



Williamson County
Long-Range Transportation Plan Update
Public Input Report from Countywide Open House
Thursday, April 16th from 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

A countywide open house was held to present information regarding the Williamson County Long-Range Transportation Improvement Plan Update and to gather public input. Attendees were able to view exhibits, which displayed population and employment statistics, transit routes and proposed mixed-use developments. Additionally, projected levels of service for proposed roads in the year 2035 were illustrated using two scenarios – the proposed projects being built compared with the projects not being built. Participants were also provided with handouts, including Frequently Asked Questions, a list of proposed transportation projects to be included in the plan, a map displaying current road-bond projects that have either been completed or are in the design or construction phase and a summary of comments received from the precinct open houses held previously. The open house was held at the Williamson County Courthouse in Georgetown. Forty-four people attended the open house; we received 20 written comments.

Meeting Notification

A press release was distributed to media outlets throughout Williamson County, and information was placed on the Road Bond Web site (www.roadbond.org). Additionally, an advertisement was placed in the following media outlets on the following dates:

Taylor Daily Press – Thursday, April 8, 2009 and Thursday, April 16, 2009

Hutto News – Wednesday, April 15, 2009

Williamson County Sun – Sunday, April 12, 2009

Hill Country News – Friday, April 10, 2009

Round Rock Leader - Saturday April 11, 2009

Austin American-Statesman – Wednesday, April 15, 2009

Summary of Comments:

A standardized input form was provided to attendees that included the following questions:

- What other factors should the Commissioners Court consider when making decisions about transportation for the County?
- What role should transit play in the County's transportation plan?
- What is the most important project to you in this plan, and why?
- Is there anything that has been left off the project list?
- Additional comments?

Written Comments:

Mike Harlow commented that the need for the State Highway 29 Liberty Hill Bypass is flawed. The maps indicate the population growth will be south and east of Liberty Hill, and the bypass does not meet the need. He stated that a continued focus on rail is a must. The costs of highways have skyrocketed. The

most important project in this plan is the Highway 29 Bypass at Georgetown because it is a critical choke point. He stated that the South Bypass at Liberty Hill is a mistake. It does not help congestion at Seward Junction. The original 400-foot swath was decided on without including the citizens of Liberty Hill. It would seem that the 3405 option provides a less expensive and more environmentally sensitive route. The 3405 route would bypass Liberty Hill and connect to 183, Ronald Reagan and IH-35. One of the problems is that we don't need a 400-foot solution. We need a number of smaller options.

David Bartels with the City of Round Rock commented that the proposed station at the junction of the Red Line and the Round Rock rail link is not a viable option. The Round Rock rail location will be east of what is depicted on the map. He suggested that the Transit Oriented Development area also needs to be checked. He suggested that the Pflugerville Station at SH 45/SH 130 TOD should be named the town center development. He asked that an intermodal and parking facility be added in southwest downtown and Brown and Bagdad. He stated that Round Rock is negotiating for land for a Park & Ride lot on the south side of SH 45 between Greenlawn and IH-35 for express bus service. He stated that Round Rock will still have bus service inside the city by CARTS. Round Rock spent a year developing demographic projections for the MTP update and it includes the additional 1.2 million square-foot commercial building at the potential TOD at the Station at Dell headquarters.

Michael Wright commented that the most important projects are Shell Road and SH 195.

Heidi Ross requested to be added to the database.

Patrick Harlow commented that trains, buses and mass transit are factors that should be considered when making decisions about transportation for the county. Repair of county roads is important. He asked that SH 29 stay on the existing right-of-way to help the businesses in Liberty Hill. There is no logic, reason or reality, to the SH 29 Bypass. CAMPO plans to add one lane to Highway 29 when necessary. He also commented that the plan should not consider toll roads, Trans-Texas corridors or eminent domain.

Alissa Harlow commented that the county should consider real needs in making decisions about transportation. Road repair is important. The most important project is to keep SH 29 local. It should not be a toll road and it should not be a loop around Liberty Hill. Nothing was left of the project list. TxDOT should run the state highway system.

Ben Lake stated that the county has done a good job of issuing bonds at the right time and in the right amount and should continue to evaluate market conditions to "stretch" our bond money. Mass transit options should always be considered for extremely congested areas but more and wider roads are typically best. He commented that all the roads to the north and west out of Georgetown are very important (SH 195, RM 2338, SH 29, etc). He appreciated the county encouraging public opinion through these meetings and supports its decisions to date.

Lisa Harlow stated that the county should consider conservation when making transportation decisions. She stated that ranchers will lose and realtors will gain with a loop around Liberty Hill, and the county will lose precious land and rivers. She commented that removing the SH 29 loop through a flood plain would be the most important project in the plan because it is expensive and destructive. SH 29 is the

main thoroughfare through Liberty Hill. It has brought many businesses that hope to thrive on the road and a loop would cut off the life of these businesses.

One individual commented that there seems to be limited analysis of the population predictions for the City of Hutto. The person also commented on the need for transparency and oversight of the T. Don Hutto Detention Center.

Tammy Garth commented that the population growth predictions do not seem accurate or represent growth. She also asked to speak to someone about the Hutto Detention Center.

One individual stated that public transportation should be considered as part of the plan. He stated he wanted the Hutto Detention Center to be closed.

One individual commented that SH 29 be a four-lane highway. He suggested that a rail project from Taylor to Georgetown should be included in the plan.

Colin Johnston commented that the direction of population growth should be a factor the county considers when making decisions about transportation. He would like to add the extension of D.B. Wood and Shell Road to the project list, especially Shell Road needs to be widened to add at least a turn lane.

Linda Harlow commented that congestion in the metro areas of Round Rock, Cedar Park and Leander should be the main consideration for road projects. She suggested that bringing a mass transit line to Seward Junction would be a good idea. Projects in Cedar Park and Leander should take priority over projects around Liberty Hill. Congestion in these areas is going to be far more severe. A bypass around Liberty Hill is not needed. There will be capacity on an expanded SH 29 for many, many years to come.

Robbie and Mahlon Arnett commented that the Commissioners need to know their precincts inside and out, neighborhood by neighborhood, street by street, farm by farm and school by school. Engineers should drive the area and not just look at data before planning. Transit, especially light rail, will be very important and needs to be planned now using real-time data. The county should look at school districts and their boundaries. FM 1660 realignment is not on the map. The population density maps should be scrapped because the information is way out of date and is not very descriptive for those individuals looking at the county who do not live here.

Billy Turner commented that the county should repair all county roads before constructing new ones. The most important projects in the plan are CR 398 & CR 373. The plan needs to add a loop around Taylor (397); it should connect with Chandler Road north of Taylor.

Ed Polasek commented that FM 1460 should move forward as a pass-through-finance proposal. This would move opening day to 2015, if approved by the City Council and TxDOT.

One individual noted that CR 130 between CR 100 and the SE Inner Loop is not shown on the map, and there is a lot of traffic on this road.

Jerry Roane commented that the long-range plan should include advanced transportation systems such as TriTrack.net to solve congestion. TriTrack.net is being manufactured in Georgetown. Peak oil should

not be part of the long-range planning process. Traditional transit needs to be replaced with advanced transportation systems, which some people are calling Pod cars and other call dual-mode cars. A high-speed monorail down the freight rail corridor would make traditional trains obsolete. He suggested that a TriTrack grid network be added to the project list.

Susan Garry commented that the county should preserve as much green space as possible to address global climate change that is possibly exacerbated by eliminating trees and grass for more and more pavement, preserve as much farm and ranch land as possible. Based on demand, an express bus service should be studied between Taylor and Round Rock. She thanked the county for not projecting any new projects in rural areas of eastern Williamson County. She encouraged the county to continue to impact the rural areas as little as possible by using existing ROW and existing routes as much as possible, rather than proposing new routes that will cut across farms and ranches. In regard to moving the freight rail off the UP line to eastern Williamson County, the county should consider if this can be done without unacceptable destruction of farms, ranches, homes and communities on the valuable Blackland Prairie. Please consider the Coupland community. She quoted the Central Texas Rail Relocation Study, "An overpass for FM 1466 is proposed in Coupland. Coupland is a small community and the main businesses district is located along FM 1466 and only a few hundred feet away from the railroad. Elevating FM 1466 through this area will have a significant impact to access to the businesses."