

# US 290 Feasibility Study

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## Minutes

### Gillespie County Relief Route Task Force Meeting

August 20, 2018, 3 p.m. – 5 p.m.

#### ➤ Opening Remarks and Introductions

*Kory Keller, Chairman, Gillespie County Relief Route Task Force*

Kory Keller welcomed and thanked the Task Force, TxDOT staff and consultants. All meeting participants introduced themselves. The March 28, 2018, Task Force Meeting Minutes were approved.

#### ➤ Traffic and Safety Discussion

*Andy Atlas, Project Manager, CP&Y*

*Facilitated Group Discussion by Lynda Rife, Rifeline*

Andy Atlas, CP&Y, began the discussion with an overview of the Public Workshop. He thanked participants for their help and preparation of the event. The meeting had 415 attendees, 122 comments received and 81 surveys received at the workshop, with 105 surveys received after the workshop.

Atlas went over the common themes of the comments received during and after the workshop, which included:

- Utilize Friendship Lane for the relief route.
- Build relief route as far south of town as possible.
- Solution is needed for the traffic issues on Main Street. There is frustration that this has been a problem for too long.
- Property owners fear they will lose their homesteads, family farms, and historical buildings.
- Citizens want property owners to receive fair market value if their property is used for the relief route.
- People fear that the relief route will take away from tourism.
- Citizens fear that trucks will cause accidents on Main Street.

Kent Myers mentioned that a lot of community members have concerns about the funding of the project and the process of obtaining land for ROW. Cathy Kratz said that acquisition will follow the federal process. Myers suggested a one-page fact sheet to provide to people with concerns.

Cord Switzer asked what TxDOT and consultants heard that concerned them the most. Atlas responded saying that his biggest takeaway from the workshop was that the community seems interested in the project. His biggest concern is the effect on the downtown merchants and including them in the process. Lynda Rife added that the downtown merchant opposition was there, but not big.



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Donnie Schuch said that he heard that people were concerned about the amount of ROW needed and community access.

There were a total of 186 online surveys completed (269 visits to the website). The following is an overview of the results:

- Approximately 25% of the respondents identified both traffic and safety as top priorities.
- Approximately 21% of the respondents identified preserving downtown as a priority.
- 76% of the people taking the survey noted that it was important or very important to get commercial trucks off of Main Street.
- 15% of respondents indicated it was not important to remove the trucks from Main Street
- 75% of respondents indicated that the US 290 relief route was important or very important.
- 12% of respondents indicated that the US 290 relief route was not important at all.
- Economic development rated the lowest with only 5.5% ranking as a priority which was closely followed by environmental impacts.

He also noted that when participants marked concerns on maps, respondents identified the following:

- 106 safety concerns
- 34 environmental constraints
- 28 historic sites
- 24 new developments
- 15 destinations
- 40 other locations which mostly were where people's homes were located

The following is a summary of the results of the survey:

- Truck Traffic:
  - 76% of the people taking the survey noted that it was important or very important to get commercial trucks off of Main Street.
  - 15% of respondents indicated it was not important to remove the trucks from Main Street.
- Importance of Relief Route
  - 75% of respondents indicated that the US 290 relief route was important or very important.
  - 12% of respondents indicated that the US 290 relief route was not important at all.
- Congestion:
  - 50% of the respondents stated that congestion was worse on weekends and holidays .
  - 22% of respondents stated that Main Street was always congested.
  - 3% of respondents stated that Main Street was never congested.
- Open-ended questions:
  - Overwhelmingly, respondents mentioned safety and reduced traffic as benefits of a relief route (174 comments).
  - Only 17 respondents stated that they did not support a relief route.
  - Eminent domain and losing land were the biggest concerns mentioned by respondents (36 comments) followed closely by cost/economics and timeline (30 comments).
  - Public transportation, better law enforcement, towing, crosswalks and improved



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traffic signalization were all mentioned as a way to improve traffic on Main Street. Four respondents suggested reducing tourism and limiting new business.

- Demographics:
  - 56% of respondents live in Gillespie County outside of Fredericksburg.
  - 10% of respondents lived outside of Gillespie County.
  - 75% of respondents work in Fredericksburg.

Lynda Rife asked the Task Force if anything concerned them about the survey results. Switzer noted that he noticed a lot of people seemed concerned about property rights, but that wasn't reflected in the survey results. Linda Langerhans noted that it is a little misleading that a relief route will take trucks off Main Street, it needs to be emphasized that not all trucks will be taken from Main Street.

She asked the group if any other materials should be shown at the next meeting. The following were requested:

- A clear timeframe (with funding sources) – Kratz said that until the feasibility study is completed, we can't really ask for funding for the project or no much beyond the feasibility study
- What happens to property if it is already purchased and the road doesn't get built? Kratz answered that it is possible to lease land from property owners to prepare for a potential road. It's not the right time for that yet.

## ➤ Modified Goals and Objectives

*Stacey Benningfield, CP&Y*

“Protect and Preserve Property” and “Protect and Preserve Environmental Resources” were separated.

Peggy Matli requested that the chart be reordered by ranking in the survey. Otherwise, the modification was approved. Benningfield explained that evaluation criteria would be created based on the goals and objectives.

## ➤ Conceptual Route Options

*Stacey Benningfield, CP&Y*

Benningfield presented the maps received at the workshop and a map that captured every line and suggestion from each map – the “Spaghetti Bowl Map.” Red routes were considered viable, black routes were considered not viable. Benningfield explained the flaws, i.e. community features, bodies of water that made a route not viable.

Benningfield presented the next map, which grouped and color-coded routes that had similar features and locations. The next map had routes that consolidated and incorporated features from each of the route groupings. The 12 route segments can be combined into 9 end-to-end alternatives. Benningfield explained that the team wants to be able to present these alternatives and the process to the public.

Myers asked why option 9 (pink) is included on the map if TxDOT will not consider Friendship Lane as an option. Kratz said that Friendship Lane is not an option for what TxDOT will fund, but the city could



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choose to fund it if they believed that was best. Option 9 can be used because it is not directly within Friendship Lane—routes can still be close to the city. Langerhans mentioned concern with the cost of building the routes, especially those with lots of water crossings, and requested that crossings be noted on future maps.

Rife asked if the process of determining the alternatives made sense, the Task Force said yes. Benningfield said the next step will be to evaluate each alternative based on criteria determined from goals and objectives to further narrow the alternatives. The routes go from 6.5 to 18 miles.

Rife said that they also plan to give the public the opportunity to tweak alternatives at the next meeting with rulers the represent ROW and minimum/maximum curves.

Switzer mentioned concerns about cost, Benningfield said we are not quite at the stage where we evaluate cost. Rife said this is not the appropriate time to vote on a route, more needs to be evaluated. We want to learn about what the community likes and doesn't like about each route. The feedback will be factored into the process of narrowing down the routes. Cost will be one of many (including those that are federally mandated) factors evaluated.

Benningfield asked the Task Force is the process makes sense and if they are comfortable presenting it to the public. The Task Force said yes.

Rife asked if anything else needs to be done:

1. Talk to Settler's Ridge representative
2. Talk to John Friedman
3. Timeline of upcoming meetings
4. Dale Creinweld's land near the pink route
5. Green route needs to be shifted – protect Backwoods Barbeque

## ➤ Frontage Roads/Controlled Access

*Paul Schrader, CP&Y*

Paul Schrader suggested that at the next public workshop, the Task Force and TxDOT present the public with a range of Typical Sections that could potentially be used. He explained the types of options available. It was recommended that an overhead cross-section be provided. Kent Myers requested that the ultimate goal be presented along with construction phasing cross sections. It was mentioned that a shared use bike/ped facility might make the route more popular.

Desirable ROW is still 400-feet, but other options give some more flexibility with where a route can be built.

The team will make a board that shows trade-offs between details for future meetings.

## ➤ Traffic Data Update

*Matt Best, HDR*

Matt Best presented the following data:

- Project tube counts
  - 7 locations x 4 days (Thursday – Sunday)



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- Aggregated at 15-minute intervals
- December 2017
- August 2018 + 3 additional 4-day periods (including classification)
- TxDOT Average Annual Daily Traffic (1999 – 2017)
- TxDOT 24-hour truck percentages

Best explained that the team is also using the StreetLight InSight tool to determine origin-destination data.

Additional data, including crash data, travel demand modeling, and future year traffic volume forecasting, is being utilized.

## ➤ Public Workshop #2 Discussion

*Andy Atlas, CP&Y*

*Facilitated Group Discussion by Lynda Rife, Rifeline*

Issues from last time: need more room, more parking, more entry points

Tentative Logistics:

- Date: September 24, 2018
- Time: 4:30pm – 7:30pm
- Location: Fredericksburg High School gymnasium

The Task Force approved of the ideas.

- We will show:
  - Problem Statement - Traffic Crashes
  - Updated Goals and Objectives
  - Route Options
  - How Route Options Were Defined
  - Ruler Exercise
- Outreach
  - Informational Flyer- distributed to local schools and businesses
  - Email Blasts
  - Press Release
  - Newspaper Advertisements
  - Workshop Information- posted on city and county calendars
  - Workshop Information- posted on TxDOT Project Page
  - Facebook and Twitter Posts

Switzer suggested that the Problem Statement focus more on congestion than crashes.  
The Task Force approved of the plans.



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## ➤ **Main Street Property and Business Owner Outreach**

*Andy Atlas, CP&Y*

*Facilitated Group Discussion by Lynda Rife, Rifeline*

Atlas presented plans about the Main Street Property and Business Owner workshop. The following has been done so far:

- Mailed Invitation to Magic Mile Merchants/Property Owners
- Open House Format
- Date-first part of September

Task Force requested that San Antonio and Austin Street owners be considered.

Preliminary plans include meeting in the Pioneer Museum the week of Sept. 10.

## ➤ **Wrap Up**

*Kory Keller, Gillespie County Relief Route Task Force*



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