NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY AND PUBLIC HEARING
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR
INTERSTATE HIGHWAY (IH) 35E: FROM FM 2181 TO US 380

CSJs: 0195-03-050, 0195-03-071, 0196-01-056, 0196-01-074, 0195-03-075

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) have prepared a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed expansion of IH 35E and will hold a Public Hearing to discuss the proposed IH 35E mainlane improvements and construction of High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV)/Managed lanes with concurrent flow from Farm-to-Market Road (FM) 2181 to United States Highway (US) 380 in Denton County, Texas. The term concurrent indicates that travel along the HOV/Managed lane would be in the same direction as the mainlanes of the facility. The proposed project is approximately 11 miles in length and travels through the Cities of Corinth and Denton. The purpose of the Public Hearing is to discuss the social, economic, and environmental effects of the proposed project. The Public Hearing will be held on:

Thursday, October 20, 2011
6:00 pm – Open House
7:00 pm – Public Hearing
University of North Texas Gateway Center
Gateway Ballroom
801 North Texas Boulevard
Denton, TX 76201

IH 35E is an essential element of the local and regional transportation system. Within the project area, IH 35E functions as an interstate highway, a major arterial, and as an important regional commuter route through the Cities of Corinth and Denton. The purpose of the proposed project is to address transportation needs by increasing capacity, managing traffic congestion, improving mobility, and improving roadway deficiencies through the project corridor. The proposed project would enhance the regional transportation system and the local areas through which it traverses.

The existing IH 35E facility, from the southern project terminus (FM 2181) to approximately 0.4-mile south of Corinth Parkway, consists of six mainlanes (three 12-foot (ft) lanes in each direction). From this point, IH 35E narrows to four mainlanes (two 12-ft lanes in each direction) extending to the northern project terminus at US 380 and includes the portion of IH 35W south of the IH 35E/IH 35W interchange. The existing mainlanes are separated by concrete traffic barriers (CTB), grass medians and/or tube rail barriers throughout the project length. Along IH 35E, the outside mainlane shoulders are generally 10 ft wide; the inside mainlane shoulders generally range from four to 14 ft at the southern and northern ends of the project corridor, and zero to four ft throughout the middle area of the project corridor. Along IH 35W the outside shoulders are approximately 10 ft wide, and the inside shoulders generally range from four to six ft wide. The existing IH 35E facility generally has two 12-ft frontage road lanes running in both the north and south directions. The existing right-of-way (ROW) width of IH 35E varies from approximately 200 to 574 ft.

The proposed IH 35E improvements include the addition of mainlanes, frontage road lanes, and Managed/High Occupancy Vehicle-Concurrent Flow (MHOV-C) lanes within the project limits. The proposed IH 35E improvements would consist of three to four mainlanes in each direction from FM 2181 to the IH 35E/IH 35W interchange, and five mainlanes in each direction from the interchange north to US 380. The proposed project also includes a portion of IH 35W south of the interchange with three mainlanes in each direction. The typical mainlane width is 12 ft throughout the project limits. The typical mainlane outside shoulder width is 10 ft and the typical inside shoulder width varies from 10 to 11 ft. Frontage roads vary from two to four continuous lanes in each direction throughout the project limits and consist of 11- foot wide inside lane(s) and a 14-foot wide outside lane (excluding gutter) for shared use by bicycles and vehicles. Cross streets and frontage roads would include 6-foot sidewalks adjacent to the roadway to accommodate for pedestrian travel. The proposed concurrent MHOV-C lanes would be 12 ft wide, varying from two lanes in each direction (from FM 2181 to US 77 and the IH 35E/IH 35W interchange to US 380) to one in each direction (from US 77 to the IH 35E/IH 35W interchange and along IH 35W). The proposed project has no conversion of existing mainlanes into MHOV-C lanes. The typical outside HOV/Managed lane shoulder width varies from 10 to 11 ft, and the typical inside shoulder width varies from four to 10 ft throughout the project limits. The term “HOV/Managed lanes” encompasses all types of lane management strategies, including occupancy and price based lane or facility management (i.e. HOV lanes pricing by occupancy, time of day, congestion level, etc). The Concurrent HOV/Managed lanes of the proposed project would be tolled. In addition to these improvements, a proposed pedestrian bridge located between North Texas Boulevard and Bonnie Brae Street would connect UNT campus facilities on both sides of IH 35E.

The proposed IH 35E project would be constructed within a ROW width that varies from approximately 325 to 613 ft. The proposed project would require approximately 106.59 acres of new ROW and would result in approximately 57 displacements. Consistent with U.S. Department of Transportation policy, as mandated by the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 and the Uniform Relocation Act Amendments of 1987, TxDOT provides relocation resources to all displaced persons without discrimination. All property owners from whom property is needed are entitled to receive just compensation for their land and property. Just compensation is based upon the fair market value of the property. In order to assist those who are required to move from a home or business, TxDOT also provides, through its relocation assistance program, payments and services to aid in movement to a new location. Information concerning relocation services and benefits available to affected residential and commercial property owners and information about the tentative schedules for ROW acquisition and construction will be available at the Public Hearing and can also be obtained from the TxDOT Dallas District Office. TxDOT commits to utilizing Workforce Solutions to help minimize or mitigate for adverse impacts to individual employees as a result of the proposed project’s implementation. Representatives from Texas Workforce Commission will attend the Open House/Public Hearing to answer questions or present services information on behalf of Workforce Solutions.

The proposed project crosses the 100-year floodplain at the following five locations: an unnamed tributary of Hickory Creek, an unnamed tributary of Pecan Creek, a tributary of Pecan Creek, a tributary of Graveyard Slough, and a floodplain associated with Swisher Creek. These crossings are expected to impact a total of approximately 14.92 acres of floodplains. The hydraulic design for the project would be in accordance with current FHWA and TxDOT design policies. The facility would permit the conveyance of the 100-year flood, without causing significant damage to the facility, stream, or other property. The proposed project would not increase the base flood elevation to a level that would violate applicable

floodplain regulations and ordinances. The proposed project would result in the placement of temporary and permanent dredge or fill material into 11 jurisdictional waters of the U.S., including wetlands, and would require a Section 404 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Nationwide Permit (NWP) 14 Preconstruction Notification (PCN) for four of the crossings.

The proposed project would not require the use of nor substantially impair the purposes of any publicly owned land from a public park, recreation area, wildlife/waterfowl refuge, or any historic sites of national, state, or local significance.

The schematic layout showing the location and design of the proposed project, the Draft EA, and other information related to the project would be available for viewing at the Public Hearing and are available for public inspection at the City of Denton City Hall, 215 East McKinney Street, Denton, Texas 76201; the City of Corinth City Hall, 3300 Corinth Parkway, Corinth, Texas 76208; the TxDOT Denton County Area Office, 2624 West Prairie, Denton, Texas 76201; and the TxDOT Dallas District Office, 4777 East Highway 80, Mesquite, Texas 75150.

All interested persons are invited to attend this Public Hearing. Persons interested in attending the Public Hearing who have special communication or accommodation needs are encouraged to contact the TxDOT Dallas District public information officer at (214) 320-6100 at least two (2) work days prior to the Public Hearing. Because the Public Hearing will be conducted in English, requests for language interpreters or other special communication needs should also be made at least two work days prior to the Public Hearing. TxDOT will make every reasonable effort to accommodate these needs. Verbal and written comments relative to the proposed project may be presented at the Public Hearing. Written comments can also be submitted to the following address:

Robert Hall, P.W.S., CFM
TxDOT Dallas District Environmental Coordinator
P.O. Box 133067
Dallas, Texas 75313-3067

Verbal or written comments may be presented for a period of 10 days after the Public Hearing and must be postmarked by October 31, 2011 to be included as part of the official public record. The EA and schematic are available for viewing and comment throughout the public notice period and comment period. For additional information, please contact Nasser Askari, TxDOT Dallas District, via phone 214-320-6628, or fax 214-320-4470, or e-mail: Nasser.Askari@txdot.gov