



VIRTUAL PUBLIC HEARING SCRIPT
SH 174 at Brazos River (Lake Whitney)
Bosque/Hill Counties
CSJ: 0519-02-019
February 9, 2022

Narrator: Annie Sikes

SLIDE 1 – Title Slide

Hello ladies and gentlemen. I'd like to welcome you to the SH 174 virtual public Hearing for the proposed replacement of the SH 174 bridge over the Brazos River (Lake Whitney) in Bosque and Hill Counties.

Thank you for joining us. My name is Annie Sikes and I work in the public involvement section in the Transportation Planning and Programming division for the Texas Department of Transportation, better known as TxDOT.

SLIDE 2 – Virtual Public Hearing in Response to Public Health

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 Hearing to avoid in-person contact. At this time, the virtual format will be in lieu of an in-person public Hearing. The presentation will cover the same information the Waco District would have shared at the in-person public Hearing. However, the comment process for this virtual public Hearing will be different from what we normally conduct at an in-person Hearing and will be explained shortly. All project information can be found on the TxDOT website.



SLIDE 3 – Project Purpose and Limits

The purpose of this project is to provide a reliable and efficient crossing of State Highway 174 over the Brazos River, with the structural and functional capacity to meet current and projected traffic requirements, including the mix of large and heavy vehicles that operate in the area.

SLIDE 4 – Public Involvement Goals

The public involvement goals for the propose project include providing public involvement opportunities for stakeholders, roadway users, and the general community to engage with the project team and share feedback and to update those interested on the project process and timeline. Another important purpose for this hearing is to Meet the federal and state requirements to notify the public about potential project impacts to recreational land.

SLIDE 5 – Project Overview – Purpose and Need

The need for the proposed project is based upon the following conditions:

- Extensive deterioration of the concrete decks on the approach spans
- Fracture critical design of the steel truss – (a portion of the bridge could collapse if certain steel members fail)
- Narrow roadway width and low level of service for the volume of truck traffic
- Load restriction that impacts locally generated and regional heavy vehicle traffic
- Deficient traffic railing
- Inadequate clearance between the water and the deck truss

Slide 6 – Project Overview – Deck Elevation

- As you can see in this photo, the existing deck truss catches debris during high water events and bridge must be closed during periods of heavy rainfall

SLIDE 7 - Project Overview - Existing Bridge

The existing bridge has the following features:

- 2 -12 ft lanes with 2.5ft shoulder/curb
- 12 spans = 1,294 ft overall length
- The load posting has been temporarily removed, but to do that, we had to set up the bridge, so that it is currently open to one way traffic only with an automatic traffic signal at each end.

SLIDE 8 – Design/Alignment

We considered several options before choosing the proposed alignment

- We rejected the “no-build” option as it would not meet the purpose and need for this project
- Building a new bridge upstream would have significantly affected the features of Kimball Bend Park.
- The preferred alignment would be downstream of the existing bridge and would allow traffic to use the existing bridge during construction

The new bridge would include the following features:

- 2–12-foot lanes with a 10-foot shoulder.



- The proposed bridge would include 10 spans, and it would be approximately 1,450 feet long.
- The complete proposed schematic can be viewed at: www.txdot.gov, keyword search "SH 174 at Brazos River"

SLIDE 9 - Environmental Considerations: Historic Resources

Prior to December 16, 2014, the Federal Highway Administration, otherwise known as FHWA, reviewed and approved documents prepared under the National Environmental Policy Act, known as 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.

SLIDE 10 - Environmental Considerations: Historic Significance

Sections 110 and 106 of the Historic Preservation Act require that sponsors of federally funded projects evaluate historic-age structures and determine whether they are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), and whether the proposed project would adversely affect any identified eligible or listed historic resources.



Slide 11 Environmental Considerations: Historic Significance

The SH 174 bridge is eligible for the NRHP under Criterion C for its distinctive engineering and design features. As part of our evaluation of the SH 174 bridge, TxDOT is requesting your input on mitigation ideas for the loss of the bridge.

SLIDE 12 - Environmental Considerations: Water Resources

Under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, the Brazos River/Lake Whitney is considered a “water of the United States.” We have determined that the construction activities required for this bridge replacement would be authorized by a Nationwide Permit 14 and are in the process of verifying that determination with the US Army Corps of Engineers. Nationwide Permit 14 authorizes *“Activities required for crossings of waters of the United States associated with the construction, expansion, modification, or improvement of linear transportation projects (e.g., roads, highways...” [etc.]”*

SLIDE 13 - Environmental Considerations: Recreational Property

Chapter 26 of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Code and Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act both protect recreational properties such as public parks and wildlife management areas. This project would take approximately 4 acres of recreational property.

Chapter 26 of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Code requires a public hearing before any project is approved that takes public [recreational] property. Before approving the SH 174 project, TxDOT is conducting this hearing in accordance with the requirements of



Chapter 26. We have provided appropriate public notification of the hearing as required by law.

SLIDE 14 - Environmental Considerations: Recreational Property

The proposed project is anticipated to impact the following properties protected under Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966: SH 174 Truss Bridge, and Kimball Bend Park and limited use recreational areas on both sides of the river. The proposed project would take approximately 4 acres from Kimball Bend Park and the limited use recreational areas owned and operated by the US Army Corps of Engineers. TxDOT anticipates making a *de minimis* determination for this use under Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966. Public comment on the effects of the proposed project on the activities, features, or attributes of the Kimball Bend Park and the limited use recreational areas may be submitted as described later in the presentation. TxDOT is considering a Section 4(f) *de minimis* impact determination for impacts to Kimball Bend Park and to a wildlife management area. A *de minimis* finding means that the proposed project would not adversely affect the activities, features, or attributes that qualify these properties for protection under Section 4(f). TxDOT will consult the US Army Corps of Engineers (the official with jurisdiction over the recreational property), and the public for input before making this determination.

SLIDE 15 - Environmental Process

This slide shows the environmental clearance process, which must be completed before the right-of-way acquisition process can be completed.



SLIDE 16 - Anticipated Scheduled

The anticipated project schedule for the proposed project includes today's Virtual Public Hearing followed by Environmental Approval anticipated in March 2022. Bids for construction are anticipated to be accepted beginning in May of 2022. Construction is anticipated to begin in July 2022 and last approximately 18 months.

SLIDE 17 – Share Your Input

TxDOT is committed to continuing our efforts to gain public feedback about this project. We understand that this virtual public hearing format is a bit different, so let's take a few moments to explain the comment process – which is the most important part of this video. Given our current COVID-19 situation, the Waco District is asking the public to provide their comments in the following ways:

You may submit your comments online by visiting the website www.txdot.gov and in the "Search TxDOT" box in the upper-right hand corner of the webpage, enter the search term: "SH 174 at Brazos River." Then click on the "Submit Your Comment" button at the top right of the page or click on the Email link at the bottom of the page.

You may email your comments to: michael.rhodes@txdot.gov

You can mail your comments to the Texas Department of Transportation

ATTN: Michael Rhodes

100 South Loop Drive

Waco, TX 76704

Additionally, the public may leave a verbal comment at 833-933-0437



The public comment period closes on Thursday, February 24, 2022 which is 15 days from this virtual public Hearing. Please ensure your comment is received or postmarked by this date. Comments can be made throughout the comment period and will be included in the hearing documentation.

Ladies and gentlemen, we sincerely appreciate your attendance and interest concerning the proposed replacement of the Brazos River Bridge on State Highway 174. Your questions and comments will receive careful consideration.

Thank you very much. This concludes the formal presentation. We are now adjourned.