

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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PUBLIC HEARING

-- BERGSTROM EXPRESSWAY --

Wednesday, November 19, 2014

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The above-entitled Public Hearing took place from 6:33 to 7:41 p.m., on Wednesday, November 19, 2014, at the Delco Activity Center, 4601 Pecan Brook Drive, Austin, Travis County, Texas 78724. Presenters:

Marisabel Ramthun, Jerel Rackley, Shelly Eason, and John Breed.

1 (Open house held from 6:00 to 6:33 p.m.)

2 P R O C E E D I N G S

3 MARISABEL RAMTHUN: Good evening.

4 Welcome. We're gonna go ahead and start with the public
5 hearing for the Bergstrom Expressway project. My name
6 is Marisabel Ramthun, and I work for TxDOT in the Austin
7 District.

8 Today is Wednesday, November 19, and the
9 official time is . . . 6:33. p.m. I would like to begin
10 the public hearing for the proposed Bergstrom
11 Expressway.

12 Before we get started, I ask that you
13 please silent any electronic devices.

14 If you're not familiar with the building,
15 there's restrooms on both sides of the building. And in
16 case of an emergency, there is exit at each corner of
17 the building, at all four corners.

18 I would like to note that this public
19 hearing is only for the Bergstrom Expressway project,
20 and we will not being discussing any other proposed
21 projects in the area.

22 The engineering layouts and environmental
23 assessment are available here for your viewing tonight.
24 We also have a copy located at Austin District office
25 and at the project Web site. The address for the office

1 and the Web site are included in the packet of
2 information you receive when you sign in. If you do not
3 get a packet of information, we still have some there at
4 the sign-in table for you to pick up.

5 Smaller scale of the project layouts are
6 available for your viewing at the University Hills and
7 Ruiz Branch libraries.

8 We would like to thank the Austin
9 Independent School District and the Delco Activity
10 Center for allowing us to use their facility here
11 tonight for the hearing.

12 I would like also to recognize the project
13 team from TxDOT and the Regional Mobility Authority. If
14 you could please stand if you're part of the project
15 team. Thank you.

16 The format for tonight's public hearing is
17 shown on the second page of the packet of information
18 you received. As you're aware, we ge- -- began the
19 program this evening with an open house at 6:00 p.m. I
20 hope you had a chance to view the drawings for the
21 project and to ask questions to the project team. If
22 not, there will be another opportunity to review the
23 layouts and the displays and talk to the staff during
24 the 15-minute break that we will have after the
25 presentation. That break will occur after we have the

1 technical and environmental and right-of-way
2 presentations.

3 You can also sign up during this break to
4 speak during the public-comment period. Please sign up
5 using the speaker registration cards. These are
6 available at the sign-in table, if you wish to provide a
7 comment tonight.

8 After the break, the public session will
9 begin. The speaker duration of the session will depend
10 upon the number of speakers. We have a court reporter
11 here today to record your comments, and we will be
12 preparing a transcript of this hearing.

13 We have a public hearing officer in
14 attendance tonight, Mr. Terry McCoy. Mr. McCoy is the
15 Deputy District Engineer for the Austin District.

16 The purpose of tonight's public hearing is
17 to provide information about the proposed Bergstrom
18 Expressway project and obtain input from the community
19 about the project.

20 There are many ways you can leave
21 comments. Verbal comments may be made after the break,
22 during the public-comment period, or even comments can
23 be left in the comment boxes that are in the tables
24 behind you tonight. Or you can mail, fax, or send a
25 comment through the project Web site. There's also --

1 in your packet, on the back page, there's also a page
2 where you can write your comments, and it has the
3 address, fax number, or . . . that you can submit your
4 comment.

5 Please make sure that if you want to
6 submit any written comments, you do so tonight, or even
7 after you leave tonight. You can do it by December
8 1st. That's when the open period will end. So you
9 can still submit comments after tonight, by December
10 1st.

11 All verbal and written comments received
12 by December 1st will be analyzed and the results will
13 be provided in two reports. The Public Hearing Summary
14 and Analysis is a report that will include a summary of
15 the hearing proceedings and comments. The analysis of
16 all the comments will also be provided in this report.
17 The comment . . . hearing . . . comment and respond
18 report will also have the comments with a response.
19 Copies of these reports will be available on the project
20 Web site for download, or will be available for the cost
21 of reproduction.

22 I'm gonna turn over the presentation to
23 Jerel Rackley, who is a professional engineer, and he
24 will provide you with the details on the engineering and
25 planning for the Bergstrom Expressway project.

1 JEREL RACKLEY: Good evening. My name is
2 Jerel Rackley, and I'm the project engineer for this
3 project. I'm going to start by giving you a little
4 history of the US 183 project.

5 US 183 was constructed in the early 1960s
6 as a four-lane divided roadway. The population of
7 Austin and Travis County has grown quite a bit since
8 then. In the early 1980s, a plan emerged to improve US
9 183 from RM 620 to SH 71. Several build alternatives
10 and the no-build option were studied. In 1985, the
11 alternative that was approved was a six-lane
12 controlled-access roadway from 620 to 71.

13 To date, right-of-way has been purchased
14 between 620 and 71, and the highway has been finished
15 from 620 to 290. Between 290 and 71, there have been
16 some operational improvements to US 183 to help increase
17 or maintain mobility.

18 Today, TxDOT is part of an organization
19 called the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning
20 Organization, or CAMPO. CAMPO is the designated
21 planning organization for the region, including Bastrop,
22 Burnet, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson Counties.

23 Growth in Austin and the surrounding area
24 has resulted in the need for many roadway improvements
25 throughout the region; therefore, there has been a shift

1 in the view of how much value comes from the tolled
2 facilities.

3 Once CAMPO determined that within a
4 25-year planning period there would not be enough
5 federal or state money to complete the nontolled,
6 six-lane, controlled-access US 183, tolling of the US
7 183 project from 290 to 71 was approved in the CAMPO
8 2035 Regional Transportation Plan.

9 The Bergstrom Expressway is the preferred
10 alternative on US 183 between 290 and 71. The proposed
11 project covers a distance of approximately eight miles
12 on the . . . on US 183, and extends from US 290 to SH
13 71.

14 Today, US 183, between 290 and 71, is
15 characterized as a four-lane divided roadway, with two
16 lanes of travel in each direction. The number of travel
17 lanes varies in each direction.

18 The current road also is what's called
19 a . . . noncontrolled-access road, meaning it has
20 driveways coming straight into the traffic lanes. And
21 there are traffic signals throughout the corridor.

22 We begin any project with the question:
23 What are we trying to accomplish? We've determined that
24 our goal on US 183 between 290 and 71 is to improve
25 safety and mobility for travelers.

1 The population of Austin in 1980 was about
2 346,000, and in 2010 it had grown to about 800,000.
3 It's been estimated that Austin will have about
4 one million people living in the city in 2020. An
5 increase in population correlates with increases in
6 traffic volume and vehicle crashes; therefore, we need
7 to change travel movements on 183 in order to improve
8 safety and mobility.

9 A six-lane tolled expressway with two
10 lane -- two to three general-purpose lanes is the
11 preferred build alternative on US 183. This means the
12 proposed roadway would have three main lanes of travel
13 in each direction, with two to three general-purpose
14 lanes in each direction, depending on existing
15 condition.

16 A sidewalk is proposed next to
17 general-purpose lanes on one side of the project. A
18 shared-use path -- which is similar to a wide
19 sidewalk -- for both pedestrians and bicyclists, is
20 proposed next to the other set of general-purpose lanes.
21 Also, a 5-foot bike lane is proposed next to both the
22 northbound and southbound general-purpose lanes.

23 Most of the right-of-way in the corridor
24 has already been purchased, but there is a need for
25 about 4 acres of new right-of-way and 9 acres of

1 easements. No displacements would occur as a result of
2 the acquisitions.

3 I'm gonna show you the display of our
4 schematic in the next few slides. In each of these
5 slides, you'll see that the yellow indicates the
6 number -- indicates the lanes that are nontolled. The
7 blue indicates the lanes that . . . that . . . would be
8 tolled. The pink areas show the shared-use path. The
9 tan areas show the proposed sidewalk. And the orange
10 lines show the right-of-way.

11 You can also view the schematic up close
12 along these bleachers on the side, download it from the
13 project Web -- or -- download it from the project Web
14 site, or view it at the locations mentioned earlier in
15 the presentation.

16 What you're seeing now on the screen is a
17 view from above of the proposed improvements at
18 Manor/Springdale Road. As can be seen, the nontolled US
19 183 main lanes continue from the north, over
20 Springdale -- Manor/Springdale Road. The tolled main
21 lanes begin just south of this interchange. Two-lane
22 entrance and exit ramps are provided for nontolled
23 access to the general-purpose lanes.

24 This slide shows the overpass they're
25 planning to build at Loyola Lane. The proposed main

1 lanes will go under Loyola, and there will be turnaround
2 structures so travelers will not have to stop to change
3 directions of travel on the general-purpose lanes.

4 This is a view of the proposed
5 improvements at 51st and Martin Luther King Junior
6 Boulevard. The existing crossover at 51st Street
7 would be removed, and the turning movements accommodated
8 at MLK. Although the distance of travel from the
9 neighborhood to the YMCA is increased by about one mile,
10 the travel time is slightly reduced because of the
11 turnaround structures.

12 A small amount of right-of-way is needed
13 to build a bicycle-and-pedestrian bridge across 183.
14 This bridge would connect the west side of 183 to the
15 YMCA in the Little Walnut Creek Hike and Bike Trail.

16 In addition to tolled main lanes,
17 nontolled connectors . . . underneath . . . MLK . . .
18 would be constructed . . . across US 183. These . . .
19 these nontolled connectors would be cro- -- connected
20 underneath MLK. These connectors would allow a traveler
21 to keep going instead of having to stop at the light.

22 South of MLK, there are several crossings
23 of US 183 where we propose to revise the turning
24 movements by providing turnaround structures at Boggy
25 Creek. These . . . include the intersections at

1 Technicenter Drive and Hudson Street.

2 These are the structures, the bridges,
3 across Boggy Creek. There will be four roadway bridges
4 across Boggy Creek. The main lane and general-purpose
5 lanes are built on these bridges across Boggy Creek.
6 There will be turnaround bridges constructed both on the
7 north and south sides of Boggy Creek.

8 The shared-use path would also be located
9 on a bridge over Boggy Creek, and would be connected to
10 the Southern Walnut Creek Hike and Bike Trail, with a
11 separate bridge across . . . the creek.

12 At Bolm Road, the existing overpass will
13 be removed, and Bolm Road east and west of US 183 would
14 tie into the general-purpose lanes.

15 A proposed pedestrian bridge would provide
16 bicycle and pedestrian access across US 183 at this
17 location.

18 From Bolm Road, travelers on the
19 southbound general-purpose lanes would be able to go
20 northbound using Levander Loop. Right here.

21 For residents . . . of the Knollwood . . .
22 on the Colorado River, the travel distance would be
23 increased by about one-and-a-half miles; however, the
24 travel time would be reduced by about half a minute
25 because of the turnaround structures provided on the

1 north side of Boggy Creek.

2 New connector bridges would be constructed
3 to tie Airport Boulevard, 7th Street, and 1st Street
4 to US 183. The existing truss bridge over the Colorado
5 River would be preserved and decommissioned from use as
6 a roadway bridge. It would be used as a
7 bicycle-and-pedestrian bridge instead.

8 Montopolis Drive would be realigned and
9 cross US 183 as an overpass.

10 South of Montopolis Drive, the travel
11 movements at the cross-over at Vargas would be moved to
12 the overpasses at Montopolis Drive and Patton Avenue.
13 The proposed main lanes shown in blue would end just
14 north of Patton Avenue. An overpass is proposed to
15 carry the main lanes over Patton.

16 The proposed improvements at the SH 71
17 interchange include reconstruction of SH 71 west and
18 east of US 183 and construction of direct connectors
19 tying US 183 north of the interchange to S -- SH 71 west
20 of the interchange.

21 I don't show or discuss all of the . . .
22 the detail of the proposed drainage easements for the
23 project. Overall, the project would provide the
24 necessary storm drainage to maintain water detention and
25 flow throughout the limits of the project.

1 Also, existing driveway connections to --
2 to the general-purpose lanes would be maintained, in
3 agreement with property-owners.

4 If you have any questions about what I've
5 shown, or want more information, my team members and I
6 will be available at the sides of the room during the
7 break.

8 A summary of the environmental studies
9 will be reviewed by Shelly Eason. Please welcome
10 Shelly.

11 SHELLY EASON: Good evening. Welcome.
12 All right. I'm Shelly Eason. I've worked for TxDOT for
13 about 13 years. I'm an environmental specialist.

14 A summary of the environmental studies is
15 called an environmental assessment. The National
16 Environmental Policy Act requires that we document how
17 we comply with rules and regulations.

18 WOMAN FROM AUDIENCE: Shelly. I'm sorry.
19 He's taller than you are. You might. . . .

20 Thank you.

21 (Ms. Eason adjusted the height of her
22 microphone.)

23 SHELLY EASON: We have copies of the
24 environmental assessment here tonight, if you'd like to
25 review them during our break, after our presentations.

1 And they're on that back table. The document is also
2 available for download and view on the project Web site.

3 There are various state and federal laws
4 require environmental studies be done before proceeding
5 on transportation projects. We study the natural and
6 the human environment, and we've done lots of studies to
7 include all this. We've done an air-quality assessment,
8 a community assessment, a traffic-noise analysis, a
9 biological evaluation, hazardous-materials site
10 assessment, and an indirect and cumulative analysis.

11 In the next slides I will show you a
12 summary of what we've done and what we found during the
13 studies and what is documented in that environmental
14 assessment.

15 In the community assessment, we looked at
16 11 routes of travel. These routes were chosen because
17 they represented the routes to and from the
18 neighborhoods surrounding the project area in two common
19 destinations along US 183.

20 The worst-case scenario in the 11 routes
21 that were looked at were -- would result in an increase
22 in travel distance of about three miles and an increase
23 in travel time of one minute.

24 Three of the 11 routes would result in an
25 increased travel distance of about one-and-a-half miles;

1 however, the time to travel the extra distance would
2 only increase the travel time about 30 seconds.

3 Seven out of the 11 routes would have
4 reduced travel time.

5 Since both the increases in travel time
6 and traffic congestion affect the cost to travel,
7 improving mobility by reducing traffic congestion would
8 reduce travel costs, even though we're -- we propose to
9 toll some of the roads, and the tolls would need to be
10 paid on some of those routes.

11 In the air-quality assessment, it is
12 concluded that lower emissions of mobile-source air
13 toxics are associated with decreases in traffic
14 congestion. Therefore, air quality in general would be
15 more stable along the US 183 corridor. The community
16 assessment and the air-quality assessment are attached
17 to -- in the -- to EA and appendices. And again, copies
18 of those are available on the tables in the back.

19 Now let's look at a proposed park. As a
20 part of the assessment of how the Bergstrom Expressway
21 project might make changes to the community, we looked
22 at parks-and-recreation areas along US 183. The planned
23 shared-use park and s- -- path and sidewalks would
24 provide quite a bit of new access to the city of
25 Austin's planned and existing trail system.

1 The City bought -- brought to our
2 attention their plans to build a park east of US 183
3 near Bolm Road. It's in this green area. They plan to
4 name this road the Bolm Road District Park. To date,
5 the City has not made any improvements on the land.

6 The Bergstrom Expressway project would
7 result in about one acre of parkland becoming part of
8 the roadway right-of-way. The right-of-way is needed so
9 that the shared-use path can be constructed in this
10 area. Let's see. Right there. The shared-use path is
11 a pink color, but it's kinda hard to see there.

12 Several meetings with the City have been
13 held regarding the proposed shared-use path and the
14 Bergstrom project. A summary of the coordination with
15 the City is attached to the community assessment, that
16 is also available here tonight, attached to the EA.

17 Federal Highways has determined that the
18 conversion of about one acre of parkland to Bergstrom
19 Expressway right-of-way would have no adverse effect to
20 the features, attributes, or activities that qualify the
21 park for protection under Section 4(f) of the Department
22 of Transportation Act.

23 Okay. In the community assessment, we
24 also studied what would happen when traffic is moved
25 closer to residences, churches, businesses, or outdoor

1 activities. We created a traffic-noise model of the
2 Bergstrom Expressway project. The traffic-noise
3 analysis indicated that noise barriers would be feasible
4 and reasonable at locations within the right-of-way
5 across from the University Hills subdivision. The final
6 decision to construct the proposed noise barriers will
7 not be made until completion of the project, design,
8 utility evaluation, and polling of adjacent
9 property-owners.

10 An informal noise -- noise workshop will
11 be held between Bergstrom Expressway project team
12 members and owners of property adjacent to the proposed
13 noise barrier. The purpose of those workshops is to
14 provide information about the noise barriers so the
15 owners may make an informed decision to vote for or
16 against the proposed barriers. More information about
17 those workshops and traffic-noise-barrier plan will be
18 provided as we progress.

19 There are several large oak trees south of
20 the Colorado River that are of local interest. Several
21 studies of the trees have been completed over the past
22 two years by arborists and project planners. The
23 studies have resulted in the development of some of the
24 best management practices that will be followed during
25 construction. These practices, and other protective

1 measures, will help to ensure the health of the trees.

2 Okay. Then another thing, any time we
3 plan work on old structures, such as bridges, TxDOT
4 completes tests to determine if the paint is -- or
5 caulking might contain lead or asbestos. Some of the US
6 183 drainage structures, and p- -- and a pipeline along
7 US 183, have lead-based paint and/or asbestos.

8 Also, there is an old landfill that has
9 been identified in the right-of-way near Loyola Lane.
10 Extensive testing of the landfill has indicated the
11 materials and soils could be handled during
12 construction. But however, TxDOT requires contractors
13 follows -- follow the rules and regulations regarding
14 exposure to hazardous materials. Any cleanup and
15 disposal of hazardous materials found during
16 construction would also follow the appropriate
17 regulations and guidance used for those efforts.

18 TxDOT has developed policies and practices
19 to avoid impacts of migratory birds. The Bergstrom
20 Expressway construction plans will include
21 notes/instructions of how contractors will avoid birds.

22 The reconstruction or construction of
23 bridges and culverts would result in some filled
24 channels . . . of the streams that cross US 183 and into
25 the Colorado River. The estimated fill would be

1 permitted using a US Army Corps of Engineers nationwide
2 permit.

3 Water quality in the area would be
4 maintained on and offsite of the project. Specifically,
5 the base flood elevations would be maintained and
6 managed as required through coordination with the local
7 floodplain administrator and the Federal Emergency
8 Management Administration.

9 All rules and regulations required under
10 the Clean Water Act and Texas Pollution Discharge
11 Elimination System would be followed.

12 The proposed rehabilitation of the 1936
13 truss bridge has been approved by the Texas Historical
14 Commission. Any changes to the bridge would maintain
15 historic aspects of that bridge.

16 And through avoidance and protective
17 measures, the Bergstrom Expressway project would not
18 impact federal- or state-listed threatened or endangered
19 species.

20 And lastly, there's the
21 Davidson-Littlepage Cemetery is located within the US --
22 right-of-way near State Highway 71, and it would be
23 protected during construction.

24 So all along our way we've been partnering
25 with the local community and other resource agencies.

1 It's important during any environmental study. Public
2 involvement has been ongoing since the planning of the
3 proposed expressway began in 2011. TxDOT has met with
4 various neighborhood associations and local businesses.
5 Also, we have hosted open houses in -- to present
6 different aspects of the proposed Bergstrom Expressway.

7 In addition to community input, these
8 resource agents also -- agencies also provided input
9 during the environmental study.

10 Okay. Your comments on the Bergstrom
11 Expressway are welcome. As I mentioned earlier, if you
12 want to review the entire environmental-assessment
13 document, there are copies of the documents on the
14 tables located behind us. And to the . . . and . . .
15 the technical reports are attached as appendices. You
16 can also look at this document online at the Bergstrom
17 Expressway project Web site.

18 Any changes to the design of the Bergstrom
19 Expressway project that might occur as a result of your
20 comments would be studied, and we may include them in
21 the environmental assessment before it's considered
22 final.

23 As I mentioned earlier, right-of-way and
24 easements will be needed for this project, Jerel
25 mentioned; however, no displacements are anticipated.

1 I'd like to welcome John Breed. He's
2 gonna discuss the right-of-way needs and how our
3 acquisition process goes.

4 JOHN BREED: Good evening. My name is
5 John Breed. I work for Atkins, who is working for the
6 Mobility Authority as a general engineering consultant.
7 Part of our scope includes providing oversight of the
8 right-of-way acquisition process for the Bergstrom
9 Expressway project that currently includes 41 parcels to
10 be acquired.

11 It's possible that later in the project
12 development the selected design-build contractor may be
13 required to acquire additional parcels that are
14 necessary for the project. If that determination is
15 made, the selected design-build contractor will be
16 responsible for acquiring that right-of-way, with
17 oversight from the Mobility Authority to ensure that
18 proper guidelines and laws are followed.

19 Before I go into more specific details on
20 the right-of-way process, I'd like to direct your
21 attention to the slide on the screen behind me.

22 No -- no person will be displaced by the
23 Mobility Authority's construction project unless and
24 until adequate replacement housing has been provided for
25 and has been made available to all affected persons.

1 The program is designed to bring all notices,
2 informational material, and personalized assistance
3 needed to make the acquisition and your relocation, if
4 necessary, as easy as possible.

5 The design of the highway sets the
6 alignment and what properties must be acquired in order
7 to construct the project. The current design at this
8 time does not involve the acquisitions of buildings or
9 structures.

10 According to law, if your property, home,
11 or business is acquired for a transportation project,
12 you are entitled to receive just compensation for your
13 acquired property and any damages to your remainder
14 property. Just compensation is determined by developing
15 an independent real estate appraisal for each parcel.
16 Each property-owner will be given an opportunity to
17 accompany the appraiser during the appraiser's
18 inspection. You will also be given the opportunity to
19 provide the appraiser with any specific details that you
20 feel are pertinent to the valuation of your property.

21 A written offer will be forwarded to each
22 property-owner. At this time, we would like to sit down
23 with you and meet with you and discuss the possibility
24 of purchasing your property.

25 In addition to the Mobility Authority's

1 acquisition program, affected landowners and tenants may
2 be able to participate in the Mobility Authority's
3 relocation-assistance program. This
4 relocation-assistance program assists residents,
5 businesses, farms, and ranches in moving as a result of
6 being displaced by a highway project. A
7 relocation-assistant agent will be provided to help
8 explain the benefits and help you secure them.

9 The most important thing that you can
10 remember is you must be occupying the property on the
11 date in which the offer's made to the property-owner to
12 ensure eligibility.

13 Additionally, copies of the
14 property-owner's bill of rights are located in the back
15 of the room. These rights detail your rights as a
16 property-owner in the state of Texas. If you have any
17 questions, please feel free to get with me at the break
18 or after the meeting tonight.

19 I'm now gonna turn the hearing back over
20 to Marisabel. And thank you for your time this evening.

21 MARISABEL RAMTHUN: So thank you, Jerel,
22 Shelly, and John, for your presentation tonight.

23 There are a few more steps in the process
24 as we move forward. As I said earlier, the main purpose
25 of this hearing is to hear from you and get your

1 comments, including, you know, from what you've seen and
2 heard here tonight.

3 If you wish to make a verbal comment,
4 please sign in in the -- you know, with a comment
5 registration card. You can turn those cards in at the
6 table, and you will be placed in the queue for your
7 comments.

8 The last page of the packet of information
9 is a comment sheet. This paper has information where
10 comments may be mailed or faxed, but you may also leave
11 written comments in any one of the comment boxes located
12 in the back of the rooms on the table.

13 I do want to remind you that you can
14 submit both written and verbal comments tonight. You're
15 not precluded from making additional comments after you
16 leave here. If you leave and decide to make a comment,
17 you can still mail/fax those or submit it through the
18 Web site until December 1st.

19 Public hearings follows a formalized
20 process where the formal public-comment session is
21 solely intended for receiving public comments. We will
22 not be answering any questions during the public-comment
23 period. If you have questions, you can ask the project
24 team during the break or after the hearing is over. The
25 project teams are wearing names tags, and they'll be

1 available, you know, to answer your questions.

2 The virtual tour of the project will be
3 playing on the screens during the break. Please note
4 that you can also see this on the project Web site.

5 We will now take a 15-minute break and
6 allow you the opportunity to view the exhibits and
7 discuss with the project team.

8 So the time is 7:07. We will . . .
9 reconvene at 7:20 . . . what's 7:07 plus 15? 7:24.
10 We'll take a 15-minute break. Thank you.

11 (A break was taken from 7:07 to 7:25 p.m.)

12 MARISABEL RAMTHUN: Okay. We're gonna go
13 ahead and get started with the comment-period part of
14 the program. If you can please take your seat, out of
15 courtesy of the ones that are gonna speak.

16 One point I would like to make is that
17 nothing that we have presented tonight is final. It is
18 subject to change based on the comments that we receive
19 from you from today up to December 1st.

20 Let me remind you that we will not be
21 answering questions during the verbal-comment period.
22 This is time for you to provide your comments and
23 statements for the record. If you have questions after
24 the presentation, our staff will be happy to meet with
25 you at the various exhibits. Project team members will

1 be available after the presentation to answer your
2 questions one on one.

3 In order to ensure that everyone who wants
4 to make a formal comment this evening has an opportunity
5 to do so, we will limit all comments to three minutes.
6 A timer, located on the screen, will indicate the
7 beginning of your three minutes. After three minutes,
8 you will be asked to be seated so the next speaker can
9 make their comment. Unused time may not be given to
10 another speaker.

11 As you may have noticed, we have a court
12 reporter here to create a transcript of this hearing.
13 The court reporter will take your comment for the
14 official record of the hearing. Please be sure to face
15 the court reporter when you speak so that your comments
16 can be accurately recorded.

17 Now we will call out the names of the
18 people who signed up to speak. I ask that you please
19 use the microphone located in the center aisle, right
20 here in front of me. Please state and spell your full
21 name so that the court reporter may document your
22 comment for the record.

23 The first speaker is John Davis.

24 JOHN DAVIS: Thank you. John Davis,
25 J-O-H-N D-A-V-I-S.

1 (Technical difficulties with the
2 microphone.)

3 JOHN DAVIS: John Davis, J-O-H-N
4 D-A-V-I-S.

5 And I wanna urge all the workers here and
6 the committee to please consider that back in the 1980s,
7 Highway 183 was fully funded by bonds and under -- other
8 funding mechanism. In fact, 183 North was completed
9 about 15 years ago. 183 South should have been
10 completed, but instead, money was diverted to the new
11 toll road 130.

12 And the fact -- I urge y'all to look that
13 converting vital freeways into toll roads is blatantly
14 discriminatory to those in this community that are
15 disadvantaged economically; to put basically a rich
16 man's road in an area where people can ill afford to pay
17 the fees, to pay the exorbitant toll rates.

18 So there are other ways, like indexing the
19 gas tax would be the best solution, that has been frozen
20 for 20 years. With prices dropping and fluctuating, the
21 people won't mind paying five cents more a gallon. And
22 that indexing the gas tax, something -- something so
23 simple as that, will basically allow enough funding to
24 not have any toll roads. You'll save yourself a lotta
25 trouble by trying to force this into a community that

1 can't afford it.

2 Why not toll the north side of the
3 community, that has enjoyed freeway access for over 20
4 years? And I've lived here and waited and waited and
5 waited, and then finally, when there is some light that
6 there's gonna be a nice road system, you -- you put up
7 here that it's gonna be toll roads.

8 And when that happens -- and I know you
9 guys are gonna force it through, like you tried to do in
10 2005. The CAMPO CTMRA are sitting on hundreds of
11 millions of dollars in reserve funds. Use that money.
12 Stop trying to force toll roads on existing roads, like
13 you've done on Manor Expressway; like you're doing on
14 Mopac. It's not gonna work here. And you can take
15 it . . . replan it, do what you have to do, but . . . we
16 will not accept toll roads on existing freeways.

17 MARISABEL RAMTHUN: The next speaker is
18 Mary Jo Hernandez.

19 MARY JO HERNANDEZ: Yes.

20 (Technical difficulties.)

21 MARY JO HERNANDEZ: My name's Mary Jo
22 Hernandez, and I'm a member of the Restore Rundberg
23 Revitalization Team. I speak for myself and for the
24 affordability and accessibility of the northeastern,
25 eastern, and southern sections of the city of Austin.

1 The Rundberg area of the city of Austin is
2 bounded by 183 on the south, Metric Boulevard on the
3 west, Braker Lane on the north, and Cameron/Dessau Lane
4 on the east. 183 is a major thoroughfare and access
5 point for the Rundberg area.

6 Rundberg, like all of Austin, is deeply
7 concerned about affordability and traffic congestion.
8 The median income for a family of four persons in the
9 area is no more than \$24,000 per year. The needs of the
10 Rundberg area for free access to all of Austin are the
11 same as those of other residents.

12 District 4 and the Rundberg area voted
13 against the recent rail project, and for the Proposition
14 1, which now releases transportation moneys from the
15 State rainy-day fund for nontolled-road improvements.
16 These funds should be used for this project.

17 Tolled roads benefit only private
18 investors, not the population of Austin, Travis County,
19 Williamson, or Hays/Caldwell counties.

20 Tolled-road construction does not
21 represent the values of the people. Free, tax-based
22 road construction is clearly the choice of those who
23 drive and those who will pay the cost of another toll
24 road.

25 The residents of the Rundberg area cannot

1 afford to fund or to use toll roads.

2 Central Texas Regional Mobile Authority --
3 Mobility Authority and TxDOT, we ask you to listen to
4 us. Respect and honor the will of the people. Improve
5 183 and keep it free from tolls.

6 Thank you.

7 MARISABEL RAMTHUN: Next person, Toni
8 Rayner.

9 TONI RAYNER: Good evening, everyone.
10 Toni Rayner, T-O-N-I R-A-Y-N-E-R. Live over here in
11 78723, University Hills.

12 I agree with the previous two speakers.
13 But . . . I have learned a lot in the meetings I've been
14 attending. And the design of this roadway, I'm very
15 impressed with. I can see where community concerns are
16 being addressed. I'm very impressed with it.

17 I like the idea that major intersections
18 have free . . . bypasses, so that the neighbors can go
19 around these major traffic lights without paying a toll.
20 I notice those kinda things.

21 I love the hike-and-bike trail. For some
22 reason, the official name's not sticking in my head.

23 I kind of wish that, at least in our
24 neighborhood -- I think your University Hills is the
25 biggest neighborhood that directly abuts the planned

1 highway. I would really love it if we could actually
2 have a real, nice sidewalk separated from the highway
3 speeds. Surveys, I'm sure, have shown that we've got
4 people making footpaths in the grass. And we have an
5 elementary school 500 feet from the highway. We have a
6 church right next to the highway. We should have had
7 safe, wide sidewalks from the beginning, but we don't.

8 I would like it if you could figure out a
9 way to give us . . . additional accommodations for the
10 highway frontage.

11 The noise barrier is probably gonna be a
12 real blessing, but the sidewalks are something we've
13 needed for a very long time.

14 Also . . . excuse me. I've heard that the
15 area around the Loyola Lane intersection is built on an
16 old landfill, which is why the soil conditions are
17 destroying the existing road surface. And that any
18 excavations will be removing that landfill. Yay.

19 I don't know if there's a chance that it
20 will be releasing methane into the air, and whether
21 there's any kind of methane-collection accommodations
22 being thought of.

23 And . . . that's most of it.

24 Looking at -- oh. One of the things on
25 the maps, and on the presentation, if you could include

1 some sort of directional indicator, because 183 is . . .
2 really crazy-shaped. I'm very familiar with the road,
3 but other people approaching the maps are saying, "Where
4 the hell is this?" If you could have some sort of
5 directional finder, I think it would be easier for
6 strangers to . . . to wrap their brains around it.

7 Thank you.

8 MARISABEL RAMTHUN: Next speaker, Whitney
9 Siever.

10 WHITNEY SIEVER: I didn't write anything
11 down, so I'm . . . I'm just going on . . . just gonna
12 wing it. Shoo.

13 I think the first three speakers voiced my
14 concern about highways being highways, and . . .
15 think. . . .

16 I'll just write it down.

17 MARISABEL RAMTHUN: Next speaker, Willie
18 Lewis.

19 WILLIE LEWIS: Good evening. My name is
20 Willie Lewis. I . . . I live on Springdale Road, just
21 down south of 183.

22 The fact that, you know, we developing 183
23 now is something that's -- like the first speaker said,
24 is about 20 years late. But. You know, we -- we did
25 all the overpass all the way from north, and we get down

1 here, and now all of a sudden we need a toll road to --
2 to do the remainder. You know. And we've had over 20
3 years to do it.

4 And it's not because of this area. It's
5 because of the airport out there. People are having a
6 hard time gettin' to and from the airport. So that is
7 the reason that TxDOT is doin' it now.

8 And my thing is . . . the people that's in
9 the area is not going to use the toll road. They gonna
10 use the access road. And . . . it's -- this doesn't
11 make a lot of sense to me to -- at this point to be able
12 to drive from Cedar Park to Loyola Lane without . . .
13 express -- without toll, and then all of a sudden for
14 another five/six miles you're gonna have to do toll
15 roads. You know.

16 My thing is that . . . the . . . access to
17 183 going north has been eliminated between Springdale
18 Road and -- and 290, and that's because TxDOT built a
19 bridge. They didn't have enough comments, I guess,
20 to -- about it, so they just took the access out. Now
21 you have to go all the way north of Cameron Road to
22 access 183 if you goin' north. So it -- it just makes
23 it hard for the neighborhood, people in the
24 neighborhood, to -- to do the mobility. For me, I would
25 have to go back to Loyola Lane and then come in on 183

1 rather than goin' on Springdale, because if I do, then I
2 have to drive on the access road.

3 And believe me, it's gonna increase,
4 because of the development on north and south on
5 Springdale Road, for people going north.

6 Thank you.

7 MARISABEL RAMTHUN: Thank you, everyone,
8 for your comments tonight.

9 After conclusion of the public-comment
10 period on Monday, December 1st, we will compile and
11 consider community input from tonight's public hearing
12 and comments received before December 1st, prepare and
13 circulate summary and analysis of the public hearing and
14 comment response reports.

15 If changes are made to the design based on
16 the comments received, the environmental assessment may
17 need to be revise. The environmental assessment would
18 then be review again by the Federal Highway
19 Administration.

20 We anticipate that the Federal Highway
21 Administration will issue an environmental finding early
22 next year.

23 It is important to note that you can stay
24 informed and get involved by visiting the project Web
25 site, www.BergstromExpressway.com; call in the telephone

1 hotline at 1 (866) 424-3583; or inviting the project
2 team to meet with your group.

3 Again, the comment -- the public-comment
4 period ends on December 1st, 2014.

5 Thank you, everyone, for attending
6 tonight's public hearing, and we're now adjourned.

7 (Hearing adjourned at 7:41 p.m.)
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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, RABIN' MONROE, Certified Shorthand Reporter in and for the State of Texas, hereby certify that the above transcript is a true and correct transcription of the proceedings, done to the best of my skill and ability;

And I further certify that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties in the above-listed action, and, further, that I am not financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Certified to by me this 2nd day of DECEMBER, 2014.



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