

Section 1: Summary of Agency and Public Meetings

Purpose of the Meetings

The purpose of the agency and public meetings was to present the evaluation and analysis process for the Reasonable Alternatives, to present the Proposed Recommended Alternative for the proposed project, and to receive comments. The meetings were the fourth in a series of agency and public meetings since initiation of the Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed project.

Agency Meeting Summary

Wednesday, April 22, 2015

TxDOT Houston District, 7600 Washington Avenue, Houston, Texas 77007

Cooperating Agencies – 10:00 a.m.

Participating Agencies – 2:00 p.m.

Six invitations were mailed to cooperating agencies on March 20, 2015. No agency representatives attended the meeting for the cooperating agencies.

Twenty-one invitations were mailed to participating agencies on March 24, 2015. There were 14 individuals representing nine agencies (Airline Improvement District, Central Houston Inc., East Downtown Houston Management District, Greater East End Management District, Greater Northside Management District, Harris County Flood Control District, Harris County Toll Road Authority, Houston-Galveston Area Council, and the Houston Downtown Management District) in attendance at the meeting for the participating agencies.

TxDOT provided agency meeting attendees with an informational handout and comment form. A narrated presentation and the public meeting exhibits were displayed on a screen. A three-dimensional (3D) visualization video of the Proposed Recommended Alternative was shown. Reference materials were also available, including the North-Hardy Planning Studies, Alternatives Analysis Report (Highway Component); meeting summaries of the first three public meetings; a glossary of common terms; the Need and Purpose Statement; and the Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan.

An open discussion followed the presentation. No written comments were submitted at the meeting. All information presented at the agency meeting was the same information as was presented at the public meeting, and is described below in the discussion of the public meeting.

Copies of the agency invitations and mailing list are included in Appendix A. Copies of the sign-in sheets are included in Appendix B.

Public Meeting Summary

Thursday, April 23, 2015

Aldine Ninth Grade School, 10650 North Freeway, Houston, Texas 77037

5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 28, 2015

Houston Community College Central Campus, Learning Hub/Science Building

1300 Holman Street, Houston, Texas 77004

5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 30, 2015

Jefferson Davis High School, 1101 Quitman Street, Houston, Texas 77009

5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Meeting Notices

Legal Advertisements

- Houston Chronicle, March 24, 2015, and April 13, 2015
- Online posting of Houston Chronicle Legal Advertisement, March 24, 2015, and April 13, 2015
- La Voz, March 25, 2015, and April 19, 2015
- Defender, March 26, 2015, and April 16, 2015

TranStar Highway Signs

TxDOT Houston District used TranStar's Dynamic Messaging Signs (DMS) on I-45 to post the public meeting dates, times and locations.

Website Postings and Electronic Notifications

Meeting notices were posted on TxDOT's website at: <http://www.txdot.gov/inside-txdot/get-involved/about/hearingsmeetings.html> and on the I-45 project website at: <http://www.IH45NorthandMore.com>.

An electronic notification of the meeting was sent by TxDOT to persons who requested to be added to TxDOT's list of interested persons and to those who sent comments via the project website.

Online messaging about the public meeting:

- TxDOT Houston District Twitter postings, April 23, 2015 – May 1, 2015
- TxDOT Houston District Facebook post, April 28, 2015

Copies of the legal notices, Houston TranStar DMS messaging, website postings, and electronic notifications by TxDOT are included in Appendix C.

Mailouts

- TxDOT Houston District mailed letters to elected officials on March 20, 2015. The list of federal, state, and local elected officials is included in Appendix A.
- Postcards were mailed on April 2, 2015 to 4,922 adjacent property owners, local businesses, city, state, and federal officials, homeowner associations, and local organizations and institutions. The English/Spanish notice included the meeting time, locations and purpose of the meeting, and a description of the proposed project. The postcard and mailing list are included in Appendix A.

Other Media

The following articles, editorials, and blog posts were published about the public meeting and the project:

- Houston Business Journal “15 Houston road projects needed to improve state’s economy,” April 17, 2015
- Houston Public Media “TxDOT releases plans on major redesign of I-45 in downtown Houston,” April 22, 2015
- Click2Houston “TxDOT to host public meeting on revamping North Freeway,” April 22, 2015
- Houston Chronicle “I-45 would move, sink and shift from Pierce Elevated in TxDOT plan,” April 22, 2015
- Dallas Morning News “\$6 billion highway plan has Houston’s I-45 congestion in cross hairs,” April 23, 2015
- ABC13 Houston “Final proposal would change look of north freeway,” April 23, 2015
- Swamplot “The 5 wackiest images from TxDOT’s plans to reroute I-45 and abandon the Pierce Elevated,” April 23, 2015
- Click2Houston “I-45 major overhaul plan unveiled,” April 24, 2015
- Houston Chronicle | Gray Matters “Imagine the Pierce Elevated as a park,” April 26, 2015
- Houston Chronicle | The Highwayman “I-45 mega-project meetings move to Midtown Tuesday,” April 28, 2015
- Houston Chronicle | Editorial “Pierce-redux,” April 28, 2015
- Northeast News “TxDOT plans massive changes to I-45,” April 28, 2015
- Houston Chronicle | Gray Matters “What would it take to turn Pierce Elevated into Pierce Skypark?” April 29, 2015
- Houston Public Media “TxDOT shares plans to remake I-45, tear down Pierce Elevated in downtown Houston,” April 29, 2015

- Houston Chronicle “TxDOT releases 3D video of I-45/North Houston Highway improvement plan,” April 30, 2015
- Houston Chronicle | The Highwayman “Final I-45 meeting Thursday, but years of work ahead,” April 30, 2015
- Purple City “Making things worse,” April 30, 2015
- Houston Business Journal “Houston real estate heavyweights all for downtown highway transformation,” April 30, 2015
- Houston Chronicle “Massive I-45 project would remove Pierce Elevated, add lanes,” May 1, 2015
- Swamplot, “Wacky TxDOT I-45 Redo Renderings Now Available in Mind-Boggling Video Format,” May 1, 2015
- Houston Chronicle | Gray Matters “Tear down the Pierce Elevated. Make it Pierce Promenade,” May 3, 2015
- Houston Chronicle | Opportunity Urbanist “Thoughts on TxDOT’s ambitious new plan for I45N,” May 3, 2015
- Houston Matters | News 88.7 broadcast, May 4, 2015
- Houston Chronicle | The Highwayman “Meetings over, but discussion of I-45 project continues,” May 4, 2015
- Rice | Kinder Institute for Urban Research “Pierce Elevated May Go Back to the Future,” May 4, 2015
- Houston Matters “TxDOT floats ideas for rerouting I-45 through downtown Houston,” May 4, 2015
- Citylab “Houston’s Urban Interstate Debate: Transform, or Tear Down?” May 7, 2015
- OffCite “Ten major changes in the plans to expand I-45 you might not know about,” May 30, 2015
- ABC13 Houston “Plans for major facelift of I-45 near downtown Houston,” June 2, 2015

Additional online messaging about the public meeting not coordinated by TxDOT:

- Gail Delaughter, Houston Public Media, Twitter postings, April 22, 2015 – May 4, 2015
- Dug Begley, Houston Chronicle, Twitter postings, April 22, 2015 – April 30, 2015
- Houston Matters, Twitter post, April 23, 2015
- American Institute of Architects (AIA) Houston Newsletter, May 15, 2015

Copies of the articles, editorials, blog posts and additional online messaging are included in Appendix D.

Attendance

A total of 540 people registered their attendance at the public meeting. Of these, the nightly counts for the public, media, and elected officials are listed below:

April 23, 2015		April 28, 2015		April 30, 2015	
Public	106	Public	146	Public	273
Media	2	Media	3	Media	3
Elected Officials	1	Elected Officials	2	Elected Officials	4

Copies of the sign-in sheets are included in Appendix B.

Meeting Format

The public meeting was an open house from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Project team members were readily available to answer questions. The open house format allowed attendees to move freely between the narrated presentation and displayed exhibits to discuss project details with the project team. Spanish-language project team members were available to accommodate the communication needs of Spanish-speaking individuals, and some meeting materials were provided in Spanish. The presentation, handout, and exhibits were posted on the project website prior to the public meeting. Following the April 30, 2015 meeting, the 3D visualization video and interactive map were posted on the project website.

Photographs of the meetings are included in Appendix E.

Handouts

A bilingual English and Spanish handout included an agenda, the purpose of the project, a description of the proposed project, a map of the project area, the alternatives evaluation process, a description of the proposed recommended alternative, and information on how to provide comments on the project. Media packets were also made available to members of the media present at the meeting. A copy of the handout is included in Appendix F.

Opportunities for Public Comment

TxDOT provided comment forms for the public to submit written comments during or after the meeting. All attendees were informed that written comments could also be submitted after the meeting via mail, email, or on the project website by the end of the comment period (May 31, 2015). TxDOT contact information was provided at the meeting and in the newspaper notices published prior to the meeting. A copy of the comment form is included in Appendix F.

Presentation

The public meeting included a narrated presentation describing the need for and purpose of the project, the study process, the proposed recommended alternative, and how to provide comments.

The presentation lasted about 13 minutes, and at the conclusion, attendees were encouraged to view the exhibits and talk with the project team. The presentation was in English, and paper copies of the Spanish-language translation were available. Copies of the English and Spanish presentations are included in Appendix F.

Stations

Stations were located throughout the open house area where the public could view or obtain information. Two video monitors showed 3D visualization videos of the proposed design concept for Segment 3. There was also a station for members of the public to use a computer program to locate their home or business in relation to the proposed project. Also at the meeting were tables with environmental information; Section 106 information; references (past studies, Need and Purpose Statement, Agency Coordination and Public Involvement Plan, glossary of common terms, Council on Environmental Quality's Citizen's Guide to NEPA, and previous public meeting summary reports); and right-of-way information. Tables were staffed by project team members. Personnel from the TxDOT Right of Way Division were present to answer questions about land acquisition and the relocation assistance process. TxDOT Right of Way Division's "Relocation Assistance" and "State Purchase of Right of Way," in both English and Spanish, were available for the public. These booklets are also available on the project website and are included in Appendix F.

Exhibits

Exhibits were displayed on easels and are included in Appendix G. In addition to the sign-in table and welcome board, the following exhibits were on display during the public meeting:

- Thank You For Your Support and How to Comment
- Purpose of the 4th Public Meeting
- Project Team
- North-Hardy Corridor Studies History
- What is an EIS?
- Alternatives Screening Process
- Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Process and Timeline
- Environmental Constraints Map from Beltway 8 to Crosstimbers Street
- Environmental Constraints Map from Crosstimbers Street to South of Downtown
- Evaluation Criteria: Segments 1, 2, and 3
- The Section 106 Process
- Proposed Recommended Alternative Conceptual Roadway Layouts and Typical Sections (for Segments 1, 2, and 3)
- 3D Visualization Video

Comments Received

The deadline for submitting public comments was May 31, 2015. Because the deadline was on a Sunday, TxDOT accepted comments after the published deadline date. Seven comments received after the May 31, 2015 deadline were included in the public meeting record. Following is a summary of the origin of public comments included in this report:

- 85 comment forms received at the public meeting
- 15 written comments mailed to TxDOT
- 141 emails submitted to TxDOT
- 263 comments submitted on the project website

Copies of the comments are included in Appendix H.