

Notice of Availability FEIS (US 290)

Public Notice of Availability FEIS: Pursuant to Title 43, Texas Administrative Code, §2.5(e)(8)(B), the Texas Department of Transportation is advising the public of the availability of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for proposed improvements to the US 290 Corridor, from FM 2920 near the community of Waller, Texas to IH 610 in Houston, Harris County, Texas. The FEIS wait period ends May 17, 2010. Comments regarding the FEIS should be submitted to the Director of Project Development at the Texas Department of Transportation's Houston District Office located at 7600 Washington Avenue, Houston, Texas prior to 5:00 p.m. on **May 17, 2010**. The Texas Department of Transportation's mailing address is P.O. Box 1386, Houston, Texas, 77251-1386.

The US 290 study corridor extends approximately 38 miles from Farm-to-Market (FM) 2920 near the community of Waller to the US 290/Interstate Highway (IH) 610/IH 10 interchanges area in Houston, and includes Hempstead Road from approximately Beltway (BW) 8 to IH 610. In general, the proposed project evaluated includes the following roadway improvements: additional general-purpose lanes on US 290 and reconstruction of US 290 frontage roads; a managed lane (toll) facility along the US 290 corridor from Bauer Road to BW 8, and continuing along Hempstead Road from BW 8 to IH 610; frontage roads (Hempstead Road) adjacent to managed lanes from BW 8 to IH 610; direct connectors from US 290 and the managed lanes to IH 610 and IH 10 via the Northwest Transit Center; and a reserved high-capacity transit corridor along US 290 from future Grand Parkway/State Highway 99 to BW 8, and along Hempstead Road from BW 8 to IH 610. The purpose of the proposed action is to reduce traffic congestion in the US 290 Corridor within Harris County, improve level of service and mobility on US 290 and Hempstead Road, and bring the roadway facilities up to current design standards, all of which will help to improve safety. The alternatives that were identified and evaluated include various configurations of the locally preferred modal alternative identified in the major investment study (MIS); alternative alignments for proposed improvements along US 290, Hempstead Road, and IH 610 (to provide for direct connectors); and doing nothing beyond what is already planned or programmed. Throughout the development of alternatives, efforts were made to avoid potential impacts to existing residential, commercial, and public properties, and other developed areas. Four alternatives were developed for the US 290 portion of the project. Five alternatives were developed for the Hempstead Road Corridor. Three alternatives were developed for IH 610 to integrate with the US 290 and Hempstead Road alternatives. The US 290, Hempstead Road, and IH 610 alternatives were evaluated at a comparable level of detail in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Based on environmental, planning, and engineering considerations, and public and agency input, a Recommended alternative was identified for the US 290, Hempstead Road, and IH 610 areas of the project. Subsequent to the DEIS public hearings, the Recommended alternative was modified to incorporate suggestions made by the public and agencies, and revised designs. The FEIS contains the evaluation of the Preferred alternative and the No Build alternative, and provides a summary of the alternatives considered and evaluated during the MIS and DEIS studies.

The Recommended alternative as presented in the DEIS, was selected after careful consideration and assessment of the potential environmental impacts and evaluation of agency and public comments. After consideration of all agency and public comments received on the DEIS, as well

as updated environmental data, TxDOT, in coordination with FHWA, selected a Preferred alternative alignment. It was determined after careful review of the DEIS comments that the Recommended alternative as presented in the DEIS be carried forward as the Preferred alternative. The Preferred alternative has the same general configuration as the Recommended alternative, with some changes in the number of proposed main lanes on US 290: 12 lanes from West 34th Street to Pinemont Drive (revised from 10 lanes), 12 lanes from FM 529 to Eldridge Parkway (revised from 10 lanes), and 10 lanes from Eldridge Parkway to Telge Road (revised from eight lanes). Some direct connector and access ramp modifications were also revised. The other major change in the Preferred alternative is the relocation of the transit reserve from north of the managed lanes along Hempstead Road to between the managed lanes and the Union Pacific railroad, from BW 8 to IH 610.

The Preferred build alternative that has resulted from the study was proposed on the basis of its ability to best facilitate the project's Need and Purpose, while minimizing impacts to the natural, physical, and social environments. The Preferred build alternative begins at FM 2920 and ends at the US 290/IH 610/IH 10 interchanges area in Houston, and includes Hempstead Road from approximately BW 8 to IH 610. It is approximately 38 miles in length. The Preferred alternative would require the acquisition of new right-of-way (ROW) (approximately 780 acres), the adjustment of utility lines, and the filling of aquatic resources including jurisdictional wetlands (18.63 acres, based on the preliminary determination, to be verified by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers). The Preferred alternative as presented in the FEIS would displace 87 single-family residences, 225 multi-family residential units, 134 businesses, and 16 mini-storage units along US 290, and 49 single-family residences and 224 businesses along Hempstead Road. Single-family residences that would be displaced are primarily in Oak Forest and White Oak Falls neighborhoods. Several mobile home communities would be impacted. The multi-family units that would be displaced are in Creekwood, Vintage, Wynnewood at Wortham, The Promenade, Carrington Place, and Stonehaven apartment complexes. The US 290 portion of the Preferred alternative would require the relocation of two churches (St. Peter's Anglican and Celebration Lutheran Church), and several areas with pipeline transfer facilities and pipeline equipment. The Hempstead Road portion of the Preferred alternative would require the relocation of the Christ Family Church, a Southwestern Bell facility, and the Precision Emergency Medical Services (EMS) station. The archeological survey is incomplete because right-of-entry (ROE) was denied by several landowners to parcels in the proposed ROW. The archeological survey will remain incomplete until ROE to the remaining proposed ROW has been acquired. TxDOT coordinated the archeological survey report, recommended that the NEPA process be allowed to proceed and the archeological inventory be deferred until ROE or the parcels in question have been acquired. Once ROE or the parcels have been acquired, the archeological survey of the remainder of the area of potential effect will be completed, as well as any coordination/consultation that is required, prior to commencing with construction. If archeological sites are identified within the Selected alternative, additional investigations may be necessary to determine if they are eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). If unanticipated archeological deposits are encountered during construction, work in the immediate area will cease, and TxDOT archeological staff will be contacted to initiate post-review discovery procedures under the provisions of the Programmatic Agreement–Transportation Undertakings (PA-TU) and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). If any site identified by archeological field survey within the Selected alternative is found to be eligible for

the NRHP, actions and consultation will be initiated to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects to that site. If an NRHP-eligible site cannot be avoided in the final design process, consultation will include development of a mitigation plan. The mitigation plan will be developed and reviewed by TxDOT in consultation with the Texas Historical Commission and FHWA. Design modifications may be sufficient to reduce the severity of the effect to a non-adverse level. Mitigation of unavoidable adverse effects typically includes archeological data recovery and full archival documentation. Section 4(f) coordination will only be performed for archeological sites warranting preservation in place. No historic properties or endangered species are expected to be affected.

Copies of the FEIS and DEIS (both electronic and paper) and other information about the project may be obtained, at the cost of reproduction, by contacting the Director of Project Development, TxDOT Houston District Office at 713-802-5243. The FEIS and DEIS may also be reviewed at the following locations: (1) TxDOT District Office, 7600 Washington Avenue, Houston, TX 77007; (2) TxDOT Area Office, 14838 Northwest Freeway, Houston, TX 77040; (3) US 290 Program Office, 2950 North Loop West, Suite 1150, Houston, TX 77092; (4) Spring Branch Library, 930 Corbindale, Houston, TX 77027; (5) Fairbanks Library, 7122 North Gessner Road, Houston, TX 77040; (6) Cy-Fair Library, 9191 Barker-Cypress Road, Cypress, TX 77433; (7) Collier Regional Library, 6200 Pinemont Drive, Houston, TX 77092; (8) Hillendahl Library, 2436 Gessner Road, Houston, TX 77080; (9) M. Smith Memorial Library, 2103 Main Street, Waller, TX 77484; (10) Northwest Library, 11355 Regency Green Drive, Cypress, TX 77429; (11) Hockley Community Center, 28515 Old Washington Road, Hockley, TX 77447; and (12) Houston Library Central Branch, 500 McKinney, Houston, TX 77002. An electronic version of the FEIS and DEIS may be reviewed or downloaded from the US 290 Program Office website at www.my290.com.