

US 290 Fredericksburg Feasibility Study

Meeting Minutes

Gillespie County Relief Route Task Force Meeting #1

January 31, 2018, 3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

➤ Opening Remarks and Introductions

Kory Keller, Chairman, Gillespie County Relief Route Task Force (Present)

Kory Keller welcomed attendees and asked all participants to introduce themselves.

Task force members were provided with a copy of the agenda.

➤ Task Force Presentation

Kory Keller, Gillespie County Relief Route Task Force

Keller explained that since nothing new had developed since the last coordination meeting, it would be best to move forward to the project overview presentation. All task force members present expressed agreement.

➤ Project Overview

Andy Atlas, Project Manager, CP&Y

Andy Atlas transitioned the discussion to provide the task force with an overview of its role moving forward, the study timeframe and the project development process.

Task Force Role: The task force will be the project team's local tie to the community. The task force's role in the feasibility study will ensure that a local voice is considered throughout the project. Members' experiences, insights, and ties to the community are pivotal to project advancement.

Study Timeframe: The study duration is expected to be 18 to 24 months. The project team will hold public workshops to develop goals and objectives. Andy Atlas shared that the project team encourages the task force to participate in the workshops and open houses by attending as well as assisting in the preparation of the meeting. At the conclusion of the study, the project team will narrow the preliminary options to a locally preferred route option that may advance for further study.



Project Development Process:

- a. Phase 1: A Feasibility Study is the first step in the project development process. Feasibility studies introduce a potential project to the community and identify recommended route options. This process can take 2 years or more.
- b. Phase 2: The NEPA Environmental Study and Schematic Design phase is the next step in the process. Contingent on funding, recommended route options from the Feasibility Study will be studied further for environmental constraints. This process takes two or more years.
- c. Phase 3: Final design, ROW acquisition and utility adjustments take place in the third phase. This process takes three or more years.
- d. Phase 4: Contingent on funding, construction occurs in the fourth phase – a process that may take three or more years.

Andy Atlas transitioned the discussion to Lynda Rife for identification of potential project issues and benefits.

➤ **Identification of Issues and Benefits**

Group Discussion Facilitated by Lynda Rife, Rifeline

Lynda Rife began the discussion by stating that the team was kicking off the federal process at this meeting and will be following all the procedures involved.

Lynda Rife began a facilitated discussion to assist task force members in identifying potential project issues and benefits associated with a new route alternative to US 290/Main Street through Fredericksburg.

Lynda Rife requested that task force members share current problems that the task force is seeking to address with a US 290 relief route. The following responses were recorded:

Problems identified:

- a. Removal of trucks from Main Street (congestion)
- b. Gridlock on Fridays/Saturdays, especially at critical intersections (traffic signals can compound issues) – this was the primary reason the task force has been looking at a relief route rather than a truck route
- c. Accessibility issues for locals, especially during weekends
- d. Safety concerns (car safety, pedestrian safety)
 - Many people congregate at crosswalks
 - Large loads coming through town blocking intersections and coming into close proximity to sidewalks and businesses
 - Three pedestrians were hit at Washington and Main Street intersection, maybe 10 to 12 incidents annually. Many more close calls.
 - Suggested that the project team obtain safety data from the police who did a safety study 3 years ago (Team could update this data to current year)
- e. Large trucks from the gypsum mine (Georgia Pacific) contributing to delays



- f. Sand trucks from Brady fracking operations contributing to delays
- g. Challenges posed to Main Street economic development (difficulty for deliveries to arrive/depart/park – no alleys available, side street congestion resulting)
- h. Main Street configuration could be improved as part of City project, such as reconfiguring the parking spaces to avoid long trucks sticking out into lanes
- i. Most wineries are east of US 290 and are not affected by congestion in downtown Fredericksburg; most visitors to these wineries also travel into downtown Fredericksburg
- j. Potential damage to historic buildings (noise, soot residue, vibrational damage)
 - Nimitz Museum has documentation of damage to buildings.
- k. Issues with driveway access, many more driveways off of US 290 are being requested
- l. Fredericksburg has become a tourist destination itself (traffic triples on weekends) and people expect a quieter atmosphere – not to walk up and down what feels like a US highway with large trucks
- m. Traffic noise levels
 - New noise ordinance recently implemented to reduce noise levels; locals very concerned with noise

Benefits of a Relief Route:

- a. Additional opportunities for economic development along the relief route (depending on access level of new road)
 - The task force explained the importance of explaining the tradeoffs between access and development to the public
- b. Bicycle safety and facilities could potentially be helpful
- c. Consideration for scenic/aesthetic designation for relief route for community buy-in (“bluebonnet relief route”/wildflower trail/parkway)
- d. Reduced noise levels in downtown

Lynda Rife transitioned the conversation to Stacey Benningfield for review of maps while the public involvement team prepared the audience response survey.

➤ **Review Maps and Identify Additional Constraints**

Stacey Benningfield, CP&Y

Stacey Benningfield presented maps to the members of the task force and requested task force members identify and designate areas that might be barriers to the construction of a new route. Participants were given the opportunity to mark the maps with Post-It Notes to identify local areas of concern and note them throughout the region.

- i. Identification of waterways, subdivisions, parks, etc.
- ii. FEMA doesn’t have floodplain data available for the area, but the City has it for the entire County that they can send to us

After participants were given time to leave comments on the maps, Stacey Benningfield asked Lynda Rife to complete the Issues and Benefits Survey and begin the Stakeholder Discussion.



➤ **Issues and Benefits Survey and Stakeholder Discussion**

Group Discussion Facilitated by Lynda Rife, Rifeline

Lynda Rife conducted an audience response survey. Participants were asked to rank statements according to personal preference and were provided the following response options: “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Neutral,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly Disagree.”

Seven task force participants answered Questions 1 and 2, not including the practice question. Eight task force participants answered Questions 3 through 11.

Of the responses received:

- 100% of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that protection of historic properties is an important consideration
- 88% of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that congestion mitigation through downtown is an important consideration
- 86% of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that safety is an important consideration
- 86% of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that local access is an important consideration
- 78% of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that removing truck traffic out of downtown is an important consideration
- 75% of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that minimizing impacts to property is an important consideration
- 63% of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that economic development is an important consideration
- 51% of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that designation of the project as a scenic or wildflower route is an important consideration, 38% disagreed or strongly disagreed
- 50% of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that reduction of noise is an important consideration, 25% were neutral
- 50% of survey participants disagreed that environmental protection is an important consideration, 25% were neutral
- 51% of survey participants disagreed or strongly disagreed that bicycle accommodations are an important consideration, 25% were neutral



**US 290 Feasibility Study
Task Force Priority Survey Summary**

A survey of the US 290 Feasibility Study Task Force was conducted on Jan. 31, 2018. Seven members of the task force answered questions one and two, eight answered questions three through 11. Below are the rankings of each potential priority.

Statements	Topics	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Safety is an important consideration for this project.	Safety	43%	43%	14%	0%	0%
Local access is an important consideration for this project.	Local access	29%	57%	0%	14%	0%
Economic development is an important consideration for this project.	Economic development	13%	50%	38%	0%	0%
Congestion mitigation through downtown is an important consideration for this project.	Congestion mitigation	63%	25%	0%	13%	0%
Environmental protection is an important consideration for this project.	Environmental protection	13%	13%	25%	50%	0%
Minimizing impacts to property is an important consideration for this project.	Property	50%	25%	25%	0%	0%
Designation of this project as a scenic or wildflower route is an important consideration for this project.	Scenic route	13%	38%	13%	25%	13%
Bicycle accommodations are an important consideration for this project.	Bicycle accommodations	13%	13%	25%	13%	38%
Reduction of noise is an important consideration for this project.	Noise reduction	25%	25%	25%	13%	13%
Removing truck traffic out of downtown is an important consideration for this project.	Truck traffic	63%	13%	0%	25%	0%
Protection of historic properties is an important consideration for this project.	Historic properties	38%	63%	0%	0%	0%

Identification of Stakeholders

Lynda Rife then asked the group who they thought would have an interest in the study. Participants' responses are recorded below.

- i. Groups interested in the project, followed by respective Issues
 - Ranchers/Farmers
 - Property concerns
 - Livelihood concerns
 - Accessibility on/off relief route and crossing from one side to the other
 - Devaluation of property
 - Noise/Lights/Water Pollution
 - Main Street Business Owners
 - Changes to Main Street? What would it become?
 - How to keep trucks off Main Street
 - How to keep customers on Main Street?
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - Convention and Visitors Bureau
 - Ensure tourism remains high
 - Winery Owners (290 Wine Trail Group/Hill Country Wine Group)
 - Raising taxes to fund corridor preservation
 - Customer access
 - Environmental factors
 - Property rights
 - Local access to and around relief route



- Wealthy Land Owners/Residents
 - Investment and devaluation of property
 - Cost of project to fund in taxes
- Hill Country Land Trust
 - Heritage Ranch/ Century Farms
 - Issues with easements on their property
- Truck Company Owners and Drivers
 - Raising taxes to fund corridor preservation
 - Safety
 - Efficiency
- Mine Owners
 - Safety
 - Efficiency
- City Hall
 - Addressing Main Street congestion responsibly
 - Raising taxes to fund corridor preservation
 - Keeping citizens informed
- Dark Sky City
 - Additional development and light pollution could affect this
- Gillespie County Relief Route Task Force
- Citizens/Voters
 - Raising taxes to fund corridor preservation
 - Addressing the congestion problem
 - Some groups have frozen tax rates (e.g. over age 65)
- Hill Country University Center
 - Commuters
- Schools (Public and Private)
 - Bus Transportation
 - Safety
 - Commuters
- Hospitals (Hill Country Memorial)
 - Commuters
- EMS/Fire/Law Enforcement
 - Congestion
- Farm Bureau
 - Private property rights
- Real Estate Associations
 - Could compromise property sales while decisions are being made
 - What information do they have to disclose while study is in progress and once alignment has been set?
- Gillespie County Fair Association
 - May be impacted by route options
- Gillespie County Airport
 - May be impacted by route options
- Hill Country Alliance



- Lights/Noise/Pollution
 - Designation as IDA International Dark Sky Community could be compromised
 - Environmental factors
- Tea Party
 - Raising taxes to fund corridor preservation
- Bicycle Advocacy Group
 - Multi-modal options
 - Dedicated bike lane
 - Safety
- Motorcycle Enthusiasts
 - Safety
 - Congestion
- Visitors
 - Ease of travel to destinations and to downtown
 - Will a less busy downtown change the visitor experience?
 - Historic structures
- Gillespie County Historical Society/Nimitz Museum
 - Impacts to historical areas/buildings
 - Protection of historical properties
- Century Farms/Heritage Farms
 - Livelihood
 - Potential loss of heritage
 - Environmental factors
- Hill Country Land Trust
 - Eminent domain - previous issues with transmission lines
- Private Property Rights Group
 - Infringement on property
 - Eminent domain
 - Litigation
 - Very active with 2003 TxDOT efforts
 - Central Texas Private Property Rights Coalition
 - Contact Todd Bierschwale
- Environmental Groups (Friends of Fredericksburg Nature Center)
 - Trails
 - Birdwatching
 - Pollution
 - Air quality
 - Sign pollution
 - Protection of the environment
- Golf Course Senior Citizens (Approximately 50 members)
 - Potential tax increase to fund corridor preservation
- Relief Route Task Force



Lynda Rife advised the participants that consideration of the varied viewpoints will be ongoing throughout the study process. Lynda Rife inquired about the possibility of the addition of new task force members. Current task force participants determined that it would be best to maintain the current task force membership pending the need for the inclusion of additional members as more project information becomes available.

Lynda Rife then welcomed Andy Atlas to conclude discussion facilitation.

➤ **Path Forward**
Andy Atlas, CP&Y

Andy Atlas explained that additional task force meetings with the project team will be conducted in the future. Following the collection of new traffic data and origin destination data, the next task force meeting will be scheduled. The plan for the upcoming task force meeting will be the identification of goals and objectives and the definition of a study area in preparation for a public workshop. Andy Atlas shared that the project team would like to hold monthly calls with the task force to keep each other updated throughout the process. Most members of the task force agreed that monthly calls would be helpful.

For reaching out to the public, the City will keep the City and County websites updated with the latest maps and language. For public notice of the public meetings, notice of two weeks is OK, but more is better.

➤ **Approval of Task Force Minutes for August 24, 2017**

Kory Keller stated that there was now a quorum of the task force and asked for the approval of the minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously.



