

The following persons may be contacted for additional information concerning this document:

Albert Hinojosa
Area Engineer
Federal Highway Administration
Texas Division
(512) 536-5967
albert.hinojosa@dot.gov

Christopher Amy
Environmental Coordinator
Texas Department of Transportation
Corpus Christi District
(361) 739-6960
christopher.amy@txdot.gov

ABSTRACT

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), as Joint Lead Agencies, have prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) to determine the potential environmental, social, and economic impacts of the proposed US Highway 181 (US 181) Improvements from Beach Avenue to Morgan Avenue at the Crosstown Expressway (alternately known as State Highway 286). The proposed US 181 Harbor Bridge Project would involve the replacement of the Harbor Bridge and the reconstruction of portions of US 181, Interstate Highway 37 (I-37) and the Crosstown Expressway in Corpus Christi, Texas. The project limits extend both north-south along US 181 and the Crosstown Expressway and east-west along I-37 and include: US 181 at Beach Avenue on the north; Crosstown Expressway at Morgan Avenue on the south; I-37 and Buddy Lawrence Drive on the west; and I-37 and Shoreline Boulevard on the east. The proposed project is listed in the Corpus Christi Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) 2010-2035, the 2013 August quarterly revision to the 2013-2016 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), and the 2014 Unified Transportation Program (UTP) under Category 2: Metropolitan and Urban Corridor Projects; Category 6: On-System Structures Replacement and Rehabilitation; Category 7: Metropolitan Mobility & Rehabilitation; and Category 12: Strategic Priority.

The need for the proposed project has been identified from underlying transportation deficiencies with the Harbor Bridge and US 181 in the project area, which include maintaining the long-term operation of a US 181 crossing of the Corpus Christi Ship Channel and safety risks caused by design deficiencies. The purpose of the proposed project is to maximize the long-term highway operability of the US 181 crossing of the Corpus Christi Ship Channel and to improve safety for the traveling public, including during hurricane evacuations.

Four reasonable build alternatives and the No Build Alternative were evaluated to an equal level of detail in the Draft EIS, and each of the four reasonable build alternatives would involve the following: the acquisition of new right of way; residential and commercial displacements; community impacts, including impacts to minority and low-income communities; access changes; conversion of existing land use to transportation use; impacts to floodplains, wetlands/Waters of the U.S., public parks and public wildlife refuge lands, historic sites, vegetation, protected species, hazardous materials, and traffic noise impacts. All of the proposed build alternatives would require the removal of the Harbor Bridge System—the Harbor Bridge and six other historic highway bridges—an adverse effect to resources eligible for the National Register of Historic Places; therefore, the proposed project would require a Section 4(f) approval by FHWA as well as a Bridge Permit from the U.S. Coast Guard. The Red Alternative is identified in the Draft EIS as the Preferred Alternative and would be evaluated to a higher level of detail, as appropriate, in the Final EIS following a public hearing. The final decision on a Selected Alternative would occur when the Final EIS receives a Record of Decision. The estimated construction cost is \$637 million (as of August 2013) and Federal, state, and local funding would be utilized. FHWA will issue a single Final EIS and Record of Decision document pursuant to Pub. L. 112-141, 126 Stat. 405, Section 1319(b) unless FHWA determines statutory criteria or practicability considerations preclude issuance of the combined document pursuant to Section 1319.

Comments on the Draft EIS are due March 3, 2014 (60 days from the date of the Notice of Availability) and should be sent to:

Christopher Amy
Texas Department of Transportation
1701 S. Padre Island Drive
Corpus Christi, TX 78416
(361) 739-6960
christopher.amy@txdot.gov

Comments may also be sent to: HarborBridgeProject@urs.com