

The East Branch Update

SH 190 TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Volume 1, Issue 1 March 2006

Public Meeting Set for March 30, 2006

A Public Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 30, 2006, for the State Highway (SH) 190 Transportation Study, The East Branch. The Public Meeting will be held from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm and will be Open House format with no formal presentation. This will be the second Public Meeting conducted thus far for this project.

The latest design alternatives and the potential effects of each will be available to gather public input, comments, and/or suggestions. The meeting will give you an opportunity to ask questions, learn more about the study process and evaluation and provide comments on the proposed alternatives. Large -scaled drawings of the alternatives will be displayed. You will also have the opportunity to ask questions one-on-one with members of The East Branch design team during the Open House. The alternative alignments are also available on the project website: www.theeastbranch.org. Written comments are also welcome.

SH 190, The East Branch Public Meeting

Thursday, March 30, 2006
Open House 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm
Mesquite Convention Center
1700 Rodeo Drive
Mesquite, TX 75149

The study corridor for the SH 190 Transportation Study is from Interstate Highway 30 (I-30) south to Interstate Highway 20 (I-20) and is approximately 11 miles long. The potential route(s) under study will directly involve the cities of Garland and Mesquite, Town of Sunnyvale and Dallas County. A new location six-lane roadway is proposed, and viable alternatives and potential transportation modes, including the No-Build Alternative, and the potential for toll-application to the build alternative alignments are being examined. Various alternatives, alignments, and evaluations will be on display.

The March Public Meeting is a critical milestone in the overall schedule for The East Branch. The input received at this meeting will help determine the preferred alternative. This alternative will then be refined and studied further (based on comments received) via a design schematic and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Public participation is an integral part of this project.... The East Branch Team needs input from you to make this project an all-inclusive success!



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So why study SH 190 now?

TxDOT is beginning the SH 190 study now to help preserve a corridor, if needed, & allow local governments to plan ahead for future development, population increases & transportation needs.

FAQs About the Process

Based on comments received during the Public Meeting in July 2005, the study team modified the alternative alignments. The modified alternatives will be presented during the public meeting for further comments.

The transportation planning process includes seven steps:

Steps 1 and 2 include the transportation needs of the Dallas/Fort Worth Area identified through the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). The MTP is also required for the region to receive federal transportation funding. The MTP is financially constrained. This effort is led by the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG). Local governments, transit agencies, tolling authorities and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) are involved in the process. SH 190 is shown on the MTP, however no right-of-way or construction funding has been currently allocated for this project. TxDOT is studying SH 190 to help preserve a corridor, if needed, and allow local governments to plan ahead for future development and transportation needs.

The project is currently in Step 3. Step 3, planning, design and environmental process and includes development of alternatives; travel demand studies and analysis; Draft EIS; public involvement; agency involvement and preliminary engineering, as shown on the following diagram.

This study involves the development and evaluation of alternatives and development of an EIS in accordance with state and federal guidelines. Alternative development and evaluation, public and agency involvement, and schematic design are included. This combined planning effort will conclude with:

- Identification of Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA)
- Typical cross-sections with Right-of-way width determination
- Preliminary Design Schematic
- Final environmental clearance through a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Record of Decision (ROD)

Future Toll Road?

The East Branch will be evaluated for potential toll-application as part of the SH 190 Transportation Study objectives. In Texas, current identified transportation needs exceed available funding by three to one. Traditional, tax-based methods of financing roads are no longer sufficient to handle the statewide and local transportation needs in a timely fashion. The future depends on funding tools that maximize budgets by using strategic partnerships with local communities and private businesses. In the past, Texas highways have been funded by a limited combination of federal, state and local funds.



Decision Making Process for Transportation Process

The planning process for SH 190 will include the preparation of an EIS following the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

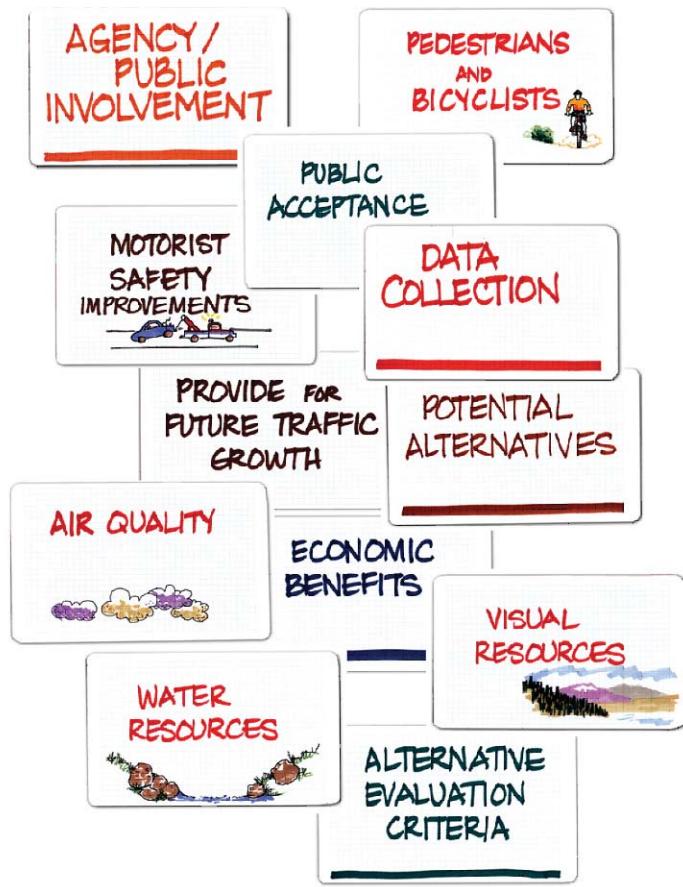
What is NEPA? The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 established a national policy for protection of the environment. The Act is considered to be the basic "National Charter" for protection of the environment. NEPA requires federal agencies or agencies that receive federal funding to use an interdisciplinary approach in planning and decision-making for actions that impact the environment. This allows for a balanced approach to transportation decision-making that takes into account the potential impacts on the human and natural resources and the public's need for safe and efficient transportation improvements. NEPA requires the preparation of an EIS on all major federal actions that could significantly affect the environment.

What is an EIS? An EIS is a report that documents the existing social, economic and environmental conditions; assessment of the effects due to the proposed alternatives; and identify potential mitigation. The document analyzes issues such as noise, access, cultural resources, air quality, economic effects and wetlands. The first version is called a Draft EIS (DEIS); it is designed to help decision-makers assess potential affects of each alternative. The DEIS will not recommend an alternative, but merely presents the potential effects of the No-Build Alternative and build alternatives. A Public Hearing will be held to receive public comment. Once comments are received from the public, elected officials and other agencies, a recommended alternative will be reflected in the Final EIS (FEIS). The FEIS will include the same information in the DEIS as well as the recommended alternative and address agency and Public Hearing comments on the DEIS.

When will the DEIS be completed? The actual date for the release of the DEIS has not been determined. The complete document must be reviewed and approved by the TxDOT and FHWA before any information or results are released. This is done to prevent the premature release of information and groups from trying to influence the decision-making process at inappropriate times. The DEIS is tentatively scheduled to be released during the fourth quarter of 2007.

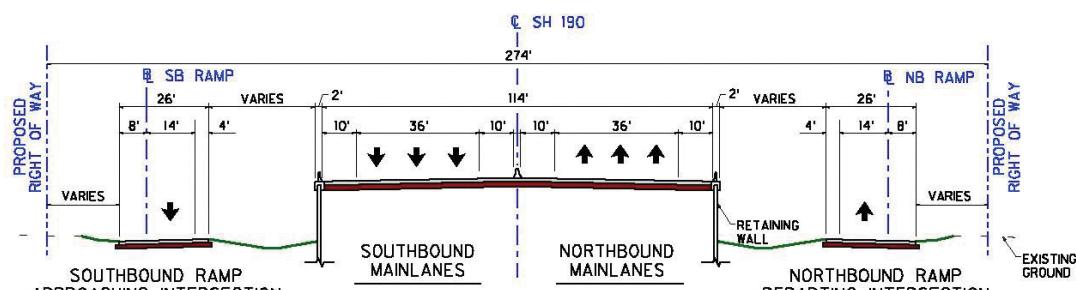
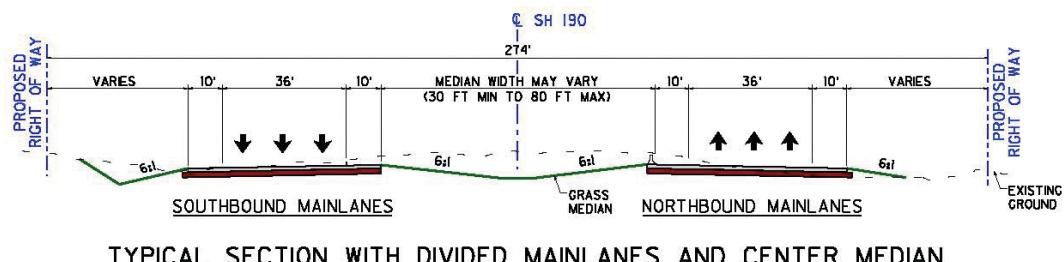
Once the FHWA approves the document for release, a Public Hearing will be scheduled. Persons on the project mailing list will be notified of the availability of the document and date of Public Hearing. Copies of the DEIS will be placed at numerous locations for public review and will be available for purchase at TxDOT in CD or printed form.

How will an alternative be selected? After publishing the DEIS, a Public Hearing will be conducted to receive comments. Additionally, the TxDOT will seek a formal recommendation from each local government in the form of a resolution. Each local government recommendation along with the information in the DEIS, comments received from federal, state, regional agencies and the public will be considered. TxDOT will recommend the alternative for the FEIS and it will be reflected in the FEIS for the project. The FEIS is then sent to FHWA for final review and approval.



Preliminary Alignments

A Public Scoping Meeting was held in July 2005 to inform interested persons about the study initiation process and different alternative alignments being considered to allow an opportunity for comments about the project. Based on comments received during the Public Scoping Meeting, the alternatives were modified. These conceptual project alternatives will be presented during the Public Meeting March 30, 2006. Typical sections are shown below.



PROPOSED SH 190 TOLLWAY/FREEWAY TYPICAL SECTIONS





Contact Information

We need input from everyone – commuters, businesses, property owners, civic groups and residents to develop a transportation solution for The East Branch. Numerous opportunities for input will be provided throughout the project's development:

- www.theeastbranch.org
- Public Meetings and Hearings
- Project Newsletter
- Project Mailing List – go to www.theeastbranch.org/mailinglist.asp
- Presentations – if you would like a presentation to your community organization, please e-mail: contact@theeastbranch.org or call Athena Bolton: (214) 920-8167.
- Project Display/Kiosk – if you would like the kiosk displayed at your publicly-accessible business or building, please e-mail: contact@theeastbranch.org or call Athena Bolton: (214) 920-8167.

Typically Used Acronyms

- DEIS = Draft Environmental Impact Statement
- EIS = Environmental Impact Statement
- FEIS = Final Environmental Impact Statement
- FHWA = Federal Highway Administration
- LPA = Locally Preferred Alternative
- MTP = Metropolitan Transportation Plan
- NCTCOG = North Central Texas Council of Governments
- NEPA = National Environmental Policy Act
- ROD = Record of Decision
- TxDOT = Texas Department of Transportation

Carter-Burgess



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