



I-35 Waco (Section 4B) Construction Communication Plan

Waco District Office

Texas Department of Transportation

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DRAFT

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I-35 Waco Construction Communication Plan

The I-35 Waco Construction Communication Plan is a comprehensive document designed to guide construction communication and outreach in a timely and easy-to-understand format that leads to public understanding and support of the Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT's) efforts to improve safety, mobility and congestion along I-35 in the Waco District (Figure 1). Informative, timely and concise communication is essential for building trust and relationships among the community's numerous and varied stakeholders identified and outlined in this document.

This plan identifies stakeholders, challenges and opportunities unique to the I-35 Waco project. It includes specific communication techniques, tools and materials tailored to the needs and preferences of stakeholders, and it offers specific ways of measuring success.

Background

My35

In 2008, TxDOT established My35, a revolutionary and award-winning approach to transportation planning that resulted in an ongoing citizen-driven planning effort. In 2016, the [I-35 Statewide Corridor Plan](#) was released, outlining the necessary steps to achieve an improved highway transportation system, less time spent in traffic, and increased economic opportunities for millions of Texans.

My35 Waco

The central region of the I-35 Statewide Corridor Plan is called [My35 Waco](#), referring to the section of I-35 that falls within the TxDOT Waco District, including Hill, McLennan, Falls and

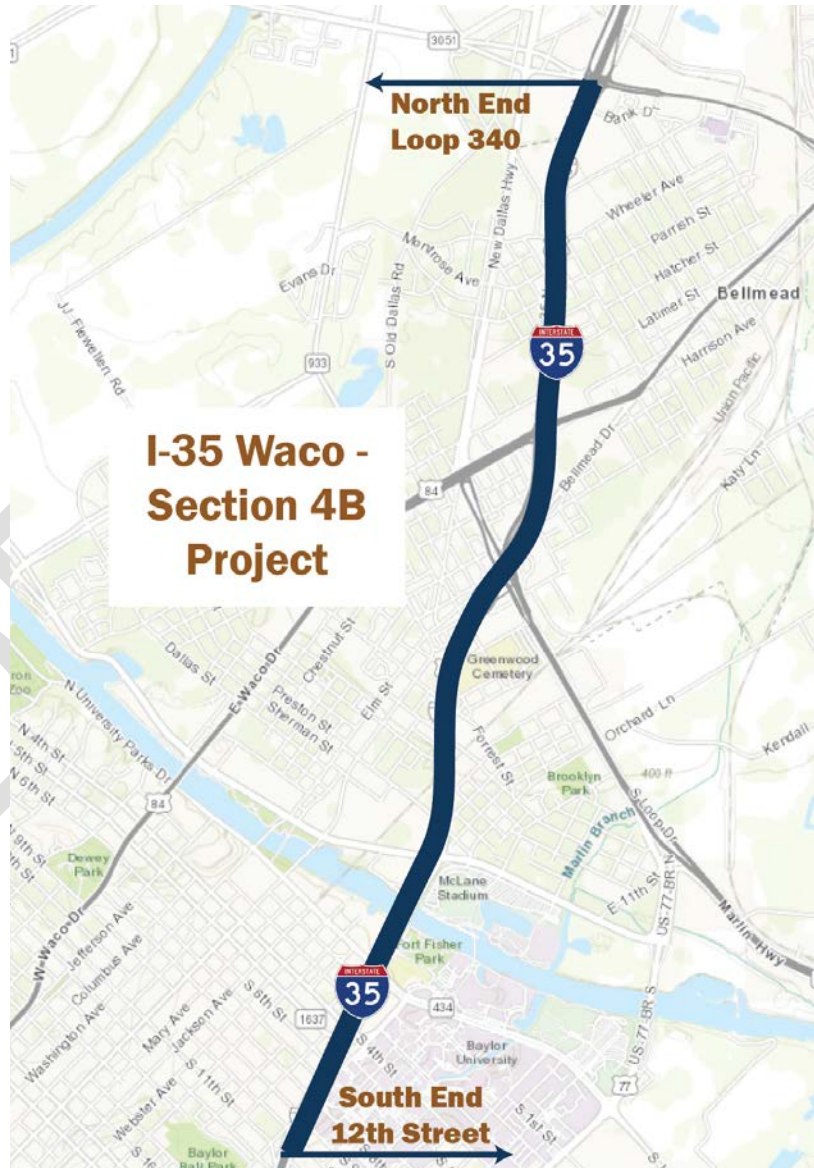


Figure 1. I-35 Waco Project.

Bell Counties. During the past 10 years, TxDOT has implemented improvements to 74 miles of the I-35 corridor through this region, and as a result, the majority of I-35 through the region has expanded from a four-lane facility to a six-lane facility in rural areas and is planned for expansion to an eight-lane facility through Temple and Waco.

I-35 Waco Project

The I-35 Waco project covers approximately 5 miles of the remaining 8 miles of I-35 through the Waco District. The immediate construction impact of the project on Waco and its greater urban area makes this the most expensive and complex highway construction project the Waco District has developed to date. Therefore, this project requires a correspondingly robust communication plan.

The I-35 Waco Project Team will implement reliable and proactive outreach efforts that engage stakeholders and provide relevant and timely information to residents and travelers.

Key Messages

I-35 serves as the backbone of local, regional, statewide and national transportation networks, but improvements have not kept pace with population and economic growth, resulting in increased traffic congestion. The I-35 corridor needs long-term improvements to manage congestion and improve mobility. Communicating the purpose behind the improvements being pursued helps the public understand the reasons for the inconvenience created by roadway construction. The immediate and continued impact of the I-35 Waco project on local and regional users will be substantial. However, the project is designed to address all these issues.

My35 Waco

Lack of mobility along I-35 threatens the economic livelihood of the region. The I-35 corridor in the Waco District is the primary connector between the Dallas/Fort Worth, and Austin/San Antonio metropolitan areas. Not only is traffic congestion inconvenient, it impacts the Waco community by decreasing:

- **Safety:** In 2015, more than 4,950 crashes, including 24 fatalities, occurred on I-35 in Central Texas.
- **Air quality:** Emissions from idling vehicles stuck in traffic increase air pollutants in the region.
- **Emergency response times:** Traffic congestion delays emergency response vehicles like fire, law enforcement, or those carrying patients to and from health care facilities near (within 2 miles) the I-35 corridor.
- **Economic opportunities:** Travel delays drive up the cost of goods and negatively impact the quality of life for everyone sitting in traffic, making local businesses less attractive to commerce.
- **Transit delays:** Traffic congestion creates delays for alternative forms of transportation as well, reducing the reliability of transit services in the greater Waco area.

I-35 Waco Project

This project will complete the transformation of I-35 into a smart and efficient highway system through:

- Real-time information: providing users with real-time information that enables them to decide when, where and how to travel.
- Innovative design: incorporating innovative intersection and ramp designs, and installing integrated permanent transportation management technology.
- Improved safety: improving and lengthening access and exit ramps for easier traffic movements.
- Maximum efficiency and minimum disruption: maintaining community values while improving connectivity for all forms of transportation, maximizing existing right of way without overbuilding, and allowing for technology advancement.

Communication Plan Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives defined in this plan are consistent with TxDOT's [I-35 Statewide Corridor Plan: A Path to 2040](#) and have been tailored to the specific needs of the I-35 Waco project. These goals and objectives aim to ensure that TxDOT provides relevant and timely project information to the public and communicates project benefits efficiently and accurately.

Communication Goals

Each communication technique, tool or material in this effort will be designed to meet at least one of the following communication goals:

1. Develop a cohesive, consistent and continuous model for two-way information sharing.
2. Provide timely updates to ensure the community is kept informed about the project.
3. Ensure timely information sharing so that stakeholders have a reasonable expectation of traffic impacts during construction.
4. Provide multiple channels of communication and correspondence to inform stakeholders and receive feedback about the status of construction.
5. Ensure stakeholder concerns are addressed in a timely manner.
6. Develop exceptional communication practices among the I-35 Waco team.
7. Anticipate communication challenges that support timely project completion.

Communication Objectives

Success in achieving the communication goals will be evaluated on an ongoing basis using the following objectives:

1. Create and maintain a project stakeholder database including all stakeholders, their contact information, potential interests and concerns.
2. Provide timely and appropriate responses to all emergency and otherwise unforeseen situations.
3. Provide timely and relevant information about alternate routes.
4. Provide timely and appropriate responses to all stakeholder inquiries and requests.

5. Provide easy and reliable access to project information for all stakeholders.
6. Establish and maintain relationships with key media personnel throughout the region.
7. Communicate key messages and employ consistent messaging across all platforms.
8. Create open channels of communication with I-35 Waco users during construction by providing regular updates and keeping effective avenues for communication open.
9. Keep stakeholders and the project team engaged to coordinate exchange of the most up-to-date information.
10. Employ tools that are helpful and relevant to a diverse set of stakeholders.
11. Assess communication tools, materials and techniques regularly for effectiveness.
12. Establish an internal feedback system to recognize best communication practices, identify lessons learned, and integrate innovative approaches.

Communication Metrics and Evaluation

Communication efforts will be evaluated on an ongoing basis to ensure that techniques and communication channels are effective. TxDOT will prepare monthly reports and dashboard updates for project leadership to summarize communication activities. The reports shall include the following metrics:

- Direct person-to-person contact:
 - Number of businesses visited.
 - Number of meetings/presentations to agencies, elected officials, organizations, etc.
 - Number of business meeting notifications and meeting attendees.
 - Number of stakeholder calls addressed.
- Number of requests for information and a record of delivered information.
- Electronic contact:
 - Subscriber counts.
 - Social media messages and metrics.
 - *My35 Central Texas News* circulation.
 - My35.org Central Texas usage and page hits.
 - Number of real-time traffic map unique visitors.
- Number of press releases.
- Media coverage.
- Number of lane and ramp closure notifications.
- I-35 Waco District Traveler Information System Information:
 - End-of-queue warning system deployments.
 - Crash rates during construction.

I-35 Waco Project Team

TxDOT has developed project-wide teams to spearhead outreach efforts that address the stakeholders' high expectations for information sharing. The goal of these teams is to coordinate project activities and information to minimize construction impacts and proactively keep the community informed. Figure 2 depicts the organization of these teams under the umbrella of the My35 Waco Plan.

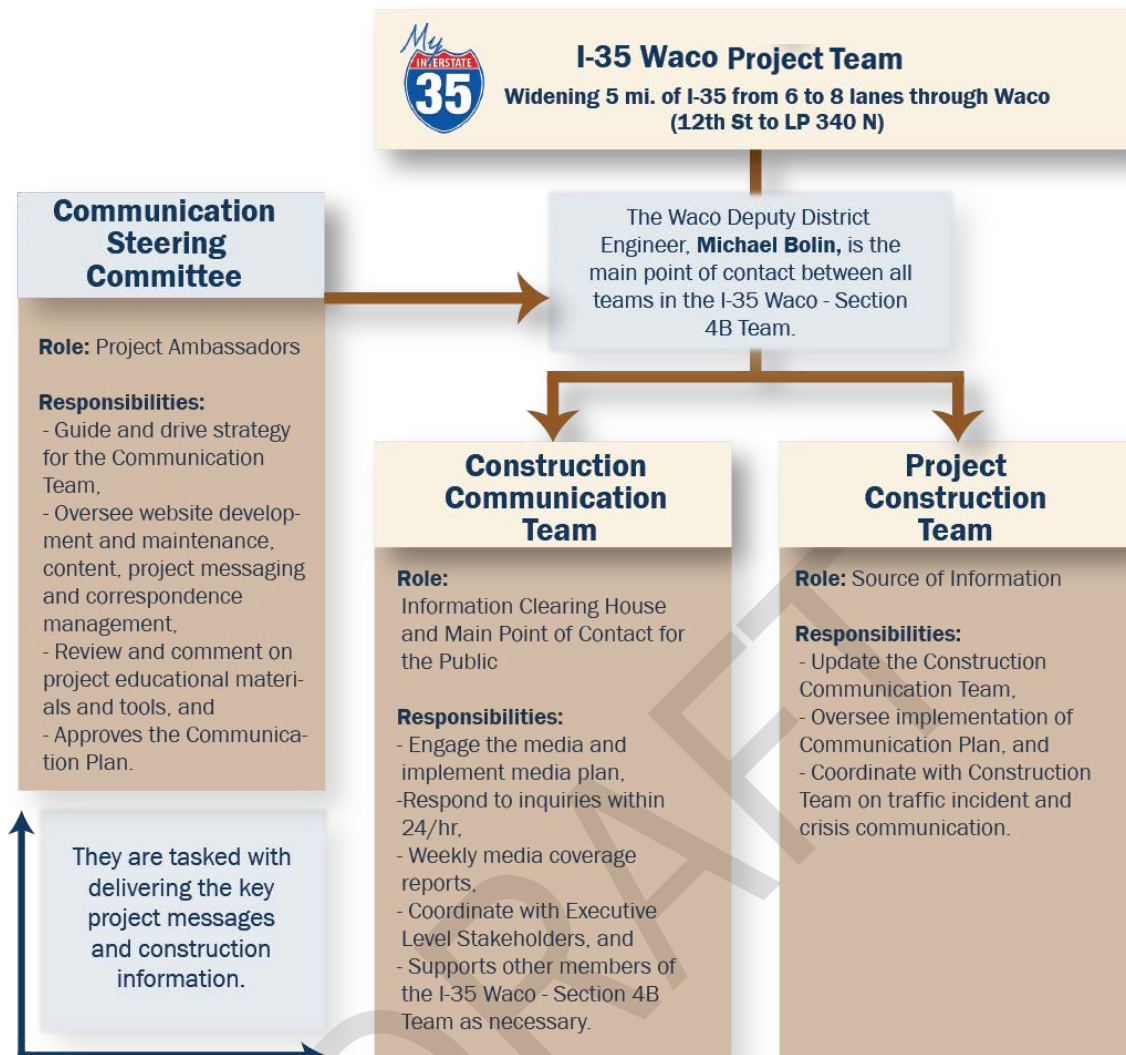


Figure 2. I-35 Waco Project Team Structure and Roles.

The I-35 Waco Project Team is composed of staff from TxDOT, the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI), the Construction Engineering and Inspection Consultant (CE&I), and contractors – all working together as a team to ensure the successful completion of the I-35 Waco project.

Additional information about specific roles and responsibilities for the Construction Communication Team is in the “Construction Communication Team” section. Appendix A details the member lists of all groups, overlapping members and detailed responsibilities.

Construction Communication Team

The Construction Communication Team, comprised of public information officers and support staff, will be paramount to ensure that project-wide messaging, goals and objectives are implemented. Figure 3 illustrates the composition of the core Construction Communication Team.



TPP = Transportation Planning and Programming Division

Figure 3. Construction Communication Team Organizational Chart.

The Construction Communication Team, in coordination with the rest of the I-35 Waco Project Team, is responsible for messaging and high-level media strategy. As such, the team is in charge of day-to-day media management, content production and social media management.

Construction Communication Team Roles

This section highlights the roles, responsibilities and tasks for each of the members of the Construction Communication Team as well as their information access needs to successfully perform their duties.

Waco Public Information Officer

The Waco PIO is the public face of the I-35 Waco project and as such plays a key role in managing the overall communications of the project. The Waco PIO maintains effective relationships with the media to ensure a prompt response in case of an incident on I-35 during construction.

Ken Roberts
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 @TxDOTWaco

Responsible for: Team leadership, media relations and incident management communications.

Needs access to: system information, data warehouse, corridor devices and periodic reports.

Tasks:

- Serve as the primary point of contact on all I-35 incident and communication efforts.
- Coordinate the activities of additional TxDOT staff when needed to ensure a quick response to media and public inquiries.
- Coach TxDOT staff to aid in responding to media inquiries when their expertise is needed.
- Serve as the project representative to the media and manages all media inquiries.
- Coordinate communication responsibilities with the I-35 Waco Project Team and with organizations, municipalities, and emergency response agencies impacted by an incident.
- Facilitate information compilation and dissemination of consistent and clear information during and after an incident affecting the project area.
- Approve website content and coordinate website content implementation on My35.org with TxDOT's Communications Division.
- Monitor team compliance with the communications protocols.

Construction, Engineering and Inspection Consultant Representative

The public information representative from the CE&I consultant is responsible for development, coordination and facilitation of public outreach activities and enables the Construction Communication Team's outreach activities.

Responsible for: team leadership, information sources and communication management.

Needs access to: system information and data warehouse.

Tasks:

- Lead public meetings, open houses and other opportunities for interaction with the general public.
- Develop and coordinate public outreach events and materials.
- Create and administer the media outreach schedule in collaboration with the Waco PIO.
- Create and manage an outreach and correspondence database to keep track of input received.
- Procure necessary advertising space and development of related content in representation of the Waco District.
- Develop project-specific hotlines, emails and other personas.
- Share construction updates.

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I-35 Public Information Officer

The I-35 PIO assists the Waco PIO with all aspects of communications and supervises or creates content for electronic outlets.

Jodi Wheatley
(254) 867-2700
Jodi.Wheatley@txdot.gov

Responsible for: My35 Central Texas web content, newsletter and news releases.

Needs access to: system information, data warehouse and periodic reports.

Tasks:

- Oversee the creation and approval of content for I-35 press releases before dissemination to the public.
- Inform the rest of the Construction Communication Team about the nature and schedule of every I-35 press release.
- Develop website content and deliver web files to the Waco PIO.
- Coordinate with the TTI research scientist on what data gained from monitoring road conditions and construction schedules should be released to the public.

TTI Traveler Information Operations Specialist

The TTI traveler information operations specialist is a representative of TTI within the Construction Communication Team.

Robert Brydia
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r-brydia@tti.tamu.edu

Responsible for: construction traveler information system.

Needs access to: system information, data warehouse and periodic reports.

Tasks:

- Develop and implement a construction traveler information system that monitors roadside travel time signs, smart work zone monitoring and roadside lane closure delay signs.
- Develop and implement data feeds meant to be distributed via non-traditional media (web, email and social media).
- Ensure portable changeable message signs and other on-road traffic management elements are placed correctly and used to notify the traveling public of upcoming construction changes starting a week in advance of construction kickoff.

TTI Mobility Coordinator

The TTI mobility coordinator's (MC's) main role is to act as an advocate for public interest within the project team.

The MC's job is to demonstrate how TxDOT is working on behalf of the public by anticipating mobility challenges

and ensuring stakeholder concerns are satisfied in support of timely project completion.

John Habermann
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Responsible for: lane closure notifications and coordination.

Needs access to: system information, data warehouse, corridor devices and periodic reports.

Tasks:

- Serve as a project point of contact representing the needs of the traveling public and local stakeholders between and among TxDOT staff, contractors and engineers.
- Facilitate open lines of communication among key stakeholders and develop solutions to problems resulting from the construction project.
- Coordinate and facilitate an expert traffic management team.
- Support an ongoing public information campaign to educate property owners, businesses, and the general public about the project and its impacts.
- Work with construction contractors to assess and adjust phases of construction to minimize negative impacts for businesses and the traveling public.
- Assist TxDOT in making presentations to public officials and to civic and service organizations when requested.
- Coordinate and produce notifications for all lane and ramp closures:
 - Coordinate approvals of high-impact closures (all main lanes closed in at least one direction).
 - Coordinate messages on dynamic message signs in neighboring districts with the Waco District Traffic Operations Division.
- Coordinate with TxDOT inspectors and the Traffic Operations Division on the timely removal of dynamic message sign messages to maintain public trust in the project provision of credible information.

TTI Communications Specialist

The TTI communications specialist is a representative of TTI within the Construction Communication Team. The communication specialist assists and provides support to the CE&I, Waco PIO, TTI mobility coordinator, and TTI research scientist with all aspects of communications and public outreach.

Michelle Canton
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Responsible for: overall communications support.

Needs access to: system information, data warehouse and periodic reports.

Tasks:

- Provide knowledge management support and access to technical resources available through TTI.
- Assist with development of website content and deliver the content to the Waco PIO.
- Assist with all aspects of the project as needed.
- Serve on the 4B Communication Steering Committee.

TxDOT TPP Public Involvement Specialist

The TxDOT TPP public involvement (PI) specialist provides supervision and support for all communication activities and acts as an additional liaison between the Construction Communication Team and TxDOT TPP.

Susan Howard

(512) 416 - 2030

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Responsible for: oversight of communication activities.

Needs access to: system information, data warehouse and periodic reports.

Tasks:

- Act as the main point of contact between the I-35 Waco Project Team and TxDOT TPP PI Section.
- Provide knowledge management support and access to technical resources available through TxDOT's Austin office.

Stakeholders

To understand the unique needs and concerns of each interested party in this construction effort and effectively improve communication, the I-35 Waco team conducted a stakeholder analysis for the My35 Waco effort. Stakeholders have initially been classified into three groups based on their anticipated level of involvement and specific information needs. Table 1 lists the overarching members of each group.

Table 1. Stakeholder Groups and Members.

Executive Level	Local	Through Travel
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ TxDOT Texas Transportation Commission▪ TxDOT Communications Division▪ TxDOT Leadership Team▪ TxDOT Waco District and other districts along I-35▪ I-35 Waco Communication Steering Committee<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ City councils and mayors○ County commissioners○ Metropolitan planning organization▪ Members of Congress▪ Legislative House and Senate▪ House and Senate Transportation Committee chairs▪ Committee members (chairs and select members)▪ Legislative liaison▪ Major employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Businesses adjacent to I-35 and in the greater Waco area▪ Emergency response services▪ Independent school districts (ISDs)▪ Universities▪ Media outlets▪ Local public works and transportation departments▪ Service organizations▪ Civic organizations▪ Neighborhood associations▪ Special event coordinators▪ Transit providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Greater Waco region residents▪ Regional commuters▪ Tourists▪ Travelers through Waco District▪ Commercial travelers such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Texas Trucking Association○ Tejas Logistics, Waco○ American Trucking Association○ Walmart○ HEB○ UPS○ FedEx

Executive-level stakeholders are those directly involved in the development or direction of the I-35 Waco project. As such, they are usually concerned with proactive communication of project-specific details to better address their constituents' concerns.

Local stakeholders are those primarily impacted by the project construction efforts. They include local drivers in need of real-time information they can use to make localized route choices and departure-time decisions, as well as businesses and institutions needing to respond to shifting access.

Through-travel stakeholders are those using I-35 to travel through the region on a daily, regular or occasional basis. Therefore, they need to be informed about daily lane closures and detours, anticipated travel delay, and incidents. Appendix B provides more details about through-travel stakeholders.

Communication Matrix

A communication matrix (Table 2) was developed to establish what information will be shared, when it should be shared, with whom it should be shared, through which channels it will be distributed, and who on the Construction Communication Team is responsible for overseeing the process. The matrix is organized around the three main types of stakeholders identified in Table 1.

The matrix also outlines suggested techniques, tools and materials believed to be best suited for each group. Table 3 provides a brief description of them. Appendix C provides more details about these techniques, tools and materials.

Table 2. I-35 Waco Project Communications Matrix.



















Stakeholder Type (Role)	Type of Information	Traveler Information Needs	Frequency of Communication	Time of Notification	Suggested Techniques	Suggested Tools	Suggested Materials	Point of Contact
Executive Level (TxDOT and Key Partners)	Project details	 Travel Time/Speed	Daily		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefing presentation Stakeholder meetings Tours/block walks Information sharing and coordination with cities and local governments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traveler information system Surveys (in person and online) Dashboard Live camera feeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)/fact sheets My35 Central Texas newsletter Closure alert e-blast Presentations 	Waco PIO
		 Closure Information	Daily	 Project Development				
		 Queue Warning	Weekly	 Pre-Trip				
		 Incident Information	Quarterly	 System Evaluation Parameters				
Local Stakeholders (Ambassadors and Local Entities)	Expected effects and proactive notice	 Travel Time/Speed	Daily	 Project Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefing presentation Stakeholder meetings Educational brown bags Third-party information distribution Meet the Waco Team meetings Virtual meetings Special event booths Media partnerships Tours/block walks Information sharing and coordination with navigation software, such as Google Maps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traveler information system My35 website Social media Hotlines (email and phone) Changeable message signs Surveys (in person and online) Dashboard Live camera feeds Travel information centers Drivetexas.org 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Door hangers FAQs/fact sheets My35 Central Texas newsletter Project-in-a-Box meetings Project maps Animations and videos Closure alert e-blast Presentations Media kits and news releases 	Waco PIO and CE&I consultant
		 Closure Information	Daily	 Pre-Trip				
		 Queue Warning	Weekly	 In-Route				
Through Travel (Regional and Statewide Users)	Expected traffic levels and rerouting options	 Travel Time/Speed	Daily		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Third-party information distribution Media partnerships Information sharing and coordination with navigation software, such as Google Maps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traveler information system My35 website Social media Hotlines (email and phone) Changeable message signs Live camera feeds Travel information centers Drivetexas.org 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My35 Central Texas newsletter Maps Informational flyers and posters Closure alert e-blast Media kits and news releases 	Waco PIO staff and TxDOT TPP PI specialist
		 Closure Information	Daily	 Pre-Trip				
		 Truck Restrictions	Weekly	 In-Route				
To Whom		What	When		How		Who	








Table 3. Outreach Techniques, Tools and Materials.

Techniques	Tools	Materials
<p>Briefing Presentation Informational meetings with officials and/or scheduled appearances at council/commission/board meetings allowing questions and discussion.</p> <p>Stakeholder Meetings Meetings with key stakeholders (e.g., corridor neighbors, businesses and community organizations).</p> <p>Educational Brown Bags Informational brown bag lunch sessions with major employers to discuss pertinent construction activities and phase changes.</p> <p>Third-Party Information Distribution Use of third-party groups and organizations to distribute information via their websites and email networks.</p> <p>Meet the Waco Team Open House Meetings Open-house format meeting series allowing the general public to familiarize themselves with the project and project team.</p> <p>Virtual Meetings Online or virtual meetings to provide information about the project and give an opportunity to provide feedback about the project.</p> <p>Special Event Booths Special events at major project milestones incorporating elected officials, the media and the community at large (e.g., ground breakings and ribbon cuttings).</p> <p>Media Partnerships Engagement of local and regional media to solicit coverage, distribute news releases, and coordinate press conferences and special events.</p> <p>Tours/Block Walks Corridor walks to distribute information, invite business owners to public meetings, collect contact information, and identify issues.</p> <p>Information Sharing and Coordination with Navigation Software and Local Governments Construction-related closures and detour information sharing with navigation apps (e.g., Waze and Google Maps) and local governments.</p>	<p>Traveler Information System A multi-area construction corridor traveler information system that can monitor infrastructure and provide real-time traveler information.</p> <p>My35 Website Project site with up-to-date project information, as well as contact information allowing for two-way communication with the community.</p> <p>Social Media Use of existing social media accounts to provide up-to-date or emergency project information and monitor social media for emerging community concerns or issues.</p> <p>Surveys (In Person and Online) Online or in-person surveys to gauge public and stakeholder opinions and concerns.</p> <p>Hotlines (Email and Phone) Email and bilingual telephone hotlines for comments and inquiries with a 24-hour inbox.</p> <p>Changeable Message Signs Portable changeable message signs used to provide on-road traveler information (e.g., lane closures and detours).</p> <p>Dashboard Web-based dashboards used to summarize information, metrics and activities tailored according to each audience and purpose.</p> <p>Live Camera Feeds Access to existing live camera feeds, showing current traffic conditions along the I-35 corridor to allow the public to plan trips.</p> <p>Travel Information Centers Update travel information centers with information and materials on ongoing and upcoming construction activities, potential disruptions to long-distance travel, alternative routes and contact information for project staff.</p>	<p>Door Hangers Intense construction alert door hangers that are distributed to neighborhoods and businesses along the I-35 corridor.</p> <p>FAQs/Fact Sheets Handouts communicating key messages, general information or specific improvements for the I-35 Waco project.</p> <p>My35 Central Texas Newsletter Quarterly newsletter and e-newsletter providing updates on project progress.</p> <p>Project-in-a-Box Meetings Project-specific information including detour, access, schedule and contact information provided to businesses, neighborhoods and residential properties before the start of construction.</p> <p>Project Maps Easy-to-understand/public-friendly maps and schematics for public distribution and online posting.</p> <p>Animations and Videos Conceptual, three-dimensional animation and informational videos that demonstrate project outcomes from a traveler's point of view and make complicated project information easily accessible.</p> <p>Closure Alert E-Blast Email message sent to a subscriber list with information on upcoming closures and other relevant project details.</p> <p>Informational Flyers and Posters Flyers and posters intended for wide distribution including project key messages or information on construction progress.</p> <p>Presentations PowerPoint template and master community slide deck used for informational public presentations.</p> <p>Media Kits and News Releases Media kits including press releases, fact sheets, ready-to-use graphics and images, FAQs, and contact information for distribution to media contacts.</p>

Traveler Information Needs

The success of the I-35 Waco Construction Communication Plan depends on providing the right information to the right stakeholders at the right time. Given the variety of traveler information needs on this project, the Construction Communication Team will be required to monitor, obtain, and update information within varying time frames. Table 4 lists the main information needs by topic, and describes the details associated with it, their expected source, how often they should be updated, and the Construction Communication Team member responsible for ensuring this update occurs in the appropriate time frame.

Table 4. Traveler Information Needs.

Information Needs	Details	Source	Update Time Frame	Construction Communication Team Contact
 Travel Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current segment speed Current corridor speed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I-35 Central Texas Traffic Map 	Real time	TTI mobility coordinator
 Queue Warnings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location Expected delay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I-35 Central Texas Traffic Map 	Real time	TTI mobility coordinator
 Incidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location Type Status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency medical services (EMS)/ Department of Public Safety 	Real time	Waco PIO
 Closures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ramp closures Lane closures High-impact closures Access restrictions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I-35 Waco Project Team Construction Communication Team 	Weekly	TTI mobility coordinator
 Routing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rerouting options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I-35 Waco Project Team Construction Communication Team 	Weekly	CE&I consultant representative
 Truck Restrictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location of truck restricted routes and restriction details 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I-35 Waco Project Team Construction Communication Team 	Monthly	CE&I consultant representative
 System Evaluation Parameters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanent changes Project progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I-35 Waco Project Team Construction Communication Team 	At project milestones	Waco PIO

Media Communication Protocol

Media communication is a critical element in terms of public perception of the I-35 Waco project. The Media Communication Protocol will drive exposure and link the variety of I-35 Waco project outreach and messaging opportunities for positive, in-kind and earned media. Timely and proactive outreach through existing strong media relations can ease public concerns and may potentially contribute to a greater acceptance and support for the project.

Approach

A well-planned and well-executed media outreach effort will provide an avenue to disseminate information, respond to the public, and help further the goals of the I-35 Waco project. By promoting useful information and encouraging awareness, the team will foster appropriate driver behavior during the construction process. These efforts will in turn reduce uncertainties and dispel misinformation, allowing the public to stay informed and plan travel accordingly.

The approach to media communications is based on the following media relations strategies:

- Employ consistent, key messaging for each phase of the project.
- Create and distribute comprehensive media kits before the start of construction.
- Maintain a regular media briefing schedule for local media.
- Respond to media inquiries and requests as quickly as possible after receiving them.
- Build active media relationships with new media contacts and cultivate existing ones.
- Foster responsible and effective use of social media to engagement news outlets and reporters.

Media Outreach Schedule

In accordance with My35 Waco procedures, a specific media schedule will be developed for the I-35 Waco project. The schedule will be based on project milestones and identify proactive public outreach opportunities. As media outreach opportunities present themselves, publication deadlines will be added to the media schedule and the overall media plan. The media schedule will be added to this plan as an addendum once the construction schedule is finalized and the media schedule is able to be crafted around construction activities.

Media Tools

The Construction Communication Team will use various tools to communicate project milestones or project-specific information and messaging to the media, including:

- **Media kits, press releases and alerts:** Media kits will be developed and distributed to media contacts at project kickoff and project milestones, and will available via the project website. Kits will include press releases, pre-packaged on-camera interviews, b-roll, sound bites, fact sheets, ready-to-use graphics and images, FAQs, contact

information, and any other materials relevant at the time. Releases and alerts will be sent to media at least seven days before a planned event with an in-depth explanation of the issues involved as well as the time, date, and location of the event or milestone. Follow-up calls will be made within 48 hours of distribution to ensure releases were received, to provide additional information, and to learn about the reporter’s particular interests in continued coverage of the I-35 Waco project. Unplanned or emergency media releases will be issued as needed.

- **Traffic reports:** The Construction Communication Team will take advantage of local media daily traffic reports through direct outreach to local traffic reporters.
- **Earned media opportunities:** Earned media opportunities will be maximized by tailoring project-specific communications to particular publications. The Construction Communication Team will proactively reach out and communicate with established media contacts to foster favorable editorial coverage and increase awareness of upcoming events or traffic pattern changes.
- **Social media:** The Construction Communication Team will use existing social media accounts to contact and update local reporters and to provide real-time information to the general public (Figure 4).

Specific social media tools will be strategically selected based on the target audience (Table 5), recognizing that each tool has a particular level of effectiveness at disseminating information, a level of feedback expected from the public, and a certain speed at conveying urgent information.

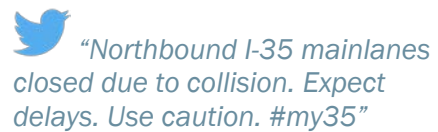


Figure 4. Social Media Post Example.

Table 5. Greater Waco Social Media Tools.

Organization/Entity	Platform	Handle or Username	Owner
TxDOT Waco District	Twitter	@TxDOTWaco	Waco PIO Ken Roberts
TxDOT	Facebook	Facebook.com/TxDOT	TxDOT Communications Division

Appendix E provides more information.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Ongoing evaluation is necessary to determine how the elements of the Media Communication Protocol are contributing to overall project goals. The effectiveness of the media outreach will be monitored by:

- Ongoing analysis with a monthly report of the accuracy, tone and reach of media coverage.
- Weekly status reports of all media coverage addressing the communication outcomes outlined at the beginning of this plan.

Executive-Level Stakeholder Communication Protocol

Establishing an Executive-Level Communication Protocol is done with the understanding that executive-level stakeholders can help facilitate the proactive distribution of information and expedite information delivery through their networks, in case of emergencies or unscheduled closures.

In an effort to minimize impacts to the traveling public, the Construction Communication Team will reach out and coordinate with executive-level stakeholders along I-35 to:

- Provide information about construction activities most likely to impact them.
- Exchange information about planned events and construction-related activities.
- Assist in identifying preferences for receiving updates and information.

The Construction Communication Team will engage executive-level stakeholders with techniques, tools and materials based on the type and urgency of the information distributed while taking into account how executive-level stakeholders can in turn use them in communicating with their constituents.

Approach

TxDOT envisions particular communication processes being implemented with stakeholders identified as executive level (Figure 5). Using the protocol, the Construction Communication Team will:

1. Identify an appropriate contact from each of the institutions listed as executive-level stakeholders in Figure 5 in order to reach out and schedule an individual project kickoff meeting for each stakeholder.
2. Develop and provide printed and digital educational materials on the I-35 Waco project (including but not limited to e-cards, postcards and posters) to executive-level stakeholders for display and distribution among their networks.
3. Create an information exchange with each executive-level stakeholder by which the following information will be shared:
 - From the Construction Communication Team: scheduled lane or ramp closures and construction activities with expected significant impact on the traveling public.
 - From executive-level stakeholders: a calendar of special events, school district

Executive Level Stakeholders for the Greater Waco Region

- City of Waco
- Greater Waco Region Chamber of Commerce
- Baylor University
- Local ISDs:
 - Waco
 - La Vega
 - Connally
 - Robinson
 - China Spring
 - Midway
- Local hospitals
- Police, fire and EMS
- Major employers:
 - Providence Health Center
 - L3 Technologies
 - Baylor Scott and White Health (Hillcrest)
 - Walmart
 - H-E-B
 - Sanderson Farms, Inc.
- Trucking industry
- Legislative liaisons

Figure 5. Executive-Level Stakeholders.

events, university graduations, football games, UIL competitions, back-to-school nights, high-traffic holiday sales, or any other high-traffic event that should be considered when programming construction activities.

4. Compile, update and maintain a greater Waco event calendar with the information provided, which will be shared on a monthly basis with the team to be used for construction activity scheduling and traffic-control measures.
5. Send advanced notice to all executive-level stakeholders before any changes are made in programmed lane, ramp or high-impact closures from what was originally stated in the traffic control program.

Ideally, communication with executive-level stakeholders is done in person by engaging key staff in meetings to build sustained and long-lasting relationships. However, when necessary, other channels (e.g., phone and email) may be sufficient.

Correspondence Management and Reporting Protocol

The Correspondence Management and Reporting Protocol identifies the policies and procedures for the management of I-35 Waco project correspondence. The protocol was developed to streamline tracking, integration and response to comments received from stakeholders. All applicable staff will follow this protocol, and the protocol can be adjusted as necessary over the life of the project.

Outreach and Correspondence Database

The Construction Communication Team staff tasked with public involvement efforts for the I-35 Waco project, led by the CE&I consultant representative, will establish an outreach and correspondence database to streamline the tracking of agency, stakeholder and general public coordination. This database will be used for tracking and documenting the following:

- Public and agency comments.
- Public participation opportunities and outreach efforts.
- Media communications.
- Contact and mailing lists.

Comment cards, website comment and contact forms, telephone and email hotlines, faxes, and/or emails addressed to txdot.gov accounts will be considered as materials allowing an opportunity for comments. Discussions with project team members, conducted both in person or by phone, will also be considered opportunities to receive comments. Team members involved in them will report and submit them to the database.

The information requested in each of the previous materials should include the data points listed in Figure 6 to enable a comprehensive comment theme analysis and description of all comments received.

Required Data Points for Comments
All comment forms will ask for the following information:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Date▪ Name of commenter▪ Agency/organization/group (if applicable)▪ Address▪ Comment method (letter, email, etc.)▪ Information requested▪ Comment source▪ Preferred contact method

Figure 6. Comment Data Points.

Reporting Procedure

It is anticipated that most comments will address multiple issues and concerns. The Construction Communication Team will define a comment coding theme system to be used for the classification and analysis of received comments. The coding theme system will be added to this communication plan as an addendum once completed. Lastly, the team will analyze and report communication outcomes to the rest of the I-35 Waco Project Team on a quarterly basis.

DRAFT

Conclusions

This I-35 Waco Construction Communication Plan formalizes the communication protocols and tools to be used to communicate the I-35 Waco project status and progress to the community, and helps the I-35 Waco Project Team remain accountable for desired outcomes.

The organizational structure and protocols identified in this plan are intended to serve as a guide to those responsible for minimizing motorist frustration with construction activities necessary to implement the widening of I-35 to an eight-lane section through downtown Waco. This will be accomplished through seamless teamwork by the various disciplines involved in the project. Through proactive communication, the team will minimize surprises that local motorists and through traffic could experience within the changing construction zone of the I-35 Waco project.

Each team member should become fully aware not only of their own responsibilities and resources available to them, but also of the members of the team and other groups working on the project.

DRAFT

The appendices were compiled in support of the present document. Table 6 lists these appendices. Through the use of this plan and its appendices, the Construction Communication Team is expected to determine how to best reach stakeholders while taking full advantage of the resources available.

Table 6. List of Appendices.

Appendix	Content
Appendix A	I-35 Waco Project Team Rosters
Appendix B	Stakeholder Analysis
Appendix C	Outreach Techniques, Tools and Materials
Appendix D	Frequently Asked Questions
Appendix E	TxDOT Social Media Policy
Appendix F	Legislative Updates

Besides the structure and strategies included in this plan, the initial document will be revised throughout the construction period to address opportunities to improve current practices, ensure the achievement of its communication goals, accommodate delays, and possibly even create new technologies.