



# Air Quality Technical Report

---

U.S. Highway (US) 59 and US 77 Widening Project

Victoria County, Texas

CSJs: 0088-05-096, 2350-01-056

June 2021

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 U.S.C. § 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated December 9, 2019, and executed by FHWA and TxDOT.

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
Project Description.....	1
Transportation Conformity.....	1
Traffic Air Quality Analysis (TAQA) .....	1
Mobile Source Air Toxics (MSAT).....	1
Construction Emissions .....	1
References Cited.....	8

**APPENDIX**

**Figure 1 - Project Location**

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## Project Description

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Yoakum District proposes to widen U.S. Highway (US) 59 and US 77 in Victoria County, Texas from Farm-to-Market Road (FM) 236 to Business U.S. Highway (BU) 77 for a distance 5.12 miles.

The existing facility North of FM 446 is an undivided section with two lanes, one in each direction and 10-foot-wide outside shoulders. South of FM 446, US 59 is divided with four 12-foot-wide travel lanes, two in each direction and 10-foot-wide outside shoulders. An existing grade separation exists at US 59 and BU 59. The existing right-of-way varies anywhere from 220 feet to over 1,200 feet wide along this corridor.

The proposed improvements to US 59 and US 77 include the addition of two travel lanes along US 59 and US 77 to create a four-lane divided roadway. US 59 and US 77 run congruently for a portion of the project. The project would also include the construction of one-way frontage roads to upgrade the US 59 and US 77 roadway to a controlled-access facility. A grade separation is proposed at US 77 and Old Goliad Road.

The location of the proposed project is illustrated on Figure 1 in the **Appendix**.

## Transportation Conformity

The project is located in an area in attainment or unclassifiable for all national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS); therefore, the transportation conformity rules do not apply.

## Traffic Air Quality Analysis (TAQA)

Traffic data for the years 2025 and 2045 is 10,800 to 15,050 vehicles per day and 15,450 to 21,500 vehicles per day, respectively. Average daily traffic and growth rates vary between the mainlanes and frontage roads of US 59/US 77, which is why they are presented as a range. A prior TxDOT modeling study and previous analyses of similar projects demonstrated that it is unlikely that the carbon monoxide standard would ever be exceeded as a result of any project with an average annual daily traffic (AADT) below 140,000. The AADT projections for the project do not exceed 140,000 vehicles per day; therefore, a Traffic Air Quality Analysis (TAQA) was not required.

## Mobile Source Air Toxics (MSAT)

### Background

Controlling air toxic emissions became a national priority with the passage of the Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA) of 1990, whereby Congress mandated that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulate 188 air toxics, also known as hazardous air pollutants. The EPA has assessed this expansive list in their latest rule on the Control of Hazardous Air Pollutants from Mobile Sources (Federal Register, Vol. 72, No. 37, page 8430, February 26,

2007), and identified a group of 93 compounds emitted from mobile sources that are listed in their Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS)<sup>1</sup>. In addition, EPA identified nine compounds with significant contributions from mobile sources that are among the national and regional-scale cancer risk drivers or contributors and non-cancer hazard contributors from the 2011 National Air Toxics Assessment (NATA)<sup>2</sup>. These are 1,3-butadiene, acetaldehyde, acrolein, benzene, diesel particulate matter (diesel PM), ethylbenzene, formaldehyde, naphthalene, and polycyclic organic matter. While FHWA considers these the priority mobile source air toxics, the list is subject to change and may be adjusted in consideration of future EPA rules.

#### *Motor Vehicle Emissions Simulator (MOVES)*

According to EPA, MOVES2014 is a major revision to MOVES2010 and improves upon it in many respects. MOVES2014 includes new data, new emissions standards, and new functional improvements and features. It incorporates substantial new data for emissions, fleet, and activity developed since the release of MOVES2010. These new emissions data are for light- and heavy-duty vehicles, exhaust and evaporative emissions, and fuel effects. MOVES2014 also adds updated vehicle sales, population, age distribution, and vehicle miles travelled (VMT) data. MOVES2014 incorporates the effects of three new Federal emissions standard rules not included in MOVES2010. These new standards are all expected to impact mobile source air toxics (MSAT) emissions and include Tier 3 emissions and fuel standards starting in 2017 (79 FR 60344), heavy-duty greenhouse gas regulations that phase in during model years 2014-2018 (79 FR 60344), and the second phase of light duty greenhouse gas regulations that phase in during model years 2017-2025 (79 FR 60344). Since the release of MOVES2014, EPA has released MOVES2014a. In the November 2015 MOVES2014a Questions and Answers Guide<sup>3</sup>, EPA states that for on-road emissions, MOVES2014a adds new options requested by users for the input of local VMT, includes minor updates to the default fuel tables, and corrects an error in MOVES2014 brake wear emissions. The change in brake wear emissions results in small decreases in PM emissions, while emissions for other criteria pollutants remain essentially the same as MOVES2014.

Using EPA's MOVES2014a model, as shown in **Figure 1**, FHWA estimates that even if VMT increases by 45 percent from 2010 to 2050 as forecast, a combined reduction of 91 percent in the total annual emissions for the priority MSAT is projected for the same time period.

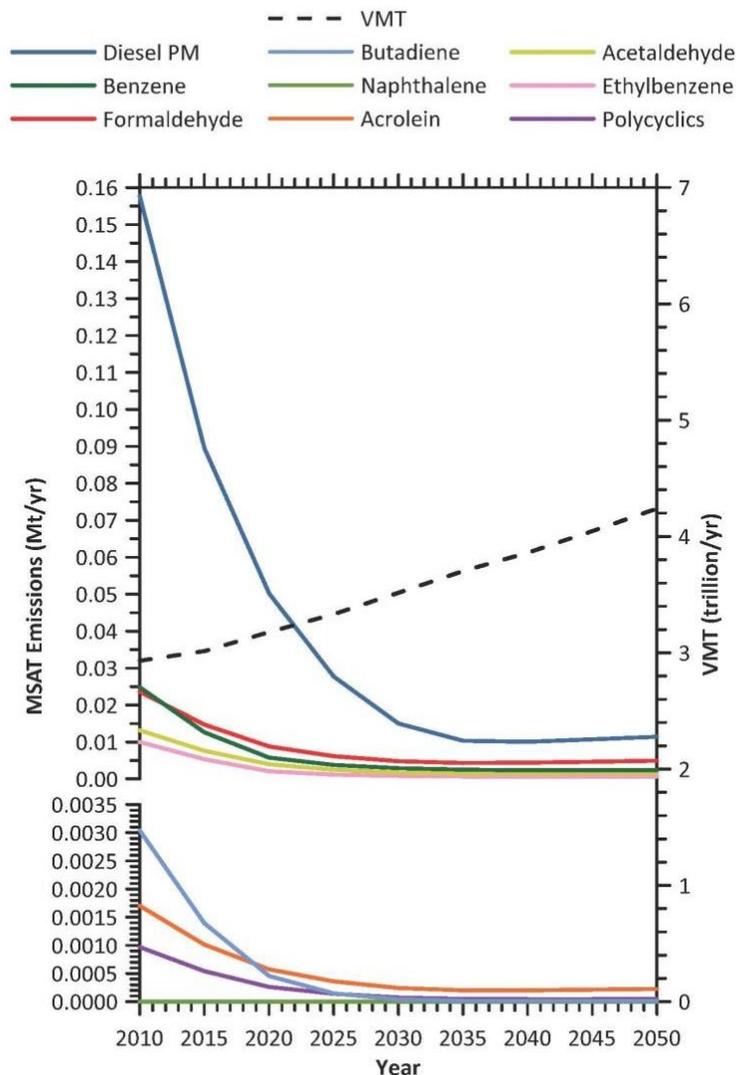
---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.epa.gov/iris/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/national-air-toxics-assessment>

<sup>3</sup> <https://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPDF.cgi?Dockey=P100NNR0.txt>

**Figure 1:**  
**FHWA PROJECTED NATIONAL MSAT EMISSION TRENDS 2010 – 2050**  
**FOR VEHICLES OPERATING ON ROADWAYS**  
**USING EPA's MOVES2014a MODEL**



Source: EPA MOVES2014a model runs conducted by FHWA, September 2016.

Note: Trends for specific locations may be different, depending on locally derived information representing vehicle -miles travelled, vehicle speeds, vehicle mix, fuels, emission control programs, meteorological, and other factors.

Diesel PM is the dominant component of MSAT emissions, making up 50 to 70 percent of all priority MSAT pollutants by mass, depending on calendar year. Users of MOVES2014a will notice some differences in emissions compared with MOVES2010b. MOVES2014a is based on updated data on some emissions and pollutant processes compared to MOVES2010b, and also reflects the latest Federal emissions standards in place at the time of its release. In addition, MOVES2014a emissions forecasts are based on lower VMT projections than MOVES2010b, consistent with recent trends suggesting reduced nationwide VMT growth compared to historical trends.

## MSAT Research

Air toxics analysis is a continuing area of research. While much work has been done to assess the overall health risk of air toxics, many questions remain unanswered. In particular, the tools and techniques for assessing project-specific health outcomes as a result of lifetime MSAT exposure remain limited. These limitations impede the ability to evaluate how potential public health risks posed by MSAT exposure should be factored into project-level decision-making within the context of NEPA. The FHWA, EPA, the Health Effects Institute, and others have funded and conducted research studies to try to more clearly define potential risks from MSAT emissions associated with highway projects. The FHWA will continue to monitor the developing research in this field.

## Project Specific MSAT Information

A qualitative analysis provides a basis for identifying and comparing the potential differences among MSAT emissions, if any, from the various alternatives. The qualitative assessment presented below is derived in part from a study conducted by FHWA entitled A Methodology for Evaluating Mobile Source Air Toxic Emissions Among Transportation Project Alternatives.<sup>4</sup>

The VMT estimated for each of the Build Alternatives is slightly higher than that for the No Build Alternative, because the additional capacity increases the efficiency of the roadway and attracts rerouted trips from elsewhere in the transportation network. The additional travel lanes contemplated as part of the project alternatives will have the effect of moving some traffic closer to nearby homes, schools, and businesses; therefore, under each alternative there may be localized areas where ambient concentrations of MSAT could be higher under certain Build Alternatives than the No Build Alternative. The localized increases in MSAT concentrations would likely be most pronounced along the expanded roadway sections that would be built from FM 236 to BU 77, specifically, near the former Aloe Army Air Force Base and current industrial development. However, the magnitude and the duration of these potential increases compared to the No Build alternative cannot be reliably quantified due to incomplete or unavailable information in forecasting project-specific MSAT health impacts. Also, MSAT will be lower in other locations when traffic shifts away from them. However, on a regional basis, EPA's vehicle and fuel regulations, coupled with fleet turnover, will over time cause substantial reductions that, in almost all cases, will cause region-wide MSAT levels to be significantly lower than today.

### *Incomplete or Unavailable Information for Project-Specific MSAT Health Impacts Analysis*

In FHWA's view, information is incomplete or unavailable to credibly predict the project-specific health impacts due to changes in MSAT emissions associated with a proposed set of highway alternatives. The outcome of such an assessment, adverse or not, would be influenced more by the uncertainty introduced into the process through assumption and

---

<sup>4</sup>[https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air\\_quality/air\\_toxics/policy\\_and\\_guidance/msat/index.cfm](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air_quality/air_toxics/policy_and_guidance/msat/index.cfm)

speculation rather than any genuine insight into the actual health impacts directly attributable to MSAT exposure associated with a proposed action. Consistent with 40 CFR 1502.22 (regarding incomplete and unavailable information) FHWA does not conduct MSAT health impacts for the reasons described below.

The EPA is responsible for protecting the public health and welfare from any known or anticipated effect of an air pollutant. They are the lead authority for administering the Clean Air Act and its amendments and have specific statutory obligations with respect to hazardous air pollutants and MSAT. The EPA is in the continual process of assessing human health effects, exposures, and risks posed by air pollutants. They maintain the IRIS, which is “a compilation of electronic reports on specific substances found in the environment and their potential to cause human health effects” (EPA, <http://www.epa.gov/iris/>). Each report contains assessments of non-cancerous and cancerous effects for individual compounds and quantitative estimates of risk levels from lifetime oral and inhalation exposures with uncertainty spanning perhaps an order of magnitude.

Other organizations are also active in the research and analyses of the human health effects of MSAT, including the Health Effects Institute (HEI). A number of HEI studies are summarized in Appendix D of FHWA’s Updated Interim Guidance on Mobile Source Air Toxic Analysis in NEPA Documents.<sup>5</sup> Among the adverse health effects linked to MSAT compounds at high exposures are: cancer in humans in occupational settings; cancer in animals; and irritation to the respiratory tract, including the exacerbation of asthma. Less obvious is the adverse human health effects of MSAT compounds at current environmental concentrations<sup>6</sup> or in the future as vehicle emissions substantially decrease.

The methodologies for forecasting health impacts include emissions modeling; dispersion modeling; exposure modeling; and then final determination of health impacts – each step in the process building on the model predictions obtained in the previous step. All are encumbered by technical shortcomings or uncertain science that prevents a more complete differentiation of the MSAT health impacts among a set of project alternatives. These difficulties are magnified for lifetime (i.e., 70 year) assessments, particularly because unsupportable assumptions would have to be made regarding changes in travel patterns and vehicle technology (which affects emissions rates) over that time frame, since such information is unavailable.

It is particularly difficult to reliably forecast 70-year lifetime MSAT concentrations and exposure near roadways; to determine the portion of time that people are actually exposed at a specific location; and to establish the extent attributable to a proposed action,

---

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air\\_quality/air\\_toxics/policy\\_and\\_guidance/msat/index.cfm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air_quality/air_toxics/policy_and_guidance/msat/index.cfm)

<sup>6</sup> HEI Special Report 16, <https://www.healtheffects.org/publication/mobile-source-air-toxics-critical-review-literature-exposure-and-health-effects>

especially given that some of the information needed is unavailable.

There are considerable uncertainties associated with the existing estimates of toxicity of the various MSAT, because of factors such as low-dose extrapolation and translation of occupational exposure data to the general population, a concern expressed by HEI.<sup>7</sup> As a result, there is no national consensus on air dose-response values assumed to protect the public health and welfare for MSAT compounds, and in particular for diesel PM. The EPA states that with respect to diesel engine exhaust, “[t]he absence of adequate data to develop a sufficiently confident dose-response relationship from the epidemiologic studies has prevented the estimation of inhalation carcinogenic risk.”<sup>8</sup>

There is also the lack of a national consensus on an acceptable level of risk. The current context is the process used by the EPA as provided by the Clean Air Act to determine whether more stringent controls are required in order to provide an ample margin of safety to protect public health or to prevent an adverse environmental effect for industrial sources subject to the maximum achievable control technology standards, such as benzene emissions from refineries. The decision framework is a two-step process. The first step requires EPA to determine an “acceptable” level of risk due to emissions from a source, which is generally no greater than approximately 100 in a million. Additional factors are considered in the second step, the goal of which is to maximize the number of people with risks less than 1 in a million due to emissions from a source. The results of this statutory two-step process do not guarantee that cancer risks from exposure to air toxics are less than 1 in a million; in some cases, the residual risk determination could result in maximum individual cancer risks that are as high as approximately 100 in a million. In a June 2008 decision, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit upheld EPA’s approach to addressing risk in its two-step decision framework. Information is incomplete or unavailable to establish that even the largest of highway projects would result in levels of risk greater than deemed acceptable.<sup>9</sup>

## Construction Emissions

During the construction phase of this project, temporary increases in particulate matter (PM) and MSAT emissions may occur from construction activities. The primary construction-related emissions of PM are fugitive dust from site preparation, and the primary

---

<sup>7</sup> Special Report 16, <https://www.healtheffects.org/publication/mobile-source-air-toxics-critical-review-literature-exposure-and-health-effects>

<sup>8</sup> EPA IRIS database, Diesel Engine Exhaust, Section II.C.  
[https://cfpub.epa.gov/ncea/iris/iris\\_documents/documents/subst/0642\\_summary.pdf](https://cfpub.epa.gov/ncea/iris/iris_documents/documents/subst/0642_summary.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.cadc.uscourts.gov/internet/opinions.nsf/284E23FFE079CD59852578000050C9DA/\\$file/07-1053-1120274.pdf](https://www.cadc.uscourts.gov/internet/opinions.nsf/284E23FFE079CD59852578000050C9DA/$file/07-1053-1120274.pdf)

construction-related emissions of MSAT are diesel particulate matter from diesel powered construction equipment and vehicles.

The potential impacts of particulate matter emissions will be minimized by using fugitive dust control measures contained in standard specifications, as appropriate. The Texas Emissions Reduction Plan (TERP) provides financial incentives to reduce emissions from vehicles and equipment. TxDOT encourages construction contractors to use this and other local and federal incentive programs to the fullest extent possible to minimize diesel emissions. Information about the TERP program can be found on the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality's (TCEQ) TERP website.<sup>10</sup>

However, considering the temporary and transient nature of construction-related emissions, the use of fugitive dust control measures, the encouragement of the use of TERP, and compliance with applicable regulatory requirements; it is not anticipated that emissions from construction of this project will have any significant impact on air quality in the area.

---

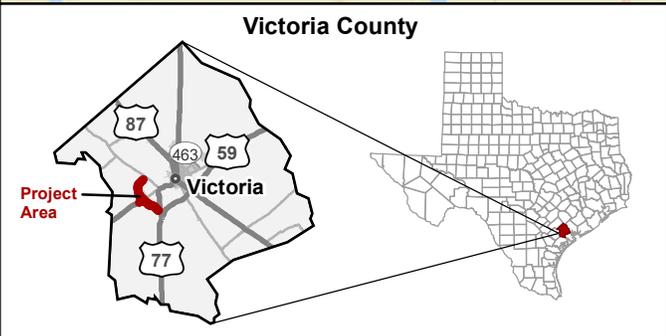
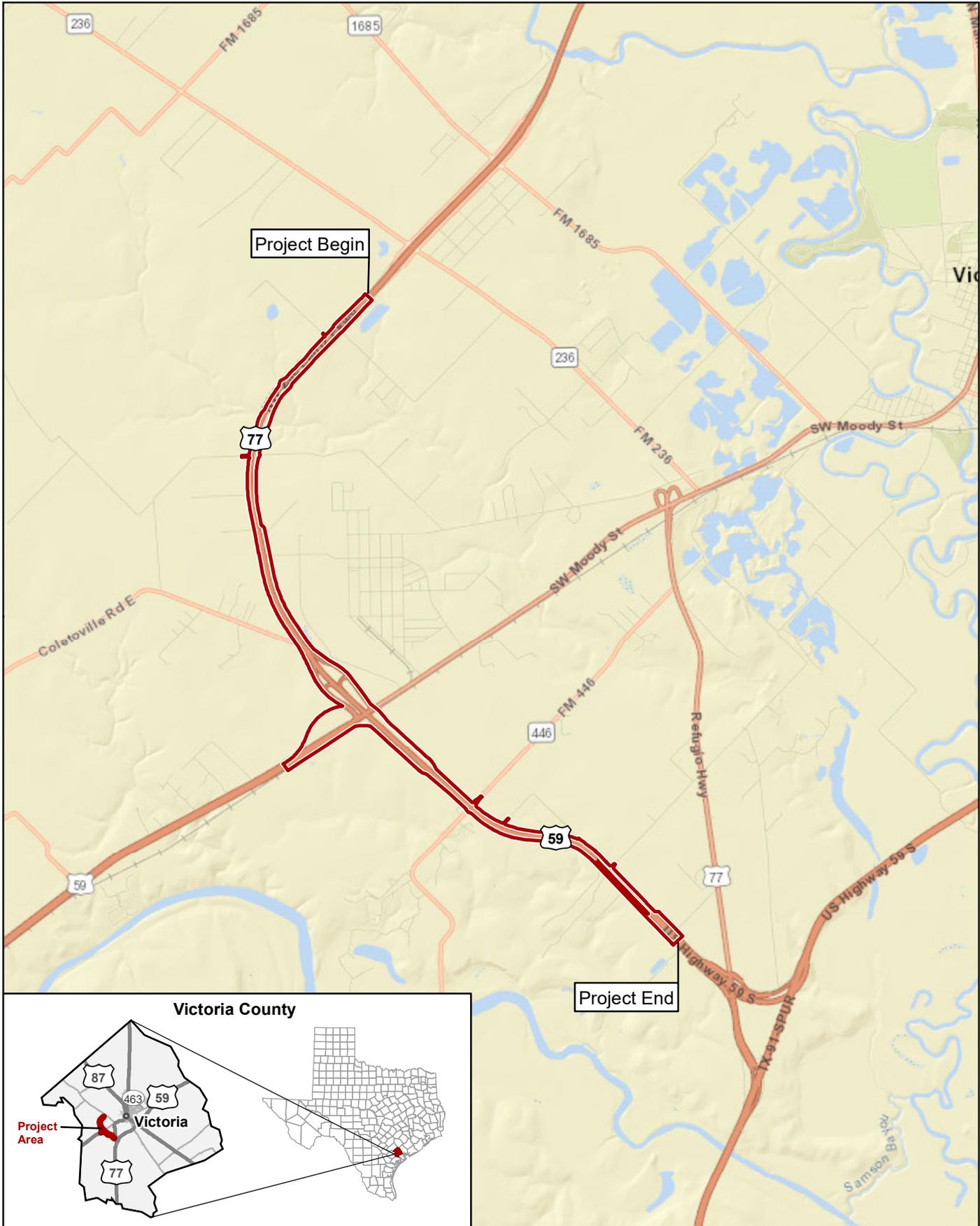
<sup>10</sup> Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). Texas Emissions Reduction Plan-  
<https://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/terp>

## References Cited

- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). October 2016. Updated Interim Guidance on Mobile Source Air Toxic Analysis in NEPA Documents. Found at: [http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air\\_quality/air\\_toxics/policy\\_and\\_guidance/msat/index.cfm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air_quality/air_toxics/policy_and_guidance/msat/index.cfm)
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). 2017. Transportation Conformity: A Basic Guide for State & Local Officials. [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ENVIRONMENT/air\\_quality/conformity/2017\\_guide/guide06.cfm](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ENVIRONMENT/air_quality/conformity/2017_guide/guide06.cfm)
- Health Effects Institute, Air Toxics Review Panel. October 2016. Mobile-Source Air Toxics: A Critical Review of the Literature on Exposure and Health Effects. Found at: [www.healtheffects.org/publication/mobile-source-air-toxics-critical-review-literature-exposure-and-health-effects](http://www.healtheffects.org/publication/mobile-source-air-toxics-critical-review-literature-exposure-and-health-effects).
- Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). Texas Emissions Reduction Plan (TERP). Found at: [www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/terp/](http://www.tceq.texas.gov/airquality/terp/).
- Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). May 2017. Environmental Handbook for Air Quality.
- Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). August 2020. Guidance for Preparing Air Quality Statements.

## APPENDIX

Figure 1 - Project Location



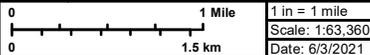
**Figure 1.**  
**Project Location (Road Base)**

US 59 and US 77 Widening Project

 Project Location



CSJ: 0088-05-096, 2350-01-056



Basemap Source: Esri (2021)