



HOUSTON COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS

cypress sun - news

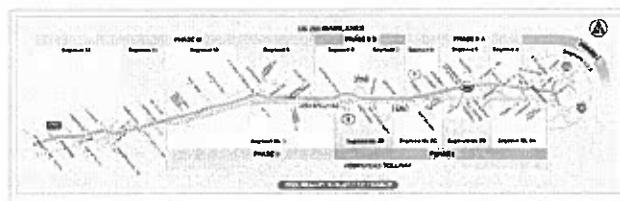
U.S. 290 projects forge ahead

Print Page

By **VALERIE JONES**

Published: 12.03.09

Drivers whose daily commute involves using U.S. Highway 290 are all too familiar with the congestion that plagues the busy road, but with \$314.6 million worth of funding from Proposition 12, plans for the renovation of U.S. 290 will begin sooner than expected.



"Proposition 12 is exciting for us because it allows us to do construction on pieces of the (U.S. 290/Interstate Highway 610) interchange earlier than we had hoped," said Mike Zientek, senior public involvement representative for the U.S. 290/Hempstead Corridor Program. "That interchange is really the spine of what we're trying to do. The most important piece that we can do with Proposition 12 is deal with the inbound 290 motorists and westbound North Loop motorists to get to I-10 directly. That would alleviate some congestion."

A stipulation of Proposition 12 funds is that all projects have to be left for bid by May of 2011. Zientek said he's confident the projects will begin near that date.

However nothing can be completed without first having environmental clearance.

"The Federal Highway Administration is reviewing our Final Environmental Impact Statement and we're hoping to have it available for public comment sometime in 2010," Zientek said. "After it is released, people will have 30 days to make written comments on our program. We will look at these comments and ask for a record of decision. If it's granted, that's extremely important because that means the environmental process is concluded and we can get going."

Although Proposition 12 will allow for advance construction on a portion of Phase I of the program, funding for the remainder of the corridor is still a big issue.

"Phase I of 290 will be built by TxDOT and we are working with Harris County Toll Road Authority to reach a final agreement," he said. "When TxDOT is working on that, the toll road authority will begin building Phase I of Hempstead Tollway (610 to Huffmeister). Pending funding availability and environmental clearance, we would expect to begin work on Phase I on 290 and Hempstead Tollway in 2012 and possibly be finished by 2015."

As of now, it's unclear when Phases II and III of the 290 construction will begin due to unidentified funding.

To learn more about the U.S. 290/Hempstead Corridor Program, visit www.my290.com.

Copyright © 2009 - Houston Community Newspapers Online

[x] Close Window