



## **Citizens' Advisory Committee Meeting**

### **US 181 Harbor Bridge Project**

**July 11, 2013 – 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm**

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

#### **Meeting Summary**

##### **Display items**

1. Dec 2012 preliminary designs for four proposed project alternatives
2. July 2013 revised preliminary designs for four proposed project alternatives

##### **Welcome and introductions**

Victor Vourcos and Chris Amy, TxDOT project managers for the Harbor Bridge Project, opened the Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting, welcomed participants, and had everyone introduce themselves. Sixteen CAC members signed in (one substitution). Two members of the public were in attendance.

Mr. Vourcos and Mr. Amy gave an update on the Harbor Bridge Project. They explained that there have been changes in the preliminary designs for the four proposed build alternatives in response to input from the public. These changes include a smaller right-of-way footprint and improved access to areas of the city. They also gave an overview of changes in the project schedule, explaining that the pace of the project has been accelerated with expected completion of the environmental documentation this fall and a Public Hearing in early 2014. In addition, they noted some recent developments in funding for the project.

##### **Table discussions of revised preliminary designs**

Mr. Vourcos then introduced the meeting facilitator, Susan Howard. Ms. Howard reviewed the meeting agenda and reminded the CAC members of the general meeting guidelines. She described the meeting format: round table discussions with CAC members rotating from table to table (15-minute rotations) to review all four proposed alternatives and provide feedback on revised preliminary designs. CAC members were able to compare the preliminary designs for the four alternatives from the December 4, 2012 public meeting to the current designs, with additional information provided in a handout describing the changes in all the alternatives.

To begin the table discussion, a facilitator seated at each table asked CAC members the following questions:

1. What do you notice about the new design? What do you see?
2. What concerns or confuses you? What excites you?
3. What does this mean for you?
4. How do these design changes affect you/Corpus Christ?

Facilitators recorded the responses on easel pads at each table. Once the rotations were completed, Ms. Howard called upon each table facilitator to present the comments collected from his/her table. The comments on each proposed alternative are captured below.

### **CAC Member Comments – Red Alternative:**

#### **Benefits:**

- Does not affect Oveal Williams Senior Center
- No impact to highland properties on Navarro St
- Better connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods
- Saves money and space
- Improves connection from Hillcrest community to the east
- Improves connection between Broadway and I-37 under the bridge
- Saves the bridge from becoming lost from sight and being adjacent to the existing bridge

#### **Drawbacks:**

- Not enough room under US 181 Nueces Bay causeway for trucks wanting to use turnaround
- Last south-bound exit on State Highway (SH) 286/Crosstown Expressway, take city streets to downtown
- Existing traffic backs up on SH 286 - the facility ties into this
- Prefer that the bridge be closer to the bay- like the orange alignment
- Alignment divides a community
- Loses the view of the bay area
- Local street traffic backing up in the I-37/SH 286 area
- More congestion on frontage road and I-37/SH 286;use the direct connectors
- Slows traffic getting into downtown; grid lock on local streets
- Takes tourists away from downtown
- SH 286 east-bound must exit Leopard to get downtown
- North-bound safety; no fire station in area or access ramp
- Safety of Beach St.

**Suggestions:**

- Can Broadway St. be improved?
- Can trails be added going east from the Hillcrest community?
- Consider aesthetics for Broadway St. between SH 286 and Shoreline Dr. along I-37.
- Washington Coles community to south of I-37: can this connection be improved?
- Keep the neighborhood connected under US 181.
- Keep Winnebago St. open.

**CAC Member Comments – Orange Alternative:****Benefits:**

- Better connection to North Port Ave. (truck traffic)
- Friendlier to community – smaller interchange
- Community use areas
- Nueces Bay Causeway turnaround
- Agnes St. and Laredo St. improvement and connection from Highway 181 to access downtown
- Better than West Alternative
- Stays closer to downtown
- Improvement over previous preliminary design (2012)
- More “friendly” to community than earlier version that had larger interchange
- New bridge in similar location to current bridge - prefer this location to Red or West Alternative
- Bridge location
- “Really like” changes to Orange Alternative (2013 v. 2012)
- Bridge location provides better view of Bay front versus Ship Channel for visitors.

**Drawbacks:**

- Concern about access to Port
- Direct access concern about north-bound traffic exiting Highway 181 on Leopard St.; stop sign/light
- Emergency services - increase time to aquarium
- Still needs work in downtown area
- Concern about single exit north-bound for North Beach
- Downtown to Portland a “little difficult”
- Closing Winnebago and losing “synergy”
- Neighborhoods access from one side of 181 to other north of I- 37 “connectivity issue”
- Prefer Green Alternative

**Suggestions:**

- Need to help downtown traffic move around

- Request shared use path
- Request I-37 E of 181 be a “boulevard”
- Current infrastructure used as an on ramp connecting to northeast infrastructure just south of bridge

**Future Plans for City Infrastructure:**

- The new wastewater treatment plant is being moved north of the current location.
- The City of Corpus Christi plans to extend Staples St. past Broadway Blvd. to connect with downtown city streets in the future.

**CAC Member Comments – West Alternative:**

**Benefits:**

- Potential for increased property values downtown
- Opportunity to reconnect north side to downtown

**Drawbacks:**

- Concern about volume of event traffic using frontage road box to turn
- Concern about residential acquisitions/displacements.
- Concern about crossing in tank farm - emergency access
- Proximity to refineries – safety issues
- Length
- More difficult to get to downtown
- Limited access from neighborhood
- Emergency response time to North Beach
- Construction in dredge area
- Should consider tying into Hwy 358 instead of SH 286
- Poor access for truck traffic downtown
- Too close to refinery and neighborhood
- North-bound business access to I-37
- Detract from skyline/iconic landmark
- Potential for terrorism
- Visual impact to drivers
- Removal of ramps at Crosstown and I-37 – downtown access

**CAC Member Comments – Green Alternative:**

**Benefits:**

- Exit for aquarium – Beach St.
- Fire service - emergency access maintained
- Access to Lipan St. and Comanche St. - school access.
- Fewer environmental justice impacts/ continuity between neighborhoods
- Thankful to have a bridge

- Same traffic and street patterns
- Does not interfere with Hillcrest and north side Washington-Coles
- Skyline icon status
- Acquisitions/ residents and business
- View from stadium is the same
- Leaving bridge at Tanchhua St. is good
- View of bridge; key to city for tourists; closest to water
- Traffic
- Ramps to I-37 better
- Signature view of city

**Drawbacks:**

- Noise impacts
- Doesn't really benefit safety because of curve
- Isolates SEA district from downtown – on ramp from north can't get off until Staples St.
- Can't get on bridge from downtown
- Hotel in downtown; to go north you have to go to Crosstown Expressway (SH 286)
- Curve still a concern
- For Hillcrest access, must go north to get on the bridge; Port traffic has to do the same
- Grade of bridge and concern with bike and pedestrian
- Problem with trucks turning north of Hillcrest
- Former separation of neighborhoods; Red/Orange alternatives cut neighborhoods in half again
- Same access issues in downtown
- Concerns of bridge grade with resulting curve
- Downtown US 181 too low - creates impediments
- Similar to what we have now
- Safety
- Acquisitions of businesses in downtown
- Traffic concern over having stop signs or lights

**Group discussion of public involvement activities**

Ms. Howard then informed CAC members about other upcoming opportunities for public involvement. She mentioned the possibility of additional small neighborhood meetings like the ones held in fall of 2012 and asked for ideas to assist in planning those meetings. She prompted the group by asking for suggestions about possible meeting locations, existing meetings for presentations, locations for displays, etc. No suggestions were proposed but CAC member Mr. Gilbert Cantu made a statement regarding his recognition of and appreciation for the amount of work that had been done

to address the public's concern about the previous proposed preliminary designs (Dec 2012). Several other CAC members echoed the same sentiment.

**Meeting summary and plans for next meeting**

The next CAC meeting will be held before the Public Hearing planned for early 2014.