

Appendix B
State and Federal Resource Agency Webinar Summary

Loop 9 Resource Agency Webinar Summary

Date: March 27, 2013 **Time:** 1:30 PM – 2:30 PM

Project: Loop 9 Southeast

Location: WebEx Online Meeting Hosted by NCTCOG

Purpose: Provide Resource Agencies with a Loop 9 Status Update and Opportunity for Input

Attendees: Debra Griffin, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Rhonda Smith, EPA
John MacFarlane, EPA
Linda Henderson, Texas Historical Commission (THC)
Mark Denton, THC
Karen Hardin, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD)
Sean Edwards, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Darren LeBlanc, USFWS
Bruce Nolley, Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)
Doug Booher, TxDOT
Sandy Wesch, North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG)
Jeff Neal, NCTCOG
Jacob Asplund, NCTCOG
Tamara Cook, NCTCOG
Bob Best, NCTCOG
Nathan Drozd, NCTCOG
Lori Cole, Atkins
Brian Clark, Atkins
Eric Holsten, HNTB

Attachment A: Presentation/Handout (2013_03_27 Resource Agency Meeting.PDF)

Attachment B: E-mailed comments from Karen Hardin (TPWD Written Comments.PDF)

Attachment C: E-mailed comments from John MacFarlane (EPA Written Comments.PDF)

1. Presentation (see **Attachment A** for the Powerpoint presentation/handout).

- Sandy Wesch (NCTCOG) began the meeting by asking participants in the conference call to identify themselves. She then outlined the general purpose of the webinar and thanked everyone on the call for their involvement.
- Doug Booher (TxDOT) also welcomed participants to the call and thanked them for participating.
- Jeff Neal (NCTCOG) provided an overview of meeting topics: history of Loop 9, new approach to the corridor, and project status. Jeff reviewed the project history stating the project was first envisioned in 1957. The project was first added to the regional transportation plan in 1974 and has been included in every plan since. Jeff summarized the studies that have been conducted on the Loop 9 corridor. He noted the importance of the Trans-Texas Corridor-35 (TTC-35) study in changing the direction of the project in the mid-2000s. He also highlighted the impacts of the decision to adopt the TTC-35 no build alternative and the recommendations of the NCTCOG Regional Outer Loop Corridor Feasibility Study (ROL-CFS) on the development of a new vision for Loop 9.

- Jeff continued with a description of the project as it was previously envisioned for the Loop 9 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Jeff indicated that traffic volume projections for the corridor were much lower in Mobility 2035 than in Mobility 2030. He listed a number of reasons for the drop in projected traffic. He indicated that the Loop 9 project is still important to the region to improve connectivity, reduce travel times, and encourage economic development. Jeff noted that \$45 billion worth of projects were removed from the metropolitan transportation plan (MTP) for Mobility 2035, including most of the Regional Outer Loop.
- Sandy proceeded with a description of the current corridor feasibility study area. She explained that the portion of Loop 9 between US 67 and US 287 was removed based on the ROL-CFS. She said that the traffic movement could be served through improvements to US 67 and US 287, instead of a new location greenfield corridor. Sandy outlined the goals of the study, noting that the decisions are all appropriate to make prior to initiating a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) study. She reiterated that the Loop 9 project will improve connectivity and foster economic development.
- Sandy explained that the current effort to update the vision for the corridor uses data collected during previous studies and new information to refine and improve on the planned facility. Sandy noted that Atkins is working diligently on the engineering and right-of-way analysis for the Loop 9 corridor. Sandy emphasized that the highest priority section based on traffic projections is between US 67 and IH 45. She said that one positive outcome of the economic crisis is that the slow-down of development in the area so the conditions in the corridor have not dramatically changed in recent years. She highlighted that the study is following the Planning and Environmental Linkages methodology which should expedite the preparation of one of more NEPA studies for the high-priority section(s) of the corridor.
- Sandy listed the elements of the new Loop 9 vision. She discussed the narrower typical right-of-way, especially the smaller footprint near interchanges. Sandy noted that the facility is being planned for a 50-year horizon, not just the typical 25-year horizon used in the MTP. She emphasized that the facility would be staged and frontage roads and/or main lanes would be constructed as they became warranted, rather than all at once. She stated that the goal was to establish a transportation corridor that will preserve space to meet future mobility needs. Sandy briefly discussed the potential to use tolled bridges and innovative financing to fund some improvements along the Loop 9 corridor. Sandy listed the types of decisions that would be made based on the current study: type of facility, impacts to nearby facilities, corridor alignment, logical termini, section prioritization, and staging.
- Sandy summarized the efforts to date on the project. She explained that the notice of intent (NOI) for the Loop 9 project was rescinded to provide a clean break with previous studies and to clear the way for future NEPA studies on high-priority sections of the corridor. She highlighted the involvement of county and city officials and staff in the dozens of interviews conducted by Atkins. She noted that travel demand modeling by NCTCOG to support phasing and prioritization decisions about the project was nearing completion. Sandy itemized the next steps for the project: continued refinement of corridor alignments, analysis of travel demand modeling results, consultation with stakeholders along the corridor, and holding a meeting to inform and receive input from the general public.

2. Questions/Comments

- Mark Denton (THC) asked if the TxDOT – Environmental Affairs Division (ENV) would be involved in the review process for Loop 9?
 - Doug Booher answered that yes TxDOT – ENV would be participating in the process.

- Mark stated he had scanned the THC database. In 2007, the THC issued an antiquities permit to GeoMarine for the project but had not received a report. And about a year ago, an extension was requested. Is the permit needed?
 - Lori Cole (Atkins) answered that yes a permit extension was requested when it was thought that the DEIS would be moving forward. The permit needs to be cancelled. Future NEPA studies would include archeological surveys and permits would need to be requested as needed.
- Mark stated that since the NOI was rescinded, no right-of-way was being purchased.
 - Bruce Nolley (TxDOT) stated that about 10 acres had been acquired. Sandy mentioned that a separate NEPA document had been prepared to allow for the acquisition of the 10 acres as a hardship acquisition.
- John MacFarlane (EPA) asked what did the NOI (that was rescinded) list as the project and what is the difference between that project and what is being proposed now.
 - Sandy replied the project for the original Loop 9 were from IH 20 to US 287 and the proposed project was a six-lane tollway. The new concept is for a staged facility with narrower right-of-way and slightly shorter limits (US 67 rather than US 287). Doug also added the previous Loop 9 project would have been built all at once; the current vision is to build the initial facility over a 10 to 15 year time frame.
- John asked in another NOI would be issued after the feasibility study and would the NOI be for a Tier 1 document.
 - Doug replied the feasibility study would function as a Tier 1 document because it was following the Planning and Environmental Linkage process. He stated that NEPA studies would be conducted for each section of the corridor as necessary based on the overall vision recommended by the corridor feasibility study.
- John asked about the ability to build the ultimate facility 40 or 50 years from now under a NEPA document.
 - Doug stated that as part of the regional planning process, NCTCOG continual looks and assess transportation needs. Sandy confirmed that NCTCOG updates the financially constrained regional transportation plan every four years. She also added that other corridors have been handled similarly. The thought is to get environmental clearance of the ultimate right-of-way footprint needed but only build what is justified within the horizon year of the transportation plan. This would require addition environmental document prior to building the mainlanes. For example, the environmental document for the SH 170 corridor near the Texas Motor Speedway covered the entire project but only the frontage roadway were built. Now 20 plus years later, a new environmental document was being developed to allow construction of the mainlanes.
- John asked if cooperating agencies were being requested at this time.
 - Sandy replied no; that would occur during the NEPA process for each of the projects as determined by the feasibility study. The feasibility study will help determine the logical termini for the segments of independent utility. The cooperating agencies would likely vary by segment. Also, the study would help determine what type of NEPA document was required (i.e., EIS or environmental assessment).

- Karen Hardin (TPWD) stated that the project should consider longer spans over perennial waters to help minimize hydrologic impacts and accommodate terrestrial wildlife. She also mentioned the need for mussel surveys and looking for updates to the state threatened and endangered species lists.
 - Bruce confirmed that TxDOT will continue to avoid impacts to mussels wherever possible and noted that Dallas District staff had recently attended a training session about mussels.

- John mentioned that on the Loop 9 project, the three major resources of concern for EPA were environmental justice, wetlands/water quality, and air quality.
 - Sandy thanked him for the feedback.

- Sean Edwards (USFWS) requested a copy of the presentation.
 - Sandy committed to sending him a copy following the conclusion of the webinar.

LOOP 9 CORRIDOR FEASIBILITY STUDY

3/27/2013

Topics

2

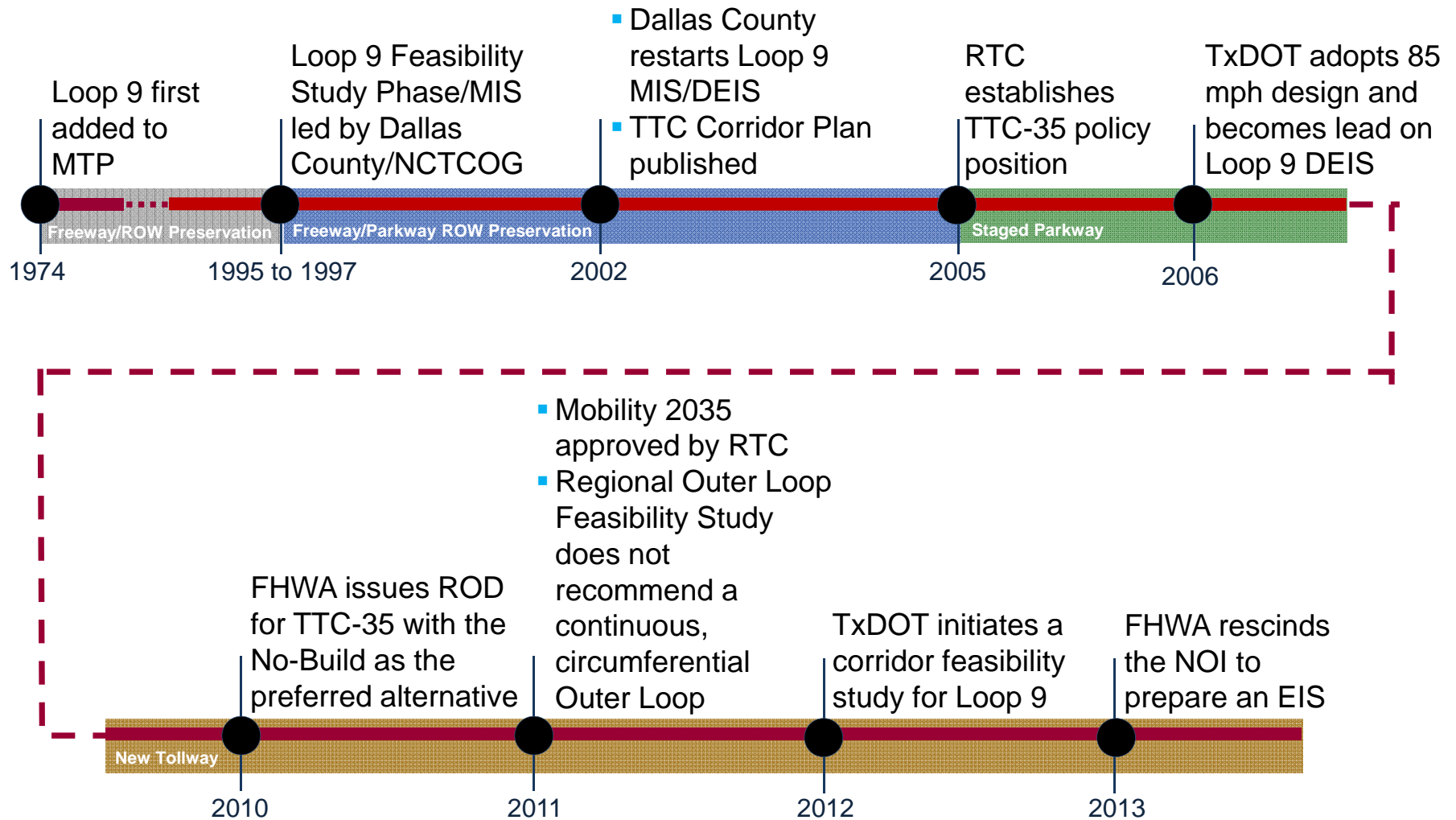
- Introduction
- Evolution of Loop 9
- New Approach
- Options for Moving Forward
- Suggested Next Steps

EVOLUTION OF LOOP 9



Evolution of Loop 9

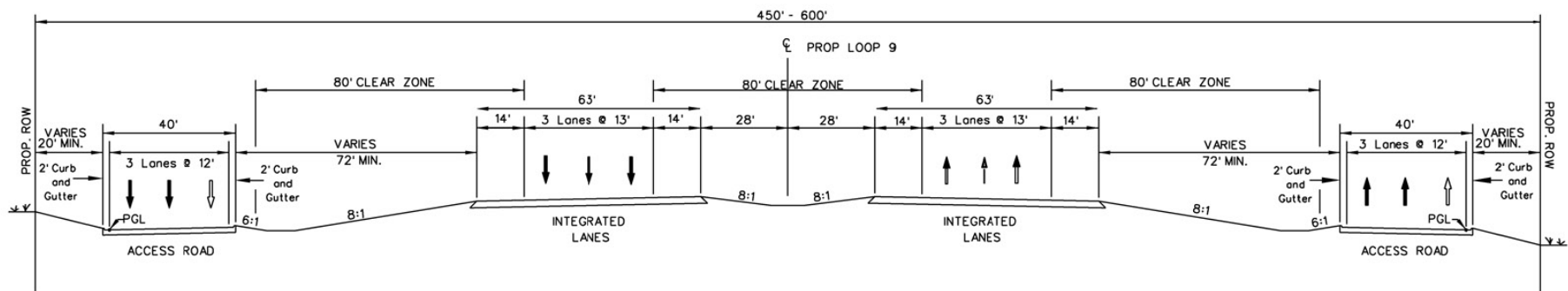
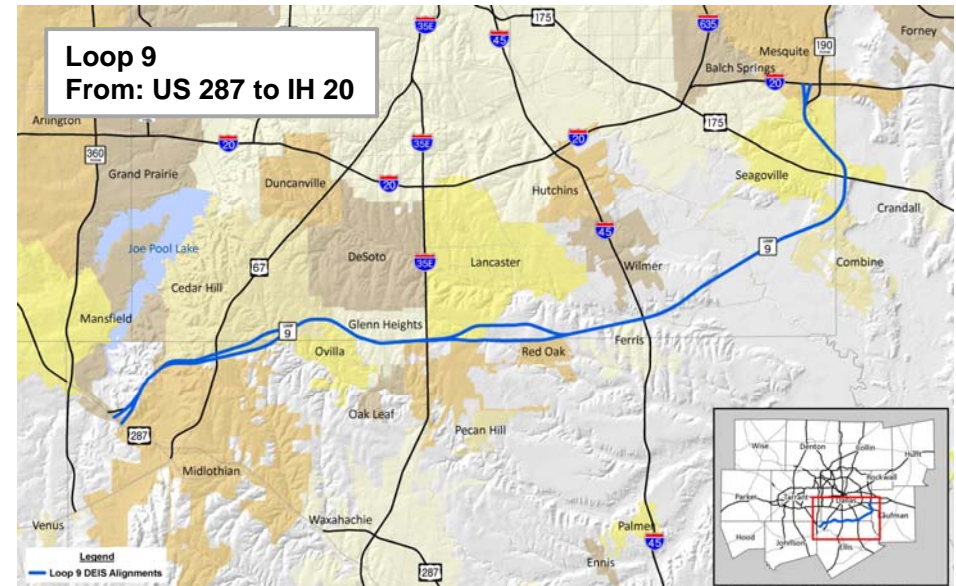
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Scope of Loop 9 DEIS

5

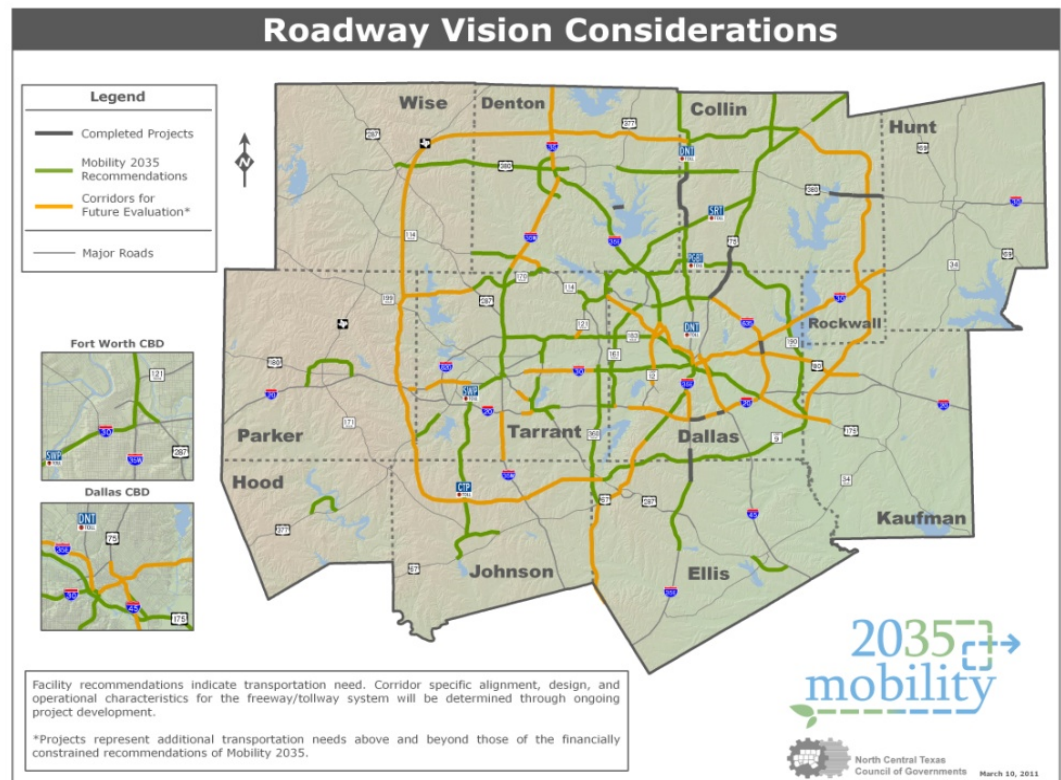
- 44 miles long
- Proposed 450 to 600-foot right-of-way
- 85 mph design speed
- Cost: \$5.7 billion



Review of 2035 Traffic Projections

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- Based on *Mobility 2035*, estimated traffic volumes were less than half of the previously projected volumes based on *Mobility 2030*
- Reasons for low projected traffic on Loop 9
 - ▣ Toll
 - ▣ Lack of Regional Outer Loop to the west
 - ▣ Lack of connection to statewide TTC-35
 - ▣ Revised regional demographics
 - ▣ Changes to the travel model network
 - ▣ New travel model and MPA boundary



But...

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- There still is a need for a east-west facility in South Dallas/North Ellis Counties to provide:
 - ▣ Connectivity
 - ▣ Travel time savings
 - ▣ Potential economic development opportunities

CORRIDOR FEASIBILITY STUDY

Study Area



Goals of the Study

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- Solicit input from local and community leaders on specific transportation facility needs
- Determine the transportation problems within the study area
- Identify a corridor where transportation projects could be developed to address area problems
- Identify specific transportation projects to advance in the corridor while considering the potential for impacts on the natural, socio-economic, and cultural environments
- Recommend a program of transportation projects to advance by priority within the corridor as funding becomes available

Corridor Feasibility Study

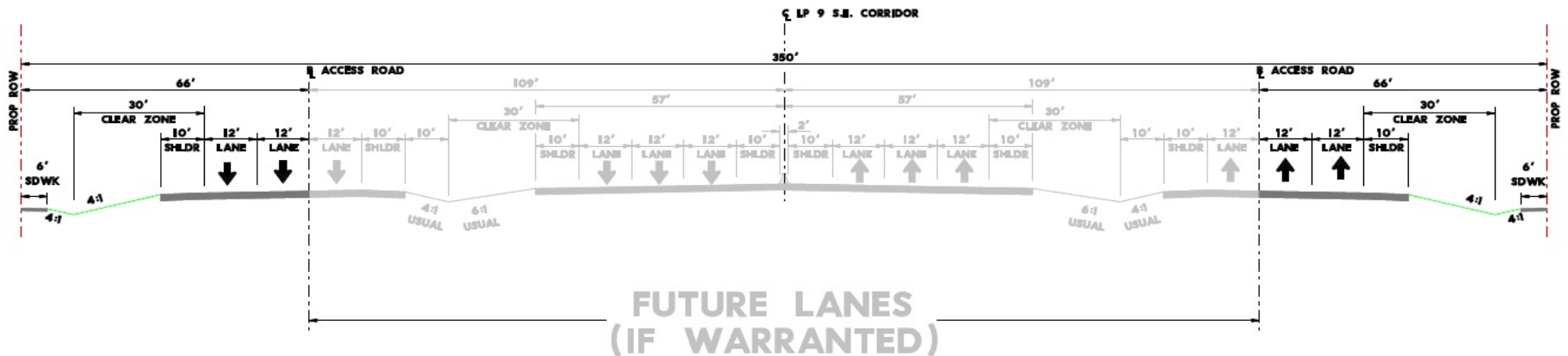
11

- Establish new vision
- Use information developed for the DEIS
- Conduct engineering/right-of-way studies for priority sections
- Emphasis on the section with the highest traffic volumes (from US 67 to IH 45) and adjacent development potential
- Follow Planning and Environmental Linkages methodology

Establish New Vision

12

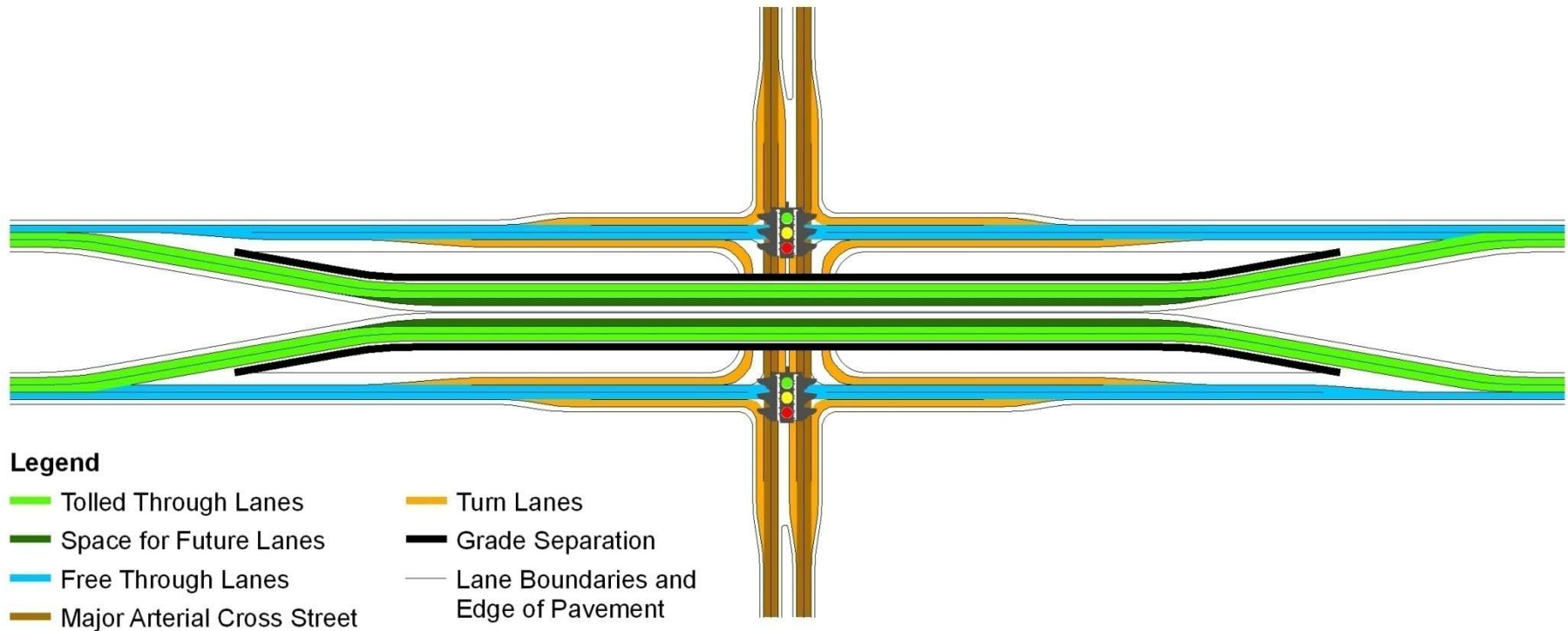
- Elements to include:
 - ▣ Narrower right-of-way (350 feet vs. 600 feet)
 - ▣ Lower design speed (70 mph vs. 85 mph)
 - ▣ Context sensitive solutions
 - ▣ Access management
 - ▣ Flexibility to convert to a full, controlled access facility, if needed



New Potential Design

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- Could allow for innovative finance approach by including toll bridges at cross streets



Outcome

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- What type of facility is needed
- Determine effect to other planned transportation facilities
- Corridor alignment
- Logical termini
- Prioritization based on traffic, local needs, and funding
- Staging (i.e., construction vs. right-of-way preservation)

PROJECT STATUS



Efforts to Date

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- NOI to prepare an EIS rescinded March 20, 2013
- Corridor alignments and data from preliminary DEIS are being used and updated
- Study team has interviewed staff and elected officials from all local governments in the corridor
- Refinement of corridor alignments is underway
- Travel demand modeling nearing completion

Future Efforts

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- Continue efforts to refine the corridor alignment(s) based on community comments
- Analyze travel demand modeling data to help determine the type of roadway needed, location, and staging
- Meetings with other stakeholders (e.g., IIPOD, quarries, landfill)
- Public meeting

COMMENTS & QUESTIONS

From: Karen Hardin <Karen.Hardin@tpwd.state.tx.us>
Sent: Thursday, March 28, 2013 12:52 PM
To: Sandy Wesch
Subject: RE: Loop 9 Resource Agency Meeting - Presentation

Hi Sandy,

I thought I would write down my informal comments that I suggested at the webinar for consideration during project planning and I also added a few more. I would suggest having resource agencies solicited for scoping comments for the feasibility study if this hasn't already happened. The comments may be very similar, but that way there is documentation specific to the study and not just from the old DEIS.

1) At stream or drainage crossings consider wildlife use and movement of aquatic and terrestrial species within the stream/riparian corridor. Consider bridge spans rather than culverts where feasible. Consider larger bridge span lengths and heights to accommodate fluvial geomorphological changes of streams, to allow for terrestrial species crossing under bridges, and to allow for future recreation trails under bridges.

2) Consider the dry land substrate under bridges usable by wildlife and consider using artificial ledges in culverts for terrestrial species. In bridge and culvert areas, consider avoiding riprap and using wildlife friendly stabilization practices such as burying rip rap, back-filled with topsoil and planted with native vegetation or using biotechnical streambank stabilization methods that use live native vegetation or a combination of vegetative and structural materials.

3) Consider potential impacts to state-listed and common native mussels.

4) Contact the TPWD Texas Natural Diversity Database at txnodd@tpwd.state.tx.us for known occurrences of rare resources and avoid impacts to rare resources. This database is continually updated, so TPWD recommends inquiries of TXNDD information be obtained periodically over a long-term project, such as annually.

5) TPWD also recommends annually checking the status of listed species for the project counties in case the information changes. The TPWD county lists of rare and state-threatened species can be found at http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/land/maps/gis/ris/endangered_species/. TPWD recommends avoiding disturbance to habitats suitable for state-listed species.

6) Consider coordinating with local law enforcement for information regarding wildlife/vehicle collisions or coordinate with TxDOT/county/city road crews for information on areas of abundant road kills of small animals. Project design may be able to incorporate wildlife crossings in areas of concentrated wildlife use, if such areas are known ahead of time.

I enjoyed the webinar/conference call format for the meeting as it prevents long drive times for such a short, but informative meeting. I like that we also have the presentation to save to our computers so that we can reference it if we can't recall everything presented and it gives a good history/timeline of the project.

Thanks,

Karen Hardin
Wildlife Division - Habitat Assessment Program
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
4200 Smith School Road
Austin, TX 78744

(903) 322-5001
f (903) 322-6018

From: Sandy Wesch [<mailto:SWesch@nctcog.org>]
Sent: Wednesday, March 27, 2013 7:16 AM
To: Bruce Nolley; Tracy Hill (Tracy.Hill@atkinsglobal.com); Barnes, Callie L; Doug Booher (DBOOHER@txdot.gov); Lindsey Kimmitt; 'Cole, Lori L'; 'Clark, Brian C'; 'Griffin.debra@Epa.gov'; 'Linda.Henderson@thc.state.tx.us'; 'Mark.Denton@thc.state.tx.us'; Karen Hardin; 'leblanc@fws.gov'; 'sean_edwards@fws.gov'; 'eric.j.dephouse@usace.army.mil'; 'gracey.gray@tceq.texas.gov'; 'darren_LeBlanc@fws.gov'; 'smith.rhonda@epa.gov'; 'macfarlane.john@epa.gov'; 'Eric Holsten'
Cc: Jeffrey Neal; Jacob Asplund; Tamara Cook; Chad Edwards; Bob Best
Subject: Loop 9 Resource Agency Meeting - Presentation

In case there are any technical issues with the Loop 9 webex meeting this afternoon (1:30 pm), attached is a copy of the presentation.

And just a reminder, you will need to log into the meeting both via the internet (<https://nctcog.webex.com/nctcog/j.php?ED=225846357&UID=1396261947&RT=MiM3>, WebEx Meeting Number: 575 292 974) and call in (1-800-250-3900, PIN 442318#) to participate in the discussion.

Thanks!

Sandy Wesch, P.E., AICP
Project Engineer
North Central Texas Council of Governments
616 Six Flags Drive, Arlington, Texas 76011
Phone 817.704.5632 | Fax 817.640.3028
swesch@nctcog.org

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From: MacFarlane, John <MacFarlane.John@epa.gov>
Sent: Thursday, April 04, 2013 3:04 PM
To: Sandy Wesch; Doug Booher; Jeffrey Neal
Subject: RE: Loop 9 Resource Agency Meeting - Summary

All,

Attached is information regarding the EPA's Regional Ecological Assessment Protocol. This data may assist you in avoiding area of high ecological value and integrity. The first link is the report explaining REAP and the 2nd link is the GIS data. Just search "REAP".

Report

<http://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyNET.exe/P100BU04.txt?ZyActionD=ZyDocument&Client=EPA&Index=2011%20Thru%202015%7C1995%20Thru%201999%7C1981%20Thru%201985%7C2006%20Thru%202010%7C1991%20Thru%201994%7C1976%20Thru%201980%7C2000%20Thru%202005%7C1986%20Thru%201990%7CPrior%20to%201976%7CHardcopy%20Publications&Docs=&Query=reap%20region%2006&Time=&EndTime=&SearchMethod=2&TocRestrict=n&Toc=&TocEntry=&QField=&QFieldYear=&QFieldMonth=&QFieldDay=&UseQField=&IntQFieldOp=0&ExtQFieldOp=0&XmlQuery=&File=D%3A%5CZYFILES%5CINDEX%20DATA%5C11THRU15%5CTXT%5C00000000%5CP100BU04.txt&User=ANONYMOUS&Password=anonymous&SortMethod=h%7C-&MaximumDocuments=15&FuzzyDegree=0&ImageQuality=r85g16/r85g16/x150y150g16/i500&Display=hpfr&DefSeekPage=x&SearchBack=ZyActionL&Back=ZyActionS&BackDesc=Results%20page&MaximumPages=1&ZyEntry=1&SeekPage=x>

GIS Data

<https://edg.epa.gov/metadata/catalog/main/home.page>

Thank you,
John MacFarlane
NEPA Specialist
Office of Planning and Coordination (6EN-XP)
U.S. EPA Region 6
1445 Ross Ave, Dallas, TX 75202
214-665-7491

From: Jacob Asplund [<mailto:JAsplund@nctcog.org>]
Sent: Thursday, April 04, 2013 1:51 PM
To: Parrish, Sharon; Gilmore, Cathy; Honker, William; Griffin, Debra; Osowski, Sharon; melanie.aldana@tceq.texas.gov; Linda.Henderson@thc.state.tx.us; Mark.Denton@thc.state.tx.us; brett.johnson@tpwd.state.tx.us; karen.hardin@tpwd.state.tx.us; kevin.mote@tpwd.state.tx.us; jared.laing@tpwd.state.tx.us; david.holdermann@tpwd.state.tx.us; JoAnn.M.Duman@swd02.usace.army.mil; Barry.G.Osborn@usace.army.mil; darren_LeBlanc@fws.gov; tom_cloud@fws.gov; sean_edwards@fws.gov; sidney_puder@fws.gov; 'eric.j.dephouse@usace.army.mil'; 'gracey.gray@tceq.texas.gov'; Smith, Rhonda; MacFarlane, John
Cc: Clark, Brian C; Jeffrey Neal; Sandy Wesch; Tamara Cook; Doug Booher; Lindsey Kimmitt; Eric Holsten; Barnes, Callie L; Cole, Lori L; Hill, Tracy L; Bruce Nolley
Subject: Loop 9 Resource Agency Meeting - Summary

Greetings,

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Loop 9 Resource Agency Webinar on March 27th!

For everyone who was unable to attend, here is our draft summary of the meeting and a copy of the presentation. If, based on reading these materials, you'd like to provide input about the Loop 9 Corridor Feasibility Study process or the Loop 9 project itself, we would welcome your comments.

For everyone who joined in, please let me know if you have any suggested revisions or corrections to the meeting summary. We would also welcome additional comments about the study process and/or the Loop 9 project.

We'd like to receive any comments, corrections, or suggestions by Friday, April 11.

Sincerely,

Jacob Asplund

Transportation Planner

North Central Texas Council of Governments

616 Six Flags Drive, Arlington, Texas 76011

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WebEx Meeting Number: 575 292 974) and call in (1-800-250-3900, PIN 442318#) to participate in the discussion.

Thanks!

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