



Travis County Commissioners Court Agenda Request

Meeting Date: July 30, 2013

Prepared By: Wendy Connally **Phone #:** (512) 854-7214

Division Director/Manager: Jon White

Department Head: Steven M. Manilla, P.E., County Executive-TNR

Sponsoring Court Member: Commissioner Daugherty, Precinct Three

AGENDA LANGUAGE: Consider and take appropriate action on a request from Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) for the county to become a Participating Agency in the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on SH45SW from State Loop 1 (MOPAC) to FM 1626 in Precinct Three.

BACKGROUND/SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

On July 5, 2013, Travis County Transportation and Natural Resources Department received an invitation from TxDOT to be a Participating Agency in the development of an EIS related to the MOPAC to FM 1626 segment of SH 45 SW. Response is due back to TxDOT by August 2, 2013.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff recommends the Commissioners Court approve participation. Staff also recommends accepting the invitation to participate by having Judge Biscoe sign a letter (draft attached) to that effect, designating TNR's County Executive, Steve Manilla, P.E., and the Division Director of NREQ, Jon White, as Travis County representatives.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES:

When TxDOT prepares an EIS, it is standard procedure to formally invite agencies (local, state, and federal) and interested parties to participate in the process, documented in the TxDOT coordination plan for the project, required by 43 TAC Chapter 2 Subchapter E Rule 2.103. Participating Agency designation does not imply that our agency either supports the proposal or has any special expertise with respect to evaluation of the proposed project. Participating Agencies participate in coordination meetings and joint field reviews as appropriate and have every opportunity for review and comment on the pre-draft or pre-final environmental documents to reflect the views and concerns of our agency related to adequacy of the document, alternatives considered, and the anticipated impacts and mitigation.

FISCAL IMPACT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING:

none

ATTACHMENTS/EXHIBITS:

TxDOT Invitation to Travis County to be a Participating Agency

Draft letter for Judge Biscoe's signature, if the staff recommendation is accepted

REQUIRED AUTHORIZATIONS:

Cynthia McDonald	Financial Manager	TNR	(512) 854-4239
Steven M. Manilla	County Executive	TNR	(512) 854-9429

CC:

Jon White	NREQ Director	TNR	(512) 854-7212
Wendy Connally	NR Program Manager	TNR	(512) 854-7214
Thomas Weber	EQ Program Manager	TNR	(512) 854-4629

: :
0801 - NREQ -



SAMUEL T. BISCOE
COUNTY JUDGE

TRAVIS COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
700 LAVACA ST., SUITE 2.7000
P.O. BOX 1748
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78767
(512) 854-9555

July 30, 2013

Mr. Carlos Swonke, P.G.
Director, Environmental Affairs Division
Texas Department of Transportation
125 E. 11th Street
Austin, TX 78701-2483

Re: Invitation to become a Participating Agency
SH45 Southwest From State Loop 1 (MoPac) to Farm-to-Market 1626

Dear Mr. Swonke:

Thank you for your July 2, 2013, letter inviting Travis County to be a Participating Agency in the development of an environmental impact statement for the State Highway 45 Southwest project. We accept your invitation and look forward to actively participating in the evaluation of this important project.

On behalf of Travis County, our principal contacts will be:

Steven M. Manilla, P.E., County Executive
Transportation & Natural Resources Department
P.O. Box 1748
Austin, Texas 78767
(512) 854-9383
Steven.Manilla@co.travis.tx.us

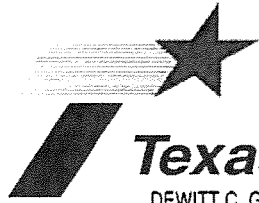
Jon A. White, Environmental Officer
Transportation & Natural Resources Department
P.O. Box 1748
Austin, Texas 78767
(512) 854-7212
jon.white@co.travis.tx.us

Please feel free to contact them regarding this project. If I can be of any assistance, please contact me at (512) 854-9555 or by e-mail at sam.biscoe@co.travis.tx.us.

Sincerely,

Samuel T. Biscoe
County Judge
Travis County, Texas

cc: Doug Booher – TxDOT Environmental Affairs Division
Steven Manilla - Travis County TNR
Jon White – Travis County TNR
Wendy Connally – Travis County TNR



Texas Department of Transportation[®]

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July 2, 2013

CODE: 9125

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JUL 05 2013

TNR

Steven M. Manilla, P.E.
County Executive
Travis County
Transportation & Natural Resources Department
P.O. Box 1748
Austin TX 78767

Re: Invitation to become a Participating Agency on the proposed Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) project to extend SH 45 Southwest from State Loop 1 (MoPac) to Farm-to-Market Road (FM) 1626 in Travis and Hays Counties, Texas.

Dear Rhonda Smith:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), in conjunction with the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA), is initiating an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for a proposed project to extend SH 45 Southwest from MoPac to FM 1626, a distance of approximately four (4) miles. The study area for the project is located in the southern region of the Austin metropolitan area, in Travis and Hays Counties, Texas and would be constructed on new location.

The need for the proposed project stems from increasing congestion causing unreliable traffic operations on area roadways. Specifically, rapid population growth in southern Travis and northern Hays Counties is straining the existing transportation infrastructure in the area. This growth, combined with lack of direct, efficient travel corridors, is hindering the ability of area residents, commuters, and other travelers to access employment and activity centers in Austin. In order to address the identified needs, the purpose of the proposed project is to improve mobility and provide an efficient alternative route to congested local roadways in this rapidly growing area.

Alternatives intended to satisfy the identified purpose and need will be considered by TxDOT. Alternatives will be evaluated within the study area based on input from federal, state, and local agencies, as well as private organizations and concerned citizens.

Your agency has been identified as an agency that may have an interest in the proposed project due to the potential for effects to the natural and/or human environment, and input from your agency may be required for the proposed project. With this letter, we extend your agency an invitation to become a Participating Agency with TxDOT in the development of the EIS for the subject project. This designation

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does not imply that your agency either supports the proposal or has any special expertise with respect to evaluation of the proposed project.

As a Participating Agency, responsibilities include identifying, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the project's potential environmental or socioeconomic impacts that could substantially delay or prevent an agency from granting a permit or other approval that is needed for the project. We suggest that your agency's role in the development of the above project should include the following as they relate to your area of expertise:

1. Provide meaningful and early input on defining the purpose and need, determining alternatives to be considered, and the methodologies and level of detail required in the alternatives analysis.
2. Participate in coordination meetings and joint field reviews, as appropriate.
3. Timely review and comment on the pre-draft or pre-final environmental documents to reflect the views and concerns of your agency on the adequacy of the document, alternatives considered, and the anticipated impacts and mitigation.

Again, TxDOT is inviting the Travis County Transportation & Natural Resources Department to serve in a Participating Agency capacity. Please respond to TxDOT in writing with an acceptance or denial of this invitation within 30 days of the date of this letter. If your agency declines, please indicate the reason for declining.

If your agency chooses to serve as a Participating Agency, a copy of the draft Coordination Plan will be submitted for your review and comment. The draft Coordination Plan provides additional insight regarding the overall project review process as well as specific roles and responsibilities for Participating Agencies.

Additionally, we would also like to invite your participation at the upcoming scoping meetings. An Agency Scoping Meeting is scheduled on Wednesday, July 31, 2013 from 3:00-4:30 PM at the TxDOT Austin District, Building 7 large conference room. A Public Scoping Meeting/Open House is tentatively scheduled for mid-August. Additional information regarding this meeting will be available at the agency scoping meeting and via the TxDOT website. Copies of the Coordination Plan will be available at both of these meetings.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the project in more detail or our agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this EIS, please contact:

Mr. Doug Booher
TxDOT – Environmental Affairs Division
125 E. 11th Street
Austin, Texas 78701
(512) 416-2663
Doug.booher@txdot.gov

Thank you for your cooperation and interest in this proposed project.

Sincerely,



Carlos Swonke, P.G.
Environmental Affairs Division Director

cc: Ms. Stacey Benningfield, TxDOT, Austin District
Mr. Wes Buford, Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority