

DATE/TIME:

December 4, 2012; 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.

LOCATION:

Solomon Ortiz Center, 1701 S. Padre Island Drive, Corpus Christi, TX 78416

PURPOSE:

- (1) To provide updated information on the proposed project, including the purpose and need for the project and the preliminary schematic drawings for the four proposed build alternatives. The No-Build alternative was also discussed.
- (2) To receive comments on the proposed project in general as well as on the proposed build alternative schematics.

FORMAT:

The Public Meeting consisted of a one-and-one-half-hour open house followed by a TxDOT presentation and a public comment session. Displays showing four proposed build alternatives and the historic resources survey were available for review and comment. Visualizations of the proposed build alternatives were also on display. Project team members were available to interact with the public, local representatives, and answer questions. Members of the public were given an opportunity to deliver a verbal comment or leave a written comment.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

Public notice of the meeting was published in the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* on November 20 and December 2, 2012, and in the *Portland News* on November 28, 2012. In addition, meeting notices appeared in the *PennySaver* on November 28, 2012; in the *South Texas Catholic* on December 1, 2012; in the *Senior News* on December 1, 2012; and in *El Tejano* on December 1, 2012. Radio spots advertising the meeting were run on Clear Channel Radio stations from November 26 – December 4, 2012. TxDOT also distributed a press release/media advisory and 100 posters advertising the meeting were distributed to 37 community and retail locations in the project area. In addition, a postcard announcing the public meeting was sent to approximately 9000 individuals living in zip codes in the project area and a newsletter that publicized the meeting was sent to the Harbor Bridge mailing list. A meeting notice also was posted on the project website (www.ccharborbridgeproject.com).

ATTENDANCE:

A total of 139 individuals (five of whom were TxDOT employees) registered their attendance at the public scoping meeting. Ten elected officials or representatives of elected officials signed in as well.

DISPLAY AND HANDOUT MATERIALS:

The following displays were available for viewing: a project location map showing four potential alternatives; maps showing each of the four build alternatives in

more detail; preliminary schematic drawings of the four proposed build alternatives, visualizations of each of the four proposed build alternatives, and two exhibits explaining the historic resource evaluation now underway. A project fact sheet, project location map, and comment card were given to each individual who signed in to the meeting. Additional copies of the Harbor Bridge newsletter were also available.

PRESENTATION:

Lonnie Gregorcyk, TxDOT Corpus Christi District Engineer, opened the meeting and introduced the project team. He reviewed the Purpose and Need for the project (safety and ongoing maintenance/long-term operation of the bridge), and the process used to reduce the number of proposed alternatives from six to four. The blue and tunnel alternatives were eliminated because they did not meet the safety need for the project.

Mr. Gregorcyk then introduced Christopher Amy, TxDOT Corpus Christi Environmental Coordinator. Mr. Amy reviewed the process involved in developing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for this proposed project. He indicated that TxDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are the co-lead agencies for this project, and that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. Coast Guard, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are cooperating agencies.

The Harbor Bridge project team is currently gathering and analyzing data for the environmental impact analysis and is writing the chapters of what eventually will become the EIS document. Mr. Amy noted that part of this process is preparing a Historic Resources Survey Report (identifying potential historic properties in the proposed project area). He pointed out that TxDOT historians were in attendance at the meeting to explain their work and answer questions.

Mr. Amy described the community impact analysis being conducted for the project. Part of this effort involved holding eight neighborhood meetings (listening sessions) in late 2012, as well as a community survey. Over 200 people attended these meetings and provided valuable feedback about their communities and the potential impacts of the proposed project on these communities. All of the information collected from the meetings and surveys will be used in preparing the community impact analysis in the EIS.

Mr. Amy then reviewed the work of the Citizens' Advisory Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee, which met three times in 2012. These committees enable interested individuals and organizations to learn more about the project, to provide input as the project proceeds, and to promote public awareness and understanding of the project. In addition the committees serve as a valuable communication link between TxDOT and the local community.

Mr. Amy then showed several visualizations of what a new bridge might look like in all of the four proposed build alternatives, while stressing that no decision has been yet been made regarding a preferred alternative.

He encouraged those in attendance at the meeting, as well as the larger community, to continue to be engaged in the Harbor Bridge Project. Project team members will be working in Corpus Christi as they gather additional data. The team also will be meeting with various local individuals and groups, and are always available to meet with those who would like more information about the project. In 2013, additional Citizens' Advisory Committee and Technical Advisory Committee meetings will be held, and a Public Design Guideline Workshop will take place later in the year. The workshop will offer community members an opportunity to provide their ideas about the general design and look of the proposed bridge.

DEADLINE:

Comments received and/or postmarked on or before December 18, 2012 were included in this public meeting report.

VERBAL COMMENTS DELIVERED AT THE MEETING

Seven individuals spoke at the scoping meeting. Their comments are summarized below.

Comment #1 Individual stressed that the North Beach area is very important and suggested that TxDOT consider a ferry from the Solomon Ortiz Center to the north shore.

TxDOT response: Comment noted.

Comment # 2 Individual asked if TxDOT had considered an "elevator" bridge with an adjustable height.

TxDOT response: Comment noted.

Comment #3 Individual expressed concerns that any of the alternatives would cut off most of the exits to downtown Corpus Christi (including Lipan, Comanche, and Broadway). These are main arteries to the city courthouse and county courthouse.

TxDOT response: Accessibility to the downtown area and communities (including North Beach) is extremely important to this project, and is something that is being considered as we develop the project schematics.

Comment #4: Individual expressed opposition to the project but if it has to move forward, his preference is for the west alternative. He would like to see the West

Alternative connect to SPID. He believes that the Harbor Bridge is being designed for the people in Gregory, Portland, and Aransas Pass in anticipation of I-69.

TxDOT response: Comment noted.

Comment #5: Individual expressed a concern that all four proposed alternatives will result in a “choke point” on the north end of North Beach. He asked about TxDOT’s philosophy with regard to combining hazardous cargo and normal pedestrian travel. He suggested having on- and off-ramps that would go to the Joe Fulton Trade Corridor from Navigation and that way there would be different ways of getting on the bridge, either from the Joe Fulton or on Beach Ave.

TxDOT response: We are looking at ways to minimize or eliminate the situation with truck traffic going onto Joe Fulton mixing with passenger vehicles. This comment will be helpful as we address this situation.

Comment #6: Individual voiced a concern about trucks leaving the Joe Fulton Trade Corridor and being directed into the Harbors neighborhood. Three of the neighborhood’s cul-de-sacs would no longer have egress from the neighborhood. This is a safety concern. He also expressed a preference for the West Alternative.

TxDOT: Comment noted.

Comment #7: Individual had a number of questions. First she asked about the number of people who attended the eight neighborhood meetings in the fall of 2012. Second, she asked for the three reasons why the Blue Alternative was eliminated. Third, she asked about HUD’s role in the project. Fourth, she asked a question about a property at Stillman and Van Loan that is on the market for \$125,000 as a commercial property. Her final question was why the Blue Alternative had been eliminated.

TxDOT response: Over 200 people attended the neighborhood meetings. The Blue Alternative was eliminated because it did not meet the project’s Purpose and Need, specifically the need for safety during a hurricane evacuation (since US 181 is a designated hurricane evacuation route). HUD, along with EPA and the US Coast Guard, are cooperating agencies in developing the Environmental Impact Statement. These agencies review the technical documents and provide review comments as TxDOT and FHWA move through this process. TxDOT is not aware of the particular property referred to by the commenter. The Blue Alternative has been eliminated because it does not meet the Project Purpose and Need.

DICTATED COMMENTS

Comment # 8: Individual dictated the following comments to the court reporter:

1. Please provide the total budget amount of money that has been spent on this project to date, by category, and the amount of money that is projected by category to be spent. Provide these figures for the community.
2. Provide information to people whose properties will be taken. Do not put this on the internet but in a public area.
3. Where are the bridge designs?
4. Please explain why the Blue Alternative was eliminated.

WRITTEN COMMENTS

No written comments were submitted.