

Appendix G-6
Initial Scoping Letters



Texas Department of Transportation

DEWITT C. GREER STATE HIGHWAY BLDG. • 125 E. 11TH STREET • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-2483 • (512) 463-8585

January 23, 2004

The Honorable Jim Pitts
Texas House of Representatives
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, Texas 78768-2910

Dear Representative Pitts:

Within a few weeks, a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare the first environmental impact statement for the I-35/Trans-Texas Corridor (TTC35) will be published by the Federal Highway Administration and Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). The notice is expected to be posted in a few weeks in the Federal Register and Texas Register.

The TTC35 project has been nominated as a transportation project for streamlined environmental review. To promote responsible environmental stewardship, we are partnering with resource agencies to develop an efficient and streamlined decision-making process that will result in timely agency reviews, as well as full compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

The NOI, which will officially inform interested parties that the environmental process for the TTC35 project has begun, invites comments, suggestions and concerns related to potential environmental impacts be submitted to TxDOT. Beginning in spring, several public meetings will be held to provide opportunities for comments to be submitted. They will be announced by legal notices in area newspapers, letters to local officials and identified stakeholders, and a news release.

As soon as the meeting dates and locations are confirmed, a list will be sent to your office for advance notification. At this time, you will also receive project materials that will be distributed at the meetings.

Throughout the environmental process, regular project updates and information, as well as a list of upcoming public meetings will be posted on the project website (www.ttc35.com). In addition, a toll-free number has been set up to provide the public with project information, 1-877-TRANS-TX (1-877-872-6789).

We appreciate your involvement in the TTC35 project - one that is important to Texas and the nation. If you have any questions on this project or would like a project update, please let me know. For your convenience, attached is a TxDOT contact list for the TTC35 project.

Sincerely,

Executive Director

Attachment

Interstate 35/Trans-Texas Corridor

Project Contact List – Texas Department of Transportation

Phillip E. Russell
Director
Texas Turnpike Authority Division
512-936-0903

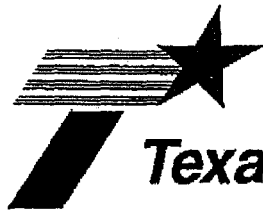
Ed Pensöck
Director for Corridor Development
Texas Turnpike Authority Division
512-936-0965

Doug Booher
Environmental Manager
Texas Turnpike Authority Division.
512-936-0980

Tonia Ramirez
Federal Legislative Analyst
Legislative Affairs Office
512-463-9957

Denise Pittard
State Legislative Analyst
Legislative Affairs Office
512-463-8746

Gabriela Garcia
Public Information Specialist
Public Information Office
512-475-2134



Texas Department of Transportation

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April 2, 2004

Mr. H. Dale Hall
Regional Director
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services
Ecological Services Regional Office
Southwest Region - 2
500 Gold Ave. SW
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102

Dear Mr. Hall:

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) acting as the lead federal agency, is preparing a Tier One Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed construction of the Trans-Texas IH-35 High Priority Corridor (TTC-35). TTC-35 is a temporary designation for the element of the proposed Trans-Texas Corridor System that would extend from the Texas-Oklahoma state line, north of the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area, through central Texas, to the Texas-Mexico international border and/or the Texas Gulf Coast – a distance of approximately 800 miles.

A Notice of Intent for proposed TTC-35 was published in the *Federal Register* on February 5, 2004, and the *Texas Register* on February 6, 2004. As currently envisioned, TTC-35 would be a multi-modal/multi-use, controlled access transportation facility. The proposed facility would include highway lanes for passenger vehicles; separate lanes for trucks; and six rail lines (one in each direction serving freight, commuter, and high speed passenger traffic). The typical right-of-way width would be 1,000 to 1,200 feet including a 200-foot wide utility zone that could ultimately accommodate lines for water, petroleum, natural gas, electricity, data, and other commodities.

It is anticipated that the Tier One EIS will include a broad-brush analysis of potential impacts owing to the proposed action. Anticipated decisions to be made during the Tier One process would include identification of a preferred route corridor (expected to vary in width from 1-2 miles, or less, up to 10 miles and that would become the study area for subsequent Tier Two documents), refinement of modal concepts, and identification of preliminary segments of independent utility. Tier One will end with the issuance of a record of decision (ROD). The Tier One ROD will not authorize construction of any portion of proposed TTC-35.

The Tier Two environmental process will commence upon receipt of the Tier One ROD addressing only those modes, passenger and truck highway, or rail, where a near-term transportation need has been identified. During Tier Two, route alternatives will be identified and evaluated, site specific studies and investigations will be performed, and, assuming a build alternative is selected as the preferred alternative, a specific route will be determined. Tier Two documents will focus on modal segments of independent utility. Approval of a Tier Two document would complete the environmental and public involvement phase of project development for specific modes addressed within that document.

A tentative Tier One study area has been defined and is shown on the attached exhibit. The purpose of this letter is to introduce your agency to the project and outline the proposed approach to environmental review and approval, initiate the agency scoping process and solicit your input in an effort to refine the project concept.

To facilitate the scoping process, TxDOT would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you or your designee to discuss the proposed project. Phillip E. Russell, Director of our Texas Turnpike Authority Division will contact your office to arrange a briefing. If you have any questions concerning proposed TTC-35 or the Tier One EIS, please contact Mr. Russell at (512) 936-0903.

Sincerely,



Michael W. Behrens, P.E.
Executive Director

Attachment

April 30, 2004

To Whom it May Concern:

In February 2004, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issued in the Texas Register and the Federal Register, respectively, notices of intent to prepare a Tier One Environmental Impact Statement (Tier One EIS) for a proposal to construct a multimodal transportation facility, known as TTC-35. TTC-35 is a temporary designation for a high priority element of the proposed Trans-Texas Corridor system. As currently envisioned, TTC-35 would extend from the Texas/Oklahoma state line, north of the Dallas/Fort Worth metropolitan area, through central Texas, to the Texas/Mexico international border and/or the Texas Gulf Coast. The purpose of this letter is to solicit comments, input and feedback to be considered during the development of the Tier One EIS.

The proposed TTC-35 facility would be up to 1,200 feet wide with separate lanes for passenger vehicles (three lanes in each direction) and trucks (two lanes in each direction), six rail lines (one in each direction for high-speed rail, commuter rail and freight rail), and a 200-foot wide utility zone. The objectives of the proposed project include:

- faster and safer transportation of people and commodities;
- relief for congested roadways;
- providing alternative routes for the movement of hazardous materials; and
- economic growth and development through the creation of new markets and new jobs.

The Tier One EIS is the first of two distinct phases (or "tiers") in the environmental study process. Tier One will evaluate a range of alternatives (including a no-action alternative) and will include a broad-brush analysis of potential impacts owing to the proposed action. Anticipated decisions to be made during the Tier One process would include identification of a preferred alternative, refinement of the modal concept, and identification of preliminary segments of independent utility. Approval of the Tier One EIS would not authorize construction.

The proposed Tier One study area is shown on the attached map. Assuming that the no-action alternative is not selected as the preferred alternative, then Tier One will result

in the selection of a preferred corridor route alternative (ranging in width from 1-2 miles, or less, up to 10 miles) that would become the study area for Tier Two.

Upon approval of the Tier One EIS, Tier Two studies would begin. Tier Two studies would focus on stand alone segments (meeting criteria established through the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 or NEPA) and would address only those modes (passenger lanes, truck lanes or rail) for which a near-term transportation need was identified in Tier One. During Tier Two, alternatives (route alternatives and a no-action alternative) will be identified and evaluated, site specific studies and evaluations will be performed, and, assuming a build alternative is selected as the preferred alternative, a specific route will be determined. Approval of a Tier Two environmental document would complete the environmental and public involvement phase of project development for the specific improvements addressed within the document.

All of the environmental studies – whether Tier One or Tier Two – will be performed in accordance with rules and regulations implementing NEPA.

Again, the purpose of this letter is to solicit comments, input and feedback to be considered during development of the Tier One EIS. The project team is particularly interested in information regarding sensitive resources and other unique features that may warrant special consideration in the Tier One EIS. Comments may be submitted in writing to: Trans-Texas Corridor, Attn: TTC-35, P.O. Box 14707, Austin, Texas 78761-4707. Comments may also be emailed to info@transtx.com. To be included in the official record of the Tier One EIS scoping process, comments must be received by June 14, 2004.

Additional information about the proposed TTC-35 project can be obtained from the project website (www.transtx.com) or by calling the project toll free number (1-877-TRANS-TX or 1-877-872-6789).

Sincerely,



Michael W. Behrens, P.E.
Executive Director

Attachment