



## ***Meeting Minutes***

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PROJECT: Loop 9 Transportation Study

LOCATION: DeSoto City Hall Council Chambers

MTG. DATE: September 28, 2006

SUBJECT: Loop 9 Task Force Meeting

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**Meeting:** The purpose of this meeting was to update the Task Force on the work efforts of the study, the schedule of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) process, TxDOT's participation and team transition, and revisions to corridor layouts reflecting changes in design parameters.

### **Attendees**

Attendance at this Task Force meeting consisted of 93 Task Force members, elected officials, interested parties, consultants and study team. A listing of attendees is attached.

### **Welcome & Introductions**

Dallas County Commissioner John Wiley Price opened the meeting, recognized and thanked the elected officials and others attending. Donald Holzwarth, Director of Dallas County Public Works, summarized the purpose of the meeting. Mr. Holzwarth mentioned that there will be additional public meetings and other opportunities for the public to make comments on the Loop 9 Study during the DEIS process, consistent with the requirements of the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

### **Loop 9 and Trans-Texas Corridor (TTC)**

Bill Hale, TxDOT Dallas District, thanked Dallas County and the region for their efforts on Loop 9. Mr. Hale stated that due to the work already completed, the region can capitalize on an opportunity to get the project built faster as a potential connector to the TTC-35.

### **Regional Perspective of Loop 9**

Jeff Neal, North Central Texas Council of Governments, summarized the NCTCOG's efforts to bring projects on-line faster in the new Mobility 2030 Plan by identifying other revenue opportunities such as tolling. Mr. Neal gave an overview of the Outer Loop projects and noted that the Loop 9 section is the only one that has started the NEPA process. Loop 9 appears in the proposed Mobility 2030 Air Quality Conformity placeholders as a 6 toll-lane + 4 frontage road-lane facility in 2015 and a 6 toll-lane + 4 truck lane + frontage roads in 2030. The NCTCOG is promoting the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) position regarding the TTC-35, developing the Outer Loop Management Plan, and initiating the Tower 55 study to look at freight rail movements.



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## **Loop 9 Conceptual Alignment and Environmental Process**

Eddie Haas, Parsons, presented a general overview of the current status of the corridor's conceptual design and findings from the Fatal Flaw Analysis. Mr. Haas discussed that since the Task Force's last meeting in May, there have been a number of changes to the conceptual alternatives that reflect alternative modes and system interface within the Loop 9 corridor. The corridor has changed from a parkway configuration to a facility that incorporates managed main lanes for trucks and autos. This has required a more detailed investigation of corridor connectivity and operations. A Fatal Flaw Analysis concluded that freight rail was not a viable alternative in the Loop 9 corridor due to geometric design challenges and topographic constraints. The next step – currently ongoing – in the study process involves detailed examination of corridor connectivity.

Mr. Haas presented details on the conceptual alternatives currently under study, including the typical sections, right-of-way needs, corridor connectivity, and key alternative alignment refinements resulting from the change to the 85 mph design speed and environmental findings. Major interstate/intrastate facility crossings would be fully-directional system interchanges for autos and trucks, while auto-only connections from regional arterials would be provided via diamond interchanges. Access/frontage roads would be provided but may not be continuous through interchange locations or in environmentally sensitive areas. Corridor implementation would be phased in segments over time, based on travel forecasts and the developer's financial models. At the outset of corridor implementation, the typical section would include 2 or 3 lane frontage roads with 3-lane mixed (auto & truck) lanes in each direction with open median for long-term expansion and separation of managed auto & truck lanes. Right-of-way width requirements will vary from 430 ft. to 600 ft. at interchanges. Transition area lengths to accommodate direct connections at interchanges would require 5000-8000 ft. from the interchange connection. Mr. Haas also discussed the specific alignment refinements in the corridor due to the change in design speed, corrections of angles at interstate crossings, avoidance of environmentally protected or sensitive areas, and other factors.

Sandy Wesch-Schulze, Carter Burgess, gave an overview of the environmental process required by NEPA and where the Loop 9 Study stands in that process. Ms. Wesch-Schulze noted that Loop 9 is in the development of the DEIS stage of the process. The DEIS will evaluate the two build alignment alternatives and the no-build alternative. Because of the refinements to the conceptual alternatives some additional environmental field work will need to be completed. Public meetings will be held prior to completion of the administrative DEIS by the end of 2006. A preferred alternative will not be recommended until after the public hearing, in the Final EIS. The goal for the final Record of Decision (environmental approval) is late 2008.

## **Loop 9 in Perspective**

Mr. Holzwarth discussed the many benefits that could result from the completion of the study and the project. He also noted that the integrity of the NEPA process will be maintained and assured that the refinements to the alignments are not drastic changes from the previous vision of the Loop 9 corridor.



## Question/Answer and Comments

Comment: *When Loop 9 is implemented, it will be the first time that a new loop started in the southern portion of the Dallas area and not the north.*

Q: *Will service roads be built within the 430-ft ROW?*

A: Yes.

Q: *How will access be determined along the Loop 9 corridor/Will service roads be controlled access?*

A: TxDOT access management standards will apply.

Q: *When will the final alignment be set and how will it be staged?*

A: The DEIS will be complete by the end of 2006. We will collect comments on the 3 alternatives and those comments will be compiled and placed in the Final EIS. The final alignment would be set when the Record of Decision (ROD) is issued by the federal government (end of 2008). After the ROD, the project could be a Cintra-Zachry design-build project, and construction could most likely start where traffic and financial models show the highest revenue.

Q: *In areas where alignment shifts occurred, will previous alignments be retained in the DEIS?*

A: Only the two alignments that have been refined to meet 85 mph design speed will be carried forward in the EIS.

Q: *In Kaufman County, you mentioned there would be a minimum of 3000 feet with 8000 foot maximum to transition in and out of interchanges. That means about three miles of continuous interchange. What kind of local access does that provide and does it make worse the gridlock in Kaufman County?*

A: A description of the Loop 9 connection with SH 190 was described. At this time, we don't know where SH 190 and the Rockwall section of the outer loop will be located. The right-of-way has to expand near interchanges, however it is anticipated that tolled lanes (only) would extend to the outer loop thus limiting the need for increased right-of-way.

Comment: *A coordination meeting with Kaufman County to explain potential design issues would benefit all from this area of the corridor.*

Q: *Will Loop 9 be a toll road? Who will manage it?*

A: Yes, and the management will most likely be Cintra-Zachry though they could contract the NTTA for operations.

Q: *If the frontage roads are not continuous, where will the breaks be?*

A: The breaks will most likely be in environmentally sensitive areas and through interchanges.

Comment: *Typically the visibility at interchanges is great but access is lousy. Not allowing the frontage roads to continue through interchange locations limits the ability of a city to effectively receive any economic benefits from adjacent quadrants to a major facility crossing.*



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### **Summary & Wrap-up**

Commissioner Price thanked everyone for attending and emphasized partnership to make the project happen.

### **Adjourn**

Meeting was adjourned.