

## SECTION 7: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

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### 7.1 PREVIOUS PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT (DURING THE PROPOSED GRAND PARKWAY SEGMENT C-1 MIS)

This section discusses the public involvement for the proposed Grand Parkway Segment C and includes details about agency coordination, local official involvement, public workshops, and hearings. Volume 3 includes a list of public involvement from March 1997 to September 2007. This section also describes other means of public involvement such as the website and newsletters.

As discussed in Section 1.1 – Background, the MIS for the proposed Grand Parkway Segment C-1 was approximately 50 percent complete when it was stopped. During the proposed Grand Parkway Segment C-1 MIS, the following public involvement events occurred:

- ◆ An Initiation Meeting was held on March 5, 1998, with representatives attending from TxDOT, the FHWA, H-GAC, METRO, and Fort Bend County.
- ◆ An agency coordination meeting was also held on March 5, 1998, with representatives attending from the TPWD, USFWS, and USACE.
- ◆ A Public Workshop structured specifically for environmental interest groups was held on April 22, 1998.
- ◆ A Public Workshop structured for the general public was held on April 27, 1998, to solicit input.
- ◆ A Public Scoping Meeting was for MIS Initiation at George Ranch on August 20, 1998, to solicit input.

All input received during these public involvement events was utilized during the study of the proposed Grand Parkway Segment C.

### 7.2 AGENCY COORDINATION

Throughout this proposed Grand Parkway Segment C study, various agency officials from the TPWD, USFWS, USACE, THC, EPA, and TCEQ provided input that was considered in the development and screening of alternatives and evaluation of the Grand Parkway Segment C project. Input was requested from and provided by these agencies on a regular basis, as necessary, via telephone conversations, meetings, and letters. Important meetings and letters are described below:

- ◆ On November 19, 1998, the study team attended the Joint Processing Meeting at the USACE office in Galveston. In attendance were the USACE, USFWS, TPWD, and TCEQ. The study team described the study process and progress to the meeting attendees.

- ◆ On December 16, 1998, the study team met with the Brazos Bend State Park personnel and the TPWD. The meeting focused on potential impacts of the proposed Grand Parkway Segment C on existing hydrologic conditions of watersheds that feed into Brazos Bend State Park.
- ◆ On March 15, 2000, in accordance with 40 CFR 1500–1508 and 23 CFR 771, the FHWA sent coordination letters to the following tribal organizations: Comanche Tribal Business Committee, Coshatta Tribe, Apache Tribe of Oklahoma, Caddo Indian Tribe of Oklahoma, Alabama-Quassarte Tribal Town, Creek Nation of Oklahoma, United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indian, Cherokee Nation, Tonkawa Business Committee, Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, and Mescalero Apache Tribe (Appendix I). A response to the letter was received from the Tonkawa Tribe of Oklahoma and is also included in Appendix I.
- ◆ On May 5, 2000, the study team met with representatives of the USFWS, George Observatory, Fort Bend County Judge's Office, Brazoria County Judge's Office, Fort Bend County Commissioners, and TPWD at the George Memorial Library in Rosenberg. This meeting was held to discuss the route alternatives suggested by the TPWD and to discuss the route selection process the study team had followed to date.
- ◆ On August 2, 2000, the study team met with representatives of the USFWS, Fort Bend County Commissioners, George Observatory, USACE, Greater Fort Bend Economic Development Council, Fort Bend County Judge's Office, Brazoria County Judge's Office, and the TPWD at the George Memorial Library in Rosenberg. This meeting was held to discuss the route selection process that the study team was using to go from Representative Alternatives to the Build Alternative.
- ◆ On August 26, 2002, the study team attended a meeting with the THC to discuss their review of the archeological reconnaissance report and the archeological Phase I survey report.
- ◆ On November 6, 2002, the study team attended a meeting with the EPA. In attendance were personnel from the FHWA and H-GAC. The meeting was to review the comments the EPA had filed on the proposed Grand Parkway Segment C DEIS of July 26, 2000.

### **7.3 LOCAL OFFICIAL INVOLVEMENT**

Throughout this proposed Grand Parkway Segment C study, local officials provided input that was considered in the development and screening of alternatives. Input was requested from and provided by these local officials on a regular basis, as necessary, via telephone conversations and meetings. Concerns of several local officials are noted below:

- ◆ Fort Bend County Commissioners provided input on ongoing land development projects, which might become constraints to the proposed Grand Parkway Segment C. They also relayed various concerns and opinions of property owners.

- ◆ Fort Bend County Engineer provided input regarding the County's Major Thoroughfare Plan and the proposed Grand Parkway Segment C's impact on the county's roadway network. The engineer also provided preliminary land plans and approval plats for new developments, which might become constraints to the project.
- ◆ Fort Bend County Drainage District Engineer provided input on 100-year floodplains and hydraulic characteristics of waterways in the study area.
- ◆ Brazoria County Commissioner provided input regarding Brazoria County's preference that the proposed Grand Parkway Segment C be located as far south as possible within the study area to more effectively serve the mobility needs of Brazoria County. He also relayed various concerns and opinions of property owners.
- ◆ Brazoria County Engineer provided input regarding the county's Major Thoroughfare Plan.
- ◆ City of Richmond City Manager provided input regarding land development projects in the city's ETJ, which might affect the project.
- ◆ City of Rosenberg engineering consultant provided input regarding street and land development projects in the city's ETJ, which might affect the project.

#### **7.4 PUBLIC WORKSHOPS AND HEARING**

A public involvement plan was formulated at the beginning of this proposed Grand Parkway Segment C study. The plan initially included five public involvement events. Another public involvement event was included later.

##### **7.4.1 Public Scoping Meeting/MIS Initiation Meeting**

The Public Scoping Meeting/MIS Initiation Meeting for the proposed Grand Parkway Segment C was held on August 20, 1998, at the Guy Lodge Hall at the George Ranch. Approximately 90 people including local residents, business owners, and city/county/state/federal officials attended the meeting. The meeting notice was published in the *Texas Register*, *Federal Register*, *Houston Chronicle*, and various local newspapers. Information was also posted at a local business within the study area. At the meeting, an overview of the Grand Parkway and of the proposed Grand Parkway Segment C study area was presented. The status of the proposed Grand Parkway Segment C study was also discussed, as well as the criteria for evaluating alternatives and the study process.

Comments were received from the public. These comments varied, and included concerns of impacts to residents, impacts to the natural environment, and impacts to the dark skies utilized by the George Observatory at Brazos Bend State Park. All of the comments received at the meeting, both verbal and written, have become a part of this study.

##### **7.4.2 Public Workshop (Meeting) #1**

On October 27, 1998, a Public Workshop for the proposed Grand Parkway Segment C was held at the George Ranch. Approximately 85 people attended the workshop. At the workshop, exhibits were presented that displayed the Reasonable

Alternatives to be carried forward for further investigation. Alternative corridors, which had been eliminated from the study, were also presented.

During the workshop, the study team received 63 written comments. The study team has evaluated all of the written comments and, as a result, made several changes to the group of Reasonable Alternatives.

#### **7.4.3 Public Hearings**

Two public hearings were held simultaneously on June 13, 2000, at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Brazoria County and Dickinson Elementary School in Fort Bend County to present the findings of the DEIS. Information on the two public hearings is available in Volume 3. A formal presentation was given and was followed by a public commenting period. Exhibits could be viewed before and after the presentation as well as during a break. Approximately 215 individuals were in attendance at the Fort Bend County hearing and 127 individuals at the Brazoria County hearing. The public hearing notice was published in the *Houston Chronicle*, *Angleton Times*, *Fort Bend Sun*, *The Herald-Coaster*, and *The Facts*. Six hundred thirty-two individual notices were mailed to elected officials, government agencies, local organizations, civic groups, businesses, landowners, and interested citizens. The public was invited to make either oral or written comments on a form available at both hearings. Many verbal and written comments were received during the hearings and are summarized in Volume 3. The responses corresponding to all comments are also included Volume 3. Public comments are provided for on a CD provided in Volume 3.

#### **7.4.4 Public Workshop (Meeting) #2**

Two public workshops were held simultaneously on November 14, 2000, at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Brazoria County and Manford-Williams Elementary School in Fort Bend County to present a Build Alternative for the proposed Grand Parkway Segment C (Volume 3). The public was given the opportunity to view exhibits displaying the Universe of Alternatives, Reasonable Alternatives, Representative Alternatives, Build Alternative, project schedule, and ROW mapping. Project team members individually discussed the project with the public and answered questions. A comment form was furnished to allow the public to submit written comments on the Build Alternative. Approximately 178 individuals attended the Fort Bend County workshop, including 4 elected officials. Approximately 79 individuals attended the Brazoria County workshop, including 3 elected officials and one member of the media. Many verbal and written comments were received during the hearings and are summarized in Volume 3. The responses corresponding to all comments are also included Volume 3. Public comments are provided for on a CD provided in Volume 3.

At the Fort Bend County workshop, the majority of the written comments regarded the northern portion of the Build Alternative and came from residents in the Bridlewood Estates neighborhood. These residents favored an alignment further to the west, away from populated areas, such as the Representative Alternative Segments B1, C1, C2, B3, and B4.1. Bridlewood residents mentioned that the Build Alternative would impact property values and quality of life and would be a source of noise and light pollution. Negative impacts were also expressed by residents in Canyon Gate, Greatwood, and Tara. Comments regarding the middle portion of the Build Alternative most often opposed the alignment along FM 762

(Segment X1). Instead, they supported the B5, B6, G2, and G3 segment alignment. Residents in the Brazos Lakes neighborhood mentioned that the Build Alternative would impact their aesthetics and recreation areas (including ball fields); increase noise, traffic, air pollution and crime; reduce property values; and degrade their quality of life. Neutral comments included issues such as sound barriers, flooding, surface water flow, access needs, relocation, lighting restrictions, and “open habitat” conservation.

At the Brazoria County workshop, many residents in Rosharon and a council member from Iowa Colony expressed support for the Build Alternative and expressed appreciation for the alignment change that responded to public comments made at the Public Hearings. Several residents asked that construction begin as soon as possible. Residents from the Brazos Bend Oaks neighborhood opposed the Build Alternative because of its close proximity. These residents mentioned that it would impact their property values, quality of life, and the wildlife in the area. Other issues mentioned included flooding; funding through tolls; intersection design; making use of public and private ROW currently on record with the county; the preference of elevating the roadway instead of constructing multiple bridges; and favorable access to farming and ranching.

#### **7.4.5 Public Workshop (Meeting) #3**

A third public meeting was held to receive comments regarding the construction of the proposed Grand Parkway Segment C as a toll facility. A copy of the schematics is presented in Exhibit 40. The meeting was held on August 30, 2007, at Guy Lodge Hall/Beasley Post Office on the George Ranch Historical Park in Richmond, Texas. The meeting consisted of an open house session, a formal presentation, and a public comment session. The open house session was held between 6:00 and 7:00 PM to allow viewing of reference materials and maps. Representatives from TxDOT, the GPA, and the consultant team were available to discuss the project and answer questions. The presentation began at 7:00 PM and included an animated flyover of the recommended Build Alternative.

A public comment session was also held, and a total of 18 verbal comments were received. One additional comment was made to a private court reporter located in the open house area. Throughout the meeting, attendees had the chance to submit written comments. Written comments could also be mailed or emailed by September 13, 2007. A total of 934 written comments were submitted within the comment period. A copy of the public meeting summary and response to public comments are available in Volume 3. Public comments are provided for on a CD provided in Volume 3.

There were 269 in attendance, including 9 elected officials and 5 media representatives.

#### **7.5 WEBSITE AND NEWSLETTERS**

A website ([www.grandpky.com](http://www.grandpky.com)) was established to inform the public about the GPA and the proposed Grand Parkway roadway project, including the proposed Grand Parkway Segment C. The website defines the limits of each segment of Grand Parkway and the status of each segment. The website also provides an opportunity to make a comment or add a name to the mailing list.

Newsletters were also published to inform the public of the status of the proposed Grand Parkway Segment C. The public was given the opportunity to put their name on the mailing list at public meetings and on the website.