

US 290 Feasibility Study

Meeting Minutes

Gillespie County Relief Route Task Force Meeting #5 Overview

DATE: March 6, 2019

TIME: 3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

LOCATION: Fredericksburg City Hall, 126 W Main St., 78624

➤ **Opening Remarks and Introductions** - *Kory Keller, Chairman, Gillespie County Relief Route Task Force*

Kory Keller, Task Force Chairman, gave a brief welcome and thank you to all attending the meeting.

➤ **Approval of Task Force Minutes for November 15, 2018**

The meeting notes were distributed to the Task Force members.

➤ **Summary of Workshop #3 Public Comments and Online Survey Results** - *Lynda Rife, Rifeline*

Lynda Rife, Rifeline, began by presenting a summary of the comments received and online survey results from the most recent public workshop (Public Workshop #3). Rife stated that 430 people had signed into the public workshop and nearly 1,300 responded to the survey. Rife explained that based on the online survey, the Maroon (H), Pink (G), Orange (F), and Gray (E) routes received the highest percentage of favorable comments, and the Purple (D), Yellow (C), Blue (A), and Green (B) routes received the lowest percentage of positive comments. Rife then went on to describe how the Purple, Yellow, Blue, and Green routes were the least favorably ranked routes.

Rife then explained the common themes in favor of and opposed to each of the routes from the online survey participants.

- The common themes in favor of the Maroon (H) route included; short distance, less expensive, less disruptions to family homesteads and farms. The common themes in opposition to the Maroon (H) route included; too close to town, schools and airport, impacts to farms and orchards, and impact to businesses.
- The common themes in favor of the Pink (G) route included; short distance, less expensive, good for local businesses, north of the Pedernales River, and good compromise. The common themes in opposition to the Pink (G) route included; doesn't allow for growth and the proximity to neighborhoods, schools and town.
- The common themes in favor of the Orange (F) route included; shortest distance, most cost effective, easy access, north of river, and the use by locals. The common themes in opposition to the Orange (F) route included; property concerns, effect on local businesses, concerns with high speeds close to city, and the close proximity to residential neighborhoods.



US 290 Feasibility Study

Meeting Minutes

- The common themes in favor of the Gray (E) route included; close proximity to town, less expensive, benefits local businesses, and less environmental damage. The common themes in opposition to the Gray (E) route included; close proximity to town, too excessive, loss of property, and inhibits growth.
- The common themes in favor of the Blue (A) route included; farthest away from city and businesses, allows for growth and development, and has fewer impact on homes. The common themes in opposition to the Blue (A) route included; size and cost of the bypass, too far out, impact on people's land, farms, and historic homes, follows Kinder Morgan Pipeline, and crosses too many water sources and flood plains.
- The common themes in favor of the Green (B) route included; allows for growth, relieve traffic, and impacts the least amount of homes. The common themes in opposition to the Green (B) route included; size and cost, impact on historical family homesteads, properties, and farms, follows Kinder Morgan Pipeline, and high environmental impact.
- The common themes in favor of the Yellow (C) route included; closer proximity to town, less cost, avoids residential neighborhoods, and allows for future growth. The common themes in opposition to the Yellow (C) included; close proximity to town, farther away from town, follows Kinder Morgan Pipeline, concerns with environmental impact, distance and cost, too far out for locals to use, impact on family homesteads, properties, and farms.
- The common themes in favor of the Purple (D) route included; close proximity to town, less impact on properties, flatter terrain, shorter distance and less expensive, use by locals, and does not cross the Pedernales River. The common themes in opposition to Purple (D) route included; close proximity to town, Lady Bird Lake, and airport, farther away from town, environmental concerns, longer distance and cost, and impact on historical homesteads, properties, and farms.

Rife continued the PowerPoint presentation by summarizing the written (non-online) public comments that had been received either during the public workshop or within the 22-day public comment period. These comments included letters, emails and completed comment forms.

The Task Force shared their input after being presented with the survey data and recommendations. The following was discussed:

- Cord Switzer questioned what are the criteria for selecting routes, other than a popularity vote. Stacey Benningfield explained that an integral part of the study was public input. She noted that to get from the conceptual stage to the preliminary stage, public input is necessary to make refinements. She continued by stating as the study progresses, evaluations will be done quantitatively. Benningfield emphasized that information and public involvement will be factors to consider on reducing the 8 routes to 3 or 4 routes and that once the routes have been narrowed, a detailed traffic analysis and historical surveys will be performed to further narrow the routes.
- Cord Switzer questioned if there is negativity on community and asked if the relief route is worth it. Kory Keller reminded the group that the Task Force's purpose is not to advocate one way or another but to allow people to make their own decisions. In response to this comment, Keller stated it is important to consider this difficult decision and go through the entire process and allow the public to decide. Tim Lehmborg asserted that he approved moving forward, stating that Fredericksburg's growth is moderate, but Fredericksburg's growth isn't really the concern. He continued to explain that Texas is growing so much, and to



US 290 Feasibility Study

Meeting Minutes

have a major US highway cutting through the city, citizens should really be considering that. Kent Myers stated that the Task Force is hearing from impacted residents and others will become a part of the decision as well. He continued by stating that the Task Force is representation from 100% of the people.

- Members of the Task Force agreed that it is neutral as far as the need for a relief route. They expressed that they are trying to inform the community by gathering facts and determining if the project is feasible. Discussion continued and the members agreed that the Task Force is not driving the process and that they are there to represent all interests. Members agreed that at the end of this process, the final answer will be yes or no. They agreed that if nothing is done to relieve traffic, 2040 traffic will be going downtown and it will be more than what it is now.
- Cord questioned what the traffic will be like if nothing is done. Clinton Bailey explained that the number one ranked project is the Relief Route.

➤ **Field Historical Study - Stacey Benningfield, CP&Y**

- Benningfield explained that based on the feedback received about concerns in regard to historical sites, TxDOT has agreed to do a field historical resource study before a locally preferred route option is selected. She defined a historic property as any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure or object included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places maintained by the Secretary of the Interior (National Park Service). She continued to explain that typically TxDOT would not do this type of study before the start of the NEPA process.
- Once the project team has 3-4 options, a historic resources firm will conduct the study so then there will be an opportunity to make the adjustments now to the route, rather than later when there is less flexibility. The analysis will be done over the summer. Benningfield responded that they will be able to identify many properties that will be able to be protected and preserved in the future. Historic Analyst from the City will be able to be a conduit between community and the TxDOT historical contractor.

➤ **Route Options and Project Team Recommendations - Stacey Benningfield, CP&Y**

- Benningfield walked the Task Force Members through actions taken in response to input received from the January 24th workshop in five different areas. Benningfield explained that the route modifications would reduce the number of displacements. Some of the Task Force members raised concerns on route modifications in regard to who was making the decision. Roger Beall stated that the purpose of the Task Force is to first serve the community and second, to provide guidance. Beall continued by stating that the first line will never be what is built because of the refining and environmental designs. Additionally, public input and many other factors help drive the process. She then asked the Task Force if they were comfortable with these modifications and understood how the decision was being made. There were none that were opposed.

➤ **Next Steps – Stacey Benningfield, CP&Y**

Benningfield explained that the screening/evaluation process that would occur after the Public Workshop #4.

➤ **Wrap Up - Kory Keller, Gillespie County Relief Route Task Force**



US 290 Feasibility Study

Meeting Minutes

Kory Keller thanked everyone for their attendance and adjourned the meeting.