



Citizens' Advisory Committee Meeting

Harbor Bridge Replacement Project Improvements to US 181 at the Harbor Bridge over the Corpus Christi Ship Channel

January 9, 2014 – 6:00 – 8:00 pm

Oveal Williams Activity Center, 1414 Martin Luther King Drive, Corpus Christi, TX

Meeting Summary

Display Items

1. Preliminary design drawings (schematics) of the Preferred Alternative, as identified in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.
2. Four schematics (for each alternative) for back of room
3. Boards showing proposed 4(f) parks mitigation
4. Board showing proposed mitigation for impacts to low-income and minority neighborhoods

Welcome and introductions

Christopher Amy, TxDOT Environmental Coordinator for the Harbor Bridge Project, opened the Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting, welcomed participants, and asked each member to introduce themselves. He introduced the project team and then introduced the meeting facilitator, Susan Springer. Seventeen CAC members signed in at the meeting and were introduced. In addition, six members of the public were in attendance.

Chris explained to the CAC that the Draft Environmental Impact Statement had been issued the week before this meeting (1/3/14) and that it identified the Red Alternative as the Preferred Alternative. Ms. Springer reviewed the CAC meeting agenda and meeting ground rules. She explained the format of the meeting—group discussions of the Preferred Alternative and proposed mitigation.

Group Discussions of the Preferred Alternative, Section 4(f) park mitigation, and mitigation for impacts to minority and low-income neighborhoods.

CAC members were divided into four separate groups to review and discuss the Preferred Alternative, 4(f) park mitigation, and the proposed mitigation for impacts to

minority and low-income neighborhoods. Two project team members sat at each table to facilitate and take notes on the table discussions.

Preferred Alternative:

To spark discussion of the Preferred Alternative, the facilitator posed these questions:

What are your impressions of the Preferred Alternative?

What concerns or confuses you? What excites you?

How will this alternative affect you/Corpus?

Responses:

Many CAC members supported the Preferred Alternative, although some stated a preference for the Green Alternative. Those who liked the Red Alternative noted that it seems to be the best overall for the community as well as for the Northside; has less impact on parks and historic resources; would have fewer environmental impacts; and offers opportunities for redevelopment. The CAC members who did not support the Red Alternative had questions about how this alternative was selected and why the Blue Alternative was dropped.

The concerns of CAC members regarding the Red Alternative generally had to do with its impact on Northside neighborhoods, both culturally and environmentally as well as access to the Red Alternative from the Northside and other areas. These concerns included the following:

- Current flooding at turn-around north of Beach Ave.
- Congestion where the Red Alternative ties into SH 286.
- Ability to access the Oveal Williams Center from the south.
- Need to preserve closest bus stop to Oveal Williams Center (now on Winnebago).
- Traffic on surface streets downtown, especially during special events or emergencies (including evacuations).
- Context-sensitive design required for any new bridge/roadway.

Questions asked by CAC members regarding the Preferred (Red) Alternative included the following:

- How many homes are affected by the Green Alternative?
- How many meetings before the Public Hearing?
- Why are we not doing 3D renderings on all alternatives if FHWA has not approved the Red Alternative?

Proposed Section 4(f) Park Mitigation

CAC members generally had mixed reactions to the proposed park mitigations.

General comments included the following:

- Ben Garza Park improvements were seen as positive by many.
- It would be great to have a new park (Washington) where the community could hold celebrations.
- The park trail can be valuable and encourage exercise.
- Mitigations should be more meaningful to the affected community.
- Enhancing Williams Park is okay if TC Ayers Park goes away. The community should provide input on disposition of the Booker T. Washington Elementary School.
- St. Paul United Methodist Church would like an increased connection to the downtown area.
- No one will benefit from the proposed park mitigation.

Concerns about the park mitigation expressed by CAC members included the following:

- There were security concerns for all the park areas, as well as concern for contamination at parks.
- Current users of TC Ayers Park may find the distance to a new Washington park site too far.

Proposed Mitigation for impacts to Minority and Low-Income Neighborhoods (Environmental Justice):

Many CAC members did not find the proposed mitigation adequate considering the impacts of the project. Those who felt this way indicated that maintaining historic churches and sites needs to be part of a mitigation plan. A business development fund would be valuable. One member suggested that the community needs a vision to believe in. Other members indicated that the current parks are not safe environmentally and therefore it would not be appropriate to encourage young people to go there for recreation. Other members basically liked the proposed mitigation measures but suggested creating a Northside historic district and making sure that the community understands the proposed mitigation and has an opportunity for input.

CAC members expressed the following specific concerns about the proposed mitigation:

- The view shed of a “sea of columns” would have a negative effect on quality of life.
- Need for adequate bus routes and service.
- Mitigation description is vague.

Questions asked by CAC members about the proposed mitigation included:

- Original estimates were \$400 mil, why are the estimates now double that?
Have you looked at costs for all of the alternatives?
- What will you do with the feedback you receive here today?
- Will you provide transportation to community meetings and hearing?
- Can you make visualization animations for all four alternatives?