



PUBLIC MEETING – POWERPOINT NARRATION

US 281 HAMILTON RELIEF ROUTE FEASIBILITY STUDY AND WIDENING PROJECT FROM US 84 (EVANT, TX) TO SH 6 (HICO, TX) HAMILTON COUNTY

CSJ:0251-01-067

SLIDE 1 – Title Slide and Study Location

Welcome to the October 18, 2022, Public Meeting for the US 281 Hamilton Relief Route Feasibility Study and Widening Project presented by the Texas Department of Transportation. We appreciate your interest in the US 281 Hamilton Relief Route Feasibility Study and Widening project.

Please note you may pause this presentation at any point to allow more time to view each slide.

SLIDE 2 – Table of Contents

This Meeting has been convened by the Department's Waco District Office and is being held to receive and consider comments from the public regarding the US 281 Hamilton Relief Route Feasibility Study and US 281 Widening Project. Today's presentation will cover the Feasibility Study location, Feasibility Study information, widening project location, widening project information and project review and approval information, and how to submit comments.

SLIDE 3 – Hamilton Relief Route Feasibility Study: Location

The feasibility study area extends from south of Hamilton to north of Hamilton. The length of the study corridor varies according to each of the various relief route

alignments being considered, each of which is generally located around the City of Hamilton.

SLIDE 4 – Relief Route Feasibility Study Purpose

This study is needed because the existing US 281 within the study limits of the City of Hamilton does not meet current design standards and does not adequately accommodate current or forecasted traffic volumes, which results in traffic congestion and reduced mobility.

The purpose of this Feasibility Study is to identify, evaluate and recommend solutions to improve travel conditions along US 281 within the City of Hamilton and evaluate the options based on criteria which includes mobility and safety, traffic operations, and natural and human environments.

SLIDE 5 – Relief Route Feasibility Study Process

There are several steps in the Feasibility Study process. Today we are conducting **Step 2** of the process presenting the current Relief Route alignment concepts and exploring other concepts alongside the public during this Public Meeting.

Step 3 prepares a Recommended Relief Route Build Alternative and associated US 281 Build Improvements within the city of Hamilton, both of which factor in comments received at this Public Meeting.

Step 4 presents the Recommended Build Alternative and Improvements for public review and comment during a final Public Meeting.

Step 5 concludes the study with the production of an US 281 Feasibility Study Report.

After the study is completed, the Department's next step will be producing a US 281 Relief Route Schematic Design, Environmental Analyses, and conduct further Public Involvement to determine the specific Relief Route and US 281 improvement designs, as well as proposed right-of-way dimensions.

SLIDE 6 – Alternative Relief Route Solutions Exploration

When conducting an alternatives analysis, the No Build Alternative is compared to various Build Alternatives. Under the No Build Alternative, no improvements to US 281 would occur; however, improvements to other corridor roadways would continue as planned.

All of the Build Alternatives have the same goals, including adequate mobility for motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, addressing safety issues, and minimizing environmental impacts while also considering local Municipal Objectives.

The Build and No-Build Alternative evaluation and comparison process involves travel demand evaluations along US 281 factoring in forecasted design year 2055 traffic volumes, traffic safety evaluations including crash history locations, minimization of impacts, and municipality and stakeholder agency coordination. One of the design exploration objectives is to achieve an acceptable year 2055 Level of Service or LOS. LOS is a term used to qualitatively describe the operating conditions of a roadway based on factors such as speed, travel time, maneuverability, delay, and safety. LOS is categorized from A to F where LOS A is free flowing traffic and LOS F is extremely congested.

SLIDE 7 – Relief Route: Current Alignment Concepts

The current Relief Route alternative alignment concepts are presented at this public meeting for public review and comment. The public is also invited to present other concepts to the Department.

SLIDE 8 – Existing US 281 within the City of Hamilton

The existing US 281 typical roadway section within the study limits consists of one 11- to 12-foot-wide travel lane in each direction with adjacent 2 to 3-foot wide shoulders, no center median, and side ditch drainage.

The existing US 281 right-of-way width varies along the corridor, but overall is approximately 100 feet wide.

SLIDE 9 – Relief Route: Couplet Option

The US 281 Couplet Concept Option would convert the existing, two-way roadways of US 281 and Railroad Street into a one-way, 12-foot-wide lane roadways with Railroad Street traveling northbound and US 281 traveling southbound.

The roadways would be located within the existing right-of-way limits. The recommended roadway drainage would be curb and gutter.

SLIDE 10 – Relief Route: New Location Roadway Option

The proposed US 281 Relief Route Option would construct two 12-foot-wide lanes in each direction around the city of Hamilton. Portions of the Relief Route alignment option are located where no roadway currently exists. The overall Relief Route Options right-of-way width is approximately 300-440-feet wide.

SLIDE 11 – Relief Route: Environmental Constraints Map

Part of the alternative alignment exploration involves identifying environmental features that could potentially be impacted by an alignment. Therefore, an Environmental Constraints Map has been prepared to aid the designers in avoiding environmental features and / or minimize impacts. These features include businesses and residences, cemeteries, floodplains and streams, hazardous materials facilities, historic structures, houses of worship, public facilities, and species-specific vegetation. The Environmental Constraints Map shown on this slide is focused on the Relief Route Feasibility Study location.

SLIDE 12 – Timeline and Next Steps

Based on the comments received at today's public meeting, the design team will prepare a Recommended Build Alternative. It is anticipated this Alternative would be completed in the Spring of 2023 and would be available for public review and comment at the final public meeting, which is anticipated for Spring of 2023. The final study is forecasted to be completed in the Fall of 2023.

Please note the listed dates are subject to change.

After the completion of this study, the Department forecasts the Next Step phases as outlined as shown on the screen.

SLIDE 13 – Transition Slide to Widening Project

(Slightly Pause on this Slide)

SLIDE 14 – Widening Project: Location

The approximately 37-mile-long US 281 corridor is located in Hamilton County as noted in orange on this Project Study Location Map and spans from US 84 in the City of Evant northward to State Highway 6 in the City of Hico. The red line on this map denotes the study area.

SLIDE 15– Widening Project Purpose

This project is needed because existing US 281 within the study limits does not meet current design standards and does not adequately accommodate current or forecasted traffic volumes, which results in traffic congestion and reduced mobility.

The purpose of this widening project is to identify, evaluate and recommend solutions to improve travel conditions along US 281 and evaluate the options based on criteria which includes mobility and safety, traffic operations, and natural and human environments.

SLIDE 16 – Project Review and Approval Information

Prior to December 16, 2014, the Federal Highway Administration, or 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 FHWA through a Memorandum of Understanding to review and approve certain assigned NEPA environmental documents. This Memorandum of Understanding between TxDOT and FHWA was updated on December 9, 2019. The review and approval process applies to this project.

Environmental studies are being conducted for the Project to support an environmental clearance in accordance with NEPA. These environmental analyses are necessary to identify, avoid, and minimize effects to the Human and Natural Environments.

Notices for this public meeting were advertised in the Goldthwaithe Eagle, the Lampasas Dispatch Record, The 4-County Evant Star, The Hamilton Herald News, The Hico News Review, the Stephenville Empire-Tribune, and on the TxDOT.gov website under “Hearings and Meetings Schedule”. The TxDOT Public Information Office also prepared a news media release to advertise the public meeting. Study and Project information are available on the TxDOT.gov website.

SLIDE 17 – Widening Project Process

There are several steps in the US 281 Widening Project process. Today we are conducting **Step 2** of the Project process.

Step 2 presents the current US 281 widening concept alternatives and explores other concepts alongside the public for public review and comment during this Public Meeting.

Step 3 initiates the US 281 draft preliminary design schematics and NEPA document and assessment.

Step 4 presents the draft preliminary design schematics at a US 281 Public Meeting.

Step 5 presents the final design schematics and National Environmental Policy Act or NEPA document at a US 281 Public Hearing.

SLIDE 18 – Current Widening Alignment Concepts (1 of 2) _

This slide presents the current widening alignment concepts currently under consideration within the southern sector of the corridor between the cities of Evant and Hamilton.

SLIDE 19 – Current Widening Alignment Concepts (2 of 2)

This slide presents the current widening alignment concepts currently under consideration within the northern sector of the corridor between the cities of Hamilton and Hico.

SLIDE 20 – Existing US 281 within Hamilton County

The existing US 281 typical roadway section within the study limits overall consists of one 11- to 12-foot-wide travel lane in each direction with adjacent 2- to 3-foot-wide shoulders, no center median, and side ditch drainage.

The existing US 281 right-of-way width varies along the corridor, but overall is approximately 120 feet wide.

SLIDE 21 – Widening Project: Roadway Widening Options

The US 281 widening option currently being considered would entail converting the existing two travel lanes to one-way, widening the existing outside roadway shoulder, and constructing two one-way lanes in the opposite direction. The alignment options being considered would install two new travel lanes east or west of the existing US 281 travel lanes, or a combination of east or west alignments depending on the adjacent US 281 corridor constraints.

SLIDE 22 – Widening Project: Environmental Constraints Map

As stated earlier, the Build Alternative exploration involves identifying environmental features that could potentially be impacted by various Build Alternatives. This Widening Project Environmental Constraints Map has been prepared to aid the designers in avoiding environmental features and / or minimize impacts in the US 281 widening project as well. These features include businesses and residences, cemeteries, floodplains and

streams, hazardous materials facilities, historic structures, houses of worship, public facilities, and species-specific vegetation.

SLIDE 23 – Comments

All public comments received during this meeting will be fully considered and responded to in the US 281 Public Meeting record and made part of the final documentation for this US 281 Study and project. This documentation will then be made available for public review and copying on the Public Meeting website.

Your comments may be provided online, or by mail, or email as shown on this screen. Comments must be received or postmarked on or before **Wednesday, November 2, 2022**, to be included in the documentation for this Virtual Public Meeting.

SLIDE 24 – “Thank You for your Interest”

We sincerely appreciate your interest in the US 281 Hamilton Relief Route Feasibility Study and Widening Project. Your questions, comments and concerns will receive careful consideration.