



# GILLESPIE COUNTY RELIEF ROUTE PRELIMINARY REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*November 2015*



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## Introduction

The following report is intended to summarize discussions that have taken place over the past two years on the need for a Gillespie County Relief Route. This report is also intended to provide recommendations on the next steps in the planning and design of this new roadway that should be taken over the next several years.

A 10-member Relief Route Task Force has facilitated most of the discussions regarding the Relief Route. This advisory committee (see Appendix A) was appointed by the Gillespie County Commissioners Court and the City of Fredericksburg City Council. The Task Force has held monthly meetings since September, 2013. Following presentation of this report to the City Council and County Commissioners, this Task Force intends to continue working on the planning and design of the Relief Route.



## Background Information

Discussions on the need for a relief route, or highway loop, have taken place in the Gillespie County area for many years. These discussions have involved officials from the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT), Gillespie County and the City of Fredericksburg. In 1986, TXDOT approved a Minute Order supporting a bypass route and identifying the role of the City and County in facilitating the development of this roadway. This Minute Order was cancelled after the City and County did not accept the terms of the order.

There have also been a number of public presentations on various designs and locations for this roadway. These meetings and discussions have not been successful in reaching final decisions on the route location, funding and other project details due to a number of reasons. These include the impact that the new roadway may have to property owners along the route, concerns about the design plans, highway access restrictions and funding arrangements.



As traffic volumes on U.S. Highway 290 and congestion in downtown Fredericksburg have continued to increase, the need for a Relief Route has become a critical safety issue for the community. With this in mind, the City, County and a number of local organizations have adopted resolutions supporting the need to study the feasibility of constructing a new State highway that would provide an alternate route for traffic around the downtown area. These resolutions of support are included as Appendix B.

Following adoption of these resolutions, Gillespie County Commissioners, and the City of Fredericksburg City Council appointed the 10-member Relief Route Task Force in 2013. This Task Force established its mission as “to identify the need and develop a viable solution for a Fredericksburg traffic relief route in order that our citizens may discern true information, which may ultimately lead to a vote on this important community topic.”

## Recent Reports

During some 25 meetings over the past two years, the Task Force has reviewed and considered an assortment of different information and studies. One of the first reports considered was prepared by the City's previous Acting Public Works Director, Walter Ragsdale, P.E. Mr. Ragsdale has an extensive traffic planning and design background in the State of Texas. He reviewed the current and projected traffic flows on U.S. Highway 290 in Fredericksburg's downtown area and determined that "within 5-6 years the average daily traffic flow (will) exceed capacity." He related several outcomes that would occur when this capacity is exceeded including (1) crash rates will increase for both vehicles and pedestrians; (2) longer emergency response times will occur; (3) traffic will seek alternate routes which will sometimes involve residential neighborhoods; and (4) there will be a negative impact on economic development in the City and County.

In 2014, the City and County were awarded a grant from the Texas Department of Public Safety to develop a Hazardous Material Commodity Flow Study. This grant was implemented via a contract with the Texas A&M

Transportation Institute with a matching share provided by the community in terms of volunteer hours. The goal of the study was to collect, evaluate, and document hazardous materials transported through the community. The results of the study have provided a factual basis for local emergency and community planning.



The results of the study have provided a factual basis for local emergency and community planning.

One of the key activities involved with this study was to collect data on large trucks passing through the downtown area at several major intersections. Findings of the study include the following:

1. Between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. a countable truck will pass by approximately every 60 seconds.
2. On U.S. 290 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. a countable truck will pass by approximately every 45-50 seconds.
3. The busiest intersection is U.S. 290 at U.S. 87S.
4. The most common truck type is a bulk carrier (dump truck, grain truck, bulk materials carrier, etc.) that is probably hauling sand, gypsum, etc.

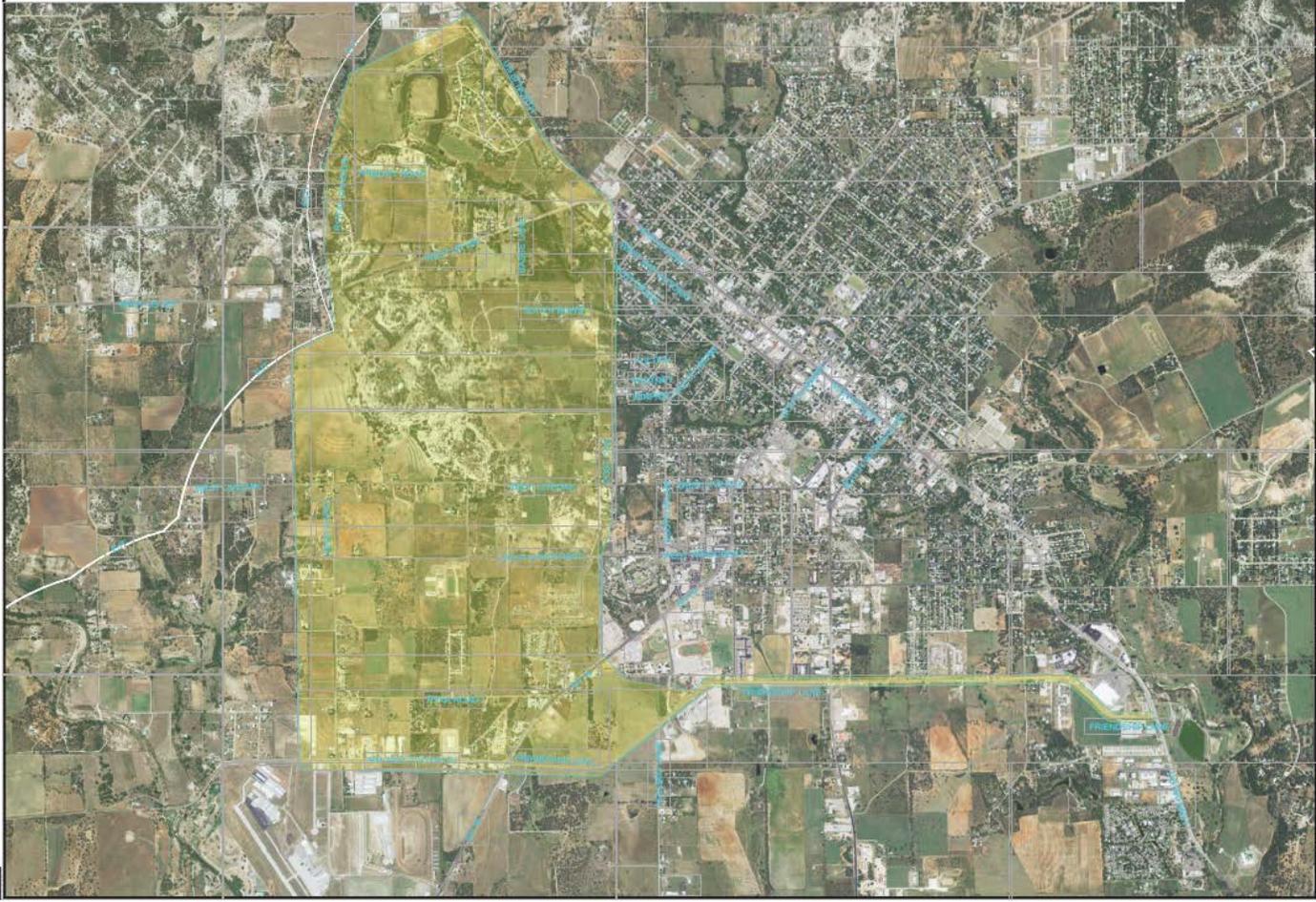
## Roadway Location and Design Issues

During the past two years, a technical subcommittee of the Relief Route Task Force has been working with an engineering consultant, Greg Haley P.E., to identify, discuss and make initial decisions on a number of preliminary roadway location and design issues. Both the Area Engineer and District Engineer for TXDOT have been involved in many of these discussions. This subcommittee has made a number of different recommendations to the full Task Force that have been approved.



First of all, it has been recommended that two different alternate routes be considered for the ultimate design and construction of the Relief Route. As shown on Figure 1, route options include using a portion of Friendship Lane which should reduce the overall construction costs of the roadway in the future. The Task Force has identified a general study area west of the City. The study area is bounded generally by Post Oak Road to the east and Kerr Road to the west. The Task Force proposes future Public Meetings to present the study area and to solicit public comment. Upon receipt of public comment, the Task Force will evaluate the comments and then further define proposed recommended route options. The design of the roadway has been discussed at several subcommittee meetings with input from TXDOT. The preferred design (which is shown in Figure 2) will require right-of-way acquisition of 140 feet.

FIGURE 1



**K.C. ENGINEERING, INC.**  
 CONSULTING ENGINEERS  
 705 HWY. 281 NORTH PLAZA 1 SUITE 103  
 MARBLE FALLS, TEXAS 78664  
 OFFICE: 800-808-8581 FAX: 800-808-8581  
 REGISTRATION # 02877

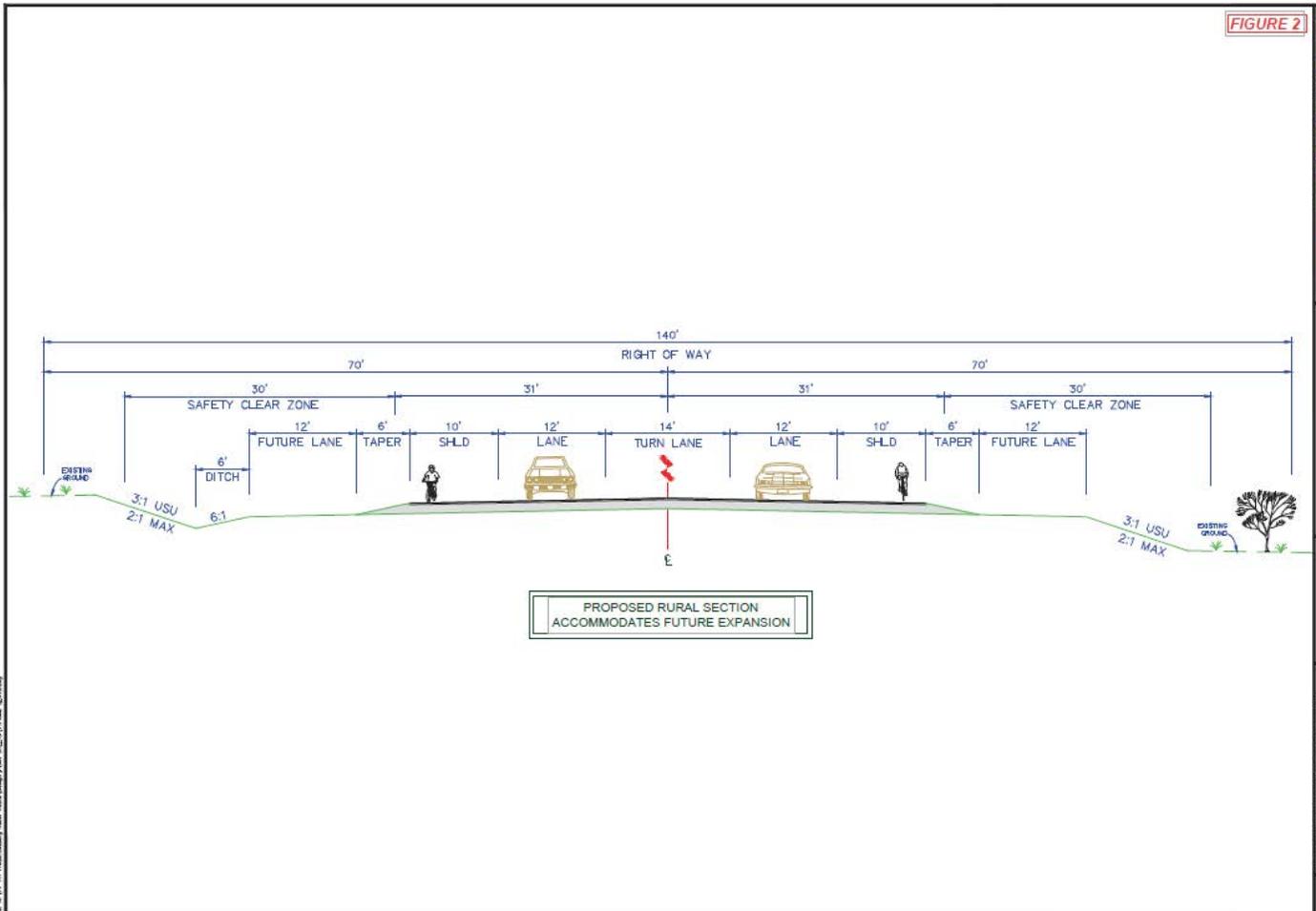
**RELIEF ROUTE  
 STUDY AREA  
 CORRIDOR**  
 FREDERICKSBURG, TX

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FILE NO.	2015-001
DATE	08/21/2015
SCALE	AS SHOWN
PROJECT	RELIEF ROUTE STUDY AREA CORRIDOR
DATE	08/21/2015
SCALE	AS SHOWN
PROJECT	RELIEF ROUTE STUDY AREA CORRIDOR

SHEET

FIGURE 2



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 705 HWY. 281 NORTH PLAZA 1 SUITE 103  
 MARBLE FALLS, TEXAS 78664  
 OFFICE: 800-808-8581 FAX: 800-808-8581  
 REGISTRATION # 02877

**TYPICAL SECTION  
 RELIEF ROUTE**  
 FREDERICKSBURG, TX

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SHEET  
 2

## Task Force Recommendations

Over the past two years, the Task Force has considered a number of different factors that illustrate the need for a Relief Route in the Fredericksburg area. This includes population growth, traffic counts, truck traffic and pedestrian traffic in the downtown area. The Relief Route is needed due to major concerns about safety for both vehicular traffic and pedestrian traffic. It is also needed to facilitate the delivery of emergency services in the Fredericksburg area and to provide opportunities for economic growth in Gillespie County.



Based upon these factors and information from recent reports, it is the recommendation of the Task Force that concerted efforts be taken to plan, design and construct a Relief Route over the next several years. Specific recommendations include the following:

1. This draft report should be presented to the County Commissioners and City Council prior to the end of 2015 for their review, proposed changes, and approval.
2. Once the Commissioners and City Council approve this report, it should then be presented to the general public to update them on the progress over the past two years.
3. The report should then be presented to the State Highway Commission with a request to issue another Minute Order documenting the State's commitment to this project.
4. The Task Force should formally request that TXDOT conduct a preliminary environmental assessment of the corridor study limits.
5. The City and County should allocate funding to hire a right-of-way agent to prepare cost estimates for the acquisition of necessary right-of-way within these corridors.
6. The Relief Route should be included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP)

## Appendix A

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### COUNTY APPOINTEES:

Curtis Cameron, County Commissioner  
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### CITY APPOINTEES:

Jerry Luckenbach, City Council  
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### CHAMBER APPOINTEE:

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### CVB APPOINTEE:

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### FARM BUREAU APPOINTEE:

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peggylandismatli@gmail.com

STAFF RESOURCES:

Bobby Ramthun P.E., Area Engineer - Texas Department of Transportation  
(512)715-5701

Kent Myers, City Manager - City of Fredericksburg  
(830)998-4101

Clinton Bailey, P.E., Director of Public Works & Utilities - City of Fredericksburg  
(830)889-5897

Greg Haley, P.E. - K.C. Engineering, Inc.  
705 N. Hwy 281, Ste. 103  
Marble Falls, TX 78654  
(830)693-5635  
gregh@kcengineering.com

TECHNICAL SUBCOMMITTEE

Kory Keller  
Greg Oehler  
Tim Lehmberg  
Kathy Sanford  
Cord Switzer  
Curtis Cameron  
Clinton Bailey

EDUCATION/PUBLIC INFORMATION  
SUBCOMMITTEE

Jim Jarreau  
Dan Mittel  
Donnie Schuch  
Peggy Matli  
Kent Myers



## Appendix B

B-1:

Resolution - County of Gillespie

B-2:

Resolution - Gillespie County Economic Development Commission

B-3:

Resolution - City of Fredericksburg

B-4:

Resolution - Fredericksburg Chamber of Commerce

B-5:

Resolution - Fredericksburg Convention and Visitor Bureau

RESOLUTION  
COUNTY OF GILLESPIE  
ALTERNATE VEHICULAR ROUTE

WHEREAS, Gillespie County and the City of Fredericksburg are experiencing substantial growth and are projected to potentially double within 40 years; and

WHEREAS, three (3) major highways – U.S. Highway 87, U.S. Highway 290, and State Highway 16 - converge and funnel their traffic onto the City of Fredericksburg's Main Street; and

WHEREAS, this convergence of vehicular traffic, combined with an ever-increasing amount of pedestrian traffic from the tourist industry, creates congestion in the downtown area; and

WHEREAS, the increased population of residents in Gillespie County and Fredericksburg creates more vehicular traffic on a daily basis causing traffic delays and decreased mobility; and

WHEREAS, Gillespie County is considering the future transportation infrastructure needs of the community; and

WHEREAS, the roadways, according to recent vehicular studies, will be reaching their capacity within 10 years or less; and

WHEREAS, an alternate vehicular route would potentially benefit not only trucks but other vehicular traffic as well; and

WHEREAS, downtown congestion could potentially be a safety issue for our citizens and tourists.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED BY THE COMMISSIONERS COURT OF GILLESPIE COUNTY, TEXAS:

- (1) That the Gillespie County Commissioners Court supports the creation of a task force to include representatives of all stakeholders to thoroughly study the needs and potential issues associated with an alternate vehicular route.
- (2) That the Gillespie County Commissioners Court requests such a task force to involve all interested citizens of Gillespie County and the City of Fredericksburg to voice their opinions through public hearings or other methods of public involvement.
- (3) That the Gillespie County Commissioners Court is concerned about the funding of such a project and hereby requests the task force to identify all potential funding sources for the potential development of such a project.

- (4) That the Gillespie County Commissioners Court requests the study of an alternate vehicular route to include not only the benefits for truck traffic but to local car traffic as well, keeping in mind the effects on the citizens of our County and City.

PASSED AND APPROVED THIS THE 15<sup>th</sup> DAY OF JULY, 2013, BY THE GILLESPIE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT.



Mark Stroehrer, County Judge  
Gillespie County, Texas



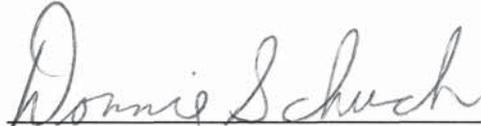
Curtis Cameron  
Commissioner, Precinct 1



W. A. (Billy) Roeder  
Commissioner, Precinct 2

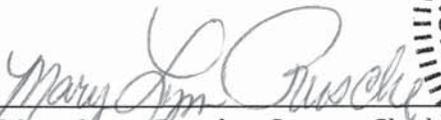


Calvin Ransleben  
Commissioner, Precinct 3



Donnie Schuch  
Commissioner, Precinct 4

ATTEST:



Mary Lynn Rusche, County Clerk



**RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS**, the City of Fredericksburg and Gillespie County populations have increased by 51 and 42 percent, respectively since 1990; and

**WHEREAS**, this population growth is expected to continue locally, for the Hill Country Region and the entire State of Texas; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Fredericksburg is situated at the confluence of two U.S. Highways and one State Highway; and

**WHEREAS**, shopping in our historic downtown area is the number one reason some one and a half million visitors come to Fredericksburg annually; and

**WHEREAS**, continued growth in truck and vehicular traffic on Main Street will likely reach capacity for this roadway by the end of the decade; and

**WHEREAS**, congestion in the downtown area has caused motorists to seek alternative routes through the City jeopardizing residential neighborhoods; and

**WHEREAS**, the idea of an alternate thoroughfare bypassing downtown has been on every City and County Comprehensive and Transportation plan for at least 45 years; and

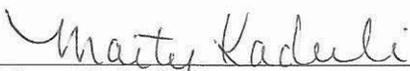
**WHEREAS**, construction of an alternate thoroughfare will only continue to get more challenging and more expensive; and

**WHEREAS**, the City and County will both benefit economically from removing the through truck traffic from Main Street;

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GILLESPIE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION:**

That the Gillespie County Economic Development Commission strongly encourages the City of Fredericksburg, the County of Gillespie and the Texas Department of Transportation to work together to aggressively pursue planning for and the ultimate construction of an alternate truck route around the west side of the City from U.S. Highway 290 East to U.S. Highway 87 North.

Passed and approved this 17<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2013.

  
Ms. Marty Kaderli, Secretary

**RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FREDERICKSBURG**

**WHEREAS**, the City of Fredericksburg and Gillespie County populations have increased by 51 and 42 percent, respectively, since 1990; and

**WHEREAS**, in addition to the growth in the population the City and County have experienced a growth in agriculture, the number of wineries, restaurants, festivals and other destinations and activities, and the number of persons visiting the area has significantly increased, and

**WHEREAS**, population growth and growth in the number of visitors is expected to continue locally, for the Hill Country Region and the entire State of Texas; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Fredericksburg is situated at the confluence of two U.S. Highways and one State Highway which not only converge in its downtown area, but which serve as the main streets in the historic downtown of the City and as the main arteries for accessing the secondary streets of the County; and

**WHEREAS**, shopping and lodging in the historic downtown area are primary reasons approximately one and a half million visitors come to Fredericksburg annually; and

**WHEREAS**, truck and vehicular traffic on US Highway 290 which is Main Street appears to have reached capacity for this roadway creating congestion in the heart of the City; and

**WHEREAS**, large trucks traveling on Main Street create the potential for increased crash rates for vehicles and pedestrians, large truck traffic poses a direct safety hazard to pedestrians crossing Main Street and its intersecting side streets, traffic congestion caused by large trucks on Main Street increases emergency response times thus potentially decreasing the health, safety and welfare of the public and that congestion in the downtown area has caused motorists to seek alternative routes through the City jeopardizing residential neighborhoods; and

**WHEREAS**, the idea of an alternate thoroughfare bypassing downtown has been on every City and County Comprehensive and Transportation plan for at least 45 years; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Fredericksburg's Master Thoroughfare Plan currently shows the general location and alignment of a truck route around Main Street from US Highway 290 East to US Highway 87 North; and

**WHEREAS**, in the future construction of an alternate thoroughfare will only continue to become more urgent for traffic safety and will be more challenging and expensive as development occurs and costs increase; and

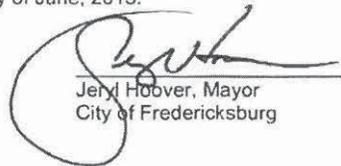
**WHEREAS**, the City and County will both benefit economically from removing the through truck traffic from Main Street; and

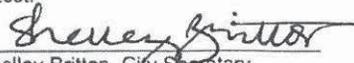
**WHEREAS**, property values and future economic development potential adjacent to the truck route around Main Street will be enhanced due to access to the route; and

**WHEREAS**, as a result of the above considerations, an Alternate Truck Route Task Force which consists of representatives from the City of Fredericksburg, Gillespie County, TXDOT, the Chamber of Commerce and other local community members has been created to facilitate the coordination, future planning, design, funding, acquisition of right of way and construction of the proposed alternate truck route, and

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FREDERICKSBURG, TEXAS** that the City supports the goals of the Alternate Truck Route Task Force and urges the task force to aggressively pursue the construction of the Alternate Truck Route, and seeks the support of Gillespie County and the Texas Department of Transportation in such project.

PASSED AND APPROVED this the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of June, 2013.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jeryl Hoover, Mayor  
City of Fredericksburg

Attest:  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Shelley Britton, City Secretary,  
City of Fredericksburg



**RESOLUTION**

WHEREAS, the population of Gillespie County, including the county seat of Fredericksburg has increased substantially and is projected to potentially double by year 2050; and

WHEREAS, Fredericksburg is accessed by State Highways 16 and 87 and U.S. Highway 290; and

WHEREAS, these roads (according to estimates by the City of Fredericksburg) are within 9 percent of reaching traffic capacity if the city, county and region continue to grow at historical rates; and

WHEREAS, congestion caused by exceeding the current transportation infrastructure may lead to increased use of residential streets, increased speed to make up for time lost in traffic and other safety concerns; and

WHEREAS, vehicular access is critical to the needs of our growing business community, including a vibrant tourism industry and other industries that rely on transportation access; and

WHEREAS, the Fredericksburg Chamber of Commerce's mission is to promote a positive and growing business community; and

WHEREAS, the idea of an alternate thoroughfare has been on every City and County Comprehensive and Transportation plan for at least 45 years; and

WHEREAS The City of Fredericksburg is currently considering the future transportation infrastructure needs of the community;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

That the Fredericksburg Chamber of Commerce encourages the City of Fredericksburg, the County of Gillespie and the Texas Department of Transportation to work together to research alternate transportation options for our community.

Passed and approved this 21<sup>st</sup> day of May, 2013.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Matt Seidenberger, Chair

**RESOLUTION  
Regarding Alternate Truck Route Around Fredericksburg, Texas**

WHEREAS, discussion of an alternate truck route around Fredericksburg has been ongoing for decades and has been indicated in the City's comprehensive plan as early as 1967; and

WHEREAS, the cost of construction of an alternate truck route will continue to rise as time passes; and

WHEREAS, the ability to identify a route will only become more difficult as development of outlying areas of the City and the County continues; and

WHEREAS, studies indicate that in five or six years average daily traffic will exceed capacity in the downtown area; and

WHEREAS, studies indicate crash rates increase for vehicles and pedestrians when roads exceed their capacity; and

WHEREAS, the downtown historic district is visited by thousands of pedestrians each week who are crossing two U.S. and one state highway with an average daily traffic count of between 13,000 and 15,000 vehicles in the 100 to 400 blocks of East Main (2011 numbers); and

WHEREAS, as traffic reaches capacity on Main Street, pedestrians will have longer wait times and difficulty crossing the streets making the overall experience of visiting downtown Fredericksburg less pleasant with a possible negative economic impact; and

WHEREAS, an accident on a weekend in the downtown area involving an 18-wheeler carrying hazardous materials could potentially injure hundreds of pedestrians; and

WHEREAS, removing some of the truck traffic from Main Street and the downtown historic district will help create a more pleasant streetscape which will foster additional private investment in outdoor public spaces and enhance the walkability of downtown for residents and visitors, which is indicated as an asset in the City's 2006 comprehensive plan ; and

WHEREAS, visitors, unaided, frequently comment on the need to remove truck traffic from Main Street during visitor research done by the Fredericksburg Convention and Visitor Bureau since 1999/2000; and

WHEREAS, the visitor research completed in 2012/2013 shows that 80% of our visitors are coming to Fredericksburg/Gillespie County as their main destination on their trip.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF THE FREDERICKSBURG CONVENTION AND VISITOR BUREAU that we encourage officials of the City of Fredericksburg, Gillespie County and the Texas Department of Transportation to modify the Fredericksburg /Gillespie County master thoroughfare plan to indicate one single route/alignment for an alternate truck route connecting Highway 290 East to Highway 87 North around the southern and western edges of Fredericksburg and to begin to protect and preserve the right-of way for that route. Furthermore, we encourage the three parties to consider construction (as soon as feasible) of the proposed Southwest Hill Country Dr. as outlined in the City's master thoroughfare plan with an alignment that would connect Tivydale Road/Friendship Drive to Kerr Road (with an extension of Kerr Road to end up at Highway 290 West) thereby providing a more short term connectivity between Highway 290 East and Highway 290 West.

Adopted this the 25<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2013.



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Sandy Nigh, Chair  
Fredericksburg Convention and Visitor Bureau Board