

Robert S. Light Blvd Extension from RM 967 to FM 1626: Virtual Open House Presentation Script

SLIDE 1:

Welcome to the Virtual Public Hearing for the Hays County Robert S. Light Blvd Extension project. This is a Virtual Public Hearing pre-recorded video presentation.

Hays County is proposing to extend the existing Robert S. Light Blvd from its current terminus at RM 967 to FM 1626 in Hays County, just south of the city of Buda.

SLIDE 2:

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, along with our commitment to protecting public health during this national emergency, TxDOT and Hays County are conducting this virtual public hearing to avoid in-person contact. At this time, the online format will be available in lieu of an in-person public hearing.

This presentation will cover the same information as the in-person hearing. However, the comment process will be different and that will be explained shortly. All project information can be found on the Hays County website.

SLIDE 3:

My name is Kelli Reyna and I will serve as your presenter on behalf of the County. The project manager for the Robert S. Light project is Allen Crozier. We would both like to welcome and thank you for watching this virtual public hearing that will be available through October 9, 2020.

We'll be covering the following areas:

- A project overview;
- An environmental overview;
- The project schedule and next steps;
- The public comment process – which will be a little different than our in-person public hearings...more information on that later – and then,
- Adjournment – when we'll conclude this video presentation.

SLIDE 4:

Prior to December 16, 2014, the Federal Highway Administration, otherwise known as FHWA, reviewed and approved documents prepared under the National Environmental Policy Act, known as NEPA. However, on December 16, 2014, TxDOT assumed responsibility from the FHWA for reviewing and approving certain assigned NEPA environmental documents. This memorandum of understanding was renewed on December 9, 2019. This review and approval process applies to this proposed project.

This virtual public hearing is being provided to share information and to encourage comments from the public regarding the proposed Robert S. Light Extension project.

Notices for this hearing were published on the Hays County, the cities of Buda and Kyle, and TxDOT websites and appeared in the Hays Free Press on September 9, 2020, as well as on the Facebook pages of Hays County and the cities of Buda and Kyle. The notice was also mailed to adjacent property owners and elected public officials.

SLIDE 5:

Hays County is committed to continuing our efforts to gain public feedback about this project. We understand this virtual public hearing format is a bit different, so let's take a few minutes and explain the comment process – the most important part of this video. Because of COVID-19, Hays County is asking the public to provide their input through verbal and/or written comments.

The verbal testimony will be similar to an in-person public hearing. The voicemail system allows you to record a comment up to three minutes long, similar to the time provided during our standard in-person public hearing practice. The verbal testimony option is available until 11:59 p.m. on October 9, 2020. Please call **(512) 685-2988** and leave a voicemail with your comment during that time; your comments will be recorded, and a response will be included in the virtual public hearing summary report.

SLIDE 6:

In addition to providing the verbal testimony voicemail option, Hays County is also accepting a written comments option. You can submit written comments by emailing the project manager at RobertSLightProject@hdrinc.com, mailing your comments to the address on your screen, or by submitting comments online at hayscountytx.com and searching "Robert S. Light virtual public hearing." Click on the "leave a comment" button near the center of the page.

Please be sure to submit your written and/or verbal testimony comments no later than October 9, 2020. The responses to all comments submitted during the comment period will be included in the virtual public hearing summary report. This report will be posted to the Hays County website within the next few months. We appreciate your understanding with this comment process.

Now, let's start talking about the project details.

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The project is 1.9-miles long and would connect FM 1626 and FM 2770 to the existing portion of Robert S. Light Blvd. at RM 967 in eastern Hays County.

Eastern Hays County needs the extension of Robert S. Light Blvd. to improve mobility of the traveling public and freight, and to reduce traffic congestion.

The purpose of the Robert S. Light Blvd. Extension Project is to provide a safe and efficient alternative route around the city of Buda for commercial trucks and personal vehicles; and to provide a direct connection between FM 1626 and I-35 in order to reduce travel times.

SLIDE 8:

The Robert S. Light Blvd. extension project would include the following improvements:

- Extend the existing Robert S. Light Blvd. roadway from the current terminus at RM 967 to FM 1626
- Initially include an additional travel lane in each direction
- Ultimately include two travel lanes in each direction (Future construction)
- Construct an overpass at the Union Pacific Railroad tracks west of RM 967 and east of FM 2770
- Construct an overpass of Mustang Branch of Onion Creek and the Centex Materials haul road
- Improve RM 967 and FM 2770 to add turn lanes to and from the Robert S. Light extension

The project schematic design is available for public review on Robert S. Light Blvd Extension virtual public hearing page on the Hays County website.

SLIDE 9:

A public meeting was held for the Robert S. Light Extension project prior to today's hearing. The first was an open house meeting on March 20, 2014 at Elm Grove Elementary School in Buda. There were 26 members of the public who attended and 6 comments were received.

SLIDE 10:

In addition to the public open house regarding the project, Hays County actively pursued communication with potentially affected property owners along the corridor who were identified early in the project process. They were contacted to meet with the project team regarding their respective properties.

Over the past several years, Hays County held several rounds of meetings directly with affected property owners to review and discuss potential right-of-way or access impacts to their properties. In some cases, follow up meetings were held to continue discussions with owners if there were design changes, adjustments, or other factors related to the proposed improvement project.

SLIDE 11:

The existing Robert S. Light Blvd. extends from the southbound I-35 frontage road to its current terminus at RM 967. The section at the intersection of Robert S. Light and RM 967 is an undivided 4-lane roadway. The section adjacent to I-35 is a 3-lane section, which transitions to a 4-lane divided roadway.

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Robert S. Light Blvd. is proposed to be extended from RM 967 to FM 1626 as a 4-lane divided roadway in its ultimate condition. While not yet warranted, in the ultimate condition, Robert S. Light Blvd. is proposed to be signalized at RM 967, FM 2770, and FM 1626.

SLIDE 13:

Robert S. Light Blvd. is proposed to be extended from RM 967 to FM 1626 as a 2-lane undivided roadway in its interim condition. In the interim condition, Robert S. Light Blvd. is proposed to have stop signs at RM 967, FM 2770, and FM 1626.

SLIDE 14:

The project schedule is shown here. The anticipated environmental study completion and National Environmental Policy Act or NEPA decision is expected this winter. Construction is anticipated to begin in the spring of 2021. It is anticipated that construction would last approximately 2 years.

The estimated project construction cost is \$20 million.

SLIDE 15:

Utility adjustments and relocations throughout the corridor are required prior to construction and these adjustments would occur prior to roadway construction. Most of the required adjustments have already been completed. The adjustments and relocation of any utilities will be managed so that no substantial interruptions to the traveling public will occur.

SLIDE 16:

The environmental study conducted for this project complies with NEPA. An Environmental Assessment was conducted for the proposed project. A copy of the Draft Environmental Assessment and technical reports are available for public review and can be found on the Robert S. Light Blvd Extension virtual public hearing page on the Hays County website.

The environmental study identified and assessed potential impacts due to the proposed project to the natural and human environment including the resources listed on this slide.

Two preliminary alternatives were considered but have been eliminated from further consideration. One additional build alternative was considered early in the project planning process which connected FM 2770 to FM 1626 south of the current build alternative. This alternative was eliminated from consideration due to engineering and environmental design constraints and poor connectivity conditions at FM 1626.

The preferred alternative would create a direct connection from FM 1626 and FM 2770 to I-35, and would improve local mobility and efficiency. The preferred alternative was analyzed in the environmental assessment. It was determined the proposed project would not result in impacts to air quality.

A Biological Evaluation Form and a Tier I Site Assessment were completed to determine impacts to threatened and endangered species and other biological resources. TxDOT has determined the proposed project will have no effect on federally listed species due to a lack of suitable habitat within the project area. TxDOT has determined the proposed project may impact 11 state-listed threatened species including species of greatest conservation need. TxDOT has coordinated with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and would implement best management practices to minimize impacts to state-listed species.

A hazardous materials initial site assessment was conducted for the proposed project. An analysis of the initial site assessment data indicates the proposed project would not involve the acquisition of known unresolved contamination. The proposed project would not impact any known archeological sites. TxDOT historians determined the proposed project would have no adverse effects to historic resources. There would be no impacts to parklands. A traffic noise impacts analysis was conducted and determined there are no receivers that would be impacted by traffic noise.

Two potentially jurisdictional Waters of the U.S. were identified within the project area. Mustang Branch, an intermittent stream that flows into Onion Creek, and a wetland that abuts Mustang Branch. The proposed project would be permitted under a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Nationwide Permit 14 with a preconstruction notification.

Again, the draft EA and environmental reports are available for your review online at Robert S. Light Blvd Extension virtual public hearing page on the Hays County website.

SLIDE 17:

The primary environmental constraints within the project area are Waters of the U.S. including wetlands, Edwards Aquifer, sensitive biological resources including habitat for endangered species, and archeological and historic resources. These environmental constraints were taken into consideration during project design to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts to environmental resources.

SLIDE 18:

TxDOT pre-certified historians surveyed the project area of potential effects and produced a Historical Resources Survey Report. The proposed project undertaking would have no effect on historic properties because none are present within the project area of potential effects. Concurrence was received from the Texas Historical Commission on June, 15, 2018.

Per Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, Hays County conducted an intensive archaeological survey of the area of potential effects. Archaeologists observed that the area of potential effects has been heavily altered through agricultural and industrial land use. No further work within the area of potential effects was recommended based on the results of the archaeological survey. The Texas Historical Commission concurred with the project findings on December 4, 2015.

SLIDE 19:

TxDOT has determined the proposed project will have no effect on federally listed species due to a lack of suitable habitat within the project area. The project may impact one federal candidate species, the bracted twistflower. Potential habitat for this species occurs on the western portion of the project area.

Conservation measures, such as minimizing excavation in previously undisturbed areas and stormwater pollution control best management practices, would be in place to protect water quality in receiving streams.

SLIDE 20:

The project area overlays the Edwards Aquifer recharge zone, contributing zone within the transition zone and transition zone, and is within the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District.

Best management practices to minimize impacts by runoff to groundwater resources will be incorporated, including sediment control fencing, baled hay, rock filter dams and construction exits. Permanent best management practices will also be implemented to reduce pollution of surface water or stormwater that originates on-site or upstream from the site and flows across the project site.

A Water Pollution Abatement Plan would be prepared in accordance with TCEQ's Edwards Aquifer Rules.

SLIDE 21:

This map shows the proposed alignment with the overlays of the Edwards Aquifer recharge zone, contributing zone within the transition zone and transition zone. TCEQ regulations will be followed to minimize impacts to water quality and the aquifer.

SLIDE 22:

This project will involve regulated activity in jurisdictional waters and therefore will require authorization under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Two jurisdictional Waters of the U.S. were identified within the project area. Mustang Branch, an intermittent stream that flows into Onion Creek, and a wetland that abuts Mustang Branch.

The build alternative is required to cross Mustang Branch and a portion of the wetland in order to meet the intersection with FM 1626. No practicable alternatives that would have less adverse effects on the aquatic ecosystem within the project area were identified.

Impacts to Waters of the U.S. would be authorized through a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Nationwide Permit 14 with a pre-construction notification. A pre-construction notification would be required for any impacts to wetlands adjacent to Mustang Branch.

During construction, impacts to Mustang Branch and the wetland would be minimized to the extent practical.

SLIDE 23:

A traffic noise analysis was conducted in accordance with TxDOT's *Guidelines for Analysis and Abatement of Roadway Traffic Noise*. Land use activity areas adjacent to the proposed project currently consist of commercial and industrial development and land which is not permitted for development.

The traffic noise analysis concluded that there are no receivers that would be impacted by traffic noise and benefit from any feasible and reasonable noise abatement measures.

SLIDE 24:

A Community Impacts Assessment was completed in accordance with TxDOT's 2015 *Community Impacts, Environmental Justice, Limited English Proficiency, and Title VI Compliance* guidance.

The proposed alignment would not bisect any existing residential neighborhoods, nor would access to any businesses, schools, churches or any other community gathering places be affected by the proposed project. No households, businesses, farm, or ranch displacements would occur as a result of this project.

Mobility and safety would be enhanced for all users of the Robert S. Light roadway, including emergency vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians, due to the increased capacity and operational efficiency of the roadway, railroad overpass, and intersection improvements.

The proposed project would not affect, separate, or isolate any distinct neighborhoods, ethnic groups, or other specific groups. No disproportionately high and adverse impacts to minority or low-income populations are anticipated as a result of the proposed project.

The requirements of Executive Order (EO) 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, are satisfied.

SLIDE 25:

Based on the findings made in the draft EA and technical reports, implementation of the proposed project would not result in a significant impact on the human or natural environment under NEPA. Therefore, a finding of no significant impact is recommended.

SLIDE 26:

Let's talk about the right-of-way acquisition process.

The proposed project would require the acquisition of approximately 53.8 acres of right of way, as well as one overhead easement from the Union Pacific railroad. This right of way section will include an overview of the federal and state laws involved, and the general process and requirements for appraisal and negotiations.

The primary federal law which sets the guidelines for right of way acquisitions and relocation assistance is found in the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970,

commonly referred to as the Uniform Act. This law sets the standard for appraisal, negotiations, and relocations, and has also been incorporated into state law as set out in the Texas Transportation Code and the Texas Property Code.

For a basic review of your rights and TxDOT's obligations, I would recommend that you visit txdot.gov to find brochures entitled *State Purchase of Right of Way*, as well as the *Landowner's Bill of Rights*.

Hays County contracted with a consultant to coordinate acquisition activities. Independent fee appraisers prepared appraisals on all necessary property. Affected property owners received written notification of the pending appraisal inspection. Appraisers requested permission to enter a property for inspection and offer the property owner, or their representative, the right to accompany them on the inspection. The appraiser determined the value of the land to be acquired, real property improvements within the area to be acquired, and damages (if any) to the remaining property. A written appraisal was then provided to the landowner at the time the offer is made. At this time, acquisition of the last few parcels is being completed.

SLIDE 27:

Let's recap how you can provide input about this project.

The first way you can share your input is to provide your verbal testimony—similar to an in-person public hearing. The verbal testimony option is available starting at 9 a.m. on September 24, 2020 and will be available until 11:59 p.m. on October 9, 2020.

Please call **(512) 685-2988** and leave a voicemail with your comment during that time. Your comments will be recorded and a response will be included in the virtual public hearing summary report. The voicemail system allows you to record a comment up to three minutes long, similar to the time provided during our standard in-person public hearing practice.

SLIDE 28:

In addition to providing the verbal testimony voicemail option, Hays County is also providing a written comments option. You can submit written comments by emailing the project manager at RobertSLightProject@hdrinc.com, mailing your comments to the address on your screen, or by submitting comments online at hayscountytexas.com and searching "Robert S. Light virtual public hearing." Click on the "leave a comment" button near the center of the page.

Please be sure to submit your written and/or verbal testimony comments no later than October 9, 2020.

SLIDE 29:

We encourage you to stay informed about the project. Visit hayscountytexas.com and navigate to Hays County Commissioners Court and select Commissioner – Precinct 2. At the bottom of this page, you will find a monthly newsletter from the Commissioner providing regular updates on projects in the Buda and Kyle areas.

SLIDE 30:

Don't hesitate to contact the Hays County project manager with any questions about the project. You can call the number on your screen Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., or email the project manager with questions you may have regarding the project.

Please remember that only comments submitted via the project email address, online comment form, mailed comment form, or messages left on the project voicemail system will be included in the virtual public hearing summary report.

SLIDE 31:

Thank you for your participation in this virtual public hearing! Don't forget to submit your written and verbal testimony comments by 11:59 p.m. on October 9, 2020. Thank you again and please, stay safe. This concludes the presentation and the virtual public hearing is now adjourned.