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TXDOT WORKING TO KEEP BUSINESS OWNERS IN THE LOOP

TxDOT is planning regular meetings with business owners along the Waco District portion of I-35 as construction progresses. The first of these meetings will cover Section 5B, West to Abbott, and be held

Wednesday, Aug. 24
3 p.m. – 5 p.m.
West Community Center
209 W. Tokio Road
West, Texas

"We want to keep business owners informed about what's going on and how the construction effort might impact their businesses," explains I-35 Information Specialist Jodi Wheatley of the Waco District. "The meetings also give us a chance to talk with these entrepreneurs about how TxDOT can better meet their needs."

Monthly meetings will cover all I-35 projects active in the district. For the convenience of business owners along the stretch of I-35 currently or soon to be under construction, each month the meeting will be held in a different county — Hill, McLennan, or Bell. With this effort, TxDOT hopes to provide business owners a chance to:

- Meet the I-35 construction and information teams;
- Get informed about construction in their area;
- Stay ahead of upcoming changes in construction, access, etc., so their businesses are minimally impacted; and
- Have an open forum in which to provide feedback and express their concerns.

"Our first meeting in West is an opportunity to get feedback on what business owners would like to see in these meetings," says Wheatley. "What information do they need, how would they like to receive it...we want to have an answer to every question if at all possible."

CALENDAR

Aug. 24

3 p.m. – 5 p.m.

Business Community Meeting
West Community Center
209 W. Tokio Road
West, Texas

Sept. 8

Open bids for Section 3B - Lorena (Woodlawn Rd to FM 2063 + the Waco Brazos River frontage-road bridges)

Oct. 6

Open bids for Section 3A-2 - Bruceville-Eddy (N. Troy city limit to Woodlawn Rd.)

LINKS

[Landowner Resource Documents](#)
[My35.org](#)
[TxDOT](#)

CONTACT

Jodi Wheatley

I-35 Information Specialist
TxDOT Waco District
100 S. Loop Dr.
Waco, TX 76704
254/867-2836
jodi.wheatley@txdot.gov

FORT WORTH'S TOWER 55 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT MOVING FORWARD, FRA APPROVAL EXPECTED SOON

Final approval is expected soon on a \$34 million federal grant that will help advance construction on a major North Texas rail yard considered to be one of the most congested in the nation.

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), along with the BNSF and Union Pacific railroads and the City of Fort Worth, are working closely with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to finalize the details on a \$34 million TIGER II grant awarded earlier this year that will help fund Fort Worth's Tower 55 Multimodal Improvement Project. Improving Tower 55, seen as a major holdup in national rail shipping, is one way TxDOT hopes to relieve statewide highway congestion. Delays and extra costs caused by long waits at the rail yard have convinced many shippers to use trucks instead of trains, adding to the traffic load on highways like I-35.

Construction could begin on the \$101 million project as early as spring 2012, pending final agreements.

Future growth in freight rail guarantees the need for increased capacity, specifically to accommodate the eleven major freight and passenger routes from across North America that merge into this intersection.

The federal money — combined with contributions from TxDOT, the City of Fort Worth and the railroads — will fund improvements such as installing new signaling, upgrading bridges, adding a third north-south main line, and improving street and pedestrian crossings.

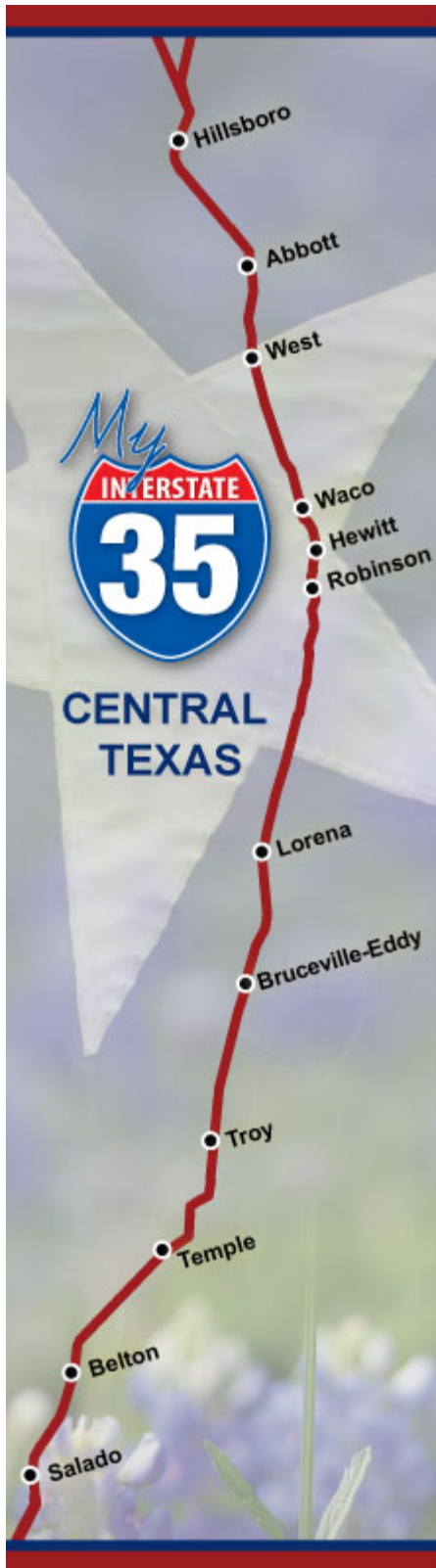
BNSF estimates \$1.1 billion in public benefits for the first 20 years after completion of the project. These include:

- Improvements that will increase capacity and transportation efficiency such as new signaling and an additional north-south track across the intersection
- Reduced freight transportation and operating costs
- Improved emergency vehicle access to local neighborhoods
- Reduced delays for motorists, pedestrians and passengers
- Reduced emissions from idling trains and vehicles at crossings

[Learn more about Tower 55 and the planned improvements](#)

HOW TXDOT'S RIGHT-OF-WAY RELOCATION PROCESS WORKS

For many road projects, acquiring right of way can be just as complicated as the construction process itself. (In the July issue of this newsletter, we examined the right-of-way acquisition process.) Sometimes homeowners, tenants, businesses, farms — and even outdoor advertising signs —



must be relocated to make the project a success. And that can be a full-time job for the dozens of TxDOT relocation specialists around the state.

"Every relocation case is different," TxDOT Right of Way Agent Cassidy Bruce says, calling the process an enormous undertaking. "But with each case, we follow strict guidelines from the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970."

A simplified TxDOT manual, **ROW Vol. 3 - Relocation Assistance** is available online. A streamlined, 40-page booklet, *Relocation Assistance*, is available from TxDOT's Right of Way Division.

"In some cases, say when only unimproved property is involved, we simply write the property owner a check based on the appraised value of the property," Bruce says. "But oftentimes, families, individuals, and properties need to be moved. Each case is unique based on the type of property and the situation of the family or individuals involved, so it can get complicated."

For the basics, here are some example cases:

For Owner-Occupied Homes

TxDOT will help homeowners search the surrounding 50-mile area for a comparable replacement home and will pay for moving costs, with no cap on the payment. However, the property owner must supply receipts to document the moving costs (required by state law). If the owner qualifies, the agency will also pay a housing supplement to purchase a new dwelling (e.g., expenses like typical closing costs and possibly increased mortgage interest costs). Owners, who must be legal residents of the United States, must own and occupy a decent, safe, and sanitary replacement dwelling within one year to qualify for this payment. The combined total of these amounts (excluding actual moving costs) may not exceed \$22,500 unless Last Resort Housing is initiated and adequately justified.

For Renters

If rent for a comparable dwelling costs more, tenants are possibly eligible for a rental assistance payment, which is paid in a lump sum to the displacee. Tenants, who must be legal residents of the United States, must rent and occupy the replacement dwelling within one year to qualify for this payment. Also, tenants could possibly use their rental assistance payment to *purchase* a replacement dwelling. If tenants exercise this option, their payment must cover the down payment and incidental expenses to purchase the decent, safe, and sanitary dwelling. The combined total of these amounts may not exceed \$5,250 unless Last Resort Housing is initiated and adequately justified. TxDOT also pays for renters' moving costs, with no cap on that payment, as long as receipts are provided to document the costs.

"Usually, comparable homes and rental property can be located," Bruce explains. "But in cases where similar properties aren't available, we initiate what we call the Last Resort Housing process, which allows us to

provide payments that exceed the normal payment limits."

For Business Owners

Displaced businesses, farms, and non-profit organizations are possibly eligible for various reimbursements including actual moving costs, reestablishment expenses (up to \$10,000), searching expenses for replacement property (up to \$2,500), direct losses of tangible personal property, or substitute personal property. Receipts are required to document costs. In some instances, a business owner can claim a fixed payment (up to \$20,000) in lieu of actual moving and reestablishment expenses, personal property losses or substitutes, and searching expenses. This payment is based on the two previous taxing years.

Numerous other scenarios exist among the thousands of relocation cases for the I-35 project.

"TxDOT wants to assist each individual or family affected by the I-35 project," Bruce says. "We have dedicated relocation counselors who are available to assist with each and every case."

Questions about the right-of-way process? [Email us](#) for the answers!

HOW TO MOVE A SMALL ARMY

How do you move a small army of big and little statues? Knowing the Texas two-step helps if you're Double D Statuary Factory Outlet #1.

You might not know the name, but if you drive on I-35 through McLennan County much, you've surely seen it. Tucked in close to the northbound side of I-35 in Bruceville-Eddy is a 3-acre field of manmade concrete and fiberglass creatures and accessories. Cats, dogs, cows, horses, deer and other wild animals, plus angels, saints, soldiers and gnomes populate the majority of the field. Some extra garden accoutrements inhabit the area as well, like birdbaths, stepping stones, garden benches, planters, wooden windmills and gliders.

Proprietor Kevin Barker and his wife, Esther, own and run the I-35 statue place, as it is referred to by many who drive or stop by. He started working for Double D Statuary in Lufkin when he left the Navy in 1994 after a career as a submarine hunter. In 1996, he decided he wanted his own business and opened one of only six full-line statuary supply stores in Texas.

Barker doesn't even know how many different kinds of statues, ranging from small to enormous, he has in stock, and that's part of what he enjoys about his work. "There's always something new coming out," he says. And he and his wife enjoy meeting new people and being outside.

Keeping a large stock on hand keeps his customers happy, but it now presents a large challenge for him: part of his land is being purchased by the state to allow for the expansion of I-35 through Bruceville-Eddy.

Barker's plan is to remain in Bruceville-Eddy and on I-35. He intends to stay open at his current location until he can get new land elsewhere along the corridor that can house his stone menagerie and provide access for his customers.

This is where it helps to know the Texas two-step. When it comes time to move off the section TxDOT purchases, Barker will send a notice to the customers who've asked to be notified about his moving sale (step one). He hopes to lessen the number of statues to be moved by selling as many as possible and letting the new owners move them. Then (step two) he will shift the remainder back behind the new right-of-way line until he can purchase a new place. He's already been looking, using the new I-35 schematics (project maps) TxDOT offers online, to find possible sites and check out the topography of the land he's interested in.

Planning ahead, he knows, won't make it easy, but it can make the logistics a lot less difficult to accomplish and can keep his customers happy as he makes his next move.

Hours for the "statue place" are Tuesday through Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. The phone number is (254) 859-3167, or visit the website or email Barker if you want to be notified about his moving sale.

LANE CLOSURES

SECTION 1C: SALADO TO BELTON (FM 2484 TO US 190 IN BELTON)

- The Connell Street exit ramp from US 190 W (first exit after entering US 190 from southbound I-35) has been permanently closed to allow construction of the new flyover connecting I-35 northbound to US 190 W.
- The inside lane of the US 190 W access road from I-35 to Connell Street is closed to allow construction of flyover support columns.
- Aug. 1–12: the outside lane of the eastbound US 190 frontage road from Connell St. to the southbound I-35 frontage road will be closed 7 a.m.–5 p.m. to allow the contractor to start work on a support column for the new flyover.

[View this section's project map \(schematic\).](#)

SECTION 5A: WACO TO WEST (N. LOOP 340 TO FM 1858)

- I-35 northbound Exit 342B will be closed for 6 to 12 months as work progresses at the US 77/I-35 interchange. Exit 342A (Crest Drive/FM 2417) will be open.

SECTION 5C: ABBOTT TO SOUTH OF HILLSBORO (FM 1304 TO FM 310)

- Chatt Rd. is completely closed and FM 310 is partially closed (one lane in each direction) under I-35 overpasses while cross streets are being rebuilt and turnarounds added. Both crossovers are expected to be re-opened in mid-August.
- Exit 362 to Chatt Rd. is closed until new exit and entrance ramps are constructed. Traffic will use Exit 359 (FM 1304) northbound and Exit 364 (FM 310) southbound to access Chatt Rd. during the closure.

MILESTONES

SECTION 1B: SALADO (FM 2268 TO FM 2484)

- Bids opened July 7. Low bidder is James Construction Group (also working on 1C: Salado to Belton and 3A-1: Temple to Troy).

SECTION 1C: SALADO TO BELTON (FM 2484 TO US 190/FM 436)

- Dirt work completed and drill shafts begun for new northbound access-road bridge over Lampasas River.

[View this section's project map \(schematic\).](#)

SECTION 3C: HEWITT TO WACO (FM 2063/SUN VALLEY BOULEVARD TO S. LOOP 340)

- Concrete portion of bridge rail poured on new flyover bridge.
- Completed last section of northbound frontage road near Greig Dr.
- Over half of the new northbound mainlane concrete pavement poured.

SECTION 5A: WACO TO WEST (N. LOOP 340 TO FM 1858/TOKIO ROAD)

- Northbound bridge deck for BUS 77 overpass poured.
- Opened a new portion of northbound frontage road between BUS 77 and Lincoln City Rd.
- Frontage roads between LP 340 and BUS 77 are approximately 50 percent complete.

SECTION 5C: ABBOTT TO HILLSBORO (FM 1304 TO FM 310)

- Completed new one-way southbound frontage road.
- Switched southbound frontage road traffic to new lanes.
- Began removing old southbound access road.
- Paved driveways for businesses along I-35 access roads.
- Completed last box culvert on northbound side.

DOWN THE ROAD

SECTION 1C: SALADO TO BELTON (FM 2484 TO US 190/FM 436)

- Begin work on caps for the US 190 westbound flyover support columns.
- Construction will continue on the retaining walls at overpasses, the support columns for the new US 190 flyover, and the new northbound frontage road from FM 2484 to Shanklin Rd.
- Crews will start drillshafts for the new northbound frontage-road bridge over the Lampasas River.

[View this section's project map \(schematic\).](#)

SECTION 3A-1: TEMPLE TO TROY (N. LOOP 363 TO N. TROY CITY LIMIT)

- Construction start anticipated in early 2012.

SECTION 3C: HEWITT TO WACO (FM 2063/SUN VALLEY BOULEVARD TO S. LOOP 340)

- Set metal railings concrete bridge rail on flyover.
- Pour northbound bridge deck at Crossover Rd. near Waco Memorial Park cemetery.
- Complete pouring concrete pavement for northbound mainlanes.

SECTION 5A: WACO TO WEST (N. LOOP 340 TO FM 1858/TOKIO ROAD)

- Construction will continue on overpasses at BUS 77, Hilltop Rd./Old Dallas Rd. and FM 1858/Tokio Rd., as well as on the new frontage roads between N. Loop 340 & Hilltop Rd./Old Dallas Rd. and on the overpass over UPRR.
- Continue night paving on frontage roads between N. Loop 340 and BUS 77.
- Continue construction of northbound mainlanes at BUS 77.

- Begin prepping ROW between Tours Rd. and FM 1858.

SECTION 5B: WEST TO ABBOTT (FM 1858 TO FM 1304)

- Pre-construction meeting tentatively planned for late August, with construction beginning in late August or early September.

SECTION 5C: ABBOTT TO HILLSBORO (FM 1304 TO FM 310)

- Open Chatt Rd. and FM 310 crossings under I-35 and remove detours.
- Connect intersections to new southbound access road.
- Set barrier on southbound side of I-35 and begin prepping for new shoulder.
- Begin paving new shoulder on northbound I-35, along with new on- and off-ramps.

SAFETY REST AREAS (HILL COUNTY)

- Pre-construction meeting anticipated in mid-August with construction starting in September.

For more information or to have your email address added to the I-35 information distribution list, please send your request to Jodi.Wheatley@txdot.gov.