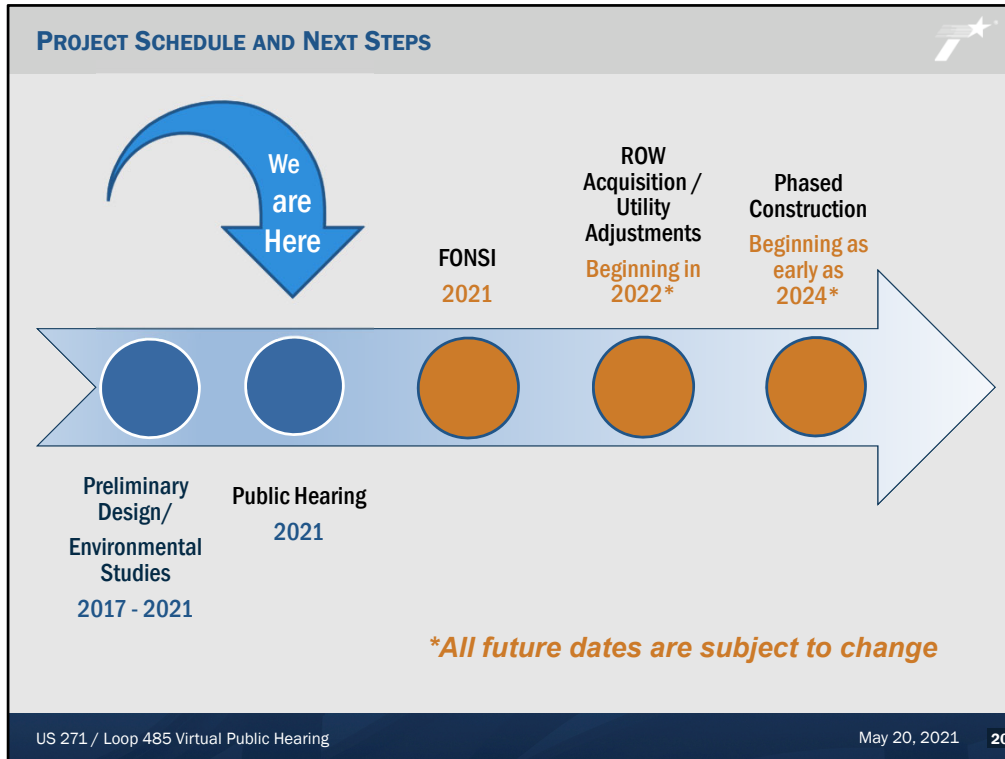
The estimated construction cost for Phase 1 is approximately 51.9 million dollars.



Phase 3 would comprise of the northern Loop 485 section to US 271, and the northern US 271 section from North Loop 485 to the Upshur County line.

This phase would include the continuous, two-way left-turn median, the northern Loop 485/US 271 intersection and the curb-and-gutter section to the Upshur County line.

The estimated construction costs for Phase 3 is approximately 9.3 million dollars.



Here is the current project schedule.

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

Right-of-way acquisitions and utility adjustments would follow the FONSI. These project activities will take two to three years to complete and are expected to begin in 2022.

The project is funded for construction. Phase 1 construction is slated to begin as early as Summer 2023. Please note the dates are subject to change based on the project's development schedule and future funding forecasts.

HOW TO SUBMIT PUBLIC COMMENTS

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

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 Leave a Voicemail	 Email Us	 Mail-in Comments	 Online Comments
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*Comments must be received or postmarked by **JUNE 4, 2021** to be included in the Public Hearing Summary Report*

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Let’s recap how you can provide feedback about this project.

TxDOT is providing four different methods to leave 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 “Comment” link, provided on the project webpage.

The verbal testimony option is available until 11:59 p.m. on June 4, 2021.

Most importantly, ALL comments, written or verbal, must be received no later than June 4th.

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.



THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!

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.